

Date: Mon, 02 Apr 2001 20:48:02 +0800

From: "V.M.Sundaram" <venkataraman@pacific.net.sg>

Subject: Re: Re: Hindu Advaita? - Re-incarnation

Dennis Waite wrote:

- > Just another brief thought that occurred to me yesterday on this subject.
- > Regarding claims that an Advaitin must also be a Hindu - is it not the case
- > that Hindus believe in reincarnation whereas the Advaitin acknowledges that
- > there is no such thing as reincarnation (for no one was ever born or died in
- > the first place)?
- >
- > Dennis

The Pure Consciousness Atman / Universal Self (which according to advaita is the same as Brahman) does not undergo birth and death. But when it appears as a Jivaatama / individual self , tenanting a body-mind complex,it is under the spell of ego consciousness. When the body dies, the jivaatama , along with ego , is reborn in another body. This repetitive cycle of birth and death continues until the jivaatama gets out of the spell of the ego.

This cycle is beginning-less (anaadi). The question "when was it born in the first place ? " has no answer. The cycle ends with mokshha.

This is the advaita view, as I understand it. The concept of re-incarnation is not rejected by advaita.

V.M.Sundaram

Date: Tue, 3 Apr 2001 12:10:54 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: Re: Hindu Advaita? - Re-incarnation

Apologies - I had not intended to begin a discussion on reincarnation. I had assumed that my words would not provoke dissent.

V.M.Sundaram wrote: -

"The Pure Consciousness Atman / Universal Self (which according to advaita is the same as Brahman) does not undergo birth and death. But when it appears as a Jivaatama / individual self , tenanting a body-mind complex,it is under the spell of ego consciousness. When the body dies, the jivaatama , along with ego , is reborn in another body. This repetitive cycle of birth and death continues until the jivaatama gets out of the spell of the ego.

This cycle is beginning-less (anaadi). The question "when was it born in the first place ? " has no answer. The cycle ends with mokshha.

This is the advaita view, as I understand it. The concept of re-incarnation is not rejected by advaita."

Surely, Shankara's teaching is that there is only the Self. There are no 'individuals' only adhyaasa causing this mistaken belief. This being the case, irrespective of what might be thought, there is no one who could reincarnate.

This topic is clearly overlapping with the one of last week on aatman, jiivaatman and paramaatman. I had meant to respond to this having recently come across the following in an excellent book by Swami Muni Narayana Prasad called "Vedaabta Suutras of Narayana Guru" (Has anyone heard of Narayana Guru - I do not recall anyone mentioning him on the lists.) I think the

members will find it interesting.

Jiva, Jivaatman and Paramaatman

The common misconception that aatman is a synonym for jiiva obscures the metaphysical sense of the word aatman given in the paragraph above. Jiva, understood as an indwelling and animating principle of living beings, is a concept readily acceptable to most people, especially to those with religious views. In Indian thought philosophy and religion are indivisible. Therefore the shift, over time, from the philosophical to the theological sense of aatman was not generally noticed or seriously considered. It is the view of the multiplicity of souls held by the theological schools of Vaisnavism and Saivism which has been most responsible for that shift. In later Vedaanta, especially after ShaNkara, it resulted in the emergence of the concepts of jivatman and paramaatman, signifying respectively individual soul and universal or supreme soul. These two words do not appear in any of the major Upanishads nor in the Bhagavad-Gitaa and although the Bhagavad-Gitaa mentions the word jiiva four times, it is used in a sense not at all related to the concept of jivaatman.

Most of the introductory textbooks of the ShaNkara School of Vedaanta use the word jiiva-brahmaikya (the oneness of soul and Brahman) to express the vision of Vedanta, but the word aatmabrahmaikya (the oneness of Self and Brahman) would have been a more correct expression of that vision. The words jiivo brahmeti naapara.h (the soul is nothing other than Brahman) are often repeated in these textbooks, which, in the understanding of the ShaNkara School, means that in an individual being, the soul only is real and the body (perceived as non-Self, separate from the soul) is unreal. This, despite the fact that ShaNkara asserts:-

The soul and all the worlds are Brahman indeed.
Such is the summary of the teaching of Vedaanta. (vivekacuuDaamaNi 478)

It should be clearly understood that Vedaanta's concept of aatman, the pervasive reality of all that appears (gross, subtle, physical, vital and mental), does not exclude the body. Only nonexistent nothingness is unreal.

In discriminating between Self and non-Self, ShaNkara examines the perceptions of gross-body, subtle-body and causal-body and concludes that having no existence apart from the Self they are, if considered apart, non-Self. He saw that the transcendental inner content of all bodies is the Self which, in this context, he referred to as jivaatman. Misunderstanding his use of the word, his followers took 'inner content' to mean an individual, indwelling soul. This error arose from confusing ShaNkara's vision with his methodology. At an initial stage of his thinking he discriminates between Self and non-Self as a methodological device to show that both are aspects of one non-dual Self. This subtle distinction between the methodology and axiology of ShaNkara's thought was lost on his followers and they began to identify aatman with jiiva, obscuring the truth that aatman is also the reality of the matter considered by them as unreal. The view of a multiplicity of individual souls having individual, separate and independent realities is contrary to the teaching of Advaita-Vedaanta which holds that one Self alone exists and there are no others. Coupled with the erroneous view of the existence of individual souls is the equally erroneous view that multiplicity, arising from one ultimate reality, is appearance only and hence unreal. Appearances too are Brahman.

Dennis

Date: Tue, 3 Apr 2001 07:57:40 +0100

From: "Miguel Angel Carrasco" <macf12@wanadoo.es>

Subject: Re-incarnation

V.M.Sundaram wrote :

[...] "When the body dies, the jivaatama , along with ego , is reborn in another body. This repetitive cycle of birth and death continues until the jivaatama gets out of the spell of the ego."

But Nisargadatta said:

"Reincarnation implies a reincarnating self. There is no such thing. (I Am That, page 262)

Miguel-Angel

Date: Tue, 3 Apr 2001 11:52:27 -0700 (PDT)

From: Anand Natarajan <harihara.geo@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: Re-incarnation

Sri Shankaracharya in Bhaja Govindam says,

"Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam,
Punarapi Jananim Jattare Shayanam.
Ihasamasaare Bahudusthaare
Krupaya Paare Paahi Murare."
Bhaja Govinda Bhaja Govindam Govindam Bhaja
Moodamathe.

" Born again, dying again,
ever passing through the Mothers womb,
This worldly life is very hard to cross
Having mercy, save me O' Lord."
Sing name of Govinda , O Deluded one.

The Bhagavad Gita also tells of re-incarnation.

From the absolute point of view, there is no birth and no death and hence no re-birth.
From our day to day experience, every Karmya Karma that is done paves way for re-birth. Like Nisargadatta Maharaj, if we find inaction in action, then there is neither birth nor death.
But for the rest of us, the prospect of re-birth is an interesting tool to tackle the problems of Karma.
If we know that, what we experience is due to our past actions, then we can control the future by acting wisely. In relative experience it is better to believe in re-birth than not believe in it.

Anand

Date: Wed, 04 Apr 2001 11:07:59

From: "Kuntimaddi Sadananda" <k_sadananda@hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: Re-incarnation

Shree Minguel-Angel -

The discussion of re-incarnation is only from jiiva's perspective who identifies himself with the equipments not from the all pervading self that the statement of Nisargadaatta Maharaj states. Hence both statements are correct within their refernces. As long as we donot get confused from what references these statements are made there is no problem.

It is like ring which thinks I am a ring now and I was a bangle in my last life and I may reincornate as bracelet in my next life. But from the Gold point - I am gold all the time never a ring, not a bangle nor a neckless - they are in me and I am not in them -

Who reincornates? - From the gold point never. From the egotistical ring point all the time.

Hari OM!
Sadananda

Date: Wed, 4 Apr 2001 20:58:40 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: Re: Reincarnation

Anand Natarajan said "In relative experience it is better to believe in re-birth than not believe in it."

Presumably this could only be true if: - a) we were strictly following karma yoga with no content of j~naana (i.e. if we still believed that there was an individual self that could reincarnate) b) we believed that it was possible to choose to behave in one way rather than another.

I find it difficult to see how the belief that there is an individual self to reincarnate could be helpful to one 'pursuing' a 'path' in Advaita. In dvaita it might make sense.

Dennis

Date: Wed, 4 Apr 2001 13:38:56 -0700 (PDT)

From: Anand Natarajan <harihara.geo@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re : Reincarnation

Dennis Waite wrote:

>Presumably this could only be true if: -
>a) we were strictly following karma yoga with no
>content of j~naana (i.e. if
>we still believed that there was an individual self
>that could reincarnate)

There is no dichotomy between the paths of Jnana and Karma. All paths lead to self surrender.

We are experiencing dwaita now. Every action produces its effect some time or the other. Therefore we say, do not act based on one's desires, rather gradually get rid of your desires.

If such a thing is told to people who do not believe in re-birth, then the question asked is, why ? As long as one does not interfere in anybody else's life, one can enjoy as much as he wants ? After all there is only one life to enjoy ?

To get the mind, away from Kamyā Karma (desire oriented action) is difficult. The mind is fickle and it is tricky. One pointed Self-enquiry leading to Jnana is difficult for the un-ripe mind. In that case, an effective tool to keep the mind on sadhana and prevent it from going after desires is to remember that each desire you pursue, is one more chain that shackles you to this wheel of re-birth.

>b) we believed that it was possible to choose to
>behave in one way rather
>than another.

This is a matter of realization. If someone threw burning charcoal at you, would you stand in its way saying I have no will to act ? Would you not rather say "I can choose how to behave" and move out of its way?

Anand

Date: Thu, 05 Apr 2001 02:59:08 -0000

From: "Tony O'Clery" <aoclery@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: Hindu Advaita? - Re-incarnation

Namaste All,

Is it not that there is Brahman and then the illusion, the thought construct of the entity or human soul. Atma is just another name for Nirguna Brahman. Unless you regard the 'I', as the Jiva then one is discussing Saguna Brahman. All illusion and concepts anyway, but useful for discussion's sake.....Om Namah Sivaya....Tony.

Date: Thu, 05 Apr 2001 19:31:15 +0800

From: "V.M.Sundaram" <venkataraman@pacific.net.sg>

Subject: Re: Re: Hindu Advaita? - Re-incarnation

Dennis Waite wrote:

.....

> Surely, Shankara's teaching is that there is only the Self. There are no
> 'individuals' only adhyaasa causing this mistaken belief. This being the
> case, irrespective of what might be thought, there is no one who could
> reincarnate.

In BG 2.13 and 2.22, the word *dehin* is used.
This dehin (occupier of deha) is described in verse 2.13 as acquiring another body (dehaantara praaptih). In verse 2. 22, it is described as going from one body to another body (samyaaati is the word used) .

Sankara in his bhashhya calls this dehin as atma. It is commonly translated as jiivaatamaa (embodied self in english).

If as you say there is no jivataman , what would you call this *dehin* ?

Whatever name you call it by,
Is not this migration of the dehin from one body to another re-incarnation ?

V.M.Sundaram

Date: Thu, 5 Apr 2001 13:08:34 +0100

From: "Dennis Waite" <dwaite@dircon.co.uk>

Subject: Re: Reincarnation

Anand Natarajan responded: -

>>b) we believed that it was possible to choose to
>>behave in one way rather
>>than another.

>This is a matter of realization. If someone threw
>burning charcoal at you, would you stand in its way
>saying I have no will to act ? Would you not rather
>say "I can choose how to behave" and move out of its
>way?

I suppose that belief in reincarnation does depend on belief in karma (lawful cause and effect in action) and, crucially, upon free-will. I'm sure I made a similar response (to the one that follows) once before to the sort of statement you now make but received no satisfactory answer.

What you say just is not so. If someone throws burning charcoal at me, of course I move out of the way but there is not an iota of choice involved. Indeed (and if you observe, I am sure you will have to agree) in such a situation the response is made before one has time to even think about what to do. It is pure cause and effect at a subconscious level. There are less dramatic situations where it is possible to imagine that one does have choice, for example whether or not I respond to this post. However, given my interest in Advaita (long developed in response to all of the experiences, reading, people I have met etc.) and my involvement in the list, my wish to air this topic (probably an egotistical desire to press home my point) etc. - again there is no choice involved. It is purely and simply cause and effect. It seems so obvious to me - why are people disagreeing? We don't have to invoke Benjamin Libet, we can see it for ourselves in all that happens to us if we open our minds to the possibility and reflect on it.

Dennis

Date: Thu, 5 Apr 2001 06:18:11 -0700 (PDT)

- > The discussion of re-incarnation is only from jiiva's perspective who
- > identifies himself with the equipments not from the all pervading self that
- > the statement of Nisargadaatta Maharaj states. Hence both statements are
- > correct within their referenes. As long as we donot get confused from what
- > references these statements are made there is no problem.

If re-incarnation is from the jiva's perspective, then it is an illusion. Because the jiva itself is an illusion. What is a jiva anyway? According to Sankara, a jiva is Brahman seemingly (but falsely) appearing as a body-mind. But the body-mind doesn't really exist, it isn't a real, independent, separate entity. It is just an appearance in Consciousness, hence a concept. All individuals are mere concepts, with no substance or essence. Only Consciousness is. All else is illusory. Hence to speak from the jiva's perspective is tantamount to speaking from an illusory perspective.

- > It is like ring which thinks I am a ring now and I was a bangle in my last
- > life and I may reincornate as bracelet in my next life. But from the Gold
- > point - I am gold all the time never a ring, not a bangle nor a neckless -
- > they are in me and I am not in them -
- > Who reincornates? - From the gold point never. From the egotistical ring
- > point all the time.

And I ask again: who reincarnates? The gold or the ring? The ring cannot. Once it is melt down nothing remains of it but the gold. Once we die nothing remains of us, except only our true nature, Pure Consciousness. It is not the individual who reincarnates. His/her death is the end of everything he/she had as an individual, including the karma. Because, as I said, what makes an individual an individual is purely a name and a form. And both are imaginary.

So if it is not the ring (the individual) that reincarnates, it can only be the gold. But can we call that RE-incarnation? No. The gold (Brahman) is all there is. It appears to become incarnate in the many forms and shapes. But that is only a mirage, like the snake in the rope, or the man in the tree trunk. Phenomena are not real objects. They are only appearances in Consciousness.

Miguel-Angel

Date: Fri, 06 Apr 2001 07:40:12

From: "Kuntimaddi Sadananda" <k_sadananda@hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: Re-incarnation

Blessed self - If we understand jiiva is illusion the problem is already solved and no question of reincarnation even arises. If we start with the problem that jiiva is illusion because Shankara says so - we have a big problem - we live in the state where jiiva appears to be real and we understand that Shankara says jiiva is illusion. As the statement goes there is big gap between the cup and the lip - understanding as an understanding as a fact is different from understanding as understanding as a thought.

Hence it is to make less confusing - referred to two different reference states - vyavahaara state or transactional state and paramaarthika state. What Nisargadatta maharaj statement is from the absolute point - If we are in that state the statements are absolutely valid. But when

we talk about illusions - we are still in the vyavahaara state - and my pay check is different from yours and my temporal problems are different from yours. The differences are real only in the realm of vyavahaara. Please read my statement again - from the ring point there is reincarnation from the gold point no. Hence what reference one is talking one should be clear. There there is no confusion.

Hari OM!
Sadananda

Date: Fri, 6 Apr 2001 13:50:02 -0230 (NDT)

From: Gummuluru Murthy <gmurthy@morgan.ucs.mun.ca>

Subject: Re: Re-incarnation

namaste.

Dennis and Miguel say that there is no re-incarnation.
Let me express my understanding on this.

We agree that in paramArtha (the Absolute), there is no rebirth. We also agree that there are jIvanmuktAs, i.e., realized souls while being in their physical body, a very well-known example of this being shri RamaNa maharShi. We also agree that jIvanmuktas - who have no death and no rebirth - also discard their bodies, i.e., we agree that falling out of body of jIvanmuktas is not death.

We differ in that, before realization, i.e., in vyavahArika, Dennis and Miguel say there is no reincarnation, while I think it is a very acceptable and viable model. While fully recognizing that what we believe in vyavahArika are concepts only, let me analyze Dennis' and Miguel's logic.

They say there is no reincarnation, but there is moksha. If there is no reincarnation, moksha has to be attained (or ignorance removed) in this life or in one life itself. If the ignorance is not removed in that one life, what then? What happens to the sancita and AgAmi karma? That karma has to bear fruit sometime. And karma is not transferrable. If karma is not accepted either, then, if ignorance is not removed, what happens after death for such an unrealized soul?

On the other hand, if we accept re-incarnation (which is only in vyavahArika), things fall into place. Every good (or bad) action has its result associated with it. The jIvA (or the subtle aspect of the jIvA) carries the essence of this karma forward, reincarnates, and keeps on doing it until the karma is fully exhausted or the Knowledge dawns on the jIvA so that no further karma is accumulated. The jIvA does not go through reincarnations anymore then.

The advantage or beauty of this concept is: The good actions done by us will have their result, may be not in this life, but in future lives. Thus we do not have to act as if everything has to be settled in this life itself. Further, it makes more logical sense than the thinking that this is the only life and moksha has to be attained in this one life itself.

I would even go to the extent of saying that acceptance of something called moksha automatically means acceptance of something called reincarnation.

If there is a better model than karma/reincarnation/moksha for explaining the vyavahArika way of unfolding of things, I would certainly like to know about it.

Regards
Gummuluru Murthy

Date: Fri, 06 Apr 2001 13:13:25 -0400
From: Gregory Goode <goode@DPW.COM>
Subject: Re: Re-incarnation

Namaste Gummuluru-ji!

I like what you say here, you found a good tug. Not directed at anyone in particular, but in general: to accept the existence of things on the physical plane but not on any subtle planes bespeaks the acceptance of primarily materialist or Western-scientific rules of evidence. But then to accept moksha?? According to the materialistic or ortho-scientific same rules of evidence, what exactly would moksha be? Why would such a person study or pursue a spiritual path at all? Or is it jst academic? Why not just wait till death; wouldn't it come to the same thing, according to these rules of evidence?

Harih OM!

--Greg

Date: Fri, 6 Apr 2001 15:52:30 -0230 (NDT)
From: Gummuluru Murthy <gmurthy@morgan.ucs.mun.ca>
Subject: Re: Re-incarnation

namaste Greg-ji,

I must confess that I could not get the point you are trying to make. It is, no doubt, my intellectual inability. I wonder if you can amplify/clarify.

What I was trying to say in my post was: If moksha is accepted or believed (as an intellectual end-point of the struggles of the jIvA to understand him/herself), then it is quite likely that SELF-realization (the ACTUAL removal of ignorance, not an intellectual understanding of what SELF-realization is) cannot be achieved in a single life-time. I am saying, then, what of the results of the good deeds and purification-of-the-mind process that has taken place in this life-time? Then if a jIvA's (I am sure you agree there is a jIvA) ignorance is not completely removed by the time the physical ailments had taken away the body, then what happens to that soul (jIvAtma)?

I am saying the jIvAtma (the subtle body of the jIvA) continues to reincarnate until SELF-realization and reaps the benefits of the good deeds and the citta-shuddhi process that had taken place in this life and the jIvA is that much closer to SELF-realization in his/her 'journey' to moksha.

I hope I am clear now.

Regards
Gummuluru Murthy

Date: Fri, 06 Apr 2001 18:23:57 -0500
From: ernesto <ernesto@bmu.com.pe>
Subject: Re: Re-incarnation

It could be interesting to hear the following words. They are taken from an article of Richard Smoley, in Internet, "The Real and the Unreal"
<http://www.lumen.org/intros/intro39.html>

"All the same, Eastern religions, as they have been established in the West, often seem less like a carefully prepared feast than a half-digested mass in the stomach of a ruminant. This is not for lack of fundamental knowledge or good will, but there are several issues that complicate the process.

In the first place, there is simply the problem of making the tradition understood. Any teaching is prone to oversimplification as it is transmitted, and the problems are complicated when there are enormous cultural distances to traverse. One example is reincarnation, which, many people will tell you, is a central doctrine of both Hinduism and Buddhism.

Not quite. Buddhists don't even believe that there is a "self" to reincarnate. They view successive "incarnations" not so much as an individual identity choosing a sequence of bodies but more like a wave in the ocean whose momentum generates similar waves: the actions of one life create a certain inertia that carries over into another.

Much the same is true of Hinduism, at least according to the early twentieth-century Traditionalist Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, profiled in this issue. He went so far as to say that "no doctrine of reincarnation . . . has ever been taught in India." According to Coomaraswamy, a man only "reincarnates" in the sense that he lives on in his descendants; otherwise the Hindu scriptures teach that there is "one and only one transmigrant" - "the Lord . . . the Supreme and Solar Self, Atman, Brahman, Indra." who is one and who lives in all beings perpetually.(3)"

" 3. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Selected Papers: Metaphysics, ed. Roger Lipsey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 15, 66-67."

If the doctrine of reincarnation means something, it means that the individuality of a man goes from life to life from ever to ever until liberation.

But if we say that atman is equal to Brahman, then obviously atman can't be the group formed by nama-rupa, the "individuality", the machine of associated elements called usually our individuality (including manas and the ahamkara).

That is the point as I see it. There can't be any element of our individuality that reincarnates for ever and ever. There is no an "I" (manas and ahamkara) that now fights, loves, writes, and that in the future will return to love the ones he loved before, to continue the battles that here he began. This is the romantic but anti-metaphysical idea taught by Theosophism and New Age (so occidental but little oriental).

There is no eternity in any element of the individuality.

So atman (as equal with Brahman, in the same way that a point of light is equal with the Light) (atman who does not fight, write, learn, or acts, atman so transcendental), atman -I repeat- transmigrates in the same transcendental way that (and because he is equal to) Brahman transmigrates.

So I think there is a great difference between the doctrine of reincarnation (the idea of an individuality turning back, the idea of the permanent existence of the ahamkara) and the doctrine of transmigration.

It could even be possible that we can think in indefinite individualities that are the place of manifestation of atman, all of them being grades of the existence, all produced at the same time in the eternal present of the eternity of atman. And if we had to see those individualities from the point of view of our physical loka (determined by space and time, although it is just one loka among the indefinite ones), then we would "locate in time" those individualities, A before B, B before C and so on. But even in this case, it wouldn't mean that there is a continuity of an "I" (as understood in reincarnation idea) in A, B and C.

It would simply mean that there has been three individualities, three relative "beings" determined with manas and ahamkara, and just one atman (that is transcendent to manas and ahamkara, and every element of Prakriti). A, B and C could even be analog among them, because of karma, but never the same "I".

¿Are there people that remember past lives? They remember what they call their past lives.

But in accordance with the doctrine of metempsychosis, as there is a physical transmission from a father to a son, after death there is also a psychic transmission of the less heavy elements of nama-rupa (including memories).

So nothing of this means reincarnation.

I would like to hear opinions about this.

Friendly,

David Cueva

Gummuluru is concerned that the views expressed by Miguel and myself contradict the notion of individual karma. Fine! I believe the idea of individual karma is equally a mistake. If I may also quote from the Gita: - V.14 The Lord does not create agency or actions for the world; He does not create union with the fruits of action. Nature does all this.

The Self does not act; only the guuNaa act. No individual self can assume ownership over karma or sanskaara. The bondage is in thinking that we are the doers of our action and reap its fruit. Moksha is release from this erroneous belief.

Dennis

Date: Wed, 11 Apr 2001 13:29:41 -0500

From: Rick Archer <rickhome@cec-waterjet.com>

Subject: Re: Re: Re-incarnation

Yes, but knowledge is different in different states of consciousness. The gun of the waking state doesn't shoot the tiger of the dream state. Those in higher states of consciousness don't deny that the perspectives from lower states don't seem real. If a man says he's suffering, they don't say "No, you're not," or if a man robs a bank they don't say, "The Gunas did it. He shouldn't be punished." So the points you quote below don't invalidate the philosophy of karma. Here's a quote from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi I just came across which pertains to this:

"The falling of the impression deep in the mind is the binding influence of the karma, is the result of the karma. To meditate does not make a man free from karma but free from the binding influence of karma. We don't get freedom from karma, nor do we get freedom from the effects of karma (with TM), but only the binding influence of karma is released. The law of causation remains."

Maharishi
Meditation Guides Course
Hochgurgl, Austria
July 1962