

TO AWAKENING, PART 6

A Soul Reviving a Dead Body

One of Professor Stevenson's cases is very special, it is the example stated in history as "a soul reviving a dead body."

In the spring of 1954, a little boy in India named Jasbir died at the age of three. His parents were very sad and prepared to bury him the next morning, but at midnight, the coffin began to move. This child woke up slowly and started to speak. His father felt very happy until he heard his three-year-old son claim that he was a twenty-two-year-old Brahmin man from the village of Vehedi.

Professor Stevenson and others began to investigate. Based on his description, they found the family of his past-life. After verification, they confirmed that what he said was correct. This was a case of "a soul reviving a dead body."

According to the investigation, Jasbir, the three-year-old child, was dead. The soul that came to this body was actually another person, a 22-year-old Brahmin youth. He said, "I was attending a relative's wedding, another relative who owed me money had poisoned me. On the way back home, I fell off the carriage and died." This Brahmin youth could even remember his murderer's name! He was clenching his teeth in bitter hatred as he spoke this relative's name.

Like or Dislike at First Glance?

The professors found that there really was such a person and such an incident. That person fell from the carriage and died after attending the wedding. People thought that he had died from a carriage accident and didn't realize that he had been murdered.

The person who killed this 22 year old Brahmin youth in his former life had a very evil intention—To wish death falls upon his creditor so as to escape debt. He thought that he could escape the debt by murdering his creditor—he was wrong—the creditor would remember and gnash his teeth every time he thought of it, even in a different lifetime. Once there was a chance, the creditor would surely retaliate.

Sometimes we meet someone who we simply feel happy to be with, but sometimes we encounter someone whom we will feel very uncomfortable with or even detest, this may have a great deal to do with past lives' incidents. Understanding this truth, how could it be possible that we dare to do shameful things?

Examples of "a soul reviving a dead body" are often recorded in some classical books in Chinese history, such as *A Collection of Bizarre Stories (Liao Zhai Zhi Yi)*. We must not regard this book as merely a mythical storybook; the stories are actually true. Even *The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor (Huang Di Nei Jing)*, an ancient Chinese medical text, also records the example of "a soul reviving a dead body."

A Thai Monk Reincarnated from His Own Uncle

Another case, also from Professor Stevenson, is about a well-respected monk Venerable Chao Kung who was born as his sister's son in Surin Province, Thailand in 1908.

His late uncle had been a devout Buddhist before his death. He liked to do sitting meditation every day. He was also very fond of his little sister. This little sister, named Naileng, was now the mother of Venerable Chao Kung. When Venerable Chao Kung began to speak, he was able to remember things from his former life. He called his own mother "little sister" and regarded his grandmother as "mother." Obviously, this would be correct from his late uncle's point of view, but from the perspective of his present life, it was wrong.

In Thailand, there is a custom that says people will encounter many misfortunes if, as children, they remember their previous life. So his family prohibited Venerable Chao Kung from talking about his past life.

One time, after he became a monk, the abbot asked, "Do you know anybody who can remember their previous life?" Venerable Chao Kung answered, "I can remember." So he began to narrate and wrote down what he remembered.

He described in detail the process of his own death: "I, in my past life, was intermittently sick for a few months. My sister acted very differently after she became pregnant. She did not like to eat sour foods as in her previous pregnancies but liked to meditate and began to have a very strong faith in Buddhism."

One day, he heard his relatives talking about his sister giving birth to a baby boy, very cute, so he decided to go and see this baby. He exhaled a few heavy sighs then closed his eyes. He saw that many relatives and friends had gathered around his body, crying. He told everyone, "Hey guys, don't cry; I am still here, living well." But those relatives could neither see nor hear him. He grabbed this person's arm, pulled that person's leg, but they all ignored him. He then thought, let me go and see my little sister and her new baby.

When he arrived, the sister could see him and said to him, "Dear brother, you have already gone to another world. Please do not appear in front of us. Do not worry about us." The soul of Venerable Chao Kung thought, "She is right. I must leave since there are different worlds. But, let me see the baby one more time before leaving."

When he tried to take a last glance at the baby, he felt as if he was drawn by some kind of spiral force. Soon he was unconscious. When he woke up later, he had become a little infant.

The Power of Directing Karma and Particularizing Karma

In Buddhism, the force that decides one's destination is called "directing karma," which pulls you towards your next birth. The directing karma refers to your last thoughts, you will be taken to the corresponding path and be reincarnated. For this reason, the state of mind of a dying person is extremely important.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught us to remind a dying person to keep good thoughts, and the best thought among all is "reciting Amitabha," because Amitabha is the only Buddha who vows to escort all beings in their departing moment to His Pure Land. Once we are escorted by Amitabha and arrive in His Pure Land, we will never suffer but enjoy all happiness. In other words, we can transcend reincarnation to learn the truth of life and the universe in the best school of the cosmos.

The world is manifested by what we are thinking. People who are thinking of Jesus will be born into heaven. People who recite Amitabha will be escorted by Amitabha to His Pure Land. If you are having the thoughts of greed, resentment, or ignorance when you die, such as thinking about your house or children, then you will be reincarnated to one of the six paths. People who attach to their house might even become a mouse to guard it!

So we must be particularly vigilant about what we are thinking.

The last thought of Venerable Chao Kung's former life was of the baby, so he was reborn as his sister's son. However, some may have the question about when the soul exists during a mother's pregnancy. According to Buddhism, a soul comes to a fetus at the very moment of conception. Yet, if the original soul of the fetus had very light affinity with the mother and died, another soul who has deeper affinity with the mother could revive the dead fetus or infant.

The professors who investigated later found out that the lifestyle, expression, and attitude of Venerable Chao Kung were indeed very similar to those of his late uncle.

In addition to directing karma, there is also particularizing karma, which will decide the general reward or retribution of our next life. For example, if the last thought in one's departure is ignorance, he will be born into the animal path. But if he has done a lot of good deeds to have a good particularizing karma, his fortune will be rewarded in that path. We have seen many pets enjoying great fortune and being taken care of meticulously, yet some people's lives are much less fortunate than those pets. This phenomenon can be explained by the different directing karma and particularizing karma of each individual. Therefore, to practice giving rise to good thoughts and cultivate virtues at ordinary times are extremely important.

In the next part, we will explain to you why most people forget their past lives and present to you two amazing reincarnation stories—two famous Confucian scholars who predicted their next lives.