

ON THE WINGS OF DEATH

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BIRTH AND DEATH

Birth and death are the two unavoidable painful events in everyone's life. Though the birth of a child may be rejoiced by the relatives, it is certainly painful to the newly arriving entity. It is clear from the invariable crying of a newly born child. Everyone enters this world with a confirmed irrevocable return ticket to depart from here. It is irrevocable because it cannot be cancelled unlike other confirmed return tickets. Only the solace is that the return date is not disclosed by *Parameshvara*. Otherwise the person will be *jeevanmrita* – dead even while living! Such a departure of the individual entity *jiva* leaving behind the present physical body is called death. At that time the subtle body of the individual accompanied by a few other necessary factors departs and travels to the next body and enters it. Such an entry is the new birth of that *jiva*. The *Brihadaranyakopanishad*, *Jyotirbrahmana* and *Saareerakabrahmana* (4-3-34 to 4-4-6) describe in detail this transmigration. The *Chhandogyopanishad* (5-10) also describes it. This is to inculcate *vairagya* in the mind of a *mumukṣu* by highlighting the unavoidable pain involved in the birth and death.

WHILE ON THE VERGE OF DEATH

The *Upanishad* gives the illustration of a *jiva* (*atma* endowed with ignorance) returning from the dream state to the waking to describe *paralokagamana* (transmigration). Like going from dream to the waking, the *jiva* goes from this body to another *loka* (field of experience) (Br.U.4-3-34). The *jiva* leaves behind all that is done and experienced in the dream there itself and enters the waking. Similarly, leaving behind everything done and gained in this world, the *jiva* goes to another *loka*. A lesson can be taken from this. People earn *punya* to go to heavenly *lokas* hereafter, but none earns *pāpa* (sin) to go to hell. Sinful actions are indulged in to amass quicker gains here in this *loka*. All such things obtained remain here only, but the *papa* travels with the *jiva* to another *loka*. Therefore a *viveki* should desist from sinful deeds.

The departure of the *jiva* from the present embodiment is best illustrated by a heavily loaded cart starting its journey on a village rugged road (Br. U.4-3-35). A cart loaded with many things driven by a sentient entity (such as bull) goes making noises because of heavy weight. Similarly the *vijnanamaya jiva* (i.e. the entity endowed with the subtle body) abiding in the present physical body inhabited (or illumined) by the self-luminous *chaitanya*, departs with expiration making sounds of hiccup etc.

People who shift their residence from one place to the other, transport their goods to the new one. In olden days, a cart was the vehicle. At death the subtle body overloaded with the goods of *karmaphalas*, *upasanaphalas* and *vaasanas* is the cart. While waking from the dream, the things of dream are left behind but their impressions (*samskaras*) are brought in the waking. Similarly while leaving the existing body the home, wealth, properties (which are actually not proper ties for *mukukshu*) are left behind whereas the load of their *vasanas* accompanies further. *Vasanas*, *karmaphalas* and *upasanaphalas* serve as the prompting factor of transmigration. The cart is directed by its cartman to the destination. So also the self-luminous *chaitanya* (Paramatma) leads the *jiva* to its next destined body.

Atma is all pervasive. Such an entity cannot have departure or arrival. How can *atma* leave a body and take to another one? Yes, in reality *atma* cannot travel. But it appears as though endowed with *upādhi* after its reflection in it (*upādhi*). It is similar to the reflection (appearance) of the sun in a vessel etc. filled up with water. *Atma* has no connection with the *upādhi* on its own. When a water-vessel moves the movement of reflection in it gives a false appearance as if the sun moves. Similarly when the subtle body separated from the gross one travels, *chidābhāsa* (reflection of *atma-chaitanya*) in it moves. This is mistaken as the travel of *atma*. When the person was alive, the *chidābhāsa* in his subtle body only used to keep him sentient. At death, the subtle body leaves the gross one. As a result the *chidābhāsa* in that gross body stops. This is what lay people describe as the *atma* has left the body. In reality there is no travel or arrival for the ever all pervasive *atma*.

Here is a piece of information which all are supposed to know and remembering which they should develop *vairāgya* (dispassion). A great sorrow befalls the person who is on the verge of death when the vital parts of the body are being extracted by the vital air (*prāna*) in the form of *udāna-vāyu*. Its function is to eject the subtle body from the gross one. From the groaning etc. of a dying person it is very clear that the process of death is an agonizing state. So is the birth. In between some tinsels of joy accompanied by more sorrows may be available. In this repeated cycle of transmigration, one's sense of commerce has to be used to find out if purchasing of paltry fleeting pleasures at the cost of enormous sorrows is justifiable. It is easy to ape the majority and get drifted along the sense pleasures coveted by the masses. But it needs courage to find out the transient and sorrowful state of *samsāra* in its right perspective. Only a rare few can do it (*Kt.U.2-1-1*).

When the body gets emaciated by disease or old age the subtle body is thrown away from all limbs like a fruit such as mango etc. from its stalk. The said *śruti* (*Br. U. 4-3-36*) gives the examples of three types of fruits. A mango even if raw can fall when struck by a stick. So also a healthy person can die on account of striking by weapons etc. The second is that of a wild fig (called *oudumbara*). It falls naturally when ripe since its bond with the stalk gets loosened. Similarly the old age naturally loosens the bond of subtle body with the gross one resulting in death. The fruit of *ashvattha* (*pippala*) tree is the third example. Its fruits fall off even by the

impact of a strong wind. Likewise a person can die on account of being struck by lightning, earthquake, cycle, tidal waves etc.

The route adopted by the *jiva* or the subtle body while departing from the gross body after getting separated from the vital parts is described by the *śruti* as '*pratinyaayam*' (through the reverse route of entry). The *jiva* having emerged from its place in the heart during the sleep gains the waking state through the route of nerves (*naadis*). But at the time of death, it goes back in the heart in the reverse order through the route of nerves. Unlike such movements earlier to travel from one state of consciousness to one of the other two, the present entry in the heart through the nerves is only to proceed further to the next body after death. The purpose of such final entry of *jiva* in the heart (the seat of *antahkarana*) is described as '*praanaaya eva*' means 'to sustain the vital airs (*prana*) in the next gross body where it is going to take birth. (*Br. U.* 4-3-36).

It is well known that the *jiva* takes the new body for undergoing *bhoga* (enjoying and suffering) of *bhogyā* (objects of enjoyment or suffering). The *jiva* on the verge of dying is obviously weak. Such an entity unable to work cannot procure objects of pleasure and suffering for which purpose the new body is being assumed. There is no room for such a doubt. The *karmaphalas* of the departing *jiva* acquire the objects of experience beforehand. The *śruti* (the Veda) gives an illustration of a king. Suppose a king is on his way to visit a particular place in his kingdom. The officers, village-leaders etc. who are hired servants of the king and receive benefits from him, wait for his arrival by keeping food, drinks and accommodation etc. ready. Similarly the parents and the other relatives of the newly arriving child wait with its requirements. It is interesting to note that the *śruti* refers to the new entity to be born as 'Brahman' only to remind us that the *jiva* is nothing but Brahman in reality. Only due to ignorance and consequent *upādhis* Brahman appears as a *sansari jiva*.

After the death, *atma (jiva)* travels endowed with the *upādhi* of *prāna*. The word *prāna* literally means vital airs. It is used for *indriyas* (senses) also because they subsist on *prāna*. But here the word *prāna* signifies the entire subtle body. The ignorant person on the verge of death, having got intense weakness in the body becomes unconscious as it were. Then the senses such as eyes etc. reach that entity (i.e. *jiva*) in *hridayam* (heart) in the sense *buddhi* abiding therein. It is well-known that the *jiva* is *atma* conditioned by *buddhi (vijñānamayah)*. The eyes etc. indicate all sense organs, organs of actions besides faculties of thinking and knowing. All these along with vital airs during the waking state are stationed in their respective places and are actively engaged in their functions. This is described as if a fishnet is operated to catch the fish. The *jiva* spreads its net to catch the sense objects and accomplish actions. At the time of death the network is being withdrawn totally in one's *buddhi* (subtle body) to take with oneself to the next body.

The faculties of perception, action and thinking etc. operating through their corresponding organs and others derive their powers to functions from their presiding deities such as the sun, moon, Indra etc. These deities enable their counterparts in the body to function

by lending the required powers to them. This phenomenon is regulated by the *prarabdha-karmas* of *jivas*. Once that is over, the body that was useful for *bhoga* (enjoyment or suffering) is no more so. As a result when this body is on the verge of being dropped, these powers in the organs etc. return and merge in their main deities. The perception, actions and thinking etc. in the dying body stops, though *indriyas* (senses) etc. are still with the *jiva*. It is like the electrical gadgets stopping their functions when the power of supply is cut off (*Br. U.* 4-4-1). For example, the sun the presiding deity of eyes, who used to favour (the eyes) earlier while living for the sake of *bhoga* abandons them at the time of death. As a result the ocular power aspect belonging to (*ādityāmsha*) abiding in the eyes leaves them and merges in its source of the sun. Then the *jiva* is unable to see the form. This is true for all functionaries such as sense-organs, organs of action. This is a universally known fact. People say that this dying person does not see, hear etc. At that time all these faculties become one with the subtle body.

ACTUAL TAKE OFF BY THE JIVA

The dying person is not conscious of anything from the external world. Then how can that *jiva* know about its future body to take off from here and reach the next destination. According to the laws of *Ishvara* by *prarabdha karma* there is a glow of cognition at the tip of specific nerve which gives it a clue about the future body and *loka* by the projection of *vasanas*. This phenomenon is called '*pradyota*' (light). It is like the dreamer seeing the dream world though totally unaware of one's waking. Guided by such direction the *jiva* having identified with the future body takes off from the present one. The gate of exit from this body is determined by the *lokas* to be reached. Higher *lokas* are reached through the *brahma-randhra* (aperture in the head), eyes, ears etc. as the case may be. As for other *lokas*, the other parts in body are used as a way of exit. It is determined by one's *karmaphalas*. Thus the *jiva* gets *pradyota* just before departing and departs along with the main *pranas* and the senses. It becomes *savijnana* immediately after the departure. *Pradyota* (the knowledge of the next body) was given to tell from which particular nerve to depart. Immediately after the departure, once again the necessary knowledge (called *vijnana*) is imparted to reach the destined *loka*. (*Br. U.* 4-4-2).

The *śruti* does not give all these details for people to chalk out their travel plan by choosing the desired body and the *loka*. The entity on the verge of death is almost unconscious. There is no free will at that time. These both types of knowledge are programmed by the results of individual's *karmas* and *upasanas* in accordance with the laws of *Ishvara*. The *śruti* cautions all to be careful and selective now itself as directed by the scriptures while deciding what to do and think repeatedly (i.e. *upasanas*). The present *karmas* etc. determine your future. Either get the direct self-knowledge for ever, never to return or at least pray to *Ishvara* sincerely to give you *jnana* and *vairagya*. The *Kenopanishad* warns everyone: If you directly know *atma* during this sojourn on earth, it is well done. If not, great calamity (of transmigration) awaits you (*Ke. U.* 2-5). Therefore do not be complacent with little smoothly running life. The mother *śruti* warns because these topics are beyond the purview of human intellect on their own (i.e. *apourusheya*).

THE ENTITIES THAT ACCOMPANY JIVA

The *śruti* further adds that the result of *vidya* (*upasana*) and *karma* besides the impressions (*samskaras*) in the *antahkarana* in the form of *vasanas* called *purvaprajna* accompany the *jiva* travelling to the next *loka* (*Br. U.* 4-4-2). These three serve as the cause of the future birth and *bhogy* (objects of enjoyment and suffering) etc. available therein. *Vidya* (*upasana*) and *karma* include both enjoined (*vihita*) and forbidden (*nishiddha*). Seeing a nude woman, thinking of it and indulging in pornography is an example of prohibited *upasana*. *Vidya* decides the specific types (species) of the next body. Then *karma* serves as the cause of proficient or deficient features of that body. But *purvaprajna* (*vasana*) manages (carries out) the two (*vidya* and *karma*). *Purvaprajna* is prominent among them because that alone is capable of carrying out the other two. Therefore, importance should be given to develop good *vasanas* (*samskaras*). Five gross elements that go into the constitution of the future body also accompany.

THE MODE HOW JIVA REACHES THE NEXT BODY

A leech having reached the tip of a straw takes the support of the next straw and then only withdraws its remaining part from the previous one. So does the *jiva*, The *śruti* says very clearly that like a leech, *atma* (*jiva*) leaves the earlier body only after fixing the next one accurately. It remembers the next body in the sense it knows clearly it as depicted by the *vasanas* that reveal the next body.

THE MATERIAL CAUSE OF THE FUTURE BODY

The *śruti* describes the material cause of the future body with an illustration of a goldsmith (*Br. U.* 4-4-4). The goldsmith makes new ornaments by melting the earlier one. The basis material gold is the same for both the earlier and the present ornament though their forms are different. As for the new body of the *jiva* the gross (*panchikrita*) five elements used for the earlier body alone serve as the seed though it has further growth by other conducive factors. The travelling subtle body is covered by the portions of grossified five elements from the earlier body. They are minute because of being very little in measure and so are not visible. The new body created by those five elements is further nourished by the sperm (*virya*) of the father, the ovum (*shonita*) of the mother besides all nourishing factors such as food, drink etc. The travelling subtle body of the *jiva* coupled with *vidya* (*upasana*), *karma* and *purvaprajna* (*vasanas*) covered by the constituent gross five elements is like the seed whereas the sperm etc. are necessary supplementary factors for it to grow. It is like a seed growing into a big tree. The soil, manure, water, the sunlight etc. are necessary. But the seed is the original locus. The reason why the *śruti* gives the illustration of a goldsmith is because he uses the same gold that constituted the old ornament to make the new one. Here also a portion of the gross five elements of previous body go into the constitution of new one. When the earlier ornament is melted, its shape gets destroyed. Then a new shape is given. In the case of *jiva*, the old shape is left behind as a corpse. The sperm and ovum of parents cast the shape of new body. The portion of five

gross elements (*bhutamsha*) of earlier body represent the gold. The actual body is in the place of ornament. Thus the subtle body covered by *bhutamsha* travels to take the next body. The transmigration is not only revealed by the *śruti*, but also discussed and established accordingly in the *Brahmasutras*, 'Tadantarapratipatti (3-1-1 to 7)' *adhikarana*. One thing is certain that the topic of transmigration is objectively non-verifiable by the common masses (except in the case of some prodigies though found rarely). One has to depend on the Veda which is the highest means of knowledge (*pramana*) in the case of *apourusheya* (beyond the purview of human intellect) things. There is no room here for free thinking or fallacious arguments. Any number of decrees passed to abolish the phenomenon of transmigration are ridiculous, absurd and display the petty mind of those who indulge in such things for their selfish ends. It cannot alter the truth.

THE MODE OF TRANSMIGRATING FROM LOWER HEAVENS

The mode of transmigration described so far is a mode of *jiva* taking to the next body abandoning the existing human one. In *Chāndogyopaniṣad* (5-10) another mode of departure is described in the case of the inhabitants of heaven procured by the route called *pitryāna* or *dhūma mārḡa* or *dakṣiṇāyana* (southern solstice) *mārḡa*. As usual the entity that travels is the subtle body endowed with *karmaphalas* etc. covered by constituent portion of five gross elements. While descending down to earth it gets united successively with *ākāśa* (space), *vāyu* (air), *dhūma* (vapour), *abhra* (non-raining clouds), *megha* (raining clouds) and vegetation including corns. The exit from the vegetation to a womb through the sperm of a male is very difficult being dreaded with only rare chances (*Ch.U.5-10-5* and 6). The rain may fall on the ocean also. In this case those *jivas* when swallowed by fish etc. will become similar to that. The space, air, vapours, clouds, vegetation etc. are only the carriers of these *jivas* who are in a condition of a swoon as it were. They do not undergo the suffering even while falling from heaven or when the corns or vegetables are pounded, cut, boiled, eaten etc. These *jivas* who have come through the earlier mentioned carriers get the next body without the prior knowledge of the next body. Those *jivas* who are not entitled for heavens either by *devayāna* (*arcimārḡa* or *uttarāyana mārḡa*) or *pitryāna* and whose *karmas* are very bad, directly get bodies of vegetation etc. and go to next body after exhausting that *karma*. They get the knowledge of future birth and the rule of *jalūkā* (leech) applies to them (*Ch.U.5-10-5/6 Bh.*). Those *jivas* who go to *Brahmaloka* through *devayāna* path do not return in this *kalpa*. The others who have gone to lower heavens by *pitryāna* take to their future bodies according to the remaining good or bad *karmas*. The rest of the varieties who do not belong to these two categories get subjected to insignificant bodies of insects etc. with repeated births and deaths (*Ch.U.5-10-8*).

ABORTION

A discussion on the killing involved in abortion and eating of eggs will not be out of context here. The argument as to when the *jiva* enters the foetus is futile because it is present

there from the day one of conception. As seen earlier, the *jīva* in the form of subtle body with the withdrawn senses (also called *prāṇas*) and accompanied by *vidyā* (*upāsana*), *karma* and *vāsanās* travels to take to next body. The subtle body has got the main *prāṇas* (vital airs) in it. The word *jīva* presupposes *prāṇadhāraṇa* (maintenance of life). But the travelling entity, the subtle body, is unconscious or in a state of swoon as it were. The *prāṇa* (vital air) being one of the main constituents of the subtle body, it is not lifeless because *prāṇa* and *cidābhāsa* are present even if it looks temporarily unconscious. This being the case the *jīva* who has entered the womb of its present mother through a sperm has life in it from the very time of conception. At no time the subtle body is lifeless whether conscious or not. All know that the killing of an unconscious person is equally a case of murder. Therefore, causing abortion at any stage is foeticide (*bhrūṇahatyā*), a killing. It is one of the most heinous sinful acts. Those who care for *dharma* must be aware of this. Even the eggs are not lifeless. Eating them involves killing.

THE PLIGHT OF FOETUS IN THE WOMB

The new body of the human species comes to the experiential level of full consciousness on becoming five months old. Remembering its past lives including the deeds therein and being afflicted by the heat of the womb it decides as follows as expressed in its soliloquy as it were. 'Being born in thousands of many and varied species, I have experienced relation with children, wives, wealth, kinsmen etc. in crores. With the sole purpose of fostering the family, zealously I earned wealth by means fair or foul. Me the wretched one never thought of *Paramēśvara* (Viṣṇu) even in the dream. Now I suffer its consequences by getting subjected to great sorrows in this womb. Taking the transient body as permanent and being carried away by insatiable thirst for sense-pleasure, I did many prohibited deeds, but never took my true welfare. Thus having suffered in manifold ways on account of one's *karmas*, I am awaiting now the time when I shall get out from this hellish womb. Thereafter, I will worship *Paramēśvara* all the time'. This way of thinking continues until the *jīva* faces finally the delivery trauma and is born. (*Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, *Uttara khaṇḍa*, *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, *Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa*, 8-21 to 39). But after the birth, the earlier decision is forgotten and the good old game of *saṃsāra* continues in full swing. The above portion from *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* also describes the anatomical development of the human foetus day by day, week by week and month by month. It is well-known that Vedavyāsa is its author.

SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA

The mode of death also reveals the danger that is inevitably present in committing the suicide. A suicide considers that ending the life can solve one's grave problem that cannot be remedied otherwise. Though this appears to be so, on its face value, it is dreaded with intensely torturous condition for that *jīva* after ending the previous body by misuse of will. In the normal death when the earlier *prārabdha* ends naturally, the *jīva* on the verge of dying gets the

knowledge (*pradyotana*) of the future body and the previous body is left like a leech (*jalūkā*) taking support of the next body. This is as per the laws of *Iśvara* since the new body is ready. When a person commits suicide, the *prārabdha* of that body is not over. The next body is not yet ready. There cannot be *pradyotana* about the new body. The leech (*jalūkā*) - method of leaving the earlier body is not possible. The existing physical body has already ended. But there is no new body. The subtle body of such a *jīva* is fully active with pangs of hunger, thirst etc. Even then they cannot be satiated for want of physical body. It is said to be a very torturous state. It is like vacating the earlier tenement without arranging another one only to throw oneself on the footpath. Sri Sathya Sai Baba once cautioned: If people come to know what actually happens after committing the suicide, they will not dare to think of it even in the dream! From the foregoing discussion it should be clear that euthanasia also is not an exception in not having the next body ready for the departing *jīva*. The same fate of suicides awaits for those who subject themselves to such a death.

JESUS DID BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION AND SOUL JOURNEYS TO GOD

Rebirth (reincarnation) is accepted by almost all religions. Its non-acceptance by the present Vatican or the Church is highly questionable. Jesus did believe in rebirth. Many biblical statements are suggestive of rebirth. Out of them the passages regarding 'a man blind from birth' (John 9:1) and the Elijah-John link constitute clear proof of rebirth (Mathew 11:13-14; 17:10-13, 17:1-13; Malachi 4:5, Mark 9:13; 10:29-30). The earlier entity alone continues in a new body after the rebirth gets confirmed by '.... the spirit and power of Elijah' (Luke 1:17).

Christianity for five and a half centuries immediately after Jesus did accept reincarnation. Historical evidence shows that reincarnation was part of the Church's early doctrine and was promoted by Church Fathers, writers who established Christian doctrine prior to the eighth century and whose works were used to disseminate Christian ideas to populations of the Roman Empire. To be considered a Church Father one had to meet the following criteria. One had to lead a holy life; one's writings had to be free from doctrinal error; one's interpretation of Christian doctrine was deemed to be exemplary; and one's writings had to have approval of the Church.

A number of Christian Church Fathers believed in and wrote about reincarnation. The prominent among them are: St. Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.), Origen (185-254 A.D.), who was considered by St. Jerome as 'the greatest teacher of the Church after the Apostles'; St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa (257-332 A.D.); St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.). Other Church Fathers who demonstrated a belief in reincarnation included Synesius (the Bishop of Ptolemais), St. Ambrose, Pope Gregory I, Jerome, St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory of Nazianzus and Clement of Alexandria.

MANIPULATED PAPAL DECREE (MINUS THE POPE) VENTURES TO ABOLISH A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON OF REINCARNATION!

History records that the early Christian Church believed in Reincarnation and of the soul's journey back to oneness with God. This all changed by Imperial decree some 500 plus years after the death of Christ. Emperor Justinian in 545 A.D. was able to apply the full power of Rome and his authority to stop the belief in reincarnation. He forced the ruling cardinals to draft a papal decree stating that anyone who believes that souls come from God and return to God will be punished by death.

A prominent theologian named Origen (185-254 A.D.) wrote about the pre-existence of the soul. He taught that the soul's very source was God and that the soul was travelling back to oneness with God via the lessons learned in multiple lives. He taught that Christ came to show us what we can become. For centuries this was mainstream view of Christianity but 300 years later it became a huge issue and the belief was made illegal because Emperor Constantine believed it was dangerous to the Empire to believe in reincarnation. In the sixth century A.D., Emperor Justinian and Pope Vigilius disagreed on whether or not the teachings of Origen should be condemned as heresy. The Pope supported the teaching as being consistent with the teachings of Jesus the Messiah. The Emperor was determined to eradicate the belief even though the Pope and the Church believed in reincarnation. The fact that the doctrine of reincarnation had been a part of Christian theology for over 500 years did not sway the Emperor.

Emperor Justinian wanted Origen's writings and teachings to be condemned and destroyed but Pope Vigilius refused to sign a papal decree condemning Origen's teachings on reincarnation. As a result of his disobedience, the Emperor had the Pope arrested and put into jail. In 543 A.D., Justinian convoked the Fifth General Council of the Church and told the Pope he would sign whatever the Council decided. On the way there, under guard, the Pope escaped to avoid being forced to condemn Origen's writings. The Emperor commanded the Council to continue despite the Pope's refusal to attend.

There was a logical reason why the Emperor was opposed to the concept that all of mankind originally came from God and was returning to God via the cycle of birth and death. Justinian had been convinced by high ranking cardinals that it was not in the interest of the Empire to allow Origen's writings to continue to be copied and distributed. A powerful group of Cardinals and Bishops explained that **if every soul had once pre-existed with God, then Christ wasn't anything special to have come from God. These Cardinals convinced the Emperor that if people realized they were the children of God, they might begin to believe they no longer needed an Emperor, or to pay taxes, or to obey the Holy Church. But since they reasoned that only Christ had come from God but God made brand new souls at the**

time of conception and only the Holy Church could bring these souls to God. Without the protection of the Empire or the guidance of the Church, all people would be doomed to be forever cut off from God in Hell. This doctrine was very acceptable to the Emperor. Once Justinian understood the political danger inherent in Origen's teachings, the rest was simply an Emperor doing what was in his best interest.

The Fifth Ecumenical Council, A.D. 545, as instructed by the Emperor, produced fourteen new anathemas and the very first one condemned reincarnation and the concept that souls pre-existed with God. "If anyone asserts the fabulous pre-existence of souls, and shall assert the monstrous restoration which follows from it: let him be anathema." Even though these events are in the history books, modern Christianity treats the doctrine of reincarnation today as if Jesus never taught it or that the early Church ever believed it. The fact that a soul comes from God and is destined to become God, as Christ is God, is the very reason why Satan rebelled.¹

All thinking persons know for certain that no natural phenomenon or the universal truth is at the mercy of someone's acceptance nor fears its rejection. It is in our interest to abide by the law of nature. Rebirth is not a speculation of someone, however great a historical person he may be. It (rebirth) is declared and described by the Veda which reveals the knowledge that is imperceptible and un-inferable. It is not dogmatic. If the omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent divinity principle can Create the cosmos, it can equally provide a guidebook revealing the things that cannot be known otherwise. That body of knowledge is the Veda. The Veda is the highest *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge) regarding the things that are beyond the grasp of human intellect on its own. Fanatic minds or minds busy in fulfilling an institutionalized personal agenda in the name of religion will not understand this fact. Such exploiters are in all walks of life. Religion is not an exception. The Veda and the *Sanātana dharma* (called Hinduism) based on it are not centred around any historical persons including incarnations such as Lord Rāma, Lord Kṛṣṇa etc. unlike all the other religions. The Veda is universal. It does not belong to Hindus alone. In the entire cosmos, it is the only body of knowledge that enables to know all that is beyond the range of human intellect. The statement of Jesus about the reincarnation and soul's journey back to oneness with God is not any figment of his mind unlike the same of those with vested interest who manipulated papal decree in the Fifth Ecumenical Council, A.D. 545, with anathemas against Origen. But it is the truth established in the Vedas which is directly cognised by the great masters from the time immemorial, and logically established in the *Brahmasūtras* by the great Sage Veda Vyāsa. Whether the followers of other religions accept it or not, the Veda forms the basis of all religions

¹ Internet – Pope Arrested for Believing in Reincarnation; Wikipedia - Pope Vigilius; scriptural support for reincarnation; <http://reluctant-messenger.com/origenz.html> ;
http://www.adishakti.org/_great_cover_up_of_reincarnation.htm
<http://www.iisis.net/index.php?page%semkiw-reincarnation-past-life-lives-christianity;>

just as the mother earth is to all the palaces, mansions, buildings, houses and huts. In this context, it is worth considering what Swami Vivekānanda has to say about Christianity in spite of his great respect for Jesus. He says: 'Christianity with all its boasted civilization is but a collection of little bits of Indian thought. Ours is the religion of which Buddhism, with all its greatness, is a rebel child, and of which Christianity is a very patchy imitation'.²

EPILOGUE

It is in the interest of all humans to know what is death and what is in store thereafter. It is advisable to safeguard one's interest right now here while living by setting the right values, the goal of life and conduct. Refusal to accept the universal laws or getting carried away by the promises of those who are not eligible to do so is not a solace to escape transmigration. Refusal to accept any universal law or not knowing it cannot be a solution. It is like the laws of a country. You follow them and safeguard your interest. Even a peasant cannot plead ignorance of laws of country in any court of law. The Vedas speak of both verifiable and non-verifiable topics. The ultimate truth unfolded in the Upanishads (the final purport of the Vedas), efficacy of certain sacrifices meant for some results here, the prediction of eclipses with utmost precision without any modern gadgets are verifiable. Based on this, the correctness of the Vedas can be inferred in the case of non-verifiable subject also. Those who deny or decry the Vedas have no basis whatsoever to do so. Thus to make or mar ourselves is left to our unbiased approach.

² Vivekānanda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora, Pg.195