

TO AWAKENING, PART 4

In the last part we have introduced to you the existence of the soul by the scientific study on NDE, OBE, and the physicists' attempted explanation. Now let me cite two classic stories to see how amazing our souls are.

A Soul That Rescued a Ship in Distress

In 1978, a book titled *Mysteries of the Inner Self* by Stuart Holroyd (born 1933) of England introduced two classic stories that have been well-researched by the scientific community. The first story, *The Soul That Rescued a Ship in Distress*, was originally published in 1859 in Robert Owen's book, *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*.

This incident happened in 1828. A merchant ship that traveled between England and Canada had been at sea for six weeks. The first mate entered the captain's office while the captain was watching the weather from the deck.

In the captain's office, the first mate Bruce discovered a man he had never seen before. Writing something on a note board, this stranger looked up at Bruce, stony-faced. It gave Bruce goosebumps! He ran to tell the captain. The captain followed Bruce, quickly returning to the office. Yet they found nobody. But the note board was still there, bearing the words: Sail to the northwest.

The captain asked,

"Are you trying to trick me, Bruce? Or deliberately making up some story?"

The first mate said, "I swear I just saw this person writing these exact words."

The captain had the first mate and all of the crew write "Sail to the Northwest." None of their handwriting matched. The captain was puzzled. They had been at sea for six weeks! How could a complete stranger appear on the ship? They searched from bow to stern but found nothing.

Although it would be a detour of a few hours to head northwest, the captain gave the order to follow the mysterious note. About three hours later, they saw an iceberg ahead. A ship had struck the iceberg and was stuck in the ice.

People onboard were frantically waving to them for help. The captain immediately ordered the lifeboats deployed, and his crew rescued the stranded people,

one by one. Among those who were rescued, First Mate Bruce saw someone he recognized. It was the stranger whom he had seen in the captain's office. He excitedly pointed the man out to the captain. The captain called him over and asked him to write these few words—Sail to the northwest. The handwriting was exactly the same. Even the man himself could not explain it.

Everyone asked, "What's going on?"

Slowly, the memory came back to him.

He said, "About three hours ago, after our boat got stuck, everybody was rushing to help. We were all very tired. So I laid down and fell asleep." He said that he had a dream about a boat that would rescue them. After he woke up, he told his shipmates not to worry, because help was on the way. He even described the appearance, the color, and the shape of the boat he had seen in his dream. The ship that came to their rescue was the ship he described.

It appears that the soul of this unknown man left his body during his sleep and found a ship to rescue them and even left his writing—Sail to the northwest. The writing is "hard scientific evidence" that the soul has enough energy not only to travel but to leave a note! This suggests that the soul is not limited by time and space; it can transcend time and space!

A Soul That Bought a House

The second story is about a woman in Ireland who often experienced astral projection. One time, while she was astral projecting, she saw a house that she was fond of. Afterward, her soul visited this house several times. She really liked the house, from the inside to the outside, from the furniture to the layout. She liked it all. But she did not know where the house was.

Later, she and her husband moved from Ireland to London. They searched the advertisements for a house bargain and visited a few. The woman immediately recognized the house she had seen in her astral projections. Everything was exactly the same as what she saw and the price was surprisingly cheap! The agent warned them that the house was haunted, but they decided to buy it anyway.

They made an appointment to meet with the owner.

As soon as they saw each other, the owner screamed out loud,

"Ah! It is you, the ghost!"

The owner had seen this woman many times in his house. What he saw was her spirit, but he thought his house was haunted and wanted to sell it as quickly as possible.

A Free Spirit Becomes a Slave to the Body

Ireland and London are more than 400 kilometers apart. The soul can indeed go beyond the distance and travel freely without obstacles.

The soul should be the master of the physical body, but when we become attached to the body, our soul becomes its slave. In order to satisfy our physical desires, we give rise to greed, resentment, ignorance, and arrogance, leading us to create innumerable karmas by killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, etc.

Not only do we create many karmas but look for different houses life after life and suffer endless retribution.

The ancient Chinese philosopher Laozi said, “My biggest worry is that I have this body.” Why did Laozi say that? According to Buddhism, we can reach any place in the universe in one thought, just like when we are dreaming at night, we can go any place and even different dimensions. Look, without the body, we will be free. How wonderful it is!

Anita Moorjani in a video of Dying to Be Me shared her near death experience, “I was in a coma. My eyes were closed but I could see everything happening all around my body, not just in the room where my body was, but beyond. I could be everywhere at the same time, It was like whatever I put my awareness on, there I was.”

This near death experience has proved the Buddha’s teaching—we can reach any place in the universe. But, if we are narrow-minded, the places we can reach will be very limited. For instance, if we do not know there are worlds beyond the six paths, we would not be able to give rise to thoughts to go. Therefore, to learn the truth of life and the universe, to broaden our mind is crucial to our liberation from reincarnation.

Time and Space Are an Illusion of Mankind

The Father of Modern Physics, Albert Einstein, has proposed that time and space are illusions of mankind. His Theory of Relativity confirmed that both time and space are determined by the relative speed of an object. When an object is moving at high speeds, the time of this object will be lengthened, a phenomenon called Time Dilation. At the same time, the object’s length will be shortened and its space shrunk.

For example, suppose one of twin brothers flies off into space at nearly the speed of light. Based on Relativity, time runs more slowly on his spacecraft than it does on Earth; therefore, when he returns to Earth, he will be younger than his Earth-bound brother.

Time and space are variable factors, they are not absolute or concrete; Einstein called them an illusion. The Buddha also told us that time and space are human delusions. Look, the “illusion” and “delusion” are equally matched.

Buddhist scriptures indicates that one day in Trāyas-Triṃśa Heaven is equal to one hundred years on Earth. One day in Yama Heaven is two hundred years on Earth. And one day in Tusita Heaven is four hundred years on Earth. This fact taught by the Buddha has amazingly been confirmed by Einstein. No wonder some said that Buddhism contains not only profound philosophy but the most advanced science.

How Big Is the Universe?

On another note, how big is the universe? According to Buddhaist Sutras, a Buddha’s edifying area is called a trichiliocosm. How big is a trichiliocosm? It is 1,000 unit worlds cubed. That is one billion unit worlds. How big is one unit world? It is a world surrounding Mt. Sumeru. Since no one knows where Mt. Sumeru is, various interpretations of a unit world have been proposed. Many believe that a unit world is a solar system. Think about it, a trichiliocosm is a Buddha’s edifying area—such as our Saha World is Shakyamuni Buddha’s edifying area—it is one billion solar systems! There are infinite Buddhas plus the dimensions that are unknown by our mundane power, so how big is the universe? It is simply impossible for us to imagine, let alone to reach it.

Modern science has been eager to explore space beyond our planet, however, we will still be in the same dimension no matter how far we reach. Some people think that the Earth will soon not be suitable for human living, so humans should find some other planets to live on. But, isn’t it more practical to fix our gravely damaged Earth?

If we cannot fix the problems of our Earth which already has life, does it make sense to create a living environment on a planet that currently has no life? The influence of amending our planet Earth will be enormous and far-reaching, if scientists and entrepreneurs shift their focus from spending money on outer space to our planet Earth, people of generation after generation can all benefit from it. How mighty will the merit be?

In the next part we will introduce to you a fascinating case designated by the father of India, Mahatma Gandhi, and an inspiring conversation between the Buddha and his disciples about life.