



## ***Reincarnation – Samsara, the Wheel of Birth and Death***

*By Swami Durgananda*

Reincarnation, Samsara or Punarjanma means "re-entering the flesh." Punarjanma is a Yogic belief shared by many religions in the world. It is a process of metempsychosis wherein the soul is able to transmigrate from one body to another. Transmigration takes place through the process of birth. At a predestined time the soul discards the body to seek rest in the afterlife before the process of entering the flesh begins again. Samsara is one of the principle beliefs of students and adherents to the teachings of the eastern philosopher Patanjali. He is said to be both the father of yoga and of the eight limbed approach to enlightenment.

Reincarnation was also a strong fundamental Christian belief until it was discarded by the Nicene council in 787AD. During the many council discussions, a decision was reached to reject the belief in reincarnation. It had proven to undermine the power and control of the priests.

Punarjanma consists of repetitive cycles of refinement. Each birth allows the soul to experience life in different races, gender and beliefs. In this way the soul can experience all aspects. When gestation is complete the birthing begins and the soul reincarnates, once again entering into a physical world where it continues the refining process, firstly as an infant then into adulthood completing the cycle as old age encroaches and death is imminent. Some believe the experience of an incarnation can even be as an animal, a vegetable or a mineral although not all exponents think along these lines.

However, all agree that every action and reaction of the soul whilst in the physical body is reflected through the body's organs of action and perception along with the senses. For example when you pick a flower, it begins to die. As you smell the flower you feel happy with the perfume that the flower provides. This is the action and reaction of the flower and you.

The soul enters the body through what is called a nadi or an energy channel situated at the crown of the head. It is of course not a physical channel but belongs to the subtle body. It is part of the seventy-two thousand energy channels or nadis which interact with the chakras enabling the soul to operate all aspects of the physical body it inhabits. The soul will complete the entry when the time is right. It will lose complete memory of its previous life and the associations it has built up during that life-time as well as in the afterlife. However, the soul will bring with it memories of vibrations if they were special. It is also believed that the soul in a new body can be reunited again with those with whom it has known in a previous life.

Fate can play its role in the cycle and that is when the soul's time as a physical being is cut short by illness or accident. We in a physical body find it hard to accept death and parting

from loved ones is never easy, especially if they are infants or a loved partner. On being separated we are filled with despair and anguish. Yet, those who have lived through an out of body experience or a near death experience relate on waking, how special it was to visit friends or family, to feel love and warmth around them. They only return to the body because they hear the call of a physical loved one or have a strong desire to finish an experience. Where were they?

They were in Antarloka, a realm of the astral regions, a place believed by some to be heaven. When the soul finally gives up the physical body it is replaced by an astral body and is able to be reunited with loved ones and friends who have already made the transition. The Soul dwells for as long as necessary before the call and desire to continue the refining cycle becomes so strong, that they must again be born and continue the cycle of Samsara. There are instances when the soul cannot break the bonds of the physical world and thus remains behind to wander between both worlds.

When I resided in a village in Germany, my family and I lived in a haunted house. My kitchen was always freezing even in summer. At nights the stairs creaked as though someone was slowly ascending to the first floor. This was accompanied by long sad sighs which ended in my bedroom where it sounded as though someone was lying on a creaking bed. Then the noise on the stairs and sighing would recommence. Any guests who stayed overnight complained about the noise, so I began to make enquiries as to the reason for the disturbances in my home. I discovered that the owner of the house, on her deathbed, had asked her son to care for the hunchback that she had taken in and had lived with her for many years. As soon as the old lady died the son evicted the hunchback. I attended the funeral of the hunchback a few years later and on returning to my house the kitchen was warm and the sound of steps on the stairs ceased as did the sighs. The old lady could take her charge with her now and continue to take care of him in the Astral.

During their time resting in Antarloka souls are able to heal from any sadness and adversity they experienced in their physical life or learn to be better equipped for the adversities of a physical human life. This sounds nice and cosy; being reunited with loved ones and old departed friends all together in a friendly and free atmosphere.

Unfortunately there are other areas of the astral. These are the darker realms where unrefined dark souls are to be found. Those who have lost their way in life will surely lose their way in death. However, they will also be able to reincarnate; returning to a physical life with the opportunity for a new beginning. Then the seeds they sew in that life, through right action, will assist in their soul's evolution and refinement. Of course those who continue with their negative ways will be condemned to the lower realms forever.

Explanations in various ancient eastern scriptures tell us that there are vast universes likened to a giant wheel and upon it all creatures are subject to birth, death and rebirth. This wheel is called the wheel of Samsara. As long as duality, the 'me and mine' syndrome which states that we are separate and more important than the whole is part of our psyche, we can never get off that endless wheel of birth and death. The moment we realize our identity with the vast creator of consciousness or we understand the concept that we are part of a whole not a singular entity we immediately experience the bliss of "oneness in all." This is the feeling of vibrational Samata. Then we are free of the endless cycle of reincarnation. We have stepped

off the physical wheel of Samsara. From that time we evolve through the vibrational astral spheres within a more subtle energetic level of existence and experience.

However, one of the prerequisites for this is at the time of death we must pass through that nadi or energy center at the top of the head. Unfortunately the soul being unaware of how it left the body becomes distracted by previously departed loved ones or lights which entice him to follow them. The way of correct transition from one state of consciousness to the next is forgotten. Knowledge gained in the physical life is an important and great asset in transmigration.

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Therefore if you have knowledge as an enlightened soul you will be completely aware at the time of death. You will depart with complete awareness best described as a conscious transmigration of the soul. Repeating the vibration of a mantra is enough to guide the departing soul on its ascent, departing from this physical life through the correct channel. Instinctually you will know where to go, guided by a vibration controlled by SAMSARA. This exit is the highest physical spiritual centre. In the Bhagavad-Gita, a popular holy Hindu scripture originating around 600 B.C. we read that Krishna, the teacher, advises Arjuna his student that, "Whatever object a man thinks of at the final moment, when he leaves his body that alone does he attain, o son of Kunti, being ever absorbed in the thought thereof. Therefore at all times constantly think of me. With your mind and understanding absorbed in me, you will surely become me." (8: 6-7). Perhaps not all of us want to aspire to being Krishna but a deity and prayer of choice is enough to guide us safely in this transition.

It is necessary that the Manas, the conscious mind (that part that is always chatting to us) and the subtle forces of the dying person disengage from the physical body through the spiritual nadi. The Upanishads (philosophical texts considered to be an early source of Hindu religion) explain how souls will retain a clear memory of their state for a short time after death and will enjoy the fruits of Samadhi or complete absolution from future physical reincarnations.

Is there a heaven and hell? There are areas governed by Karmic deeds and negativity that must be paid for, understood in Christianity as hell, therefore let us discuss the lower realms.

It is said that into blind darkness enter those who worship ignorance. These worlds covered with darkness are called joyless regions. These regions are where those whose natures are contaminated by evil, jealousy, anger and so on reside. Not a happy or comfortable place to end up and endure vibrational horror or hell. In the ancient books of yogic literature we read that, by the time of arrival in these hellish regions the astral body is a mirror of its sins and no longer resembles the physical body. In the ancient language of Sanskrit this body is called "Yatana-Deha". The punishment whilst dwelling in this area is not remembered by the soul when they leave the region, but it is imprinted so deeply on their conscience that they become deep vibrational attitudes and impressions influencing the next physical incarnation. They will be confronted with the same circumstances of their previous life and hopefully, although the experience may remain the same, their reaction will be more positive. The result will be a fierce aversion to the negative deeds of the previous life. Unfortunately if they ignore their conscience they are compelled to return to the hellish regions again and again.

There is no definite period between death and rebirth. It may vary from hundreds of years to a few months. There are two deciding factors; the first being the last impression before death, the second being the individual's karma which is best understood as their nature. A very sensual individual with strong cravings or one with intense attachments sometimes is born quickly longing to be with those left behind.

Unfortunately they forget that they will not be reborn with the same body as last time, perhaps not even the same gender. In cases of a violent death or a sudden unexpected death the soul will immediately incarnate resuming the thread of attachment. When I was in India with my Guru I met a family, elderly parents and a young daughter who had come to the house to ask for a blessing and the grace of the Guru. They waited for three days and in that time I was able to find out their story. The mother had given birth to the daughter late in life. At birth the newborn had what seemed to be stab wounds in her upper body. They still had not healed. As soon as the daughter was old enough to speak she asked to be taken home to her real parents. The kindly couple was very anxious to please their daughter and travelled with her to the village she told them about and made their way to the house she said she had lived in. On entering the house she recognized everything. The couple in the house then related how their teenage daughter was stabbed to death by robbers. The stab wounds were in the upper body. That is something for us all to think about. She did receive the blessing as did the parents and within a few days the wound marks disappeared.

The Vedas are holy texts said to have been recorded in the Sanskrit language somewhere between 1500-600B.C. The fourth and final portion of these profound holy texts, the Garbha Upanishad was passed in hymn form from spiritual teacher to devotee. These teachings explain that when the foetus in the womb is seven months old, the soul receives knowledge of its past and its future. This does not mean that it enters at that time as a conscious entity but it has always been associated with the foetus from prior to conception. This association comes about as the soul must ready itself for reincarnation. Karmic forces then come into play and the soul must seek the right parents and karmic cycle vibrations for its next physical experience. Therefore the circumstances surrounding your birth parents and your Karmic cycle whether positive or negative are your responsibility.

Past life memory will only be possible if we suffered a violent death or experienced a great love which will be recorded on the etheric body and we will remember on a soul level. For us here and now it is best to live in the moment, to be mindful of all our actions, to control our minds and bodies. So that, our next life may be lived in the subtle realms of the astral and we can incarnate vibrationally.

Remember living is not for today only, but for tomorrow also.

Swami Durgananda - Spiritual leader of Samata Yoga and gifted healer has been teaching yoga, meditation and philosophy around the world for over 40yrs. Swami has a profound understanding of the universe and the human condition through her articles and books she shares her knowledge with compassion and humour teaching us how to bring balance and harmony into our lives.

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