

Reincarnation: Out on a Broken Limb

In the late 1980's the actress, Shirley MacLaine helped populate interest in reincarnation in the United States with her popular book and television special "Out on a Limb". In several spiritual conversations, over the years, I have heard people voice support for the idea of reincarnation. I am fascinated that if otherwise intelligent people would take the time to think without jumping into the newest fad, they would find the theory of reincarnation is hopelessly irrational and illogical.

For example, if we have a long list of past lives from which we are paying off our sins until we reach spiritual perfection and absorbed into the "universal mind" (whatever that is), then why is the population of the Earth increasing? According to the law of karma it should decrease.

The law of karma, while attempting a cause-and-effect explanation to account for evil, is hopeless in attempting to solve the problem of evil. If the human soul is eternal as most reincarnationists believe, then constantly pushing that past life back to explain evil in this life eternalizes the problem of evil, it in no way can solve it. Therefore logically, evil if it is natural and eternal it would therefore be impossible to reach perfection and be "absorbed into the universal mind". If one postulates that there was a first life, this first life would have no karma debt from a past life to pay off. The 'merry go round' never starts!

The law of karma is cruel. According to reincarnation, birth defects, handicaps, rape, accidents, etc., all happen to us because of sin in our past lives. Obviously if this were true, we should not interfere with karma's administration of suffering. If one follows Christian ethics; he must not hamper with someone's suffering. Logically this would lead to the sufferer getting greater suffering in the next life because this person did not undergo his prescribed karma in this life. Is it any surprise that proper medical care for the physically and mentally handicapped, never developed in Eastern countries with beliefs in reincarnation, until the arrival of Christian missionaries? And that most hospitals and health care institutions were started by Christians.

As far as can be ascertained, none of the Indian gurus who made a financial fortune in the United States through transcendental meditation, yoga, or their

reincarnation teachings, have given one dime to alleviate human suffering. Where are their hospitals, nursing homes, special schools for the handicapped? Reincarnation philosophy cannot consistently support interference with or relief of someone else's karma suffering.

Shirley MacLaine seems to think the law of karma gives her a feeling of comfort. Would you want to "comfort" your friends on the birth of their handicap baby by walking into the hospital, room where the baby lies and announced with confidence that there is nothing to worry about, that all of them deserve what happened and that this is just karma's way of helping both the child and the parents to the next level of enlightenment?

This is not comfort: this is cruelty. If, as the philosophy of reincarnation states, our past lives are hidden from us by "divine decree", how can we avoid the same evil which causes our suffering in this life? How is justice served if a person has no knowledge of why he is punished? Even our Constitution prohibits the passing of legislation which results in criminal liability after the fact.

The theory of karma reincarnation is politically reactionary. It is a convenient tool of the rich upper classes for exploiting the lower-class. The theory of transmigration also leads to financial and ecological ruin. The Western world should take a hard look at the Eastern countries and their human misery because such misery is a direct result of the embracing reincarnation. Too many Westerners have embraced Eastern theology without accepting the lifestyle that the theory entails. One need only look to India, birthplace of reincarnation, to see that the caste system has locked individuals into a certain class with no hope of escape, causing pride among the upper-class and despair among the lower classes; to see no attempt to destroy insects and rodents which eat food supplies (they may be someone's grandmother.). Leading people to die of starvation and disease. Perhaps if Ms. MacLaine had gone to India during her spiritual quest, instead of being given a guided tour by her teachers, she might have realized the consequences and horror of such a belief system.

It is interesting that MacLaine's spiritual journey seems to be tied in with an adulterous relationship. Isn't it true in the theory of reincarnations that regardless of how you lived today, someday you'll get your act together and it will all work out? So really, everybody wins in the end.

There is no need to reckon with God in this life. Indeed, we have many lives to make things up. So, everybody wins in the end, even Atilla the Hun, Adolph Hitler, Idi Amin, Joseph Stalin, etc... Granted they may be the bringing up the rear, but as they cross the finish line, everybody will be there to cheer them on. With reincarnation, nobody loses, no wonder the idea is so appealing.

It is sad that Maclaine in his search for enlightenment has stumbled into a system of darkness. It is even sadder the hundreds of others, moved by her influence, are willing to give up their self-identity to become a faceless nonperson seeking to merge into the impersonal "Universal Mind".

All it takes is to not use the rational mind they now have!

Conrad McIntire - 1987