

Reincarnation
Beliefs and Views of different faiths,
and What Do Science and Gurbani Say About it.

Reincarnation: –

Encyclopedia Britannica defines Reincarnation as rebirth of the aspect of an individual that persists after bodily death- whether it be consciousness, mind, the soul, or some other entity- in one or more successive existences. Depending upon the tradition , these existences may be human, animal, spiritual, or other living forms. It is generally believed that the Eastern religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism believe in Reincarnation, and the Western Religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, and Bahá'ism do not believe in this concept, particularly the exact way and rationality as advanced by Hindu belief. However, there are many exceptions on both sides. Many of the adherents of Eastern religions have started disbelieving in Reincarnation, and many followers of Western Religions, have started believing in this concept.

Now the question arises, what is the belief of Sikhs in this regard, particularly what does Gurbani as included in Guru Granth Sahib, say about it. I do not claim to be any authority on this subject, nor a scholar or Pundit of any religion. Therefore, based on the understanding gained from the internet, studying some books talking with my friends from different religions, and my own 20-year humble effort to interpret Sri Guru Granth Sahib, I would first briefly describe the beliefs of various religions , and some scientists on this subject, and then finally give some quotes from Gurbani relating to this matter.

Hinduism :

According to Hinduism a soul reincarnates again and again on earth, until it becomes perfect and returns to its source (God). During this process the soul enters into many bodies, assumes many forms, and passes through many births and deaths. As per Bhagawad Gita, “just as a man discards old clothes and puts on new clothes, the soul discards worn out bodies and wears new ones.” (2:2)

According to Hindu theory of creation, “creation begins when the individual souls become separated from the undifferentiated one (God). Once the creation process begins , each individual soul is drawn and bound to a false personality, called “Jiva”(Living Being). It has an inner subtle body, and outer gross body. The soul remains bound to the the subtle body which is made of subtle senses, subtle mind,

breath, ego, and intelligence. The gross body is made of gross (animal) mind, elemental body, and its organs.

Because of the ego sense, the Jiva remains ignorant about its true identity, and experiences delusion (moha), duality (dvanda), attraction (raga), and aversion (dvesa). As a result, out of attachments and delusion, the Jivas act selfishly, as if they are different from the rest of the creation. So due to egoism, and desire ridden actions and selfishness they end up suffering.

At the time of death, the physical body and the gross mind return to the elements on the earth. But part of the subtle body survives and accompanies the soul to the next world. Depending on the nature of their past deeds, the jivas either ascend to the ancestral heaven (Pitar Loka), or descend into the hell, and stay in these worlds, until the fruits (or punishments) of their good and bad deeds are exhausted. Then these souls, having assumed the size of atoms, fall down from the heights of heaven through rain and return to earth and start once again the earthly phenomena of birth and death (Samsara). When they fall upon earth alongwith the rainwater, the souls become deposited in the earth alongwith the seeping rainwater. Then they enter plants or trees and become part of their sap. When these plants or trees are consumed by humans or animals, they enter their bodies . The souls which enter animal bodies may either take animal birth or wait until they are consumed by humans to take human birth according to their Karmas (or deeds in their past lives).

Buddhism:

According to Buddhism, the actions of a person lead to a new existence after death in an endless cycle called Samsara. This cycle is unsatisfactory and painful, and it stops only, if liberation is achieved by insight, and extinguishing of craving. Rebirth is considered one of the foundational doctrines. However this rebirth does not necessarily take place as another human being, but as an existence in one of the six realms (Gati) called Bhavchakra. These six realms are Deva (heavenly), Asura (demigod), Manusya (human), Tiryak (animals), Preta (ghosts), and Narka (resident of hell). These realms are determined by a person's good or bad karma (or deeds). However according to another view as expressed by Barbara, Obrien, there is no such teaching (as Reincarnation) in Buddhism. One of the most fundamental doctrines of Buddhism is 'anatta' or "anatman".

A third variation may be called Tibetan Buddhism. According to this reincarnation system (tulku), a distinguishing characteristic of Tibetan Buddhism is based on the theory that Buddha's soul never vanishes, but reincarnates in succession to lead his followers and to accomplish his mission. One of the first reincarnations among the

Buddhists monks in Tibet is Karma Pakshi, as a reincarnation of Dusum Chenpa who died in 1193, and told his disciples that he would return as a reincarnated being. After Karma Pakshi's reincarnation, the reincarnation system was adopted by other sects. Religious methods and rituals are used to identify a reincarnation of a late high lama. Usually dozens of candidates are sought and tested with late lama's possessions. In order to resolve any dispute, a system of golden urn lottery was adopted.

Jainism :

According to Jainism, when a being dies the soul (jiva) goes to the next body. This body may not be human, or even animal. The quality of its next life is determined by its deeds in life (karma). The mental state of the being at the moment of death is also important.

A being achieves deliverance, when it is free from all "karma". Karma is the mechanism that determines the quality of life. The happiness of a being's present life is the result of the moral quality of the actions of the being in its previous life. A soul can only achieve liberation by getting rid of all karma attached to it. Karma works without the intervention of any other being-gods or angels. have no part to play in dispensing rewards or punishments. It may be helpful to think of Karma as floating dust which sticks to the soul, or as types of atomic particle, which are attracted to the soul as a result of our actions, words and thoughts. We attract karma particles, when we do, think, or say something: we attract karma particles if we kill something, we attract karma particles when we tell a lie, we attract karma particles when we steal and so on... The quantity and nature of the karma particles sticking to the soul cause the soul to be happy, or unhappy and affect the soul's present and future lives.

Christianity:

In the major Christian denominations, the concept of reincarnation is absent, and it is nowhere explicitly referred to in the Bible. But some Christians believe that John the Baptist was incarnation of the prophet Elijah, and they quote Malachi 4:5, and Mathew 11:13,14 from the Bible in support of their belief.

However, in general Christians believe in an after life. According to the website religionfacts.com, "the Christian beliefs about the afterlife vary between denominations and individual Christians, but the vast majority of Christians believe in some kind of heaven, in which the deceased enjoy the presence of God and loved ones for eternity. For example, according to the Assemblies of God, there will be a final judgement in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to

their works. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet will be consigned to the everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

“The Evangelical Free Church of America, “believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead; of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord; to the unbeliever to judgement and everlasting cocious punishment.”

According to “Presbyteryan Church in the USA, “When you die, your soul goes to be with God, where it enjoys God’s glory and waits for the final judgement. After the final judgement, the bodies are reunited with souls, and eternal rewards and punishments are handed out.”

However following is the belief of a practicing Catholic Christian in his own words, who before becoming a Catholic “followed several denominations, mostly pentacostal and it seemed each had a different view.” Here is his take on “what happens upon dying:”

“Upon death the soul is separated from the physical body. Then there is a particular judgment in which God decides whether one goes to heaven or hell. For those souls who are to enter into heaven there is a period of time when the soul is purified of residual sin (purgatory). For we believe nothing impure can stand before almighty God.”

“Then there will come a second coming of the Messiah (Jesus), when the separated souls will be reunited with their resurrected bodies. At this time there will also be a second judgement where each will render an account of their deeds before Christ. Those who have accepted divine grace will reign with Christ in glorified body and soul. Those who have not accepted divine grace will spend eternity in hell (eternal separation from God).”

“Then the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness with a renewing of the material universe and a time of eternal peace. No more pain and no more sorrow. God will then be "all in all".”

Islam:

In general, the people who follow Islam, they do not believe in reincarnation, however they believe in an after life. According to the website religionfacts.com, “Islamic beliefs about the afterlife are very important. Muslims believe in the continued existence of the soul and a transformed physical existence after death.

Islam teaches that there will be a day of judgement when all humans will be divided between the eternal destinations of Paradise and Hell.”

“A central doctrine of the Quran, and one of the most important teachings of Muhammad, is the Last Day, on which the world will be destroyed and Allah will raise all people and jinn from the dead to be judged. The Last Day is also called the Day of Judgment.”

“Until the Day of Judgment, deceased souls remain in their graves awaiting the resurrection. However, they begin to feel immediately a taste of their destiny to come. Those bound for hell will suffer in their graves, while those bound for heaven will be in peace until that time.”

“On the Last Day, resurrected humans and jinn will be judged by Allah according to their deeds. One's eternal destination depends on balance of good to bad deeds in life. They are either granted admission to Paradise, where they will enjoy spiritual and physical pleasures forever, or condemned to Hell to suffer spiritual and physical torment for eternity.”

“The day of judgment is described as passing over Hell on a narrow bridge in order to enter Paradise. Those who fall, weighted by their bad deeds, will remain in Hell forever.”

Judaism:

The Jewish understanding of reincarnation is different from Buddhist doctrines. At every point of moral decision in his life a Jew has complete free choice. Re-incarnation does not imply pre-determination. It is rather, an opportunity for rectification and soul-perfection.

According to holy Ari, every Jew must fulfill all 613 mitzvot, and if he doesn't succeed in one lifetime, he comes back again and again until he finishes. Divine providence provides each person with the opportunities he needs to fulfill those particular mitzvot necessary for the perfection of his soul. But the responsibility lies with us.

The Talmud tells us that 613 commandments in the Torah: 248 are positive commandments or “do's” and 365 negative or “don'ts”.

Many Jews believe in life after death. In the classical traditions, there were teachings on life after death. These include the idea that humans have a soul which will one day return to God. Other teachers suggest that there will be future judgement when some will be rewarded and others punished.

According to Rabbi Howard Jaffe, Torah seems to speak about a physical place called *Sheol* (probably center of the earth). To which one "goes down" following this life. It was probably the Pharisees (the forerunners of Rabbis), who developed this idea of spiritual life after death, and Torah talked about the reward for following God's ways. The reward would be coming in an afterlife "Olam" . They further taught that there would be an end of time (as we know it) ushered by the Messiah, and at that time bodily resurrection would occur. However, the Pharisees chose to deemphasize the importance of resurrection, favoring the observance of mitzvot (commandments) for their own sake.

In summary the attitude of Judaism (regarding Reincarnation) is that we really do not know, but if there is a life after this one, and a record of what we do, then surely it will be dependent upon the kind of life we have lived. Therefore, let us try to follow God's path for us as closely, and as enthusiastically as possible. Then surely, we will know all manner of rewards especially the one of seeing the world that is better place for our efforts.

Bahá'í:

According to "religionfacts.com" Bahá'ís believe in an afterlife in which the soul is separated from the body. At death, according to the Bahá'í faith, the soul begins a spiritual journey towards God through many planes of existence.

Progress on this journey towards God is likened to the idea of "heaven." If the soul fails to develop, one remains distant from God. This condition of remoteness from God can in some sense be understood as "hell."

Thus, Bahá'ís do not regard heaven and hell as literal places but as different states of being during one's spiritual journey toward or away from God.

Bahá'ís understand the spiritual world to be a timeless and placeless extension of our own universe--and not some physically remote or removed place. But beyond this, the exact nature of the afterlife remains a mystery. Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "The nature of the soul after death can never be described."

Reincarnation According to Science:

Just as many people who don't believe in God, say that there is no scientific proof of the existence of God, similarly there is no actual evidence, no scientific proof or in other words, no science behind Reincarnation. But following is a summary of the show heard on NPR on Weekend edition on January 5, 2014 at 7.44am ET.

In this show **Jim Tucker, a professor of psychiatry and neurobehavior sciences at the University of Virginia**, says : "I got interested in it in the late '90s, but this work has actually been going on at the University of Virginia for 50 years. Over the decades,

we've now studied over 2,500 cases of children who report memories of past lives. And what we try to do is to determine exactly what they have said and what's happened, and then see if it matches the life of somebody who lived and died before. Once I got involved, I began to focus on American cases. And I have explained some of the cases in this new book that I have out and really, some of the American ones are quite compelling.”

In his book “Return to Life”, he chronicles the stories of many children, including the one that got a lot of national attention. It was the story of James Leininger. “He was a boy who remembered being a World War II fighter pilot, son of a Christian couple in Louisiana. When he was little, he loved his toy planes. But also, around the time of his second birthday, started having horrific nightmares four or five times a week - of being a plane crash. And then during the day, he talked about this plane crash and said that he had been a pilot, and that he had been flown off of a boat. And his dad asked him the name of it, and he said Natoma. And he said he had been shot down by the Japanese; that he had been killed at Iwo Jima; and that he had a friend on the boat named Jack Larsen. Well, it turns out that there was an aircraft carrier called the USS Natoma Bay that was stationed in the Pacific during World War II. In fact, it was involved in Iwo Jima. And it lost one pilot there, a young man named James Huston. James Huston's plane crashed exactly the way that James Leininger had described - hit in the engine, exploding into fire, crashing into the water and quickly sinking. And when that happened, the pilot of the plane next to his was named Jack Larsen.”

James Tucker further asserts that “previous person, James Huston , was so obscure- I mean, he was a pilot who was killed 50 years before; and he was from Pennsylvania, and James was in Louisiana - I mean, it seems absolutely impossible that he could have somehow gained this information as a 2-year-old through some sort of normal means. In fact, it took his dad a couple of years - well, really more than a couple of years; three or four years - to be able to track it all down and see that in fact, that what James was saying all did fit for this pilot who was killed.”

When asked about the science behind such cases, James Tucker replied: “I think there are good reasons to think that consciousness can be considered a separate entity from physical reality. And in fact, some leading scientists in the past, like Max Planck, who's the father of quantum theory, said that he viewed consciousness as fundamental and that matter was derived from it. So, in that case, it would mean that consciousness would not necessarily be dependent on a physical brain in order to survive, and could continue after the physical brain and after the body dies. In these cases, it seems - at least, on the face of it - that a consciousness has then become attached to a new brain, and has shown up as past life memories.”

Another Doctor **Ian Stevenson, M.D.** who spent almost 40 years, and investigated 2500 cases of children , has written an excellent book titled “**Children Who Remember Previous Lives-** A Question of Reincarnation-Revised Edition, published by McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers Jefferson, North Carolina in 2001.

In chapter 2 of the book, the author states “Many westerners mistakenly think that only the inhabitants of Southeast Asia believe in reincarnation. This error probably arose because the Hindus and Buddhists of that region recorded the belief in their ancient religious scriptures and they emphasize in their modern teachings.... Large groups of Shiite Moslems of western Asia believe in it. So do many inhabitants of west Africa, and East Africa, who have been formally but incompletely converted to Islam and Christianity.”

“ A survey conducted in 1968 showed that 18 percent of the persons in eight countries of West Europe believed in reincarnation... According to a later survey in the early 1990’s in the United states, 26 percent of the respondents said that they believed in reincarnation.”

“ The idea that we can chose the circumstances of our next reincarnation has a long history in Europe. It occurred among some of the ancient Greeks and Plato expounded it. In the Republic he described souls who are about to be reborn as choosing the lives they will have after birth. According to this belief persons who have acquired wisdom in prior lives can chose better future lives than those who have squandered their previous lives and learned nothing from there.”

In chapter 3 of his book, the author talks about “Types of Evidence for Reincarnation, he does not give much credence to claims based on “ Past Life Readings”, by Sensitives (Psychics), and Hypnotic Regression, or hallucinations during Illness or the Influence of drugs. But he does quote some instances of Dreams and Nightmares, which later proved to be true. In one such case a Lebanese child Arif Hamed recalled a previous life that ended when a large building stone fell off a building and struck the person, whose life he remembered. Similarly, the author states that some persons have seemed to recover memories of previous lives during meditation, by some Sidhas, or spiritual aspirants in Hinduism, and Buddhism.

In chapter 4, the author gives brief summaries of “**Fourteen Typical cases of children who remember previous lives.**”

To avoid making this paper too lengthy, only three concise sketches of the above summaries (one from mostly Hindu country-,India, one from mostly Muslim country (Turkey), and one from mostly Christian country (England) are briefly described below. The interested readers particularly skeptics are advised to read all these summaries and other details themselves from the book, because unless one reads the entire case in detail, it is very difficult to make up one’s mind one way or the other.

1. The Case of Gopal Gupta:

Gopal was born in Delhi in 1956. When he was only 2-and-a-half-year-old, one day his father asked him to pick up a glass of water, used by a guest. Gopal vehemently refused this order saying: “ I won’t pick it up, I am a Sharma (Brahmin- highest Hindu class). “ He then had a temper tantrum and broke some glasses. When asked to

explain, he gave many details about the previous life in the city of Mathura about 60 km south of Delhi. Later he told that he used to own a chemical company named “Sukh Sancharak”, a big house, wife and two brothers. His name was Shakti pal Sharma, and he was killed by his brother. His present parents had no connections with Mathura. His mother did not encourage him to talk about previous life. His father generally ignored Gopal’s assertions, but once mentioned this thing to one of his friends, who vaguely remembered one such murder case in Mathura, whose details resembled the assertions of Gopal.

Eventually, Gopal’s father went to Mathura in 1964 for a religious festival, and found the “Sukh Sancharak” company and checked with its manager about Gopal’s statements. What he said impressed the manager, because one of the owners of the company had shot and killed his younger brother some years earlier. Later, Gopal and his family members visited Mathura, where Gopal recognized various persons and places known to his previous life personality (Shakti pal Sharma).

2. The Case of Semih Tutusmus:

Semih was born in Sarkonak, in the village of Hatay, Turkey. His parents were Ali and Karanfil. Ali owned a small shop in the village. Two days before Semi’s birth, his mother dreamed that a man with his face covered with blood came to her, and said that he was Selim Fesli, that he had been shot in the ear and he wished to stay with her. But she knew very little about him. Selim was born with a severe malformation of his right ear, and on the right side of his face, instead of the usual external ear(pinna), only a narrow stub of skin, where the ear should have been. Selim Fesli, a farmer in the neighboring village of Hatun Kay, had been fatally wounded, by a neighbor, Isa Dirbekli, who had been out shooting rabbits, but in the evening, twilight shot Selim.

When Selim was about one and a half year old, and was able to speak coherently, his first words were Isa Dirbekli, and he made several statements about Selim Fesli’s life and death, such as the names of Selim’s wife, and all six of his children. When he was less than four years old, he walked by himself to Hatun Koy (2 km from (Hatay), went to Selim Fesli’s house, and introduced himself as Selim, and recognized several of Selim’s family members. After that first visit, he went alone to Selim’s house many other times, and when, he was punished for any misconduct, he would threaten to go off to “his village”. He considered himself, such an important member of Selim’s family, that he felt enraged, when they did not invite him for the marriage of Selim’s one son. For the engagement of another son, he even borrowed some money from his father, and gave it to this son. When he learned that Selim’s widow, Katibe was enjoying attentions of another man, he went and rebuked this man.

Above all Semih nourished a grievance against Isa Dirbekli, whom he accused of deliberately shooting him. But Isa insisted that it was an accident, for which he was jailed for two years. After his prison term, he became a vendor of raki (a distilled alcoholic beverage) in Hatun Koy. Semih often threatened to kill Isa, and when he saw him in the street, he would throw stones at him.

When the author Ian Stevenson learned about this case in 1966, and started investigating this case by interviews with Semih, his parents, and other twelve persons. He was also able to obtain and study the postmortem report on the body of Selim Fesli; it confirmed that he had died of shotgun wounds to the right side of the head.

The case of Gillian and Jennifer Pollock:

Gillian and Jennifer Pollock (identical twin girls) were born at Hexham, Northumberland, England, in 1958. When they were between two and four years old, they made several statements that suggested they remembered the lives of their two older sisters, Joanna and Jacqueline, who were killed, when a crazy driver drove his car onto the pavement.

Joanna was eleven, and Jacqueline was six, when they died. Grief from this tragedy numbed the parents, John and Florence Pollock. (Later), when Florence was pregnant, John confidently asserted, that the two deceased sisters are going to be reborn. His prediction was further confirmed, when he and his wife noticed that Jennifer, the younger girl had two birth marks that corresponded in location and size to two marks on Jacqueline's body.

In addition to some statements, and birth marks, the sisters recognized some objects, such as toys, that their (deceased) sisters had owned, and loved. The Pollocks had never discussed the deceased older sisters with the twins, who could not have seen the objects, they recognized, before the occasion, they did so. Their behavior, such as manner of holding pencil to write were similar to the older (deceased) sisters. Such as Gillian held a pencil between her fingers and thumb, but Jennifer grasped her pencil in a fist (similar to Jacqueline).

Analyses of the cases of Reincarnation:

Beside giving the summaries of the actual cases of Reincarnation Dr. Ian Stevenson, gives the Characteristics of Typical cases of the Reincarnation, and tries to answer such questions, as to why only so few cases of reincarnations are reported as compared to the number of deaths. His guess is that because in many countries the majority of the population is Christian or Muslim. Even if some children show some behavior or make statements about their previous lives, they are discouraged, and sometime even punished for such behavior or statements. Even in countries, or the cultures where the majority of the population may believe in reincarnation, still the parents discourage such behavior or statements, and the child's own friends start making fun of him or her, as one case described by the author, in which the child claimed that he used to be the head man or "Mukhtar" of his village, and his friends started teasing him by nick naming him as "Mukhtar". I personally know one such person in India, who was nicknamed and teased as "Bhaia", because when he was about two years old, he used to be very close to his paternal great grandmother, and his behavior and way of walking very much resembled that of his deceased maternal great grandfather, whom his family used to call

“Bhaia Ji. Perhaps that is why, a neighbor remarked that this child behaves , as if he is a reincarnation of Bhaia Ji. Since then, his nick name became “Bhaia”, and all the neighbor children started calling and teasing him as “Bhaia.”

Reincarnation According To Sikhism:

This humble author has spent more than 20 years trying to write a simple English Interpretation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. His interpretation in seven volumes, under the caption “It Is The Same Light” along with other books is available for free reading or download on his website www.gurbaniwisdom.com During this interpretation, he repeatedly came across such lines as “Ava Gavan, Janam Maran, Joonies , and other such terms, which clearly indicated to him that the present human life we are living is not the only life, we would ever live. According to his understanding, we have lived through many lives or existences before, and we may live many such more lives, after the present one, till we are blessed by God, and united back with Him.

Why to go too far, in Paurri 20, Guru Ji says:

ਪੁੰਨੀ ਪਾਪੀ ਆਖਣੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥	punnee paapee aakhan naahi.
ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਣਾ ਲਿਖਿ ਲੈ ਜਾਹੁ ॥	kar kar karnaa likh lai jaahu.
ਆਪੇ ਬੀਜਿ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਖਾਹੁ ॥	aapay beej aapay hee khaahu.
ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਆਵਹੁ ਜਾਹੁ ॥੨੦॥	naanak hukmee aavhu jaahu. 20

As per my humble understanding, the above lines mean : “These sins and virtues are not just (words) for the sake of saying. Whatever deeds, you do in this world, you will take (their record) along with your soul, and your future will be determined on the basis of your past deeds. As you sow, so shall you reap. O’ Nanak (this is how in God’s command) you come and go (continuously in and out of this world).

Again, in Sohilla, Raag Gaurri Poorbi Mevla 5, our last prayer in the night, we read:

ਜਾ ਕਉ ਆਏ ਸੋਈ ਬਿਹਾਝਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਮਨਹਿ ਬਸੇਰਾ ॥	jaa ka-o aa-ay so-ee bihaajhahu har gur tay maneh basayraa.
ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਮਹਲੁ ਪਾਵਹੁ ਸੁਖ ਸਹਜੇ ਬਹੁਰਿ ਨ ਹੋਇਗੋ ਫੇਰਾ ॥੩॥	nij ghar mahal paavhu sukh sehjay bahur na ho-igo fayraa. 3

Again, as per my humble understanding, here Guru Ji is saying to us : “(O’ my friends), amass only that (wealth) for which you have come (into this world, so that you may reunite with Him. However, it is only) through the Guru that God can abide in your heart. In this way, you will peacefully and spontaneously find the mansion (of God) right in your own heart, and then there will be no more round (of birth and death for you).”

Similarly, in Sukhmani Sahib, which many Sikhs read almost daily in addition to their daily “Nitnem”, I find more than dozen references . For example, in Ashtpadi 2, Pada 3, which reads as :

ਅਨਿਕ ਜੋਨਿ ਜਨਮੈ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਮ ॥
ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਤ ਪਾਵੈ ਬਿਸ੍ਰਾਮ ॥

anik jon janmai mar jaam.
naam japaṭ paavai bisraam.

Which I understand as meaning “The mortal keeps dying and being born into many existences, but by uttering God’s Name, obtains rest (in God’s presence).”

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In Ashtpadi 4, Pada 7, Guru Ji says:

ਬੈਰ ਬਿਰੋਧ ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧ ਮੋਹ ॥
ਬੂਠ ਬਿਕਾਰ ਮਹਾ ਲੋਭ ਧ੍ਰੋਹ ॥
ਇਆਹੂ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਬਿਹਾਨੇ ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ॥

bair biroḏh kaam kroḏh moh.
jhoṭh bikaar mahaa lobh ḏharoh.
i-aahoo jugatṭ bihaanay ka-ee janam.

ਪੰਨਾ ੨੬੮

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ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਖਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਆਪਨ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਮ ॥੭॥

naanak raakh layho aapan kar karam. ||7||

“(Swayed by) enmity, opposition, lust, anger, attachment, falsehood, sin, utmost greed, and deceit, in this way we have spent many lives. Nanak says, (O’ God), please show Your own mercy and now save humans (from any more such wretched lives).”

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In order to avoid making this article too lengthy, I would list all these quotes relating to Reincarnation in my website.

However, I do want to state, that in the course of my daily routine including daily Nitnem, Hukam Nama, and Sehaj path over the last few weeks, I have noted more than, I have noted 20 relevant quotes in Sukhmani Sahib alone 9 and 150 quotes relating to Reincarnation, extending over 80 pages of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), say roughly 2 quotes for every page. (To avoid making this article too lengthy, I would include these quotes in my website www.gurbaniwisdom.com). I would let the readers actually count how many such quotes they may find in the entire SGGS. According to my guess this count should be at least 2500 times.

Another point, I would like to bring to the notice of the learned readers is that the different phrases and the Shabads are not entered at random. We could sometime be misled by a phrase or *Tuk*’s literal meaning, if we don’t look at the entirety of the shabad, the shabad before it, or the overall philosophy of the Bhagat or Guru Ji, as included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. For example, the following Shabad, by Tirlochan Ji on SGGS page 526 which runs as follows:

ਗੁਜਰੀ ॥

ਅੱਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਲਛਮੀ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥
ਸਰਪ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥੧॥

ਅਗੈ ਬਾਈ ਗੰਬਦ ਨਾਮੁ ਮਾਤਿ ਬੀਸਰੈ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਅੱਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥
ਬਸਵਾ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥੨॥

ਅੱਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਲੜਿਕੇ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥
ਸੂਕਰ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥੩॥

ਅੱਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਮੰਦਰ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥
ਪੁੰਤ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥੪॥

ਅੱਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਨਾਰਾਇਣੁ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥
ਬਦਤਿ ਤਿਲੋਚਨੁ ਤੇ ਨਰ ਮੁਕਤਾ ਪੀਤੰਬਰੁ ਵਾ ਕੇ ਚਿਦੈ ਬਸੈ ॥੫॥੨॥

gojree.

ant kaal jo lachh^hmee simrai aisee chintaa meh jay marai.
sarap jon val val a-ut^harai. ||1||

aree baa-ee gobid^d naam mat^t beesrai. rahaa-o.
ant kaal jo istaree simrai aisee chintaa meh jay marai.
baysvaa jon val val a-ut^harai. ||2||

ant kaal jo lar^hikay simrai aisee chintaa meh jay marai.
sookar jon val val a-ut^harai. ||3||

ant kaal jo mandar simrai aisee chintaa meh jay marai.
paray^t jon val val a-ut^harai. ||4||

ant kaal naaraa-inⁿ simrai aisee chintaa meh jay marai.
badat^t tilochan t^tay nar muk^taa peetambar vaa kay ridai basai.
||5||2||

In this shabad, if like the story of an atheist attorney, who at his death bed was found hastily flipping pages of the bible to find some loopholes for entering heaven, we should not simply look at the phrase:

ਅੱਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥
ਬਸਵਾ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥੨॥

ant kaal jo istaree simrai aisee chintaa meh jay marai.
baysvaa jon val val a-ut^harai. ||2||

And conclude that since there is no such *Joon as Vaisava*, therefore the entire shabad, and even the entire concept of reincarnation is false. First of all, one could be born in the house of a pros or in a brothel, or such a poor family, who is compelled to sell their child (as has been some times reported in Indian newspapers). But even if this phrase is beyond our conviction, we should have no problems with the other 3 phrases, mentioning the *joons* of serpents, pigs, and ghosts.

Similarly, on page 1103 of SGGS is this *Tuk* (phrase) by Kabir Ji in which he says ; “

ਬਹੁਚਿ ਹਮ ਕਾਰੇ ਆਵਹਿਗੇ ॥	bahur ham kaahay aavhigay.
ਆਵਨ ਜਾਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਤਿਸੈ ਕਾ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਬੁਝਿ	aavan jaanaa hukam t ^t isai kaa hukmai
ਸਮਾਵਹਿਗੇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥	buj ^h samaavhigay. 1 rahaa-o.

Which if literally translated , appears to say that , “why would I come back into this world. Coming and going happens as per his command, by realizing His command I would simply merge in the command (itself).”

First of all, in this phrase itself, Kabir Ji does acknowledge that “Coming and going” (does happen), as per his command, and then he lays down a condition for merging in God, and that is “by Realizing God’s command.” I wonder how many of us, are there, who try to listen to God’s command, or realize it?

Beside the above, if we try to look at the general philosophy of Kabir Ji, for example at page 325-326 of SGGs, we see this Shabad:

<p>ਗਉੜੀ ਕਬੀਰ ਜੀ ॥ ਅਸਥਾਵਰ ਜੰਗਮ ਕੀਟ ਪਤੰਗਾ ॥ ਅਨਿਕ ਜਨਮ ਕੀਏ ਬਹੁ ਚੰਗਾ ॥੧॥</p>	<p>ga-orhee kabeer jee. asthaavar jangam keet paṅtangaa. anik janam kee-ay baho rangaa. 1 </p>
<p>ਪੰਨਾ ੩੨੬</p> <p>ਐਸੇ ਘਰ ਹਮ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਬਸਾਏ ॥ ਜਬ ਹਮ ਰਾਮ ਗਰਭ ਹੋਇ ਆਏ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥</p> <p>ਜੋਗੀ ਜਤੀ ਤਪੀ ਬੁਹਮਚਾਰੀ ॥ ਕਬਹੂ ਰਾਜਾ ਛਤ੍ਰਪਤਿ ਕਬਹੂ ਭੇਖਾਰੀ ॥੨॥</p> <p>ਸਾਕਤ ਮਰਹਿ ਸੋਤ ਸਾਂਝ ਜੀਵਹਿ ॥ ਰਾਮ ਰਸਾਇਨੁ ਰਸਨਾ ਪੀਵਹਿ ॥੩॥</p> <p>ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਪੁਭ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕੀਜੈ ॥ ਹਾਰਿ ਪਰੇ ਅਬ ਪੂਰਾ ਦੀਜੈ ॥੪॥੧੩॥</p>	<p>SGGS P-326</p> <p>aisay ghar ham bahuṭ basaa-ay. jab ham raam garabh ho-ay aa-ay. 1 rahaa-o.</p> <p>jogee jaṭee tapēe barahamchaaree. kabhoo raajaa chhāṭarpaṭ kabhoo bhaykhaaree. 2 </p> <p>saakaṭ mareh sanṭ saḅh jeeveh. raam rasaa-in rasnaa peeveh. 3 </p> <p>kaho kabeer paraḅh kirpaa keejai. haar paray ab pooraa deejai. 4 13 </p>

In which as per my humble understanding ,

Kabir Ji says: “(O’ God) we have passed through myriad forms of existences, such as non-moving (trees), animals, worms, and insects. This way we have passed through many forms of existences.”(1)

Referring to such incarnations as plants, insects and animals, before our present human birth, Kabir Ji notes: “O’ all-pervading God, we had lived through many such lives before we were cast into our (mother’s) womb.”(1-pause)

Kabir Ji notes that even among human beings, we have taken births with many different roles. He says: “Sometimes we became yogis, ascetics, penitents and celibates. Sometimes we became kings with canopies and sometimes beggars.”(2)

Now stating what he has realized in this birth, Kabir Ji says: “(In this human birth I have realized that) the worshippers of wealth and power (who turn away from God) die again and again. But the saints (who love God) live (an immortal life) because they drink the elixir of God (by meditating on His Name with love and devotion).”(3)

Therefore, Kabir Ji prays to the Almighty and says: “O' God, (I am now tired of going through so many births) I surrender myself to You. Please be merciful and grant me the perfect (status of union with You).”(4-13)

The message of this shabad is that being separated from God the soul has to wander through myriads of births. To avoid this suffering, we should still our ego and humbly pray to God to show mercy and re-unite us with Him.

If still there is some doubt, let us look at this *Tuk* (phrase) first stanza of shabad on page 700 of SGGs:

mwq ipqw binqw suq bMDp iest mlq Aru Bwel]	maat pītaa banītaa suṭ banDhap isat meet ar
pUrb jnm ky imly sMjogI AMqih ko n shwel	bḥaa-ee.
	poorab janam kay milay sanjogee anṭeh ko na
	sahaa-ee. 1

]1]

At least I cannot interpret it other than as follows:

Telling us about the background reasons why certain persons are our relatives or friends. Guru Ji says: “(O' my friends, our) mother, father, wife, son, relatives, and dear friends, have all joined together here (in one place), as a result of some connections of past births, but in the end, nobody is truly helpful (to us).” (1)

Then there is some criticism regarding the interpretations or translations of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi, and therefore in English or other language translations which normally may be based on these Punjabi translations. It is alleged that all the Punjabi translations are simply a carbon copy of probably first Punjabi translations done by some pundits of Faridkot. In this regard, I would like to quote following *Tuk* (phrase) on SGGSP 628

Dur kl bwxl Awel]	Dhur kee banee aa-ee.
iqin sglI icMq imtwel]	ṭin saglee chint mitaa-ee.

1. According to Faridkot translation, this means that they in whose heart has come to reside the word of God in the form of Vedas, i.e. they who have enshrined the message of Vedas, all their worry has been removed.
2. According to Pundit Narain Singh, it means that this command from the prime source has come. That (command) has removed all the worry of the family.
3. According to Professor Sahib Singh, "O devotee saints, the person in whose heart has come to reside this *Bani* (word) of God's praise, he has got rid of all his worry.
4. According to Punjabi and English translation by S. Manmohan Singh, " From the Primal one, has emanated the Gurbani, and it has effaced all the anxiety.
5. According to Dr. Gopal Singh, "I am blest with the Word of God, and all my woes are dispelled.

At least, I cannot call that all the four translation (2-5) are *Makhi taiy Makhi*, or virtual (carbon copies) of the Faridkot translation.

Actual proof of Incarnation :

Just as many atheists, won't get convinced about the existence of God, there are certain persons, who need some real proof of Reincarnation. In this regard, I would suggest to them to listen to the lectures of Sant Singh Maskeen, who is considered to be the most respectable Sikh scholar. In one of his lectures, he narrates his personal story, when an apparently Amritdhari Sikh woman talks to him and tells him, that the soul of a deceased good Muslim, often enters her body, and makes her come to listen to his lectures, and Gurbani kirtan, because that soul is looking for a good spiritual woman, so that in his next birth, it may be able to have a better chance of reuniting with God. But unfortunately, Maskeen Ji is dead now, so we cannot satisfy our curiosity or get our doubts removed.

However, Giani Pinderpal Singh Ji, another respectable Sikh "Parcharak" is still alive. In one of his lectures, which I heard a few years ago, he stated that in 2009, a child was born in the

family of one of his relatives, who was named Jai Vir Singh. When this child grew little older, and was able to speak, he started objecting to being called Jai Vir Singh, and insisted that “his name was Jaimal Singh. His father’s name was Ujagar Singh, of a nearby village, and he used to own a motorcycle”. First his parents thought and tried to convince the child, that this was just his imagination. But when he insisted, they went to that village, and were able to locate Ujagar Singh, who confirmed that yes his son Jaimal Singh, died in a motorcycle accident in 1999.”

I may state here, that having heard these statements, some years back, I may not be remembering the exact details, but I do believe, that if any of the skeptic readers might like to contact Giani Pinderpal Singh, he or she may contact him personally, and let me, and other readers know the results of his or her enquiry.

Conclusion:

From the above descriptions of various faiths, it is clear that all faiths believe in some form of reward and punishment in the form of hell and heaven, or rebirth in better or worse existence. But if we Sikhs neither believe in heaven and hell, nor any reincarnation after death, then there is perhaps no consequence of any good or bad deeds, including the massacres of Ghalu gharas, or the genocide of 1984. Some people may say that such bad people are punished in life, or at the time of death. But even after 36 years, I still see that more than 99 percent of the murderers of 1984 are roaming and enjoying normal lives, and I have not heard that any of them had a painful death.

Therefore, in view of all the scientific, and actual evidence, the opportunity provided by Waheguru to study and interpret Gurbani, and at least 2000 references in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji regarding

“Janam Maran”, “Awa Gavan”, “Poorab Janam” etc., this humble writer’s mind is fully convinced that somehow our souls have got separated from our primal source (Waheguru), and misled by Maya (the worldly attachments), have been covered by some impurities. It is through this process of reincarnation, Waheguru Ji is providing not one but many opportunities to get these impurities removed, so that our souls become pure, and worthy of God’s grace, and His eternal union.

But I know, there will be many, who would still try to bring all kinds of arguments, and insert their own meanings to all the references regarding this topic in Sri Gur Granth Sahib Ji. I would suggest to all impartial readers to study Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji for themselves, with an open mind on this subject and others, and make up their own minds. If their minds are still not convinced, they need to bring their doubts to the known scholars, parcharaks, or SGPC etc, clarification. As for as this humble servant is concerned, he would have to remain contented with the following quote from Kabir Ji, on Ang 655 of SGGS.

ਕਹਿ ਕਬੀਰ ਅਬ ਜਾਨਿਆ ॥
ਜਬ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਤਉ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨਿਆ ॥
ਮਨ ਮਾਨੇ ਲੋਗੁ ਨ ਪਤੀਜੇ ॥
ਨ ਪਤੀਜੇ ਤਉ ਕਿਆ ਕੀਜੇ ॥੩॥੭॥

kahi kabeer ab jaani-aa.
jab jaani-aa ta-o man maani-aa.
man maanay log na pateejai.
na pateejai ta-o ki-aa keejai. ||3||7||

Says Kabeer, now I know Him;

since I know Him, my mind is pleased and appeased.

My mind is pleased and appeased, and yet, people do not believe it.

They do not believe it, so what can I do?

Note: For more details on Reincarnation and relevant Gurbani quotations, please consult website religionfacts.com, or author’s website www.gurbaniwisdom.com.

Daljit Singh Jawa

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