



Do Reincarnation-type Cases Involve Consciousness Transfer?

James Paul Pandarakalam

ABSTRACT

The work of the late Professor Ian Stevenson has become a benchmark in the history of psychical research that is pertinent to psychiatry—to the extent that he may be termed the cartographer of reincarnation research. Over fifty years of rigorous research, he identified 2500 international experiences with intrinsic reincarnation features, and thereby established a corpus of evidence that may be considered incontrovertible for the phenomenon. Reincarnation sometimes has normal physiological manifestations and sometimes clinical attributes. Of the various instances supporting the possibility of reincarnation, those in which children remember previous lives have the most credibility. The association of cognitive and behavioural memories with birthmarks and birth defects corresponding to wounds suffered by the person whose life subjects claim to remember contributes to refuting scepticism about reincarnation. The scientific theory of reincarnation does not encompass universal reincarnation or the transmigration of souls from the animal kingdom. To free the scientific concept from religious impedimenta, distinctive terminology has been recently introduced. Painstaking investigation into reincarnation-type occurrences is a route to a deeper understanding of consciousness and its long-term survival after physical extinction. The new scientific outlook would enable cognitive sciences to move away from quantum ultra-reductionism, but quantum consciousness may serve as bridge between brain and a higher consciousness.

Key Words: Reincarnation, Consciousness, Birth Marks, Birth Defects, Intermission Memories

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Introduction

The belief that human beings have a non-biological component associated with the brain and that it survives after physical extinction is opposed to the current reductionist model of mind. We need a model that will accommodate the psi and super-psi phenomena. If human beings have a spiritual, non-physical component associated with their physical brain and body, it should theoretically survive physical extinction—at least for a finite period. In other words, proof of the existence of a spiritual component means that there must be a spiritual and aesthetic dimension to human existence. It also implies the existence of a countless number of

discarnate spirits which occupy other dimensions that co-exist with our physical dimension.

Most cognitive scientists who have a footing in classical physics tend to discount anything that is invisible. An invisible dimension has to be introduced to the physicist's imagination in a logical way. On the basis of neutrino physics, Robert D. Klauber has presented a serious case to accommodate the possibility of invisible realms co-existing with ours (Klauber, 2000). He argues that subtle realms may be made of "neutrino-like particle families" and may co-exist with our physical world without our being aware of them. Similarly, our spiritual bodies may be made of invisible neutrino-like micro-micro particles, and

Corresponding author: Dr James Paul Pandarakalam

Address: Department of psychiatry, Northwest Boroughs HealthCare NHS Foundation Trust Hollins Park Hospital & AFG Rehab Hospitals, Winnick Lane, Warrington WA2 8WN, United Kingdom

e-mail ✉ jpandarak@hotmail.co.uk

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there may be other invisible entities formed of such particles.

Consciousness is currently considered by many to be an illusion created by the neurochemical complexity of the material brain. Previous life memories challenge a reductionist model of mind such as this. Children claiming previous life memories are revealing the spiritual nature of human beings. From a scientific perspective, reincarnation would be one of the best scientific evidences for the existence of a non-biological component in association with brain, and for its long-term existence after physical extinction. No other kind of evidence—be it near-death experiences, death-bed visions, apparitional experiences or mediumistic communications – guarantees long-term existence.

Consciousness Transfer

As the word “reincarnation” has religious and occultist meanings, investigators have introduced some substitute terminology to enable more precise scientific communication. “Accidental reincarnation” and “extra-cerebral memory” are terms devised by Indian investigators (Banerjee, 1965). “Information transfer” is a term appropriate for the technically minded (Keil, 1996), and “repeated life” is yet another useful term introduced by philosophically minded investigators (Steiner, 1947). “Rebirth” is a term popular in Buddhism, but it accommodates continuation of life only, without any continuation of personal identity. In this paper, I have introduced “consciousness transfer, development reincarnation and assisted reincarnation” to distinguish and rescue the emerging scientific idea from the karmic reincarnation.

Information is not memory, but memory contains information. Stevenson preferred to make use of the term “idea of reincarnation”, and he referred to his cases as reincarnation-type cases. Reincarnation may have normal physiological aspects, and sometimes it has clinical manifestations. It is not simply a matter of memory of a past life but is about the return of the “experiencer” of the memories. Quantum consciousness is adequate to explain the recording of information and memories, and this may relate to a robotic person, but to fathom the dynamic experiencer of memories one has to conceptualise a quantum-like higher consciousness or spiritual consciousness. “Information transfer” has the advantage of being a term that does not imply a particular mechanism; nevertheless, it constitutes

a quasi-theological approach. It attaches importance to the process by which information may be transferred across space and time, involving a latent period of several years. “Soul” may be one of the transfer mechanisms, and this word is flexible enough to accommodate alternative explanations for the phenomenon of recounting previous life memories. Information may be transferred in an indirect or a direct way. The conservation of information regarding a person’s life in a third party and then its transfer to a second party who claims to remember the life of a first party would be the indirect process of information transfer. If theologians, consider this third party as an agent in the spiritistic realm, space scientists may suspect that extra-terrestrial beings are the hidden mediators (this is the E T hypothesis). Information may be transferred directly, involving telepathy and an information storage system, within a psychical internet, which may be operated by external agents. This process may accommodate mediumship, which is also, a form of information transfer, and the term is therefore too flexible for use.

The term “consciousness transfer” has the advantage of being free from such confusion and of being a reasonably straightforward way of expressing the idea of reincarnation –albeit without carrying any intention of replacing the traditional term. In true cases of reincarnation, there should be a transfer of the consciousness that once occupied a carnate body to another, newly formed carnate body. “Mind” and “consciousness” have distinct meaning in eastern thinking, but more-or-less identical meaning in western scientific thinking –in which they are inter-dependent. “Mind” is used for the memory box and “consciousness” for the search engine, but certainly more than that. “Consciousness transfer” is useful in distinguishing the scientific concept from the religious one. Reincarnation may be one of nature’s anomalies rather than the norm, but studies of the anomalous help clear understanding of the normal. Reincarnation-type case studies offer the prospect for scientifically proving the existence of a higher or spiritual consciousness beyond the quantum consciousness.

Evidence of post-mortem existence makes the hypothetical spiritual body an attractive proposition. It is logical to hypothesise that the spiritual body is encompassed by several layers of energy bodies. Interestingly, Frederic Myers’ model of the subliminal realm is in tandem with the plasma physicists’ concept of different energy



bodies assembled like a series of onion rings and constituting the human body and psyche (Jay, 2005). Amit Goswami proposes that with quantum collapse, consciousness contains five compartments of possibility. They are the material body, the vital body (quantum mechanical body), the mind, the supra-mental intellect and the blissful body (Goswami, 2001). The blissful body relates to the spiritual body, the subtlest and the most pervasive of the five components. A non-physical continuum is maintained between the five by the omnipresent non-biological component: the spiritual body. The components of the mind-brain-consciousness complex co-exist in the same way as a coloured aqueous solution and a sponge co-exist in the same locality (the colouring pigment represents the spiritual factor of the mind).

It is not genetic structure that is primarily responsible for making humans unique individuals. Individuality is the aggregate of qualities and characters that distinguishes one person from another, and it is indivisible and unique. The spiritual body individualises the embryo –this is known as the “individualising principle”. The embryo or foetus has to go through an unknown individualising process before it becomes an individual. The embryo becomes the tabernacle of the individualising force. Higher consciousness is a property of the spiritual body, which is also the embodiment of the individualising principle, and it is fundamentally the individualising principle that reincarnates along with its paraphernalia. A multipart model of mind and consciousness based on mystical experiences, particle physics and neurosciences offer a more accurate schema than one excluding mystical experiences (Pandarakalam,2010a). Stevenson did not want his rudimentary research to be linked with religious philosophy (Stevenson,1997a). There are some compelling kinds of evidence enabling suspension of scepticism about the idea of reincarnation, but they are not based on past-life regression, which is misunderstood by many people. A review of the evidence is presented in the succeeding paragraphs.

Evidence

Among the scientific evidence in favour of reincarnation, Stevenson (1974) attached maximum credibility to spontaneous utterances about previous lives made by young children. It has to be emphasised that these children speak at their own volition. The information that young people give is generally reliable, and in this group, it is

easy to detect the probable channels of communication. The common denominator relating to reincarnation is probably the memories the child has of a past life. Children usually talk about such memories between the ages of 2 and 4; infantile recollections gradually dwindle after that. Stevenson’s fifty years of research were dedicated to studying the spontaneous expositions of children regarding previous lives.

Typical Cases

Most of the cases featuring children who remember previous lives run on the following lines: the child, usually at the age of 2 or 3, begins to talk persistently of things, places and people about which their parents are entirely ignorant. The child may behave quite differently from any of their brothers or sisters. This will appear very strange in relation to the circumstances of their upbringing. Furthermore, the child may relate their revelations to a previous life that they claim to remember having led, sometimes in a neighbouring place or distant place. To the parents, the child’s strange talk and behaviour do not appear to be symptoms of mental disorder, but the situation causes them concern. The parents, often along with friends of the family start to make enquiries regarding persons presumed to be dead to whom the child’s statements may apply. Finally, they find the family that appears to be the basis of the statements.

Once contact is made with this family, additional information is received. Some of the details verify and some contradict the child’s statements. After this, the child may be taken to the family that they claim was their original family. That family may belong to a superior or inferior social stratum to the present family. In some accounts the child takes the parents and others along a complicated route through streets and alleys on the way to the family they seek. They may demonstrate somnambulistic precision. They lead their followers to the place where they claim to have lived or worked in their former life. They then greet various persons who have come to witness the event, calling them by their names and behaving appropriately to them. The child’s likes and dislikes, special idiomatic phrases, nicknames and names for objects in their previous life are recollected. Occasionally, the child may give information that unveils hidden crimes and disgraceful activities.



Birthmarks and Birth Defects

The average adult has fifteen or sixteen moles, and their origin remains unknown. Similarly, the cause of birth defects is unknown. For one of his publications, Stevenson (1997b) has trawled through his file to identify cases in which persons are recorded as having birthmarks and birth defects that correspond to wounds suffered by the deceased person with whom they are identified. About 35% of children who claim to remember previous lives have been found to have birthmarks or birth defects that they attribute in this way. Stevenson's research team has investigated 210 such children. The birthmarks were usually areas of hairless, puckered skin; some were areas of increased pigmentation and some were areas with little or no pigmentation (hyperpigmented nevi and hyperpigmented macules). The birth defects were nearly always of rare types.

In cases in which the details of a deceased person's life unmistakably matched the child's statements, a close correspondence was nearly always found between the birthmarks and birth defects on the child and the wounds known to have been experienced by the deceased person. In forty-three out of forty-nine cases in which a medical document was obtained, the document confirmed the correspondence between wounds and birthmarks or birth defects. Stevenson accordingly argues in favour of a paranormal origin for the birth manifestations, excluding maternal impressions as causative factors.

The presence of birthmarks and birth defects corresponding to the wounds of the deceased persons are objective evidence in favour of the hypothesis of reincarnation. Satwant Pasricha (1998), in her report on ten such cases, proposes that reincarnation may be a better way to account for these cases than the alternative explanations of chance, maternal impressions, super-psi and possession. Necip Unlutaskiran from Turkey is the subject of one striking reincarnation type case investigated by Stevenson (1997b). Necip was born in 1951 in the Yamach quarter of the Karsiyaka district in the city of Adana—his father's name was Suleyman Unlutaskiran and his mother was called Celile; both of them were illiterate. When the child was born, his mother noticed that he had several birthmarks on his head, face and trunk—seven in all.

Necip was slow in speaking, according to Celile. He began to speak at the age of 4 and was fluent only at the age of 5. His first utterances about a previous life were delayed in comparison

with those of other children with similar experiences; it was not until he reached the age of 6 that he began to speak about an earlier life in Mersin, a city about 80 kilometres from Adana. He said that his name in that life had been the same as his present one: Necip. Other revelations were that he had children whom he wanted to see, and—significantly—that he had been stabbed. When describing the stabbing, he pointed to the parts of his body where he had birthmarks to indicate places where he had been wounded. Stevenson later investigated medical records and found that the earlier Necip had suffered wounds that corresponded to six of the later Necip's birthmarks, verifying the connection between the boy's birthmarks and the wounds experienced earlier by another person. The odds against such a coincidence are astronomical (Stevenson, 1997b).

Necip's parents neglected his statements for six years, but finally his mother took him to a village near Mersin, where her father was living with his second wife, Fatma. Though Necip had never met his grandfather's second wife before, on seeing her he immediately said that he recognised her from his previous life in Mersin. Fatma, who had lived in the Mersin region revealed that she had known a man who had been murdered there; he was named Necip Budak. Further, she confirmed the accuracy of the younger Necip's statements about him.

Necip, by then aged 12, desperately wanted to visit Mersin, and his grandfather duly took him there. On arriving, Necip identified several members of the family of Necip Budak. Those family members provided further confirmation of the accuracy of Necip's statements about the life of their relation, Necip Budak, who a quarrelsome person, especially when drunk. Once when in a drunken state, he had begun making infuriating sarcastic remarks to an acquaintance, and the latter—possibly drunk himself—had stabbed Necip Budak repeatedly with a knife. Necip Budak had collapsed in the street and was rushed to a hospital, where he died the next day.

Among the various statements made by the young Necip, the most significant was his claim that he had once stabbed "his" (Necip Budak's) wife in the leg, resulting in a lifelong scar. Necip Budak's widow Zehra did indeed have a scar on her thigh at the place where the child claimed to have stabbed her when in his previous existence. Additionally, the child expressed emotions as if he were Necip Budak. He demonstrated great affection towards the children of Necip Budak. His



attachment towards Necip Budak's widow was such that, because of intense jealousy, he wanted to tear up a photograph of her second husband. Zehra firmly believed that Necip was her reborn husband.

Although the locations of Necip's six birthmarks correlated with the knife wounds that had led to the death of Necip Budak, in 1964 Necip's mother told Stevenson that her son had seven birthmarks when he was born. According to her, there were two marks on his head, the largest of which was an open sore that took a year to heal. Some of the birthmarks that his mother noted at birth had faded by the time that Stevenson examined the child, but three were still prominent and two others were feebly noticeable. In 1977, researchers found Necip in distressed circumstances—he was in prison because of an honour killing. Later Stevenson published several other Turkish cases (Stevenson,1980).

Professor Erlendur Haraldsson, who worked in close association with Stevenson, describes a case of an unusual birthmark in one of his publications (Haraldsson,2000). Purnima Ekanayake was born in northern Sri Lanka in 1987. Her mother noticed prominent birthmarks on the baby's lower chest, left of the mid-line (Haraldsson,2000), when she was bathing her. At the age of 3, Purnima began to recount memories in the persona of someone called Jinadasa who had died two years before in a motor accident. It was only when they met Jinadasa's family that the birthmarks became significant. Prior to the contact with Jinadasa's family Purnima never spoke about details of her injuries.

Jinadasa Perera was an incense maker who was killed when a bus hit his bicycle in 1985. During five visits to his family between 1996 and 1999, Haraldsson obtained permission to see the documents relating to the case, among them the autopsy report on Jinadasa. This showed that the bus had driven diagonally across his chest, breaking the ribs on the left side and puncturing the lungs. Purnima had a cluster of birthmarks in the exact location of the injury. Of a total of twenty statements made by Purnima, fourteen fitted the life of Jinadasa, three could not be checked and three were incorrect. It has been proven that emotional memories are more vivid, but not necessarily accurate. The families were located at a great distance from each other and they were strangers to each other previously.

The simplest and perhaps the most usual explanation for this occurrence of similarities such

as these is chance. The multiplicity of the birthmarks that correspond to the wounds of the deceased person whose life the subject remembers, and the unusual nature of the birthmarks cannot however be dismissed as a mere coincidence. Of the paranormal explanations, maternal impressions perhaps appear to be the most convincing for Purnima's birthmarks (Stevenson,1992). According to this theory, shock or a strong psychological impression sustained by a pregnant woman may produce a mark or some other defect in her baby. This explanation is valid only when the two families involved knew each other. In the majority of cases, the families are strangers. The hypothesis of reincarnation is more likely to be applicable to cognitive and behavioural correlation, provided that the informants are reliable.

Scientific information about occurrences of telesomatic phenomena –in which a physical sensation is experienced by an individual at a distance from and without material connection to the instigating cause –is limited. Telesomatic phenomena are sometimes reported in cases of near-death experience (NDE). Pasricha (1995) has reported that some subjects, on recovery from NDs, have marks on their bodies which they claimed had manifested either because they had been branded on their body in the other realm or because they were forcibly pushed downwards by messengers of the spiritual world on putting up resistance to returning to the terrestrial world from the other realm.

The birthmarks and birth defects studied in Stevenson's cases are permanent ones, so it is logical to assume that they are the outcome of a permanent co-existing bodily factor and not telesomatic impressions. Stevenson introduced (1993) the word "psychophore" to research; it means "soul bearer" and refers to the "mind stuff" or canvas on which memories are collected.

It is natural to argue that birthmarks and birth defects corresponding to the wounds of a deceased person are chance occurrences. The skin of a normal adult will accommodate 160 squares that are each 10 centimetres square. The odds against a single birthmark corresponding in location with a single wound are consequently 1:160. In cases where more than one birthmark corresponds to a wound, the chance explanation is even weaker. For two birthmarks corresponding to two wounds, the odds against increase to 1:160 x 1:160, or over 91: 25,000. Stevenson has identified eighteen cases in which a



child with two birthmarks remembers being shot by a bullet. The pattern of birthmarks is sometimes known to match a pattern of wounds. That suggests the birthmarks correspond to the small bullet wounds of entry and the larger exit wounds.

If birthmarks and birth defects do correspond to the wounds incurred by a previous personality, we may conjecture that physical wounds leave an impression on some part of the energy body, and during the process of reincarnation these impressions are reprinted on the new carbonated body. Reincarnation involves ensoulment of the spiritual body and of its vehicular energy body (the psychophore). They become incorporated into the product of conception, constituting a chimera formation—in this context a chimera is an organism containing genetically different tissues. Such a hypothesis has medical significance.

Intermission Memories

Intermission memories or inter-life memories used not to be taken seriously by researchers, but nowadays interest in the near-death experiences (NDEs) has offered a conceptual model of spiritual dimensions and consequently, spiritual memories in general are taken more seriously. Sceptics used to be such that reporting on inter-life memories could result in embarrassment for an investigator. Research suggests that NDEs are guided and controlled to some extent by external spiritual agents, and that there is a reincarnation process that is similarly, under control. It is logical to assume that caretaker spirits are able to continue to assist after the birth of reincarnated individuals. One may speculate whether they sometimes prompt children to speak out for the benefit of others once they are in safe hands. If so, such children are fulfilling a spiritual mission.

Most subjects have few or no memories about the inter-life period. Stevenson grouped the memories into two categories: terrestrial memories relating chiefly to the experience of being part of a previous family and memories of a discarnate realm (Stevenson,1987). Memories of former existence are concerned with burial and other family events and are accompanied by circumstantial evidence. Memories of discarnate existence have significant cultural variability. One of Stevenson's subjects recounted using her own thought processes to make elegant and luxurious dresses after her death –ones that did not require washing; also, food was available whenever she wished for it. Some remember meeting a sage-like

person who befriended them and later guided them to a family for their next rebirth. Some report engaging in poltergeist activity while inhabiting the discarnate realm, a kind of dream also experienced by the living. Stevenson had a respectful attitude towards such claims of intermission memories even though they rarely contain anything verifiable (Stevenson,1981).

Dr Jim Tucker, a close associate of Stevenson, has focused especially on cases with intermission memories. His subjects have claimed to have memories of the funeral of their previous personality, of other terrestrial events, of existence in another realm, and of conception and rebirth (Tucker, 2009). He has conducted a study comparing such memories with NDEs. The celestial memories validate the credibility of consciousness transfer. Haraldsson reports in-between life memories in the Sri Lankan case of Purnima Ekanayake (Haraldsson, 2016). Purnima recounted that she floated in semi-darkness for a few days. She saw her own dead body and witnessed her funeral, observing people who were mourning for her. She recounted that there were many people like herself floating around at the time, and that she then saw a light and followed it. Her next recollection was her birth into the Ekanayake family. Haraldsson considers that the Purnima case has unusual validity and quality even though it has the weakness that no records were kept before the meeting of the two families involved (Haraldsson, 2000). Although intermission memories are rare among the Sri Lankans he studied, he has found another case, that of Duminda Ratnayake (Haraldsson, 1999), who recounted his life as a monk in a Kandy temple. Duminda stated that after his death he lived among Devas (Hindu deities).

James Leininger, a boy from Louisiana (USA), is thought to be the reincarnation of a World War II fighter pilot who was shot down by the Japanese (Leininger, 2017). At the age of 2 he began to have nightmares featuring a plane crash and was heard screaming out in the night: "Plane on fire! Little man can't get out!" James then began to divulge details of planes and war tragedies that no 2-year-old boy could know. He was obsessed with toy planes, which he would crash into tables and chairs. His parents, after a long and meticulous search, uncovered the identity of a pilot whose experiences fitted their son's reports: James M. Huston Jnr, who was shot down on 3 March 1945. If this connection is correct, in this instance reincarnation took place decades after the previous incarnation.



Interestingly, James had inter-life memories, in which Tucker has particular interest (Tucker, 2013). When the child was given toy planes, he named three of them Billy, Leon and Walter. When asked why he had chosen those names, he replied that it was because they were the ones who greeted him when he got to heaven. It was discovered that ten men from Huston's squadron on board the US escort carrier Natoma Bay were killed before Huston himself was, and the names the child chose referred to three of them. James talked about heaven as a beautiful place but did not locate it in the sky. He referred to God as a being with neutral gender, not like the bearded man traditionally portrayed in Christian culture. Another of his revelations was that reincarnation is an individual choice –we might refer to it as “choice reincarnation”, augmenting the terminology of reincarnation literature. James revealed that he had found the Leininger couple who became his parents in a hotel in Hawaii; they testified that they had gone there on holiday before the birth of their son.

Intermission memories vary between different cultures, demonstrating that the images reported are influenced by popular culture. They are especially common in examples from Myanmar. Three-stage temporal schemes have been described by Poonam Sharma and James Tucker (Sharma & Tucker, 2004). The first is a transitional one in which the events remembered often seeming painful and coloured by the previous life. Subjects may witness the funeral arrangements made for them and realise that they are unable to communicate with the living. A few may remain in a state of denial regarding their own death. This stage often ends with the subject being directed by an elder or an old man dressed in white to a place where they stay for the bulk of the intermission experience. In the second stage, subjects report living in a particular location or having a schedule or duties to which they must adhere. The final stage is a preparation for return to terrestrial life and includes choosing parents for their conception. Some subjects report following their future parents' home –apparently on their own initiative –and some recall being directed to their new parents, often by co-spirits. Sharma and Tucker notice that these experiences are quite variable; no two utterances have been identical.

In a Japanese study, O. Masayuki and I. Akira (2014) reported on Japanese cases of intermission memories, noting instances of children with pre-birth memories who do not have

any previous life memories. They suggest that children with intermission memories and past-life memories may be a subgroup of a larger group. Such an observation strongly supports the hypothesis that all spiritual bodies remain in a waiting period before conception in the hypothetical cosmic womb proposed by Shakuntala Modi (2000). Metaphorically, the waiting period of spiritual bodies may be likened to that of plants growing in a greenhouse before being transplanted to a garden or decorative pot. Particle physicists are now able to conceptualise different unphysical and non-physical dimensions, making sense of the greenhouse metaphor. Inter-life regression therapists believe in the healing potential of the celestial intermission period and claim that this form of therapeutic intervention may be used to reorient clients in order that they gain the insight they lacked because of a rushed reincarnation process (Lucas, 1992). Intermission memories point towards a concept of “assisted reincarnation,” valuable in distinguishing them from the karmic reincarnations.

Past-life Regression

Hypnotic past-life regression (PLR) may offer another corpus of important evidence for reincarnation, but there are strong counter-arguments to it. In 1965 Morey Bernstein presented an interesting case in his book *The Search for Bridey Murphy*. Stevenson (1984) attaches importance only to researches cases of PLR that demonstrate responsive xenoglossy. He reports two cases in which the subjects proved to be able to speak foreign languages that they had not learned by conventional means. They spoke these languages responsively –they engaged in a sensible conversational exchange with other people who were speaking the same language.

There are a few interesting modern cases of PLR. Carroll Beckwith was a minor portrait painter who had lived and worked in New York City in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Captain Robert L. Snow is a commander of the homicide branch at the Indianapolis Police Department. He discovered while under hypnosis that he was Carroll Beckwith in a previous life (Snow, 1999). Snow had become disenchanted with the use of hypnotherapeutic procedures in child sex-abuse cases and wanted to dismiss the images that he had experienced while under hypnosis as a form of cryptomnesia, in which a forgotten memory returns without being recognised as such by the subject. His regression



took place in 1992. Subsequently Snow was able to find twenty-eight details from his regression that could be proved or disproved. Instead of refuting the veracity of his images as he intended, after thorough investigation Snow became convinced that almost every recollection he had while hypnotised had taken place nearly a hundred years earlier.

Personification is the real weakness of PLR. Hypnosis may release the dramatizing powers of mind, which make the previous personality more colourful. In hypnosis, the subject surrenders the direction of their thoughts to the hypnotist, becoming less resistant to the instructions they give. When the subject is told to remember something, they may have no accurate information to offer, but may respond by presenting incorrect statements to please the therapist, without realising that they are mixing truth and falsehood. Subjects tend to attribute a role of historical importance to their previous lives, or to identify themselves as connected to well-known people and places. When a source remains obscure, it is arguable that some of the ingredients are facts and some of them have been obtained paranormally, via extra-sensory perception (ESP).

Given all the opportunities to choose any time and place in history and geography, why a subject of PLR chooses a specific time and place to enact their previous life drama remains unresolved. It is quite possible that previous life memories indicate merely a past-life existence and are not necessarily real memories. True previous life memories need a vehicle to enable them to come out to the conscious mind, and the mind with its magical powers needs to weave a fictitious previous life to enable the delivery of the true one. This is comparable to the dream process. A few items of memory from the real previous life may become dislodged and attracted like iron filings in a magnetic field to the fictitious previous life. The outcome is a previous life narration. Stevenson (1987) compares this process to the writing of a historical novel containing fiction and facts. After observing the exaggerated claims of hypnotherapists, Stevenson (1994) stated that hypnotic regression to presumed previous lives rarely evoke any evidence of real memories. Most of the “previous personalities” brought out during hypnosis are fantasies, the sources of which may sometimes be identified. Alternative explanations and fallacies relating to PLR have been discussed by the present author elsewhere (Pandarakalam, 2010b).

Déjà vu is probably another kind of evidence for reincarnation. It is sometimes experienced by children who have reincarnation-type memories. In most cases, a simple psychological or even a neurological explanation based on hemispheric function is a strongly possible alternative. More attention should also be given to déjà vu from philosophical and religious perspectives as well and a multidisciplinary approach is recommended to unravel the enigma of Déjà vu (Pašić *et al.*, 2018). Recurrent dreams about previous lives starting in childhood offer another form of evidence. Such dreams are very vivid and become strongly fixated in the memory. Some people experience a flashback to a previous life under the effect of a drug such as LSD. Sometimes, the spiritual serenity and mental clarity achieved by those who practise meditation helps to relieve someone who has memories of a previous life.

Trans-century Cases

Most reincarnations take place in the earlier geographical area but there are some international cases. The average interval between death and re-embodiment in Stevenson’s cases have been calculated as two years. In James Leininger’s case (Leininger, 2017), the intermission lasted sixty years, and there is no manifestation of birthmarks or birth defects corresponding to the injuries sustained in the physical body during the previous life.

In the spontaneous experiences of child subjects of reincarnation-type cases, memory of a previous life that ended only a few years earlier than their birth (an average period lasting two years) is typical; in hypnotic past-life regression, the interval between the death of the previous personality and the birth of the living person is usually longer – sometime seven centuries. There are a few exceptional cases. Edward Ryall of Essex (1974) remembered a previous life in Somerset in the sixteenth century. Stevenson views his claims of previous life memories positively. A.J. Stewart (1978) recalled a previous life as King James IV of Scotland in the fourteenth century and self-published a book detailing it, entitled *King’s Memories*.

It is reasonable to assume that in trans-century cases previous life memories do not easily appear spontaneously in the conscious mind but become clearer in a hypnotic state. The time lag when compared to children remembering recent past lives is a sufficient explanation for a block in



the free flow of memories. The possibility that the subject in trans-century cases recounts details of a life about which they have no conscious recollection has to be taken seriously. An apparent silent span of time may account for a gap of centuries.

An Attempt of Refute

Professor Stephen Blake has tried to refute the karmic reincarnation in his latest publication (Blake,2014). Again, he does not distinguish the scientific concept from the doctrinal one-assisted reincarnation or development reincarnation. Blake appears to be a firm believer of spiritual dimensions and does not seem to consider the age-old axiom that celestial events cannot be measured with terrestrial standards. Assisted reincarnation is essentially a celestial phenomenon and follows its own physics. Mr Blake argues that theoretically, with each reincarnation, “the cosmic bank balance of karma” accumulates and could become unpayable. In this respect, the wisdom of Professor Blake’s mathematical logic should be given the due; immortality and individuality are incompatible with the doctrine of reincarnation. But they are not illogical with assisted reincarnation.

Blake’s opposition to the reincarnation hypothesis is mainly founded on spiritistic information transfer. As a mathematician, Blake offers an unprecedented format, using spreadsheets and equations, quantum physics, probability theory, Hilbert space, the principle of irrefutability and even mathematics of karma. He has quoted from many present-day and past scientists and philosophers to win his arguments against reincarnation, but without truly recognizing the scientific model that is being distilled from the karmic reincarnation. He has opened the file of stigmata cases starting from St Francis of Assisi to explode the birth marks and birth defects Stevenson had suggested as objective proof of reincarnation.

Spiritistic Information Transfer

Spirit possession is a taboo subject in psychiatry, but it is periodically reported in the psychiatric literature (Pereira et al. 1995), where it is dismissed as delusional or a subcultural belief. For the parapsychologist this issue has great explanatory potential. Professor C. T. K. Chari (1962) advocated spiritistic interpretation to explain previous life memories; this postulates that the children concerned are influenced by discarnate spirits from a non-physical realm whose

past-life events are transmitted to them-spiritistic information transfer. If that were so, the children would have been influenced by several deceased personalities and the subjects would not have been able to stick to a single previous life narration (Stevenson,1961). Unlike mediumistic communications, these recounting occur in clear and normal state of consciousness.

Michael S. Kunhardt has opined that no panoramic review of a former life is described as part of NDEs experienced in cultures in which there is belief in reincarnation (Kunhardt, 1993). People who adhere to the spiritualistic interpretation considers this an indication that the concept of reincarnation is a misinterpretation of the contact with the terrestrial life of another deceased human being. The utterances of the children become mere information transfer. There is however a recent account of an NDE in which an individual involved remembered two previous lives, and that makes the view invalid (Parti & Perry, 2016). Dr Rajiv Parti, a US anaesthetist of Indian origin, had a life-changing NDE in which he remembered first the life of a cruel prince in medieval India and later that of an opium cultivator in Afghanistan in the nineteenth century who became an opium addict. He claims to be affected by a carry-over of the traits of those personalities to his present life.

Subjects with birthmarks and birth defects pose a great challenge to the possession theory of reincarnation, which is different from the spiritistic hypothesis. Stevenson, who believed in the concept of possession, made two strong arguments against spiritistic interpretation. One weakness of the concept is its failure to account for birthmarks. Another is that it does not explain the almost invariable fading of memories that is observed in subjects between the ages of 5 and 8. A proponent of reincarnation hypothesis might justifiably ask why a possessing personality should cease to take that role, and why all possessing personalities withdraw from possession at about the same stage in a child’s life. These counter-arguments are applicable to the discarnate spiritistic hypothesis. The negative spiritistic influences may be even more aggressive than possession and they are capable of limitless foul play.

Three Scenarios

Three types of case have been identified: (a) people who have no apparent previous life memories and come out with florid memories



under past-life regression therapies; (b) cases in which the subject has no clear life memories, only a few vague life recollections with imprecise detail about their previous personality –these remain unidentifiable and unsolved; and (c) strong cases in which there are colourful and verifiable memories of previous lives and some with birthmarks and defects corresponding to the wounds of the previous personality. Solved cases are considered strong cases and unsolved ones weak. There is no such division with regard to reincarnation. That is a helpful argument against the spiritistic hypothesis. If what happens is spiritistic, why is there silence in unsolved cases and in PLR cases in which there are hardly any previous life memories in the conscious mind?

If some children have turned memories of a previous life and the associated behavioural memories into images, it is logical to think that there may be “silent” cases of reincarnation (unsolved cases) in which there are no imaged memories but there are behavioural memories. Such a view has enormous explanatory value. In fact, Peter and Mary Harrisons have reported several such unsolved British cases (Harrisons,2014). The three scenarios listed above do not support spiritistic interpretations. I should like to suggest that spiritistic prompting may occur in true cases of consciousness transfer, and that external spirit entities may be ones that the discarnate personality has befriended during the intermission period or ones that served as caretaker spirits who prepared them for their reincarnation. It may be hypothesised that there is a continuum from no memories, through unsolved cases, to solved cases, and that together they form a spectrum of past lives that offers validity to the theories of consciousness transfer and argue against information transfer. All three types of experience make immense contributions to this challenging research.

Intermission memories offer another challenge to the spiritistic interpretation. Unlike mediumistic narration of discarnate realm, these memories are very brief and focussed on preparation for the return to the terrestrial realm. Their utterances about intermediate existence have been very humble in contrast to the mediumistic communicators. If these previous life memories are of spiritistic origin, why the communicator is so thrifty in their renderings about the apparent inter-life existence? It is of note that there is no consensus among mediumistic communicators about the reality of reincarnation

and that their utterances on the nature of the discarnate realm have been generally inconsistent. Those discarnate communicating with the incarnates are not advanced spirits and their vision of the discarnate realm is very narrow and could be compared to the astronomers of the prescientific era who believed earth is flat and sun is rotating around the earth etc. Excluding a spiritistic causation for past-life memories does not free us from the spiritistic effects of reincarnation. The involvement of co-guides in the preparation of the discarnate beings for their new incarnate life and their continued participation in the earthly lives of the newly returned personalities are part of the research, and such information may illuminate the para-psychodynamics of human behaviour.

Other Interpretations

There is always a chance of fraud being involved in apparent claims of past-life memories. The parents of a child may wish to make money out of them. They may train them to present the drama of reincarnation. However, in most historical cases there is sufficient evidence to rule out fraud. There is also a possibility of unconscious fraud. Children may report events that happened to someone they have read or heard about, identifying themselves with these people. Their parents may have unconsciously added more to the tale as they told it to their child. Jurgen Keil (1996) refers to these two possibilities as “normal information transfer” and “unintentional information transfer”. Disorders of memory, racial memory, ESP on the part of the youngsters, mediumship and possession are all counter-arguments to spontaneous experiences of children remembering previous life having occurred.

J. Keil (2010) proposed that the children in question may be tapping into some “memory bundles” left over by deceased personalities and that what is happening is a form of mechanical memory transfer. However, such memory traces would be passive, and these children have active and imaged memories of the kind associated with strong emotions. Reincarnation is not all about memories, but also about carrying over distinctive behaviour and strong emotions. The “memory black box” that we may eject at the time of death may contain only inactive memories, and like psychometric memories those inevitably fade away with time. The same arguments refute the suggestion that these cases are misinterpreted genetic or cellular memories. The telepathic and



clairvoyance hypothesis is not feasible because these children do not show any other psychical powers with two exceptions (Stevenson,1961). Clairvoyance of current conditions would not account for the memories. In many cases, the rememberer precisely described structures as they once were, not as they were at the time of verification.

Medical Significance of the Idea of Reincarnation

The concept of reincarnation has immense medical value although this is a research area where scientists may think only in terms of probabilities. Reincarnation opens new avenues for fundamental theoretical research in psychiatry. Stevenson suggests that reincarnation may be one explanation for the unusual behaviour of a specific child even if they do not claim to remember a previous life. According to Stevenson, the idea of reincarnation explains several features of human personality that are not adequately accounted for by currently accepted theories (1977a). Reincarnation has the potential to contribute to improved understanding of such diverse matters as phobias in childhood, the presence of skills not learned in early life, abnormalities in child-parent relationships, gender identity confusion, birthmarks and congenital deformities.

In the cases Stevenson and his team investigated, 35% of the children who recalled an earlier unnatural death had phobias (Stevenson,1987). For example, if they had drowned in a past life, they frequently presented with a phobia about going out of their depth in water. If they had been shot, they were often afraid of guns –sometimes of loud bangs in general. If they had died in a road accident some had a phobia about travelling in cars, buses or lorries. Another frequently observed unusual form of behaviour, which Stevenson called “phobias”, is apparent in children who have counter-cultural attributes such as a wish to eat different kinds of food or to wear clothes that are different from those of their contemporaries. If the subject of a previous incarnation had an alcohol, tobacco or drug addiction as an adult, in a later existence they sometimes developed a craving for it at an early age.

Many of the children with past-life memories show abilities or talents that they had in a previous life. Often children who were members of the opposite sex in their previous life (cross-sex reincarnation) have difficulty in adjusting to their

new sex. Issues around enforced sex- change are perhaps factor that leads to homosexuality or lesbianism in their later adult lives (Stevenson,1987). Former girls who are reborn as boys may wish to dress as girls or prefer to play with girls rather than boys. In the Burmese culture, gender dysphoria is recognised as cross-sex reincarnation and the social lives of these individuals is accepted (Stevenson,1977b). In mainstream medical science, such anomalies have been attributed to a lack or a surplus of certain hormones or to some unknown ethology. Feldman and MacCulloch argued in favour of two types of homosexual behaviour, primary and secondary and the former were born with their orientation, perhaps due to an abnormal hormonal environment in the womb and the latter group had acquired their homosexuality through learning and were therefore susceptible to unlearning it (Feldman, MacCulloch,1971). Such issues need to be revisited and research should draw on wisdom gained from clinical parapsychology.

Stevenson has speculated that child prodigies such as Mozart may be the subjects of reincarnation (Stevenson, 1987). Autistic spectrum disorders now attract considerable attention in psychiatry. Various hypotheses have been suggested for their aetiology along a continuum that stretches from autism through savantism, prodigiousness, synaesthesia and remembrances of previous life (Jawer, 2016). Remembrance of a previous life is sometimes an advantage in adulthood, but children who remember previous lives tend to become neurotic. Many child subjects suffer miserably because they feel separated from the families to which they think they belong. They feel alienated and go through the turmoil of conflicting loyalties. Furthermore, most previous life memories are centred around unhappy events. Accidents, suicides, murders and other crimes dominate the memories, metaphorically transforming the mind into a burial ground. By talking about their previous life, children have an opportunity to ventilate their anguish and gain some relief, but there may be many who have no imaged memories but are silently suffering. Are some cases among autistic spectrum disorders, an ultimate form of neuro-psychological defence mechanism by which the traumatic events of previous lives are blocked from creeping into the consciousness and such individuals are closing themselves up in a sensory induced reverie? PLR experiments may be able to enlighten us on this emerging, but unconfirmed concept.



In transplant cases, organ rejection may take place. In consciousness transfer, is there some biological incompatibility between the reincarnating spiritual body its vehicular energy bodies and the newly accepted material body? An incongruous situation such as this may also lead to immune disorders and other unexplained medical conditions. Rushed reincarnation that lacks sufficient preparation for change perhaps results in damage to the newly acquired physical body. Some kinds of miscarriage may be considered as the outcome of a mismatching which the incarnating spiritual body's rejection of the embryo is a natural way of avoiding an unwelcome or inappropriate reincarnation. For all these reasons, the clinical potential of reincarnation research is evident. A medical professional has the responsibility to search rigorously all the possibilities when seeking the causes of the afflictions they are confronted with. It has to be borne in mind that reincarnation is not a scientific truth, but it is a scientific idea that needs investigation. That may lead to confirmation, to modification or even to rejection.

Concluding Remarks

The idea of reincarnation opens new avenues for fundamental theoretical research in cognitive sciences. If reincarnation truly occurs, then it may be one rare form of survival after physical extinction. As indicated in the preceding paragraphs, reincarnation involved physical and psychiatric morbidity. Reincarnation may have clinical manifestations and it is justifiable to bring the research subject within the domain of medical profession. Research into previous life memories open a new field of medical parapsychology.

Freud stated that one tenth of the mind is conscious, but Stevenson believes only one hundredth of the mind is accessible to consciousness (Stevenson,1987); silent cases of reincarnation substantiate Stevensonian view. Human beings contain a complex non-atomic energy system within an atomic energy system incorporated with the physical body. Just as the mind is embodied in the physical workings of the brain, so the spiritual aspect of a person is embodied in his activities as a mind brain-consciousness unit. Reincarnation-type cases offer solid proof for the existence of what is traditionally called the spiritual body, bloomed in another dimension and then incorporated with the material body. This may be composed of "micro-micro particles" (spiriton) or a quantum-like stuff with an

objectivity in its own rights. It is also the seat of the Super-psi, a concept unsafe in the hands of non-survivalists who latch on to it as a sheet anchor to explode the best evidences in favour of discarnate existence. I share the view of the psycho-physicist, James E Beichler who regards the afterlife and Super-psi as equivalent because the source for Super-psi is the same as that thing that survives physical extinction (Beichler, 2008).

In science, we have to change directions periodically or else we would return to the starting point. The problem is that humans have a huge and mostly unexplored brain that neuroscientists tend to find a niche in the brain for all experiences including the ones independent of brain and cannot visualize the brain as a dynamic data processor. For a non-reductionist, the belief that mind -body is a single biological unit is a shallow or even an empty concept but the reductionist argues that the present non-reductionist ideology itself is based on anecdotal and scrap evidences without the endorsement of the physicists who gave us precise, self-consistent explanation of natural phenomena and presented abundance of applied technologies. We cannot imagine reincarnation without the corollary belief of interactionist dualism suggesting that brain acts as a filter between stimuli reaching it and consciousness.

Those who determinedly support a strong spiritistic interpretation may argue that Stevenson's case study, rather than supporting any idea of reincarnation, may be explained as validating the existence of a soul that is closely related to the subject in their terrestrial existence. That soul is simply attracting the subject's attention, so that the latter may remember their surviving existence and then spiritually assist the suffering soul in progressing from the pre-heaven stage that they are still in.

Stevenson does not claim to have proved reincarnation but has only found and reported evidences that would make it seem possible to occur. He has favoured the reincarnationistic view for some of his cases conditionally based on the reliability of the informants of the case. When people asked him about his beliefs, Stevenson replied, I decline to answer this question because my beliefs should make no difference to anyone asking such a question. As Leonardo da Vinci said, "Whoever in discussion adduces authority uses not intellect but rather memory." Everyone should examine the evidence and judge it for himself. (Stevenson, 1990). Sultan Tarlaci has opined that if



the reincarnation cases do not demonstrate rebirth after death, then at least it has been implied that the post mortem memory of someone has been transferred to a newly-born child. He argues that even this hint is beyond the known perception of space-time, and must be considered (Tarlaci, 2017).

Reincarnation cases then would become memory transfer and not necessarily consciousness Transfer. Reincarnation cases with birth marks and defects offer an objective evidence for the authenticity of these alleged cases of previous life memories. Cases with intermission memories are particularly interesting and helpful in understanding more about the incarnation process and the spiritistic participation in preparing the reincarnating personalities for their repeated life. Such cases also give insight into the para-psychodynamics of human behaviour. The present author concludes that in case the previous life memories do not indicate reincarnation i.e. consciousness transfer, they may be considered as person oriented haunting-information transfer or even post-mortem memory transfer from some form of a hypothetical "black-box memory bundle". If there is a grain of truth in the rare incidence of reincarnation, no stone should be left unturned before refuting it altogether.

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