

AN ENGLISHMAN'S EXPERIENCE OF REINCARATION

[Editorial Note

Here is news for you. For some readers, good; for some, not so good; for some, perplexing. But we are sure, all the three kinds will read the subject matter of the news with great interest and fascination. **WE ARE GOING TO TALK TO YOU, FROM TIME TO TIME, ON REINCARATION.**

It is surely a fascinating subject. Whenever at the end of many of my public lectures, the session was opened for questions - answers, at least one question was almost certain to crop up - on reincarnation - usually the wrongly framed question; "Is their Reincarnation in our Religion?" On a light friendly scrutiny either from the stage or during private conversation, it turned out, almost invariably, that the questioner had some experience in life which he or she could not explain on any theory other than reincarnation.

I will give you an illustration from my life. I had my first encounter with Indian classical music at the age of 12 when I heard the great Aftab-e-mausiki Ustad Faiyaz Khan on Bombay radio. Something in me agitated fiercely: "Surely I have heard this before". Few days thereafter I found myself vocally following Ustad Mushtaq Hussain Khan singing Raga Yaman, as if I well knew the Raga! When at a music conference, Ustad Rahimuddin Khan Dagar started his Dhrupad, I spoke out in my musician friend's ears all the 'bole' (words) of Chautaal - Dha Dha Dhin Taa, which surprised my friend and myself more, since I had never learnt the 'bole' in this life

There could be many a 'deja vu' in your life also. ("Deja vu" means "the experience of perceiving a new situation as if it had occurred before". (Collins Dictionary).

"Is there Reincarnation in our Religion?" - is

a wrongly framed question. It should be: (a) **Does the phenomenon of Reincarnation exist in NATURE? And (b) Is there any reference to it in our Holy Books?**

The answer to both (a) and (b) is in the AFFIRMATIVE. We shall go on placing before you the materials and arguments in support of this proposition and controverting the contrary one.

Today we start with a real life story. Our storyteller Dosu Baba narrates the episode and experience in the life of one Englishman, Arthur Flowerdew of Norfolk, England - **Editor.]**

The 12 year old boy Arthur woke up with a start. He was perspiring profusely. He had a dream - a disturbing, agitating dream. He had dreamt of a large city surrounded by a desert. It was just a city and what was there to be agitated Arthur did not understand.

From that day on, the dream was repeated often, and became more and more vivid and less and less alarming. There was a small temple, and a volcano shaped rock on the outskirts of the city. There were streets and lanes, and structures, some military, some civil. "Sure, I was there", Arthur was convinced.

One day, he was on the seashore. He picked up some pink and orange pebbles and began to play with them. Suddenly the picture of the city came up in his mind. The same familiar city. It was not a dream, this time, but a clear mental view. Thereafter, whenever he went to the shore and played with the orange and pink pebbles, the picture came to him. He was now fully used to it.

Arthur grew up and so also the city of his dream. He could see it in greater details. There were military barracks. The streets had peculiar layout. There was a narrow canyon a fissure in a rose coloured wall of rock. It

was a kind of an approach passage to the city. The pink pebbles at the seashore had similar colour. Vague memories were stirring within him. "Yes, I was soldier in this city – and oh! sure I was killed herein or near this temple..... with a spear"

Years passed by. Arthur Flowerdew was now an elderly gentleman of an ordinary English folk. One day, He was leisurely watching television. A documentary, was on the screen. Title: Old City of Petra in Jordan. 'Seems familiar eh!' he thought and suddenly he jumped! It dawned on him that he was viewing the same city, the picture of which was in his mental world since he was 12. He was stunned to the core. It was the same city, no doubt, but it had all the signs of antiquity. Some structures had fallen down, but some were there, worn out but very much there. Topography had changed but not very much. So excited he was that he could not contain himself. 'I was there, I was there' he shouted. He then went on telling his experience to his neighbours and the story spread. It reached the British Broadcasting Corporation!

The show sensed masters at B.B.C. arranged for Arthur Flowerdew's appearance on T.V. In a simple sincere style, devoid of any publicity intentions, he narrated his experiences and said that he was, all along from his age of 12, seeing the same Petra in Jordan.

Government of Jordan came to know of this extraordinary event. They proposed that Arthur must be taken to Jordan along with a B.B.C. producer and shown the actual Petra city.

The old city is lying 115 miles SW of Amman and has an interesting status in Archaeology. It was the capital of Nabataeans, who had a kingdom in Transjordan, from the 4th century B.C. to 105 A.D, when it was destroyed by the Romans. Its tomb-temples and shrines are cut out into the sand-stone cliffs and have elaborate facades. (Reader's Digest Encyclopedic Dictionary: Archaeology Section). The city is classed by Phillips World Atlas in "Ruins and Archaeological sites", and shown as such in the map.

Before Arthur was to fly with the B.B.C. crew, he was introduced to a world renowned archaeologist on Petra. He asked many questions to Arthur about the city of his dream, when Arthur came out with amazing details which only a specialised archaeologist could deduce from the existing ruins of the city. He said, he had in his vision seen a volcano shaped rock on the city outskirts; a small temple and a curious structure, for the use of which the Archaeologists had no idea or guess. As to the rock, the questioning archaeologist said that no such rock was found during all the previous excavations; but when he showed to Arthur a photograph of the part of the city where the temple was standing, he pointed out the exact spot where the rock was. As to the unusual structure, Arthur said it was a guard room where he was a soldier - two thousand years back!

When the B.B.C. Jordan team actually reached Petra, Arthur on approaching the city pointed out with amazing familiarity that rock at the exact place he had predicted before arrival. When they entered the city, Arthur took them to the guard room and showed them a peculiar check-in system and how it worked! Archaeologists had no information about this. He showed them the place where the spear of the enemy had killed him. He also informed the team about the locations of other unexcavated structures in and around the city. **Surely he was there - two thousand years back!**

No member of the team doubted and could at all doubt Arthur's veracity, so exact and precise was his whole performance. The expert archaeologist was the main witness to it and he said:

"He filled in details and a lot of it is very consistent with known archaeological and historical facts and it would require a mind very different from his to be able to sustain a fabric of deception on the scale of his memories - at least those which he's reported to me. I don't think he is fraud. I don't think he has the capacity to be a fraud on this scale".

After narrating the story and quoting the above words from Joan Forman's "The Golden Shore" (Futura, London 1989), the Tibetan teacher Sogyal Rinpoche in his "The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying" (Harper - 1992; Random House 1992; Rupa (India) 1993, Seventh impression 1994) writes:

"What else could explain Arthur Flowerdew's extraordinary knowledge except rebirth? You could say that he might have read books about Petra, or that he might have even received his knowledge by telepathy; yet the fact remains that some of the information he was able to give was unknown even to the experts" (P.86).

[OR was it that the image of the city with all its known and unknown points was bodily lifted and brought before the mental screen of Arthur? And that too a hundred times? If there is a will NOT to believe in something, you gulp down any other explanation, which may be much more baffling and bewildering than the original something. OR you may just say there must be some other explanation", without having the faintest idea of what it is or can be!

THAT is the Parsi "scholastic" attitude on Reincarnation! We will meet the scholars in their own jungle, some day. - **Editor]**

MODERN MATERIALS ON REINCARNATION

My God! When these Westerners take into their heads to research and investigate on something, there is no saying to what extent they will toil and strive and sweat!

One Rosemary Ellen Cuiley is tersely described as "a journalist and author who specialises in subjects related to the paranormal." She is the author of several books with shiver-inspiring titles, like "The Encyclopaedia of Witches and Witchcraft", "Tales of Reincarnation", "Magic, Legend and Lore."

In 1991, she wrote "Harper's Encyclopaedia of Mystical and Paranormal Experience", which has been republished in 1993 by 'Grange Books', through 'Diamond Books', London. It is a fat volume of 666 pages, which at the manuscript stage was ten inches tall, as Marion Bradely says in his 'Forward'. The 500 and odd Entries in this Encyclopaedia include Akashic Record, Aura, Avatar, Dervish, Floating, Mantra, Aurobindo, Caycee.... anything known about paranormal has a place. Every item has a list of sources and references at the end. The printed book is 2.2 inches thick.

The entry on Reincarnation is 6 pages long with a list of about 25 books and articles. It begins like this:

"Reincarnation. The return of the soul or essence after death to inhabit a new physical form. **Belief in reincarnation has existed for thousands of years, and the concept has flourished at one time or another in virtually every part of the world.** Roughly two thirds of the world's modern population accepts some form of reincarnation or rebirth as a fundamental belief - most notably Hindus and Buddhists, as well as many tribal societies. Western belief in reincarnation is low but has slowly increased since the late nineteenth century **due largely to the influence of Theosophy, the American medium Edgar Caycee and the introduction of Eastern Religions.**"

The entry then proceeds on Reincarnation in older civilisations, in Islam, in Hinduism, in Buddhism, in Christianity followed by 'Scientific Investigation of Reincarnation', 'Reincarnation as the opposite sex', of Humans in non human forms, and in sub-human Kingdoms.

Rosemary says, Pythagoras (572-479 B.C.) taught reincarnation. Plato (427-347 B.C.) "said that without successive lives, life in the universe would disappear."

She reports that according to a 1981 gallup poll, 38 million adults (about 23%) in U.S.A. believed in reincarnation; roughly one quarter of those in major Christian-religious denominations believed in it: "26% of Methodists, 25% of Catholics, 22% of Lutherans, and 21 % of Protestants."

The phenomenon has been scientifically investigated by a fully qualified psychoanalyst and Professor of Psychiatry in the University of Virginia, Dr. Ian Stevenson M.D. Five volumes of his case histories have been published, while the number of reincarnation cases in his file is over 2000. We will one day go into this.

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