

Viewpoint

Jiva, Atma and Rebirth

Nilesh Shah¹

¹Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatry, Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College, Mumbai
E-mail – drnilshah@hotmail.com

What is it which keeps us alive and makes us dead when it leaves the body? Is it something spiritual, supernatural and can be explained only by a religious and philosophical concepts or it has some biological basis and can be elucidated scientifically as well. Is it 'jive', which keeps us alive? Is *jiva* and atman (soul) one and the same thing as in the concept of '*jivatma*' or are they different? Does '*jivatma*' which is immortal, leaves the body on death? Can we conceptualise '*jiva*' and '*atman*' in medical terms with our knowledge of anatomy and physiology of human body?

What happens after death? Is there a life after death? Does the soul after the death, comes back to life in a new form (reincarnation), such as another animal or anything that is living. If there is a life after death, then is it possible to know about our past life? Can we recall our past life by a techniques such as 'past life regression therapy'? This piece of writing, very humbly and respectfully, tries to express a somewhat different point of view on these issues without any intention to contradict, refute or challenge the existing spiritual and religious views. Hope, the reader will see this as a bit varied opinion on this subject and trust this script will not hurt religious sentiment of any reader.

JIVA (JIWA)

Human beings or for that matter, any organisms (animals, plants etc.) may be alive or dead. It is believed that as long as there is '*jiva*' (life) in the body, the organism is alive and when the *jiva* leaves the body, the organism will be dead. Our body is made of cells, myriads of cells, the basic structure, and building blocks of our body. Each and every cell may be alive or dead. The life in the cell is due to the electric charge across the membrane called membrane potential or trans-membrane potential. As long as this charge is there, the cell is alive. When there is no charge the cell is dead. Thus, electric charge across the membrane, the membrane potential is the '*jiva*' which keeps us alive. When a person dies, actually each and every cell of the body gradually loses the electric charge and dies.

ATMA

Atma (Soul / *Atmen* / *Ruh* / Spirit) is the incorporeal essence of a person or a thing. Incorporeal means without material form and essence means the most essential part. The human genetic code fulfils both these criteria. Being a code it is incorporeal, i.e. it has no material form and it is the most essential thing for our existence. Human species or for that matter any other living organism cannot exist without genetic code. The genetic code is very fundamental to our existence. Since the code is non-material, it cannot be destroyed by any means and so it is immortal. So, in concrete terms, Atma is nothing but a genetic code. All the living organisms have their own genetic code, the Atma.

The entire genetic code is referred to as a genome. The human genome, i.e. the genetic code is about 3.2 billion digit long. The DNA pairs are arranged according to the code.

REBIRTH

I am, what I am, is because of my genetic code. My genetic code decides all my attributes such as my eye and hair colours, my body built, my nature, my predispositions to illnesses etc.; though environmental and other factors such as my upbringing by my parents, my siblings, my friends, my teachers etcetera do contribute and may modify these attributes to some extent. If someone else will have a same genetic code like mine, he will be exactly like me. He will look like me; he would walk and talk like me and would have a very similar nature and sense of humour like me. Obviously my clone would be no different than me as he would have the same genetic code. So my clone is actually my rebirth. Between two human beings 99.9% of the genetic code is same. It is only 0.1% of the difference in the code which makes us different from each other.

Naturally, each new-born has his own genetic code which is the result of the shuffling of the genetic code of his parents. The parents pass on some part of their genetic code to their children. It may happen that the genetic code of a new-born is same as that of mine; in which case he will be exactly like me; my rebirth. It is estimated that by the end of this century around 7000 million children will be born and one of them may have the same genetic code as that of mine, so I will be born again. Thus rebirth is possible; and so the past life and the future life.

MEMORY OF THE PAST LIFE

My autobiographical memories are stored in my brain; there is no external storage of my memory. When I die my memories also die with me and are lost forever. So there is no way that anybody can have the memories of their past life. So in past life regression therapy, it is very likely that one is recalling their unconscious wish which has nothing to do with their past life.

So in conclusion, '*jive*' is the electric charge around the cell, the membrane potential and the '*atma*' is the genetic code. Rebirth is possible naturally or by cloning but one cannot have the memory of their past life as there is no external storage of memory and all the memories die when a person dies.

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