



CHILDREN AND PAST LIFE MEMORIES: IMPORTANCE OF PAST LIFE MEMORIES AS A TOOL FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, NEEDS AND DESIRES

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Abstract

Reincarnation or past life experiences gaining attention in the academia with each passing day. Researchers from different domain using scientific method to proof its existence. It is the children who are the subject of these researches. Recent researches merely concern about proving scientific claims of reincarnation but ignored the sufferings of these children who talked about previous life. These children face gender identity confusion, phobia, unusual behaviour, disturbed psychological state. They were tortured and forced to act according to the way adults want. People were reluctant to understand their unusual behaviour. This paper tried to show how we can use the knowledge of reincarnation to understand the child, their rights and needs.

Key words: *Childhood, Gender Identity Disorder, Past life memories, Phobia, Reincarnation.*

Introduction: Reincarnation, rebirth or punarjanma is a celebrated concept in many religious belief system like Hinduism and Buddhism. The doctrine of Hinduism is centred on the idea of rebirth and karma. Reincarnation means the soul come back in different body after death. So, according to the doctrine of reincarnation, the death is not the end of the journey, a human can come back in different physical body.

Reincarnation mainly a concept of the domain of Para psychology and Philosophy, until Doctor Ian Stevenson from the University of Virginia conducted scientific study on different cases of reincarnation reported from all over the world. By applying rigorous scientific method he have studied 2500 different cases from all over the world. He described these cases in various journals and books. Along with his assistant, he himself studied these cases personally, provided appropriate evidence and proved that reincarnation is a true fact and some people really remember their previous life.

Stevenson mainly conducted his study on young children as these young children usually speak up about their previous life. It is mainly young children who speak up about their previous life because due to their young age they tend to remember more about their previous life. Most of the time these children wanted to meet their previous family, having difficulties in adjusting in current situation, have faced dislocation and depression, punishment from parents for behaving in a way which is very unusual for their caste and religion, sometimes their pleading to meet their previous family or talking about their previous life gets suppressed because in some places, especially in north India, it is believed that a child will die young if they keep talking about their previous life. Stevenson and other researchers who do their research on reincarnation believe that, children provide genuine evidence for reincarnation as they are not grown up, their mind is not much impacted by the surroundings. Children do state things without the fear of being judged. It is tendency of many people to reject this child's claim as mere childish fantasies though evidences screaming that their claims are very much true. Titu Rivas in his journal 'Universality of Reincarnation' stated the need for acceptance of reincarnation as a universal process. According to him, reincarnation is a way of rejuvenation. According to this notion childhood is



not symbolize a period of limitations but it is also the period when people tend to remember their abilities and strength. According to Titu Rivas, though people view reincarnation as a humiliating fact but actually it is related to personal evolution of mankind, recurrent stage with constructive processes which leads to personal evolution and nothing have lost for forever.

But what is unfortunate is despite providing evidences for reincarnation, despite opening new dimension for knowledge researchers are merely busy in proving reincarnation as scientifically true fact, they are giving primacy to data, evidence and measurement but neglected the suffering of these children who claimed of having past life memories and difficulties in adjustment. To give primacy to objectivity we cannot neglect the subjectivity through which objectivity proves itself. Therefore, it is also duty of social scientists and researchers to look deep into their conditions, their sufferings, give importance to the unheard voices of these children rather than only using them as a tool to proof their scientific claim. Till now children is used to proof reincarnation as a fact , but now the time have arrived to use reincarnation as a tool to end suffering of these children including many other children who specifically cannot tell about their previous life but we can use this knowledge to understand their behaviour, their demand, their suffering.

Past Life and Alternative View of Childhood

Stevenson reported that current Psychological and Psycho social theories believed that childhood is an important role to play when it comes to personality formation but cases of reincarnation questions this dominant view and state the fact that our personality formation started very earlier, in fact it had started in our previous life. So, rather than following what we know in our everyday life, the knowledge about reincarnation should get spread in a much broader way so that people try to understand that each child is different and if he/ she behaving in a certain way, he/she is not rebelling against the parents and family rather it is his/ her personality trait which these children borrowed from previous life. Akhil Gupta in his article ‘Reliving Childhood’ reported that people who claimed to remember their previous life, often find it difficult to fit in our existing pattern of society. When society gave us an idea about stages of life and how childhood should be, children who claimed to remember previous life, their memory posed question to this idea. Claims of reincarnation from various part of the world questions the existing narratives about childhood. For example existing pattern of society equates children with savages, they were dependent on adults for carrying their day to day activity. Children are equated with innocence, fantasy and imagination. But those children who claimed to remember previous life behave like adults and questions the societal construction of childhood as a dependent and as a state of helplessness. Akhil Gupta reported that in order to understand life of reincarnated children we need to include the notion of metamorphosis instead of the idea of growth. According to Gupta, metamorphosis emphasize on continuity of self and its qualities beyond life time, where the idea of growth only indicate discontinuity, Societies in which reincarnation is common belief disrupts created categories of individuals and question mapping individual life through time and nation. Thus, reincarnation opens up a new dimension to the society and adults. It can make us think alternative of modern western idea of childhood. It also makes us to think of giving importance to child’s statements and demands rather than just forcing the child to behave according to the wish of the adults and society.

Problems of Children Claimed to Remember Previous Life: Reincarnation as a world view has vast implication if given sufficient importance. Here, when we are discussing about importance of reincarnation in the arena of child rights, we need to address those issues which a child having past life memories face on a daily basis. In a typical case of reincarnation as demonstrated by various



researchers, a child starts speaking about the previous life as soon they started talking. The memory stays very prominent until the age 6 to 7 years, after that the memory starts fading. In most of the time these children make statements about their mode of death, their previous place where they used to live, and their previous family members. Many of these children showed phobia to for specific things. Most of the times parents and families ignore this phobias and beaten the children or try to adjust the children forcefully according to their wish. It is also one kind of violation of their rights where adults are not ready to hear the child, they ignored their demand or think that the child is faking it where the truth is, the child have carried these traits from his previous life, even when they could not properly remember their previous life. Carol Bowman in her book 'Children's Past Lives', revealed how she started to believe reincarnation when she herself witnessed panic attacks of her children. Carol had two child one daughter name Sarah and one son name Chase. When her son Chase was five years old he started showing phobia for loud noises. When Carol Bowman took help of a regression therapist it was revealed that Chase having his phobia rooted in his previous life where he used to be a soldier died in a battle field due to hit of a bullet. A birth mark also prominent in Chase's body where he described the hit of the bullet. That birth mark used to itch and bleed at times. Bowman's son recovered most of the issues after getting regressed and going back to previous life memories. In very early age he gave knowledge about the truth of the life which only spiritually advanced wise men can give.

Haroldsson in 'Children Who Speak of Memories of a Previous life As a Buddhist Monk: Three New Cases', demonstrated that children with past life memories have showed features like adjustment problems, tendencies of dis-associativeness, increased dream recall. Haroldsson have also demonstrated some features of children who claimed of having past life, for example he found in his research that these children are more argumentative, more stung and more nervous, they are more perfectionist. These children are more fearful and anxiety prone than their peers, they tried to be more neat and orderly, and they tried to remain more alone than their peers. Though these children have some family structures like their peers but they do differ in terms of association with the family.

Some of these children claimed their previous life within their family, some of them refer their previous life in distant locations or nearby villages. Haraldsson in his article 'A Psychological Considerations of Ordinary Children and Those Who Claimed Previous Life Memories', showed how children with past life memory bear tremendous pressure from their parents to stop talking about previous life. Some children are rebuked, punished and beaten so that they don't talk about previous life. Many of them claimed that they do not belong to their present family. These children always pleaded to their parents to take them to previous family, they got over emotional when they talk about their previous family. Most of the time parents tried to suppress their demand but they sometime give in to their demand and take those children to their claimed previous family. Statements of these children are verified by both of these families and it was found to be true in most of these reported cases. These children showed unusual behaviour pattern which is very much matched with the behaviour of previous personality. These behaviour include, behaviour of opposite sex which leads to gender identity disorder, cross dressing and unusual dietary habits. Some people assume these cases can clearly justify the formation of Gender Identity Disorder. Various cases studied by Stevenson showed this pattern. Steveson described a case of a girl from Mayanmar. From a very early childhood she showed masculine tendencies, she used to behave like his deceased brother, want to wear his clothes. After requesting hard the parents gave into her demand and allowed her wearing boy's clothes, because somehow they realized that it is their son reborn as their daughter and they cannot make her do things according to their wishes. Not only that their daughter used to play with boys of her age rather than girls.



Reincarnation as a fact helped these parents to understand unusual behaviour of their daughter. Many researchers like John Hart Young also demonstrated how reincarnation could be a reason for gender identity disorder. In reality most of the children be it in India or West, forced to behave according to societal norms when they born in typical orthodox family they face much difficulties in their everyday life if they behave in a way which is very unusual for their gender, they face torture, humiliation, pressure, which leads psychological disturbances. It is now proven that homosexual tendencies too is somehow related to previous life. Not all the children remember their previous life but if we include reincarnation in our world view, try to understand these children's problem in relation to previous life, we can become more tolerant. If reincarnation gets accepted children can get more empathy and care. Children with past life memories suffer from distress and trauma associated with past life memories. They also suffer from conflicted familial relationship, identity confusion and nightmares.

Stevenson demonstrated a case of a girl name Dulcina. The girl always fall sick though bodily she was completely alright. When she was at the age five, she started talking about her previous life. In her previous life she was a man name Zeca. She used to insist his parents and friends to call her as Zeca. She did not understanding her state, what she is doing in a girl's body. She used to ask her mother why she has changed sex, she was a man before but now it is very awkward to her that she is in a girl's body. Children like Dulcina most of the times find it difficult to deal with sex change as they continued to live like their previous sex. They are most of the time uncertain about their identity. Parents always dismiss this kind of deviant behaviour by thinking that the child is deliberately doing this to seek attention. Parents seek medical help to make sure their child behave like a way which is appropriate for their sex. Doctors usually attributed this kind of behaviour to hormonal dis-balance but many research have proved that a child borrow these qualities from their previous life. So, rather than making these children pressurize we can deeply think about the possibility of carrying these traits from previous life and treat these children with care. Apart from genetics and environment, we can consider reincarnation as a third factor which help personality formation of a child. Reincarnation in different caste and religions also proven by different researchers, they have proved how people born in different religion can't fake their past life stories, thus it indicates that reincarnation is very much true. Researchers used cross religious and inter caste cases as strong cases to prove their point but in this context they have ignored how these children suffer and got tortured by their parents and families for behaving in a deviant way, in a way which is not appropriate according to their religious teachings. For example Antonia Mills have demonstrated various cross religious cases like Muslim to Hindu or Hindu to Muslim cases in a paper name 'Moslem Cases of Reincarnation Type in Northern India :A Test of the Hypothesis of Impose Identification Part I : Analysis of 26 Cases', published in journal of scientific exploration , 1990. She talked about a case of a boy name Naresh Kumar Ray Das, who claimed his previous life in kakori as Mushir Ali Shah, a town five kilometre away from baj nagar, his current home. From very early childhood he have demonstrated behaviours that is very much typical ritual with in a Muslim family, like doing Namaz. After lot of requesting Naresh parents took him to the place of his previous birth and it was then proved that Naresh was Mushbir Ali Shah in his previous life. The main concern for this kind of cases is that these two religions (Hindu and Muslim) shared a bitter past and mutual tension in the context of India. So, these families did not any way want their children behave in a way that did not support their religious behaviour. Mills have explained how parents tried to supress the child's behaviour, they always tried to restrain the children from talking about previous life. In Hindu families parents takes various violent measures which they believe will erase the memory of the child. Like they used to beat the child if they talk about previous life, they tease the child, they pierced the child's ear, sometime turn these children in a potter's wheel. Some families took these



children to exorcist and these exorcist sometimes take violent measures to erase the past life memories of these children. For example, Mills herself described how one family have rotated the child counter clock wise and tapped his head hardly in a stone and beaten him , so, that he do not talked about his previous life as Hindu because the boy belong to Muslim family. Researchers demonstrated that as parents taking these measures to erase memories of previous life from the child, they can't fake about these memories and reincarnation is a true fact. In this context what have been remained unnoticed is the sufferings and rights of these children that need to give voice, which we need to talk about.

Children often disturbed by the food habits, can't adjust their current families. For example in his book ' Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation', Ian Stevenson talked about Jasbir Singh who was from a low caste Hindu family , but at the very young age he refused to eat food from his own household. The boy told his parents that he was a Brahmin, so, he can't take those food which is ritually impure. The boy was very young and it is very unlikely that he will understand these caste based purity and pollution. The boy got beaten by the parents and after much chaos, the parents made this child eat food only when they brought it from a Brahmin house hold. Children with past life memories in most of the cases , continuously cried and pleaded to their parents so that he/she can go back to his/ her previous home. Most of the time these children voice being suppressed by the parents and close family members, they fear that they will lose their child to someone else. For example Stevenson demonstrated a case of a Muslim boy who claimed to be a Hindu boy in his previous life in a nearby village. He always cried for his previous family and his near ones but, no one gave any importance to this child's demand. Parents repeatedly rejected the child's request and tortured him to stop talking about some past life, parents thought that the child is intentionally making stories to grab attention. But when nothing worked the child himself started walking to the way to the village where he claimed to have previous life. This is practically impossible for a child to run towards a village unknown to him at the age when he could not even speak properly. Later when Stevenson himself investigated this case and applied scientific techniques then people started believe that this boy is indeed speaking the truth, he do have a past life as a Hindu boy in a nearby village. At the same time many families fear that if these children claiming their memory in a wealthy family, family of the child will demand money. Till now, despite of reincarnation being proven as truth people really find it hard to accept the fact. Due to the dominant materialistic view which prevalent in our society voices and sufferings of these children remain unheard.

Conclusion

One important aspect of child right is we need to hear children, give importance to their view. But in practice society and family member does not show any tolerance to those children who showed deviant tendencies and force them to fit in the way the adults and society wished to. In reality Child's wish and views gets unheard which impact them severely. Adults can learn so much from the children if we give importance to their views, if we take them seriously and not ridicule them which leads towards emotional hurt. Carol Bowman too stated in her book that children with previous life memories teach us so much about human existence and truth. These small children teach us much important aspect of humanity which we adults and society in the verge of forgetting. Children can help us in understanding things if we give more attention to their claims. Children from all over the world through their claim made humanity came face to face with the eternal truth of life. Humans try to prove this eternal truth through scientific research, logic and Philosophy but they failed to acknowledge the contributions of these children towards humanity how they gave us glimpse of this eternal truth through their innocence and simplicity. But, we as a modern society every time failed to acknowledge their contribution due to



our ego. By doing this we are ignoring the eternal truth and violating the rights of the child in which he/she deserves life of his/her choice, and freedom of expressing his/her needs and desires. Children also deserve proper care and treatment. When researchers proving that many of the trauma, gender identity disorder, phobias, allergies that won't heal easily could be cause of past life injuries and trauma, we as an advanced civilization should give importance to past life memories and experiences so that we can give proper care to the child. Many regression therapists claimed that a child fully recovered from phobia and trauma after getting regressed to previous life. If reincarnation as a fact gets successful in securing its place in our everyday knowledge base we will live in a society which will be free from fear and exploitation, a joyful world for the child. Reincarnation makes us understands that we should give chance to children to develop according to their liking if it is not causing any destruction. We should not force our wish on a child. May be a child's past life played a major role in shaping his/her personality. So, we should respect the uniqueness in every child. We should not dismiss their description as mere crazy talks. Perhaps the child still living as personality of his previous life and we can use this excellent tool name reincarnation to know the child's inner world better. So that we can be more understanding towards their needs and desires.

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