

Is rebirth a myth?

How would understanding rebirth
benefit us in our daily lives?

Prepared by Anjali Chui

“ Inconceivable is the beginning, O disciples, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the running on, the faring on, of beings, cloaked in ignorance, tied by craving. ”

- Samyutta Nikaya

How does the world view rebirth?

- Transmigration or reincarnation
 - *philosophers, poets & people in East & West*
- Transmigration of permanent soul created
 - *Brahma, Allah, Almighty God, Creator*
- These theories ↑ → mankind interest in
 - *“What’s the ultimate origin of life?”*

What did the Buddha say to indicate rebirth?

➤ In Dhammacakkapavattana sutta:

- *(He) “recalled my varied lot in former existences” on the very night of enlightenment*
- *He commented in the 2nd Noble Truth that “This very craving is that which leads to rebirth”*
- *He concluded that “This is my last birth. Now there’s no more rebirth.”*

Majjhima Nikaya

What is the Buddhists approach to rebirth (I)?

➤ The Buddha explains

- *Root of delusion/ignorance (moha) brings about boundless rebirth in doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticca-samuppada)*
- *Ignorance ►►► craving (desire to live and desire to be) ►►► kamma ►►► rebirth*

What is the Buddhists approach to rebirth (II)?

➤ The Buddha denies

- *Existence of a permanent soul (attā)*
- *Existence of a creator god in force (cosmic) or a being (heavenly father)*
- *Criticises theories of 3 divergent views*:*
 - o *Eternalism/Fatalistic*
(Devadaha sutta & Patika sutta)
 - o *Nihilism*
 - o *Natural deterministic (physiological constitution)*
Auguttara Nikāya

Is there any scientific evidence of rebirth?

➤ Dr. Ian Stevenson

- *Professor of Psychiatry at University of Virginia Medical School*
- *Articles printed in The Journal of the American Medical Association*
- *40 years with real cases in India, Lebanon, other countries*

➤ Dr. Brian Weiss

- *Chief of psychiatry for Mt. Sinai Hospital*

Case 1: Suzanne Ghanem, 1973



- Suzanne Ghanem as an infant, circa 1973.
- From the time she could utter her first words, she'd pick up the phone and call out the name "Leila".
- What's her unfinished business?

Pix: Courtesy of Ian Stevenson

Ref: Old Souls by Tom Shroder, published by Simon & Schuster

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Suzanne at age 7, 1979

- The little girl was devastated when she discovered her husband (*Farouk*) of her previous life had remarried.
- Suzanne said to Farouk, “But you told me you’d never love anyone but me.”



Pix: Courtesy of Ian Stevenson

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Ref. Old Souls by Tom Shroder, published by Simon & Schuster

Suzanne at age of 25



- Suzanne Ghanem taken in 1998
- She never married but maintained an intense interest in Hanan's (her former identity) husband, that he reciprocated
- Hanan's family wish fervently to suppress the case

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Pix: Courtesy of Ian Stevenson

Ref: Old Souls by Tom Shroder, published by Simon & Schuster

Don't they look like twins ?



Hanan,
Suzanne's
previous identity,
in her wedding
photo



Suzanne's at age of 25,
photo taken in 1998

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Bashir at age of 11



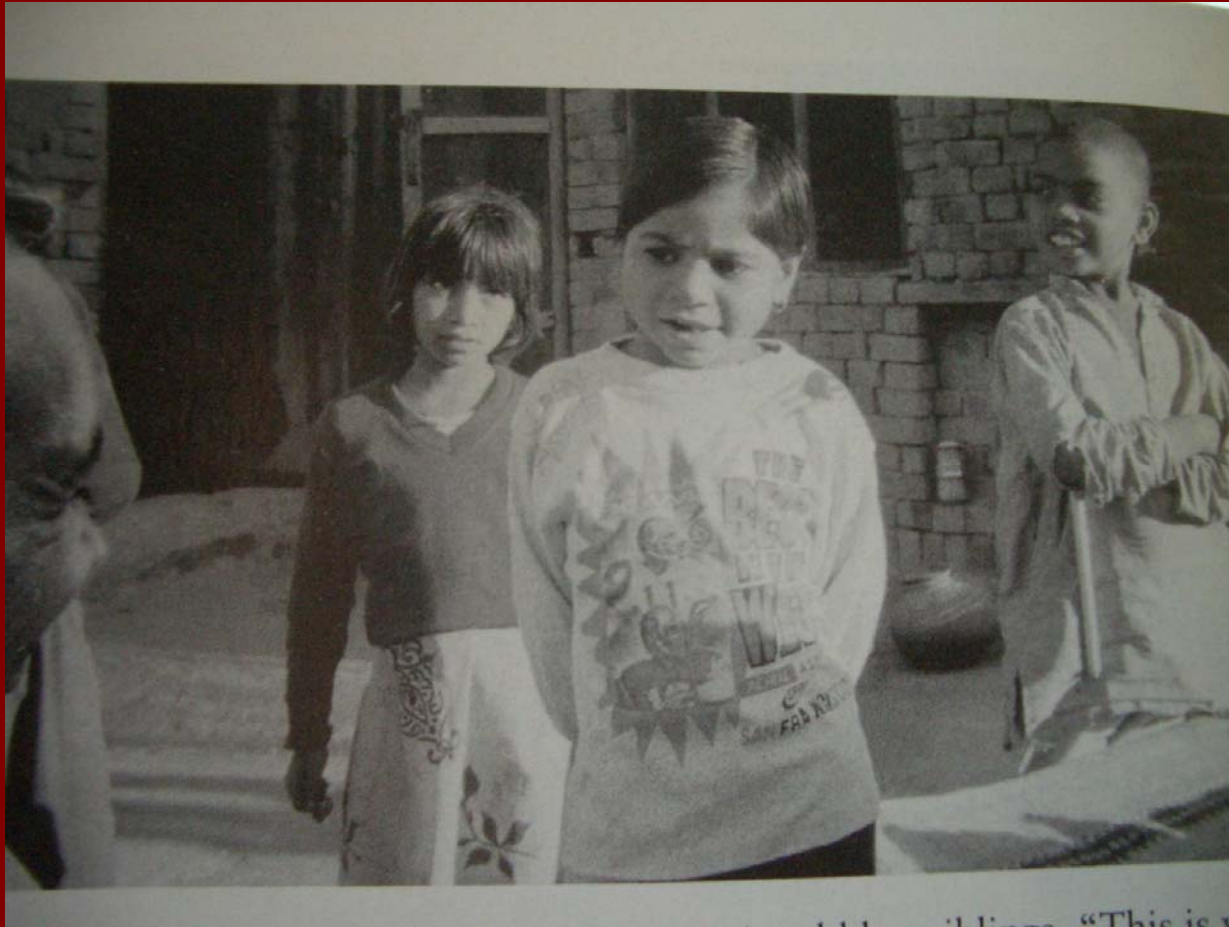
- Bashir Chmeit remembers the life of Fadi, a teenage militiaman
- Killed by a shrapnel in Lebanon's civil war
- As soon as he speak in sentences, he insisted, "I'm not Bashir. I'm Fadi."

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Pix: Courtesy of Ian Stevenson

Ref: Old Souls by Tom Shroder, published by Simon & Schuster

Preeti claims to be Sheila



- Preeti told her siblings, “This’s your house, not my house.”
- “These are your parents, not mine.”
- Shelia had been hit by car & killed shortly before her birth.

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How would understanding rebirth help us (I)?

➤ Practice of 4 brahmaviharas to all sentient beings

- *Loving-kindness (goodwill) vs. illwill*
- *Compassion vs. cruelty*
- *Sympathetic joy vs. jealousy & envy*
- *Equanimity (balance mind) vs. attachment*

How would understanding rebirth help us (II)?

➤ Reasons for keeping the 5 precepts

- *What comes round goes round*
- *Better closed all 'unfinished business' less to clear next time*

How would understanding rebirth help us (III)?

➤ Facilitates the weakening of 3 fetters for sainthood ► sotapatti (1st stream winner)

- *Practices of wrong rites and ceremonies*
- *Wrong views of self (no soul), illusion of individualism & theory of individuality*
- *Doubts (especially these 4 of the 8):*
 - o *The past, the future, the past and future*
 - o *Dependent origination (paticcasamuppada)*

What would understanding rebirth help us (IV)?

➤ Social implications

- *Reduces the desire for revenge via war or hatred*
- *Balances view of grief, sorrow and lamentation of losing loved ones*
- *Always happy and at peace*

What would rebirth explain us ?

➤ Account for

- *Inequality of mankind*
- *Arising of geniuses & infant prodigies*
- *Identical twins who have totally different characteristics, mentally, morally, temperamentally & intellectually*
- *How infants develop spontaneous passion – greed, anger & jealousy*
- *How we have instinctive likes and dislikes at 1st sight*

May you be well & happy!

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