

International Reincarnation Cases

In certain documented cases of the reincarnation type it appears that the individual was reborn in a different country to the one in which he or she had lived in the previous life.

Introduction

Contrary to widespread belief, in most reincarnation cases the subject is reborn in the same country,^[1] and often less than 25 kilometers from the location of the previous existence.^[2] Dr Ian Stevenson has published only four international cases in the collection of 1,700 cases held at the University of Virginia's Division of Personality Studies in which the past-life identity was confirmed, although there may be others that have not been published.

Reincarnation researcher Dr James G Matlock points out that this rarity suggests that souls only travel long distances between lives for specific reasons. His analysis of fourteen international cases (in which the past-life identity was confirmed) identified four motives, each of which played a part in more than one case (this finding is tentative, as the sample is small):

- to return to be with their previous family, friend or compatriot (four cases)
- to return to their homeland (four cases)
- to spread the word about Buddhism (three cases)
- to leave homeland (two cases)^[3]

The first motive accords well with the observed general tendency for people to reincarnate with people they know.^[4]

Cases Where the Past Life Identity is Known

Yvonne Ehrlich's parents were born in the 1920s and emigrated from Austria to Brazil in the 1940s. Her mother became pregnant in late 1952 or early 1953. Around the end of August 1953, her grandmother had a dream in which she saw her sister, Martha Demmer, who had been killed by Allied bombing in Vienna in 1944, bending over her son-in-law. This prompted her to predict her daughter's baby would be born a girl, the reincarnation of Martha. As a seven-year-old child, Yvonne made a single statement indicating past-life memory, telling her grandmother 'You are my sister!'; she also showed behaviours reminiscent of Martha and untypical of the family. Further, she had two birthmarks on her head which roughly corresponded with fatal head injuries that caused Martha's death. It appears, then, that in reincarnating, Martha preferred to stay with her family than remain in the country in which she had lived.^[5]

Ma Win Myint was born in 1959 in Rangoon, Burma. About eight months earlier, her mother dreamed of a close friend of hers, a British man named Paul Taylor, who had lived most of his life in Burma but died in England after unsuccessful cancer treatment. In the dream, her husband lay down with Taylor's corpse, which then rose and said 'I am alive now'. When Ma Win Myint was born, she was observed to have an unusually red complexion and sharp nose for a Burmese person, and even freckles and a patch of white hair, all of which were reminiscent of Taylor. She also was colour-blind, as he had been, and had frequent sore throats, an apparent throwback to his fatal illness, cancer of the tongue. As a child she played rough and tumble in a boyish way, and grew up to be hardworking, as Taylor had been. Stevenson writes that the case 'shows that the strong emotional ties that seem to bind families together in successive lives may also exist between friends with the same effect'.^[6]

The first Western woman to become a Buddhist nun was a California heiress and socialite, related to Russian royalty, named Zina Rachevsky. Rejecting her jet-set life for eastern spirituality, Rachevsky travelled first to India and then to Nepal, where she met Lama Thubten Yeshe (see below) and helped him found a network of centres dedicated to spreading the practice of Tibetan Buddhism. She died at the age of 42 of an undetermined disease while undertaking a retreat in a cave in the Himalayas, where she learned to meditate for hours at a time.^[7] About seventeen years later, a boy was born in France, his father a relative to Rachevsky, and was recognized officially as her reincarnation. 'Pierre' (not his real name) showed behaviours and knowledge reminiscent of Rachevsky. At least part of her motive, it seems, was to remain in the same family.^[8]

Jenny Cockell is an Englishwoman who has documented her reincarnation journey in three books.^[9] After identifying her second most recent past self as an Irishwoman, Mary Sutton, she sought out Mary's still-living and now elderly children, contacted them and, through demonstrating that she knew facts about their family known only to their mother, gained their acceptance as her reincarnation. Cockell remembered another life as a British boy who was killed in a truck accident,

Charles S, indicating a change of country. However, she learned from Charles's brother that their grandfather had been born in Ireland to an Irish family, so there is a possible relationship.^[10]

The three cases to which Matlock ascribes the motive 'spread the word', specifically about Tibetan Buddhism, are all Tibetan lamas reincarnated as Westerners, described in two books devoted to the topic by British writer Vicki Mackenzie. They seem fulfill a prophecy made by a Tibetan saint in the eighth century: 'when boats fly and iron horses run on wheels, then the Buddha dharma will be spread around the world'.^[11]

Lama Thubten Yeshe was a highly accomplished lama who fled Tibet in his early 20s when the Chinese invaded. Feeling strongly that he should teach Tibetan spiritual practice in the West, he founded an international network of centres. About eleven months after his death of heart disease in 1984, a couple who were devotees at a centre in Spain had a son, named Osel Hita Torres. Lama Yeshe's most senior disciple recognized him as Yeshe's reincarnation first, while many other people received signs in dreams or other ways. After being tested in traditional ways, he was officially recognized by the senior Tibetan lamas in exile, including the Dalai Lama, as Yeshe reborn.^[12]

Tenzin Sherab was born in 1972 and given the name Elija Ary by his parents, originally a Protestant and a Jew, who had set up a small Tibetan Buddhist centre in Vancouver, Canada. At the age of three, Elija began speaking about a past life in Tibet, and gave many details. At the age of seven, he was recognized on sight by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of Geshe Jatse, a lama who had left a prominent position to meditate in a cave before the Chinese invaded Tibet, and had once said he would be reborn in a place you would need a 'sky boat' to get to. Nothing was heard from him until Elija Ary's emergence. Renamed Tenzin Sherab by the Dalai Lama, he bears a physical resemblance to Geshe Jatse, with deep-set eyes and jutting brow. By his own account, he was reborn in the West in order to understand the culture for teaching purposes.^[13]

Trinley Tulku was born in France in 1975 to a French father and an American mother, devotees of Tibetan Buddhism. By his own report he always wanted to be a monk, exhibiting a fascination with monk's robes and asking to be taken to a monastery. Cared for by a Tibetan nanny, he could speak Tibetan at eighteen months old. While playing at the centre he was recognized by a visiting prominent lama as the reincarnation of the lama Khashap Rinpoche, who had led a monastery in India, then died fairly young of tuberculosis. Khashap Rinpoche had said he wanted to be reborn in the West, and that he and those around him would all meet again in the West.

One of the tenets of the Druze sect of Islam, whose adherents live in Lebanon and surrounding nations, is reincarnation, and they further believe that Druze are always reborn as Druze.^[14] The following two cases fulfill that belief.

Wael Kiwan, born to a Druze family in Batir, Lebanon, began saying his name was Rabih and he had lived in a neighbourhood in Beirut near the sea at the age of four. He said he had two houses, one of which he had to get to by airplane. When his parents went through a list of common Lebanese surnames with him, he recognized 'Assaf', and his father eventually found a family whose son Rabih Assaf had died in his 20s, early in the same year Wael was born. The boy was able to recognize Rabih as himself and other relatives correctly in pictures, and also remembered the Assaf house as it had been prior to renovations. Rabih had travelled to South Pasadena in California to study electrical engineering, planning to return to Beirut; however, he was prevented from doing so by war. He committed suicide by hanging, by which means – whether intentional or not – he returned to Lebanon.^[15]

Another Druze child, Suzanne Ghanem, began talking about a past life at a very young age, giving enough detail for the previous person to be identified. This was Hanan Mansour, a Druze woman from Beirut who suffered from degenerative heart disease and had travelled to the US for risky heart surgery. Hanan died the day after surgery at the age of 36. Suzanne was born ten days later in a southern suburb of Beirut; shortly before her birth, her mother dreamed that she would have a girl, and a woman whom she later said resembled Hanan told her 'I am going to come to you'. At five, Suzanne was able to remember the names of many of Hanan's relatives, was attached to Hanan's husband Farouk, and showed sufficient other indications of ties to the family that she was accepted as the incarnation of their mother by all of Hanan's children.^[16]

James Leininger demonstrated as a boy extensive knowledge of the life of an American fighter pilot killed in action near Iwo Jima during World War II (see case study [here](#)). Born 53 years later in San Francisco, James had apparently travelled as a spirit from Japan back to mainland America via Hawaii, as he accurately recalled details about a hotel where his parents stayed for a Hawaiian vacation prior to his birth.^[17]

The case of Adnan Kelleçi is mentioned briefly in a later work by Stevenson.^[18] He recalled the life of a Turkish soldier killed in action in Korea during the Korean War, whom Stevenson identified, but was born back home in Turkey, in the city of Adana.

Ma Par of Myanmar, investigated by Stevenson,^[19] is a case which would have been international if the subject had had her way. The girl was born with blond hair, blue-grey eyes and fair skin, and recalled having been a British airman on a plane that crashed near her birthplace in Burma during World War II. Ma Par recalled that in the time between his death and her own birth, she thought of his family in England and returned to them. However, the 'King of Death' forbade her to stay there and she returned to Burma, she said. She tried a second time to go to England but was again pulled back to Burma and 'ordered to be reborn'. She could not remember being told the reasons for this.

If the claim of Swedish writer Barbro Karlen to have been the legendary Holocaust diarist Anne Frank is genuine (see case summary [here](#)), hers would qualify as an international case, as Anne died in the Bergen-Belsen death camp and Karlen was born in Gothenburg, Sweden.^[20] Matlock notes that there is no clear motivation for this change of location.^[21]

Cases Where the Past Life Identity is Unknown

The same can also be said for Yael Shahar, who describes having been a Jewish Greek youth kept as a slave, tortured and then killed in the Auschwitz death camp in her book *A Damaged Mirror*.^[22] Born in Texas, Shahar was tormented by survivor guilt and guilt for having aided the Nazis in massacring her own people, and wrote the book as part of a healing journey.

Matlock notes that Karlen and Shahar both decided to be reborn far from Germany,^[23] and points out that many Holocaust memories have been reported by people in parts of Europe away from the sites of Nazi atrocities as well as in the US, suggesting a motivation to flee the scenes of their suffering.^[24]

In other cases, motivations are less clear. Bajrang Bahadur Saxena, born in (approximately) 1918 in the town of Bareilly in northern India, had fair skin, hazel eyes and blond hair, which he felt compelled to dye black so as to fit in. He reported having been shot dead as a British soldier in World War I, and had birthmarks on head and neck that resembled entrance and exit wounds. His preferences in clothing, food, eating method, climate and buildings were all reminiscent of an Englishman, and he liked to play soldiers, giving command words in English, a language he learned unusually easily later on. Interestingly, his younger brother Brij Bahadur Saxena was also blond and had some English-style preferences, and Bajrang claimed that they had been brothers in their previous lives. Stevenson speculates that in his past life, Bajrang might have been stationed in Bareilly and lived there for a time with his wife, then been deployed to France (where such a unit actually fought in 1914-15), then returned to Bareilly after death and was reborn into an Indian family.^[25]

Reincarnation researcher Ohkado Masayuki has published two unsolved international cases. Tomo, born in January 2000 in Japan, began speaking of a past life in Edinburgh, Scotland, at the age of three. Even younger—age two—he taught himself Roman letters rather than Japanese, printed his name 'Tomo', and was able to sing along to a song in English *Top of the World*.^[26]

Ohkado's second international case is of a Japanese girl who recalls having lived as a woman in India. She had a birthmark in the middle of her forehead, the location of the traditional *bindi* mark that Hindu women wear, and in fact said, 'This corresponds to what I wore in India [*bindi*]. The goddess I met in heaven stamped it on me so that I would not forget about my life in India.' Her pictures featured female figures wearing the *bindi*. She made plain her motivation for being reborn in Japan: 'It was a mistake to be born as a woman in India, where women are treated badly. So I decided to be born in a place where women are treated nicely. [This is certainly true in Japan.] I heard a voice calling for a girl and I decided to be born to my mother'. Her mother had been praying for a girl.^[27]

Matlock also suggests that reincarnating in a different nation requires control over the circumstances of one's rebirth. He writes: 'Accidents and murder are more likely to produce a sudden, unexpected death, leaving a person unprepared for what comes next... It is as if the impact on the psyche of a sudden, unexpected death reduces the control it has to determine its fate. These 14 cases suggest it is not only a desire to go abroad that is important in reincarnating internationally, but that the psyche must retain sufficient mastery to pull it off.'^[28]

International Series of Lives

Reincarnation researcher Karen Wehrstein has two papers in submission on Will and Elise (pseudonyms), two adult subjects with multiple identified past lives.^[29] They are a married couple living in the American Midwest who were brought together by their reincarnation experiences, having met on an online reincarnation forum. Will claims to remember some 30 past lives, of which four have been identified, while Elise claims to remember 12-15 past lives, of which three have been identified.

Elise has memories matching the life of Gerhard Palitzsch, a Nazi German officer who helped supervise the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp for several years until his death in 1944, and also has memories matching the life of an American soldier, Larry Johnson, who was killed in action in Vietnam in 1968. Will has memories matching the life of Wilhelm Schmidt, a young German soldier who died in France in 1915, and also memories matching the life of Wilhelm Emmerich, another Nazi supervisor at Auschwitz until his death in 1945. He has memories of a life as an American soldier in Vietnam as well, but the soldier is not yet identified.

Both subjects fall into the pattern of slain soldiers who returned home after death: Will from France to Germany and Elise from Vietnam to America. They also both fall into Matlock's pattern of fleeing Germany after the Holocaust, even though they were among the perpetrators rather than the victims. Will, at least, reports feeling a sense of betrayal by his homeland of Germany, for forcing him into heinous actions; hence his wish to leave.

Karen Wehrstein

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References

Footnotes

1.^ See Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p. 229. Here Matlock notes that a person can reincarnate a long distance away from the place of death without crossing borders if located in a large nation, giving two examples of successive incarnations 1,500 and 2,000 miles apart in the USA and India respectively.

2.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) pp. 232-3.

3.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p. 233.

4.^ See Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p. 223 table 26-3.

5.^ Stevenson's full case report: Stevenson (1997a), pp. 263-269. For more details see:

Andrade, HG (1988). *Reencarnação no Brasil. Oito Casos que Sugerem Renascimento*. Matão, Brazil: Clarim;

Playfair, GL (2011). *The Flying Cow: Exploring the Psychic World of Brazil*. Guildford, Surrey: White Crow Books: pseudonym 'Karen' used.

6.^ Stevenson (1997b) p. 1756. Full case report: pp. 1752-7.

7.^ Mackenzie (1989) pp. 44-5.

8.^ Mackenzie (1996) pp. 116-38.

9. ^ *Across Time and Death: A Mother's Search for Her Past Life Children*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994; *Past Lives, Future Lives*, Fireside, 1998; *Journeys Through Time: Uncovering my Past Lives*. London: Piatkus, 2008.
10. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p. 231, fn 23.
11. ^ Mackenzie (1989) p. 47.
12. ^ Mackenzie (1989).
13. ^ Mackenzie (1996) pp. 11-40.
14. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p. 62.
15. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p. 58-62.
16. ^ Shroder (1999) pp. 80-83.
17. ^ Leininger & Leininger (2009). See also Tucker, JB (2016). The Case of James Leininger: An American Case of the Reincarnation Type. *Explore* 2016; 12: pp. 200-207.
18. ^ Stevenson (2001) p 242.
19. ^ Stevenson (1997b) p 1812. Full case study: pp 1808-16.
20. ^ Karlen tells her story in Karlen, B (2000). *And the Wolves Howled: Fragments of Two Lifetimes*. London: Clairview.
21. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p 232.
22. ^ ben Malka, O & Shahr, Y (2014). *A Damaged Mirror: A Story of Memory and Redemption*. Alfei Menashe, Israel: Kasva Press.
23. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p 232.
24. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) p 233. See: Gershom, Y (1992). *Beyond the Ashes: Cases of Reincarnation From the Holocaust*. Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press; Gershom, Y (Ed.) (1996). *From Ashes to Healing: Mystical Encounters with the Holocaust*. Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press.
25. ^ Full case report: Stevenson (1997b) pp 1764-1782.
26. ^ Full case study: Ohkado, M. (2013). A case of a Japanese child with past life memories. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 27, 625-636. Retrieved June 29, 2017 from http://ohkado.net/articles/ohkado_2013_CORT.pdf .
27. ^ Full case study: Ohkado M (2012), Children With 'Past-Life Memories': A Case of a Japanese Female Child with 'Memories' as an Indian [In Japanese with abstract in English]. *人体科学* 21(1), 17-25. My gratitude to Ohkado for translating the cited passages in personal communications June 26-7, 2017. Bracketed comments are by Ohkado.
28. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016) pp. 234-5.
29. ^ Wehrstein, K. Two Adult Reincarnation Cases with Multiple Solved Lives, Part I: 'Elise'; and Two Adult Reincarnation Cases with Multiple Solved Lives, Part II: 'Will.' In submission.