

MUNI AMARENDRAVIJAYJI



SCIENCE DISCOVERS ETERNAL WISDOM

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WISDOM**

MUNI SHRI AMARENDRAVIJAYJI

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Gandhidham-370 201 India**

**SCIENCE DISCOVERS ETERNAL WISDOM
(SPIRITUALITY)**

BY MUNI SHRI AMARENDRAVIJAYJI

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Thinking Aloud

The news of Man's successful landing on the moon and the retrieval of lunar rock samples during subsequent exploits in outer space hit the headlines in a big way world over; it created quite a commotion in religious circles too. The traditionally credulous amongst religious orthodoxy also began to question the validity of its archaic contentions in cosmology in the light of incontrovertible evidence presented by such scientific expeditions. To placate their perturbed minds and to cover up the credibility gap thus opened in their orthodox beliefs, the spokesmen for the 'establishment' in the religious order kept on mumbling such namby-pamby explanations as 'the story of man on the moon is just another hoax played by the scientists'. How can such naivete wash with the intelligentsia today ?

If the veteran loyalists of religious orthodoxy find their faith rudely shaken today, what chance does the younger generation stand ? As it is, the youth have always been blamed for ridiculing religion and rebelling against established order by defying traditional thought. However, there is a class of young men and women today who have healthy regard for religion and open-minded inquisitiveness towards fundamental spiritual truths. But, they are so over-awed by modern scientific achievements, that they hesitate to place their trust in the eternal wisdom and traditional lore of the scriptures. There is yet another section of youngsters mostly students at school-college level who do believe in the words of the luminaries of the mystic path, but are wary of expressing their convictions in the open for fear of being alienated or banished by the general mass holding sway at these educational institutions. Their herd-instinct gets the better of their spiritual stirrings and impels them to fall in line with the brute majority and join the blasphemous cacophony considered so 'intellectual' and

'trendy' now a days. Under such conditions, I had, for long, felt the need of the presentation of the scriptural truths in a form that would enable the present generation as well as the one that is to be groomed for the future to form the right frame of mind to evaluate spiritual truths in their proper perspective.

It was merely a chance occurrence that led me to give a concrete shape to this idea. During the monsoon of 1968 a.d., our twenty-eight member monastic group was stationed at Pindwara under the stewardship of rev. Shri Hemantvijayji. He had proposed that during the ensuing paryusana - an eight-day Jain festival (similar to Christmas of Christian faith), the eight-day discourse sessions on the highly esteemed Jain scripture - Kalpasutram - be led on each day by a different member by turns who would deliver the discourse of the day. Accordingly, I was assigned to give a talk on the sixth chapter of Kalpasutram which covers the topic of 'Ganadhar-vada' - the first dialogue between Lord Mahavir and his arch-disciples. It contains a reference to the episode of how the eleven most brilliant scholars of the time including the highly acclaimed Indrabhuti Gautam accept discipleship at the feet of Lord Mahavir; They did so because they felt very enlightened by the masterly exposition of Lord Mahavir on the themes like soul, Karma, the yonder world, rebirth etc. which dispelled all the doubts that had plagued their minds for so long.

In this context, it is customary to dilate upon theosophical niceties and ideological hair-splitting between various schools of religious thought, ostensibly with a view to consolidating the faith of the audience in Jainism. I, however, felt that a change in style was called for, because it would be too much to expect that the present-day audience would benefit from such verbiage. The listener today suffers from self-doubt with his intuitive faith leaning one way while reality of scientific

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'miracles' like moon-landing etc. pulling his rational mind in opposite direction. Torn between these two, he goes through the motions of religious activities as mere ritual. The new generation is, of course, much worse off, lingering on the verge of heresy. It occurred to me that 'Ganadhar-vada' should be presented in such a way that the rationalists among the present generation may find in it a solution to their doubts and the newer generation may be inspired to lend a credulous ear to the fundamental spiritual truths like existence of soul, karma, rebirth etc. This, to my mind, seemed the crying need of the hour. With this in view, I selectively prepared some points for my presentation. Within the time-schedule that day, I could barely touch upon a few of them, but the interest it aroused in the younger section of the audience prompted me to jot down whatever points I had rummaged over in my mind for the talk.

The present work, therefore, addresses itself mainly to the up and coming generation and is aimed at helping them grasp the basic principles of religion and spiritual values. It is, therefore, quite likely that the scholarly readers looking for an in-depth discussion in an academic vein on soul-principle etc. or detailed deliberation on the modes of mystic practice may find this work lacking in that respect. Those who already possess well-founded faith in spiritual values may also find this book of not much use at first glance; I am deliberately qualifying my statement thus, because even those well-convinced of the spiritual truth find it heartening to read that the results of modern scientific research tend to support the wisdom of the sages of yore and that science is beginning to reaffirm that wisdom, albeit in a different way; it would help in getting their faith rationalised. It pleases me to note here that quite a few seasoned campaigners of the spiritual trail have expressed their delight and amazement when they personally experienced their well-grounded faith reinforced after reading

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this book with more than cursory interest. Of course, everyone may not share such enthusiasm. I do hope and trust that perusal of this book would enable the younger generation who may not have great faith in religion today but are open-minded enough to think without bias to develop a rational approach to spiritual truth and realistic reappraisal of religion for themselves.

Nothing would please me more than to know that by reading this book, those who have a flicker of faith already kindled in their hearts could derive greater succour and spiritual strength; it would also hopefully brighten their inner-selves with such steady luminescence of faith that they could feel proud and confident to express their convictions and sentiments amidst their friends and comrades without feeling any sense of inferiority or fear of ridicule.

— Muni Amarendravijayji

Translator's Note

Twentieth century has witnessed revolutionary changes in human life brought about by scientific discoveries; hence, it is labelled variously as jet age, atomic age, space age and now computer age depending upon the dominating factor of influence. During the same period, renaissance in spiritual field by way of research and exchange of ideas beyond the geo-cultural barriers has been slowly but surely taking place both in the East and the West. As a result, terms like yoga, karma, transcendental meditation, mantra and tantra have become household words.

Apparently, science and spiritualism seem to be poles apart holding on to their beliefs and dogmas, but recent upsurge of popular interest in both compels us to take a fresh look at them. While doing so, if a broad and unbiased view is adopted, we may be in for a happy surprise to find the truth lying on either side of the dividing line.

A presentation made by a specialist in a particular field may be brilliant but it usually offers a one-sided view and could suffer from profusion of details cluttering up the over-all picture. In the present work, however, the author His Holiness Munishri Amarendravijayji has provided a wide-angle view of the universe with man at its centre. When spotlighted thus by scriptural wisdom of yore and scientific knowledge of modern times, a holistic image of man - body, mind and spirit - begins to emerge as a three dimensional reality.

The depth of perception of this world-view from spiritual as well as scientific angle derives from the author's personal, firsthand experience of the spiritual path and impersonal objectivity of thought nurtured by scientific temper of a thorough rationalist. What a perfect blending of intuitive wisdom of the

mystic path with carefully cultivated scholarship/understanding of the modern science !

Coming as it does, from a member of Jain monastic order, the present work would be an eye-opener for those who reflexly reject anything remotely related to religion as nonsense; at the same time, it shall serve as a warning to those blinkered with religious orthodoxy who decline to discuss with a dissenter or give an opponent his due.

Written originally in Gujarati, the book has enjoyed such popularity that some periodicals serialized it in full, others published its abridged version and its fourth edition is out of print for some time now. Its Hindi version was also well received by readers and reviewers alike and its second edition also ran out of stock.

I consider it my good fortune and proud privilege to have had the opportunity of commencing translation work under the aegis of His Holiness Munishri Amarendravijayji with his kind blessings and had hoped to complete it in due course, but fate had something else in store; it is now my sad plight to bring it to completion without his guiding hand to direct, his benevolent heart to inspire or his saintly presence to bless it. Hopefully, the subtle vibrations of his spiritual grace descending upon us may yet be experienced if we fine-tune our receptors by following the path he has pointed out in his numerous writings.

The onus of doing a modicum of justice to his superb authorship by translating it with the fluency and splendour of the original prose is too heavy to be shouldered by a novice like me. Fortunately, His Holiness Munishri Bhuvanchandraji has been kind enough to come to my rescue. By taking charge of the situation, he spearheaded the activities guiding,

organising and successfully bringing the project to fruition with great skill and resourcefulness. His contribution by way of additions, alterations and rewriting part of the revised Gujarati edition speaks volumes for his scholarship and know-how. His painstaking review of the translation draft pinpointing the areas of changes to match the original, made my work that much easier, not to mention the boost it gave to my morale.

Words cannot suffice to express my feelings of gratitude and reverence towards both these luminaries of the mystic path without whose help, guidance and blessings I could have achieved nothing. To the extent that this rendering is found lacking, my inaptness is responsible, while credit for its merits obviously belongs to the original author H.H. Munishri Amarendravijayji and in equal measure to H.H. Munishri Bhuvanchandraji for giving it not only the facelift it needed but a new lease of life as a translated version in English.

— J. D. Lodaya

Editor's Note

The present work represents a significant milestone on the literary trail carved by His Holiness Munishri Amarendravijayji. Even after its four editions in Gujarati and two in Hindi, the book continues to be in demand. It is now twenty years since it was first published. During this period, scientific innovation and research have brought out a lot of new information; in view of this, Munishri had begun the process of updating the book. However, the time he had intended to spend for its revision was quite often taken away by indifferent health and incessant flow of visitors seeking his guidance and blessings.

On 23rd. June 1992, suddenly, after a brief spell of illness, he discarded his mortal shell, hence the planned revision for the book at his hands did not materialise. On the basis of notes and collected material left behind by him, an attempt has been made here to revise this edition incorporating additions/alterations envisaged by him so that his efforts are not lost and that readers may hopefully benefit from the same.

Now, a word about the English translation. It was undertaken some years ago under the guidance of Munishri who had gone through, corrected and approved the draft. Its publication, however, was scheduled to follow the new revised Gujarati edition which unfortunately takes place now in the absence of Munishri. It becomes expedient to clarify here that if discussion about the latest trends in science appears lacking, it is because the revised edition has not received the full benefit of the original author's expert handling and creative genius. As mentioned earlier, the present revision is based on notes and material left behind which also could be utilised only to the extent of their comprehension by me. It is, therefore, but natural that all he had in mind may not be found here; it

is hoped that the readers will bear this fact in mind while undertaking the study of this book.

Through a diligent attempt to maintain the fluency of the original in this translation, Dr. Lodaya has tried to serve the cause of those in quest of spiritual knowledge. His reverence and love for Munishri inspired him to do his best in this creative effort. Without doubt, this auspicious act would be instrumental in spiritual progress of Dr. Lodaya and many others.

— Muni Bhuvanchandraji

About the Author

Born in 1925, his Holiness Munishri Amarendravijayji as a bright, intelligent young man was keenly interested in studies. In 1942, he passed Matriculation Examination of Bombay University with distinction in science and joined college for further studies in science stream with a view to medical career. However, difficulty in coming to terms with biology dissections on frogs etc. due to ingrained abhorrence of violence and the influence of the call for freedom movement of '42 made him quit studies.

Constructive social work as per Gandhian ideology on one hand and intuitive leanings towards spiritualism on the other had brought him to the cross-roads of his future career and life. Talking about his inner turmoil in those days, in an interview published in his booklet on Navkar (Cancer Dissolved by Divine Grace), he has described how the unseen hand of Navkar's grace steered him towards the decision to join the holy order through a book which came to his hand quite by chance. Thus, in 1951, at the age of 26, his initiation into the holy order took place.

During those early years of ordainment, he undertook an in-depth study of Jain scriptural literature and comparative study of other schools of religious thought to get a complete over-view of the spiritual field. His writings bear testimony to his keen insight and deep understanding of this complex field.

He was never interested in the ritualistic aspect of religion with populist overtones of pomp and ceremony. He was more keen to delve in the core of religion that has direct bearing on spirituality and inner refinement. How ardent was his quest for right knowledge can be seen from the excerpt

taken from the foreword to his book 'Atmagnan ane Sadhnapath' (Self-knowledge and Path of Practice) :

“ Quite often after the evening group-prayer, I silently prayed for the right knowledge to guide me in the correct mode of practice and begged for inner strength to reach the goal -- the light at the end of the tunnel. ”

The light did come. One day, the answers to his longstanding queries came to him like a revelation in the form of intuitive flooding of thoughts that overflowed in his writings; thus began his literary journey on the spiritual trail as an expression of spontaneous thoughts welling up from within.

The philosophy and the mode of practice according to Jainism and its relevance in modern times as well as its comparative evaluation vis-a-vis other traditions of spiritual practice are amply reflected in his writings. His firsthand experience of spiritual path and unique interpretation of 'Anekanta-vada' (theory of multiple viewpoints) - the essence of Jain theology - enabled him to see with clarity the underlying commonality/universality of spiritual values in all religions reflecting an open-mindedness in his outlook and unorthodox approach.

His magnum opus 'Self-knowledge and Path of Practice' has such a sincerity of appeal, balancing of arguments and wide-ranging ambit that it puts him at par with the leading luminaries of Jain literary tradition.

As a true follower of Lord Mahavir's Anekanta-Vada, he dedicated this book to Maharshi Ramana whose sayings had lighted his path of self-knowledge and helped in truly understanding the teachings of Lord Mahavir in their correct perspective. But this caused quite a furore in the established

monastic community that withdrew away alienating him from the monastic mainstream. Considering it as a blessing in disguise, he treaded the mystic path as a solitary traveller for a couple of decades. It was a difficult trail full of obstacles that all great men come across in their lives aptly echoing the sentiments of the famous lines of poet Rabindranath Tagore,

‘Go forth along your chosen trail,
Care not, if no one heeds your hail’.

The intelligentsia in general and Jain community in particular came to know of his intellectual brilliance and spiritual wisdom through a series of articles - a forerunner of this book - published in the prestigious ‘Bombay Samachar’ in 1971. As already mentioned, its present book-form that came out thereafter continues to be well-received by readers and reviewers alike till today along with his equally popular work ‘Atmagnan ane Sadhanapath’ already referred to above.

He never acted like a ‘Guru’. He preferred to be a friend, philosopher and guide. Seekers — Jain as well as non-Jain—continued to visit him till his last days and benefitted from his mature guidance and inspiration. He was ever-ready to help sincere seekers.

He was not interested in traditional religiosity and kept himself away from the ritualistic mores, yet he respected the norms of ordained life and its high ideals. He insisted on putting them in practice in a rational way. As much as he was against narrow-mindedness in thinking, he was equally resolute about the place of discipline in life and strict adherence to moral code of conduct. Notwithstanding his unorthodox approach, he firmly believed in the traditional values preserved in our cultural and religious heritage.

He had given deep thought to 'Kayotsarga', a Jain form of transcendental meditation and Maharshi Ramana's system of 'Atma-vichar'-meditation on selfhood - and could see their practical application in a workable form in Vipasyana, mode of meditation taught by Lord Buddha. He underwent practical experience of this system and found it to be an effective tool to achieve the spiritual goals propounded by Lord Tirthankara, namely freedom from egotism, the false soul-body identification, instinctual desires and karmic bondage; he freely recommended it to many aspirants displaying once again his open-mindedness to grasp all good things irrespective of their source in a true spirit of application of Lord Mahavir's Anekanta-vada.

He kept himself well informed of the modern trends in science and general knowledge, being astutely selective to sift the chaff from the grain in view of the information explosion of our times. In him, there was perfect blending of modern scientific knowledge and ancient spiritual wisdom. What an ideal member of Jain monastic order would be like in coming times can be visualised in his image and his writings will continue to prove more and more relevant and topical to all Jains with rapidly changing scenario of the world in our present age.

In a rare retrospective mood during his last illness, as parting thoughts to his inmates, he had confided, " I have striven to transcend the dualities of like-dislike, attraction-aversion in my lifetime; the work is not over yet, but I am satisfied with what has been achieved so far. I am ready for the inevitable disconnection with this physical frame anytime. Let it come." He left his body on 23rd. June, 1992 at Tithal, Gujarat.

A great mystic, poet-philosopher and seasoned

campaigner on the spiritual trail, Shri Makrand Dave has hailed him as the TRUE Jain Muni. A senior Jain scholar and author, Shri Virendra Kumar Jain has placed him as the front-liner among the torch-bearers of Jain literary lineage that can boast of such illustrious predecessors as Siddhasen Diwakar, Acharya Haribhadrasuri and Yogi Anandghanji.

He was indeed among those rare souls who long for and live for nothing but truth.

— Muni Bhuvanchandraji

Publisher's Note

The present organisation owes its inception to a pair of prominent personalities of the Jain community of Gandhidham, Shri Devjibhai and Shri Nanjibhai Shah, the founders of Shah Engineering Co. of Gandhidham and worthy sons of Late Shri Champsibhai Shah, a business magnate hailing from Merau village (Mandvi-Kutch). Their handsome offer of Rs. 1.5 lakhs as donation for promoting publication of Jain literary works of merit set the ball rolling towards the formation of Jain Sahitya Academy by us at Gandhidham.

Jainism that once presented to this world the unique concept of multi-dimensional viewpoint (Syadvada) and propounded it as an integral part of its philosophy and rationale appears to be losing ground as the most rational and scientifically evolved school of religious thought; this has come to pass because intellectual stagnation and ideological isolation have pushed the present followers of Jainism into an abyss of insularity, narrowmindedness and parochialism in their approach to life as reflected in their words and deeds. The logic and rationality associated with the wide-angle view of the world as enunciated by Syadvada—the hallmark of Jain literary tradition — has become a thing of the past. This becomes particularly relevant in the present-day context of scientific temper pervading all walks of life and attempts by all other religions to open out and make a common cause of spiritual upliftment of the humanity. This wind of change is sweeping across the continents with lowering of geo-cultural barriers through globalisation of communication channels made possible by modern science. In contrast, the bulk of the publications churned out in the name of Jain literary tradition is so pedestrian in its thought-content and banal in form that it is no better than the paperback pulp peddled as literature by pen-pushers and plagiarists. The penalty that we have to pay for this profligate publishing may amount to a staggering sum; such colossal

waste, however is tolerated without raising an eyebrow by the so-called guardians of Jain literary heritage. Creative, Original and thought-provoking writing is conspicuous by its absence while archaic anecdotal material is passed on as original work and recycling as research.

In such a setting, it will be our endeavour to bring to light such literary creations that deserve wider circulation among discerning readers but have remained unpublished due to lack of sponsorship. In this activity, our guiding principle has been to aspire for quality rather than quantity and open-door policy envisages to include works of Jain or Non-Jain authors in any language (Gujarati, Hindi, English etc.) so long as they are based on the principles of Jainism and are in accordance with its philosophy.

Our organisation wishes to provide a suitable vehicle to convey the vast treasure of knowledge of yore to the world of today. Hence, the publication of great classical works of Jain tradition in the modern form will be our main concern; nevertheless, new works which can promote the above-said aim will also be equally welcome.

It is in this background that the present work of Pujya Muni Shri Amarendravijayji is chosen as the first publication of the Academy. The book gives a balanced and comprehensive way of looking at our heritage of knowledge and establishes a link between scriptures and science. In a sense, the author is a modern commentator of scriptures. It is our great pleasure to publish this unique work of the great Muniji.

We would like to take this opportunity to invite writers in Jain literary field to contact us and extend their co-operation in achieving the above goals. It will be our endeavour to suitably compensate the authors whose works are selected for publication by our organisation.

Jain Sahitya Academy, as mentioned earlier, has received monetary contribution from the original donors and will continue to receive further donations in future to extend its services in the field of Jain literature; however, only if we can effectively provide a suitable vehicle for channelising creative energies in this field in the right direction, can we consider our efforts worthwhile. We would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to invite writers in Jain literary field to come forward and contact us and help us in achieving the above goals.

It is indeed our proud privilege and good fortune to have such auspicious start to our publication series in the form of this masterly treatise on science and spirituality by an acknowledged authority like His Holiness Munishri Amarendravijayji who originally wrote it in Gujarati titled 'Vignan ane Adhyatma' and now fluently translated into English by Dr. J.D. Lodaya to whom we are indeed grateful. We would like to express our deep appreciation of his co-operation and help extended to us in fulfilling our commitment for excellence in this maiden venture.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Shri Ratilal Savla and Shri Surendrabhai of Gnan-jyot Foundation for giving us the formal permission and unique opportunity to publish the present work.

Words would not suffice in expressing our sentiments of gratitude and reverence towards H.H. Munishri Bhuvanchandraji without whose guidance, inspiration and blessings, we could not have completed this auspicious task. His untiring effort in editorial capacity and painstaking interest in preparation of this publication at every stage including the final proof-reading and correction are responsible for making this project a grand success.

Last but not the least, at such auspicious occasion we cannot help remembering and extending our heartfelt thanks

to our generous donor-duo Shri Devjibhai and Shri Nanjibhai Shah without whose magnanimous gesture, this organisation and hence this publication could not have seen the light of the day.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our commitment to publish works of quality and merit related to Jainism without any discrimination based on factional loyalty, sectarian leaning or groupism that has been dogging our broad-based 'Jain' identity under which we should all work unitedly as true followers of Lord Mahavir.

— Kirtilal Vora
Jethalal Gala
Harish Khona

Trustees , Jain Sahitya Academy, Gandhidham

SCIENCE DISCOVERS ETERNAL WISDOM

The principle theories and models of modern physics lead to a view of the world which is internally consistent and in perfect harmony with the views of Eastern mysticism.

- Fritjof Capra, ***The Tao of Physics.***

Evidence accumulates that science is beginning to say same things as those forgotten ancients, albeit in a different way.

- Paul Brunton, ***The Quest of the Overself.***

The Soul Principle and ESP Research

Who forewarns the grazing sheep of an impending storm and directs them to seek shelter on the leeseide of a hill ? what agency motivates the tortoise to find a safe hide-out before each spell of cloudburst ? This enigmatic source of instinct or intuition continues to baffle scientists who are hard-pressed to find a rational explanation for this strange but fascinating characteristic of all living beings.

Without any premeditation or prior reflection, sudden flashes of foreknowledge are known to occur to people from time to time. Under unusual circumstances, some people have experienced such premonitory glimpses intuitively. Louisa E. Rhine has catalogued a number of such instances in her book '*Hidden Channels of Mind*'. Let us look at a couple of them.

Flashes of ESP :

On 6th August 1945, a man in USA woke up to tell his wife first thing in morning that "within three months, there is going to be an explosion in Bayonne involving thousands of gallons of oil and gasoline with great danger to life. However, if proper precautions are taken, it might be possible to avert the disaster." He had never heard of any such place named Bayonne earlier, nor did he know its location. He came to know from his son that Bayonne was located in new Jersey area and there was, indeed, an oil refinery belonging to Standard Oil Company situated there. He contacted the management at refinery with a view to passing on this premonitory information so that precaution could be taken. To

this, the management responded with the formal courtesy of thanking him for his concern. It is not known whether any precautions were taken or not, but the disaster did strike as predicted.

In another instance of such premonition regarding an imminent catastrophe, a woman reports her experience in these words :

‘I was around seventeen years of age at the time of this incident. My elder sister who was married to a gifted musician, led a happy marital life. One night, I dreamed that her husband (my brother-in-law) lay wounded with bullet injuries from a rifle fired by a boy and succumbed to death due to heavy blood loss before any medical aid could be rushed to him. The next scene of my dream sequence was, that I was jolted upright from my sleep by shrill cries of my mother and as I ran downstairs, I met her at the door with a telegram in her hand that had brought the sad message of the fateful death of my brother-in-law. When I woke up from sleep, I was very upset by this horrifying dream and wrote to my sister about it. She received my letter on Saturday and laughed it off. However, on Monday, my brother-in-law did suffer the same fate as witnessed by me in the dream earlier and died of bullet injuries; the telegraphic message of his death also arrived in the same manner as visualised by me in the dream”.

‘Divine Vision’ through Yogic Practice :

Common men may, once in a while experience such a flash of foreknowledge but they do not have any control over its occurrence nor can they actuate it at will. Vision of events taking place beyond one’s range of sight or foreknowledge of future events is not available to them at will. The adept practitioners of yoga at an advanced stage can, however, develop such extra-sensory perceptive (ESP) capabilities and put them to use at will. Just as we can throw the light beam from a battery-torch at any spot that we choose, the yogi with such attainment can focus his ESP vision at will

on any object or event far off in space or time. His perceptive faculty transcends the barriers of time and space. Hence, he can see the events taking place thousands of miles away. He can visually 'probe' the past or future and can read through anyone's mind.

The scriptural anecdotes and biographical accounts of the mystics abound in instances of such ESP experiences. Even in our contemporary times, there are persons with such extraordinary powers. The truly accomplished, however, shun publicity and keep such matters undisclosed mostly, but those who come in their close contact, may get some inkling to their possession of these mystic powers. Let us go through some such instances here.

In London, at a book-shop dealing in secondhand books an English journalist named Ralph Hurst encounters a stranger whom he befriends instantly. One day, this friend, who hails from India, tells Hurst, 'you will go to India in search of mysticism and meet many holy men during your travel all over the country. Ultimately, your wish will be fulfilled'. The Englishman was amazed at such a forecast and asked, 'How did you know about my future ?' The other replied, 'I knew it the very instant we met for the first time. I had an intuitive perception about it. I have been trained by my guru in this intuitive faculty and I now confidently rely upon it.'

As time went by, the prediction came true. Leaving his successful career as journalist halfway, the Englishman came to India in search of mysticism and travelled far and wide all over the country to meet many holy men whom he had to search out as they generally used to avoid contact with the public. During intimate contact with some of these, he witnessed, at first hand, some instances of such ESP powers. For example, when he visited along with a friend, His Holiness. Shri Shankaracharya of Kumbhkonom, the holy man whispered in the ear of his friend, "Your friend will travel all over India in search of mystics and meet many saints and will listen to their

words of wisdom, but he will have to return ultimately to Maharshi Ramana. He is the only guru fit for your friend.”¹

This prediction came true word for word. He roamed far and wide all over India, but was compelled to come to Shri Ramana in the end, and sat at his feet to learn ‘Atma-Vichar’, his practice of self-inquiry and meditation.

Clairvoyant Vision through Yogic attainment :

In an instance of ESP attained by a Yogi, the author who reported it, witnesses a railway station-master, who lost his ten year old daughter following snake-bite, approach the yogi in a state of utter despair and depression due to his recent bereavement. In order to console him, the yogi describes the whole incident leading to snake-bite and death of the girl in such vivid details as if he had witnessed the episode himself. This convinces the father of the girl of the unusual powers of ESP attained by the yogi. Then, the yogi describes the story of her past births and predicts about her future rebirth which was later proved to be quite accurate. The incident is very absorbingly described by Makrand Dave, a well-known savant of mysticism - in his Gujarati book ‘*Yogi Harnathna Sannidhya man*’ (In the presence of Yogi Harnath) While going into the details of ESP phenomenon, the yogi explained:

When, by the grace of my guru, I had access to the region beyond Trikuti in the mystic path, I experienced three unusual powers being invested in me simultaneously. Experience of freedom from encumbrances of the mundane world, a sense of innate joy and profound peace and a faculty of spontaneous intuitive knowledge.... the moment I would concentrate on a subject, intuitive knowledge regarding it would well up within me without any effort on my part ... when I look at a person, I can read him like an open book. A mere glance at an object would make me aware of its complete history. If I see a herb, its medicinal properties would stand revealed before me.²

During the course of intense yogic practice, at some stage, occasional aspirants may experience manifestation of ESP powers.* ESP phenomenon continues to spellbind people's minds all the time. As a result, some imposters having no ESP capabilities at all try to create an impression of mystic achievement to win faith and respect from the laity by performing cheap stage tricks with the sleight of hand and make hay. It is, therefore, imperative to tread in this field with utmost caution and not let oneself be overawed by pretentious talk of ESP powers. The earnest, astute and alert aspirants on the spiritual path consider such powers as hindrance to their progress and ignore them completely. It is only the unenlightened, half-baked practitioners who indulge in exhibition of such powers that turns them into extroverts. This, in turn, brings about their relapse into egotism — the main stumbling block in the path of spiritual progress. As its direct consequence, the powers begin to ebb away but at such discomfiting juncture, their ego comes in the way and prevents them from accepting the fact of such a loss. They keep up the pretense by resorting to any means to maintain the earlier image made on the minds of the gullible. Thus, hypocrisy and

* In Jain theological terms, ESP powers are described as 'Avadhi-Gnan' and 'Manaparyav-Gnan'; with the aid of the former, knowledge regarding any object under the sun can be had irrespective of the barriers of time and space while the latter enables one to read the minds of others and know their thoughts. It is mentioned in the scriptures that from amongst the large assembly of Lord Mahavir's disciples in monastic order, some thirteen hundred were endowed with 'Avadhi-Gnan' and five hundred possessed mind-reading powers of 'Manaparyav-Gnan'. As against that, among the contemporary spiritual aspirants in Jain monastic order, hardly any one is known to have attained such ESP powers. An unbiased search for the reason behind such paucity of achievements should be conducted in the mode of our religious practice in a spirit of self-scrutiny.

It could very well be that such a sad state of affairs prevails due to our utter neglect of the meditational aspect of religious practice and obsessive preoccupation with the ritualistic part (that too in terms of numbers and gross bulk rather than its merits or subtle qualities) sacrificing in the process the basic ingredients like purification of mind, concentration and meditation (A perusal of authors Gujarati Book 'Atmagnan ane Sadhnapath' would prove helpful to those willing to undertake such 'quest within'.)

self-deceit enter their lives and lead them astray from the right path altogether.

Research in ESP :

Despite occasional reports of such intuitive flashes of knowledge experienced by even ordinary people, the western world had completely ignored or ridiculed such instances off hand with the result that people usually hesitated to narrate their experiences. However, the situation has since changed considerably and such unusual or paranormal phenomena have been taken up for serious scientific investigation. About forty years ago, Prof. J.B. Rhine made pioneering efforts in this field at the Duke Laboratory of parapsychology, Duke University, USA. Since then, it has been receiving increasing attention as a subject of scientific inquiry at many other centres too. As a result, sizeable literature is now available on the subject including the experimental data derived from such research.

The fact that no normal channel of perception (sense-organ) is involved in this type of intuitive knowledge, led the modern parapsychologists to term it as the phenomenon of Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP) which is synonymous with the words 'clairvoyance' 'telepathy' or 'intuition' of the common parlance.

The research related to ESP has established beyond doubt that man is not merely an aggregate of physical elements fortuitously brought together into a unique formation of matter as is maintained by materialistic science. The pioneering leader of research in parapsychology, Prof. Rhine states,

Now the occurrence of ESP has been shown to be a fact research in ESP has been going on steadily, specially so over the last twenty-five years, and inspite of the many difficulties and small number of workers, some discoveries have been made that are revolutionary.

Why are they revolutionary ? because ... discoveries, if really new are not readily accepted; they upset too many old habits and theories. The evidence of ESP does just that. As Arthur Koestler explains in 'The Sleepwalkers' ESP runs counter to current scientific theories about man; theories that interpret man in terms of physical and chemical (or mechanistic) processes. The facts about ESP do not fit the physical theory of man and those who hold to that theory are likely to reject the disturbing facts at first. In time, of course, fact will triumph and conflicting theory be rejected.³

Besides ESP, investigations are going on in other fields too. The phenomenon of astral projection—exteriorisation of the subtle element from the physical body with freedom of movement in space and time—and the principle or rebirth are among them.

Revolution through research :

The impact made by these scientific investigations on the materialistic western mind with grossly physical outlook has been, indeed, tremendous. An American Industrialist and banker, prior to developing interest in such research, expressed his skepticism in these words :

Why couldn't everyone, I wondered, see that death peremptorily ended the whole show ? and why all the argument about the possibility of life after death ? Anyone could plainly see that a dead body was very much dead indeed. How could any one seriously believe otherwise ? Three hundred years of science had failed to prove the immortality of a single soul. So why try to make something out of nothing ?

The same person, after delving deeper in the research findings of parapsychology, writes in an altogether different vein :

..... Of all the findings that have emerged from parapsychology research, perhaps the most significant is the fact that man is not, after all, merely a physical machine. For three centuries, the scientists of human nature have regarded man as nothing more than a physical contraption. The new evidence to the contrary is a wonderful step towards learning what man really is.

There is no telling how far the parapsychology research will lead us. The proof that there is something extra-physical or spiritual, in human personality has momentous implications. Eventually, the laboratory will answer even that all-time prize-winner among questions ... Does any part of the human being survive the death of the physical body ? Already research in ESP had indicated, in its freedom from the effects of time and space, the plausibility of some sort of survival. And remember that this relatively new science had barely begun.⁴

Vera Stanely Adler in her book, *'The Finding of The Third Eye'* states, "A little research has brought to light the possibility that the discoveries of science today may coincide with the knowledge of the mystics of all times with a difference only of presentation and nomenclature."⁵

The above statements carry greater significance in the present-day context of craze for science, which, in turn, with its fantastic feat of putting man in control of elements is overshadowing the mind of humanity at large and the intelligentsia in particular dragging them inexorably away from their spiritual moorings.

Impressed by the achievements of science, the man on the street has been so converted to the cult of science that he invokes the presiding deity of science and swears by it as the ultimate truth in all walks of life; science itself, however,

is turning towards spiritualism with great expectations and is keen to include the wisdom of the spiritually enlightened in its field of inquiry and verify its validity in the laboratory by way of experimentation. The inferences drawn from such research have already made the air within the citadels of science buzz with the exciting truth that “something does survive after the death of the physical body.”

2

Is Life an End-Product of Chemical Synthesis ?

Drawing inference from its investigations, one branch of science admits the plausibility of some sort of survival after the death of the physical body; while another branch i.e. Biology refuses to accept the principle of life existing independent of the physical body. According to its contention, life emerges when specific conjugation of matter by way of chemical synthesis takes place to form the body and gets annihilated with the decomposition of that body. With this as its working hypothesis, this branch of science has been striving hard to prove its contention, and hopes, one day, to create life in a test-tube by getting the right chemical constituents to come together under controlled laboratory conditions.

Biological hypothesis :

Stanley Miller, a scientist from Chicago University, on the basis of his experimental research data postulated that in the primeval biosphere of our planet, there were only three gaseous substances i.e. Hydrogen, Ammonia, and Methane with no free oxygen available in gaseous form. It existed in water only. These three gases were experimentally sealed into a test-tube and bombarded with electrical discharges saturated with ultra-violet rays. The chemical process thus induced, led to the formation of several amino acids within a week's time. Enthused by these findings, he proposed hypothetically that after a certain drop in the earth's temperature at the initial stages, the atmospheric gases i.e. Hydrogen, Ammonia and Methane along with water vapour were

transformed into carbonic and acarbonic compounds under the effect of ultra-violet radiation discharged from atmospheric electricity. From these basic ingredients, progressively higher compounds like carbohydrate, nitrate, formaldehyde and amino acids were synthesised. Eventually, the highly complex substance — protein — was formed which became biologically active with the help of special enzyme systems. Later, nucleic acid, the key factor in performance of vital functions like formation, growth, reproduction and dissolution of a cell came into existence. Using these substances as building blocks, life evolved on the earth in its most primitive form as viruses and bacteria.

As the composition of earth's gaseous environment changed, progressively higher forms of life took place. Starting from the primitive unicellular organism like amoeba, progressively complex organic forms of life developed giving rise to such a wide variety of forms and life style. Ultimately, human body with infinite number of cells came into existence. (It is estimated that an average adult human body has about sixty trillion cells and about fifty million cells get replaced every second as part of its wear and tear.)

Science considers the cell as the basic unit of life. It is constituted from proteins, carbohydrates and salts of Pottassium, Magnesium and Iron. The proteins themselves are synthesised from elements like Carbon, Hydrogen, Oxygen, Nitrogen, Sulphur and Phosphorus. Hence, science is inclined to believe that life is an end-product of some chemical synthesis. However, this is a mere hypothesis. With this hypothetical base, science is striving hard to create life in its laboratories. Despite all the equipment and sophisticated gadgets, has science yet succeeded in creating life by pure chemical synthesis ?

By the same process that is supposed to have taken place during the formative stage of the earth, Dr. Ponam

Peruma did manage to produce the basic five chemicals - Adenine, Guanine, Cystine, Tyrosine and Uracil - the building blocks of a cell, the elementary unit of all living beings; but by themselves they remain as mere chemicals, inert nonlife material without any vital quality or viability. From these chemical substances, how genes — the determinants carrying genetic code for transmitting hereditary traits of animal and plant life and having self-propagating capacity — are produced, remains an unsolved mystery for science so far.

Limitations of science :

It may be feasible for science to manufacture proteins or amino acids by chemical synthesis, but it has so far failed to create even a single cell. A million scientists putting their heads together cannot produce even a single drop of blood nor can they synthesise carbonic compounds despite having full knowledge of their chemical composition. Science has not as yet succeeded in its attempts to produce synthetic hormones like insulin from purely chemical sources which can replace the natural hormone or make good its deficiency in diabetics. Despite having complete knowledge of the molecular structure of insulin or blood, when need arises for either of them, science has to have access to organic sources - human or animal - for the supply.

Until now, for production of insulin, animal pancreas obtained from slaughterhouses was utilised exclusively, (it still continues to be) but now another source has been developed by science through biotechnology. It manages to produce insulin in the laboratory with the help of bacteria. It has now become possible to splice genetic material from another cell to the gene of living E. Coli bacterium that ensures insulin production. This process of slicing and splicing within the cell is known as genetic engineering. It will be possible to obtain other hormones similar to insulin from E. Coil through this technique. Production of growth hormone secreted by pituitary gland controlling bodily growth and another important factor 'interferon' that gives the

body immunity against infection is well under way through this process involving E.Coli. Genetic engineering has opened the door to innumerable possibilities. Until now, genetic traits in plants and animals were considered exclusive domain of Nature, but thanks to biotechnology and genetic engineering, genetic traits can now be tinkered with. For example, the gene responsible for the glow of the glow-worm has been successfully transferred to tobacco-leaf at California University laboratory; thus, tobacco plants glowing in the dark can now be grown.

Revolutionary changes through genetic engineering and biotechnology are on the cards in the system of modern medicine with the advent of new era in drug production and therapeutic innovation. Not only that, through introduction of specific gene as in plants and animals, it would soon be possible to modify human habits and behaviour too. Scientists hope that with biotechnology it may be feasible to create such plants and germs that could help solve our present problems of air and water pollution and shortage of fuel.

Science has managed to achieve such breakthrough by bringing about selective changes in the structure of a living cell, but it cannot create a completely new cell through chemical interaction alone in the laboratory.

The much-talked-about 'Test-tube baby' story may confuse one and wrongly lead one to believe that science can now create human embryo in the laboratory, but that is not so. In test-tube baby creation, science contributes only to the extent that it brings about the union/fertilisation of the ovum by the sperm in the laboratory and implants the embryo in the womb in cases of those infertile couples who due to some defect are incapable of doing so in the natural course. For this, there are two techniques; in 'IN-Vitro Fertilisation embryo Transfer' technique, the fertilisation of the egg by sperm takes place in a test-tube and is then implanted in the womb while in the other process called GIFT, science helps in achieving the

fertilization of the egg in the Fallopian tube of the mother just as in natural process. Further stages of foetal growth and birth of the baby follow the natural course of events in both processes identically.

By applying its hypothesis of genesis of life, has science succeeded in creating even a single petal of a flower in actual fact ? On the other hand, even a tiny seed with dormant potential for germination can grow into a giant banyan tree or can create fragrance, colour and beauty in a flower. For an example of superb artistry and creativity of life, one needs only to look at a tiny lotus -seed spring up from murky, stinking mud into a blooming lotus spreading it's fragrance. As against that, science cannot grow even the most primitive form of vegetative life without the help of a 'live' seed. It cannot duplicate even a lifeless carcass of a cell, leave aside creating a living one.

Now, if the physical structure of simple vegetative forms of life also cannot be created by mere chemical interaction, where is the question of generating life by chemical synthesis ?

Let us for the time being assume hypothetically that science did succeed in building a cell-structure and life began to throb in it. What does it prove ? Only, that suitable environmental conditions for manifestation of life could be engineered in the form of a plasmic substratum or a physical matrix. In other words, a suitable habitat or a viable framework could be erected to house the spirit that may abide in it as a visiting guest ; that certainly does not permit science to usurp upon its naive shoulders the mantle of creator of life.

Consciousness, the cosmic traveller :

Despite its hard struggle, science has not succeeded in creating a cell—the simplest form of abode for life to throb or dwell in. Yet, the protagonists of bio-sciences, as a final

fling at justifying their stand, argue that, 'Notwithstanding the admission of defeat by science in its attempts to create life, at least the point must be conceded that there was no life on earth at the beginning and at present it is teeming with living creatures of all kinds; so, wherefrom did life originate on this planet ? How could such vast creation come into being from nothing ? One has got to, therefore, yield to the hypothesis of the earth's cooling taking place and at some point in time, when atmosphere became congenial enough to sustain life, a chain of chemical reactions set in with eventual evolution of life as described earlier. If one refuses to accept this as plausible, how else could one explain the life flourishing in such diversity of form on this planet which at one time was barren mass of inert matter ? The growing accumulation of evidence from the study of fossils also strongly supports the view of progressive evolution of life on earth beginning with primitive forms and reaching the complexity of structure and function in the higher species. There is no way one could ignore the mass of such impressive scientific evidence'.

On the basis of above argument, Darwin has postulated his theory of evolution; many serious objections have been raised against this Darwinian theory by noted biologists and scientists. Despite these, the protagonists of evolution theory have continued their propaganda that evolution theory is completely scientific, unmindful of the arguments to the contrary by others. Hence, evolution (a la Darwin) has dominated the line of thought of the intelligentsia, but in academic circles, it is now being increasingly challenged by many top-ranking scientists. The world-renowned British astronomist Sir Fred Hoyle and Dr. Chandra Vikramasinghe, Professor of Mathematics and astronomy, Cardiff university have recently put up a theory that, millions or trillions of years ago, life-spores descended upon our planet from outer space and life began to evolve on the earth and not through a freak chance of chemical interaction accidentally. Their theory is based on mathematical and astronomical calculation. When they set out

to calculate the statistical possibility of an accidental beginning of life as proposed by the evolutionists, they came to the conclusion that from a mathematical point of view, it is impossible that life on earth had an accidental beginning. Presenting his theory, Dr. Vikramsinghe observes, "The possibility that life began on earth following an accidental interaction is so remote that it can be likened to finding a single particular grain of sand after we sift all shores of all the oceans on all the planets in the universe".

Renowned internationally for his ideology of intermediate technology and author of "Small Is Beautiful", E.P. Schumacher has critically discussed Darwin's theory of evolution in an original way in his book "*A Guide for the Perplexed*". At the end of a wide-ranging, pointed critique on the ideological defects and ontological gaps in evolutionism, he arrives at the inference that, 'Evolutionism is not science, it is science fiction, even a kind of hoax'.

Well, let us remind ourselves here that we are not dealing with the question of 'How life evolved on the earth'; the main point of our consideration at present is, whether the vital throb of life is an end-product of chemical synthesis or not. Deliberating upon this point, we have already noted that leaving aside the question of generating the vital spark of life through synthetic chemical processes, even the creation of a cell structure of such simple unicellular protoplasmic bodies like diatom or amoeba by juggling with chemical components is out of reach of science. Hence, the statement that 'life evolved on earth after it cooled down to comfortable temperatures' could be accepted only to the extent that as environmental conditions congenial to life arose on the earth, 'souls' transmigrating from some other planets landed on the earth to colonise it and as atmosphere improved, progressively more developed 'housing units' with complex arrangement of 'rooms' - cells - came into existence; Eventually, the process reached its pinnacle and there came into being the human

form with trillions of body-cells. It was growth simply in the physical shells which housed the life-spark, it had nothing to do with the creation of life. The life-sparks that inhabit these 'housing complexes' have to be considered as transmigrants from other planets of the cosmos.* The earth surely cannot be considered as the point of their origin. (Vide chapter 4. for details regarding extra-terrestrial life on other planets).

A common example will help elucidate the point. An electronic firm may manufacture T.V. sets in its factory but these sets become functional only when the television waves relayed from the TV centre enter the set. Just as TV sets manufactured in the factory and the electro-magnetic waves producing audio-visual rediffusion that brings the TV sets to 'life' are quite independent entities, the various morphologic forms in the bio-world and the life-spark manifesting itself through them are equally distinct entities, independent of each other. The life-spark may manifest itself through the agency of body, but its origin and existence are certainly not body-based.

The seat of consciousness :

If what is known about the constitution of human body and its built-in self-regulatory mechanisms for proper nourishment, maintenance, repair and defence against disease is given serious thought, one would be easily convinced that an unseen hand - an unknown intelligence is working behind such intricate processes and co-ordinating their smooth functioning. These can hardly be carried out by mere chemical interactions on a mechanistic level.

The common bat is quite an underdeveloped creature

* Just as the process of elimination of old cells and their replacement by new ones goes on in our body or new townships and colonies spring up at some place on the face of earth while older cities and settlements get effaced elsewhere, in the cosmo too, this process of change is going on. Some old planets disintegrate and new ones are born. Somewhere in the cosmos, a planet may be turning uninhabitable due to its changing environment, while somewhere else, another one may be growing hospitable for life.

compared to man, with its brain weighing only a few grammes. However, an unusual capability of this tiny brain has astonished scientists. During flight, it can detect even the smallest obstacle in its path in complete darkness and can take evasive action to avoid mid-air collision with it. Scientists have extensively tested this special faculty of the bat by flying it through criss-cross wires tied across its flight path under laboratory conditions and have come to the conclusion that its brain fulfils the role of an extremely powerful radar and ultra-fast computer rolled into one that enables the bat to choose an obstacle-free path. Can such astonishing level of intelligence displayed by the tiny brain of a bat be explained as an outcome of chemical interaction alone ?

Science proceeds on the assumption that a cell is the primary unit of life. Myriads of cells collectively form various organs that function as separate units and these organs, like the cells, come together to form the whole body that functions as a composite megaunit. Just as different organs function as parts of a corporate body in co-ordination with their counterparts and yet retain their identity by performing specialised function as independent units, the constituent cells of an organ too, though working collectively in consonance with their fellow-members belonging to that particular organ, retain their individuality of existence and function. In other words, every cell represents a unit of life by itself.

If we accept this concept of federal existence and function at cellular and organic level, the question arises as to which central agency presides over these independently functioning units (organs of the body and their constituent cells) and conducts their affairs not only as self-sufficient units unto themselves but in a concerted manner like an orchestra in perfect harmony ? And why, at the time of death, when the megaunit of body ceases its vital functions, do these independent organs and cells lose their vitality in one stroke ? With sudden heart failure, (as in a case of coronary attack) when an otherwise healthy man dies, why do his eyes

stop seeing things at the same time ? The eye as an organ of sight is still good enough to transmit light and can be successfully used as transplant material for cornea-grafting to function well in another living body. As a peripheral organ, the eye remains the same in both instances, then why this difference ? In the dead body the eye does not see, or in other words, when the agency that perceived the sensation of vision is no more, the eye fails to see; where this perceptive, conscious agency - soul - is present, the same eye can take in the whole scenario unfolded before it with full details of contour and splendour of colour. Does it not prove that the one who perceives through the eye is other than the sense-organ itself ? And that the eye itself is only an instrument for the real 'observer' ?

Line of demarcation between life and death :

Dr. Raynor Johnson, the well-known physicist at Queen's college, Melbourne University, admitting the failure on the part of science to comprehend the nature of the principle of life, writes,

Physics and chemistry applied in the biological field have had their successes on their own level and have given us bio-physics and bio-chemistry, but on the phenomenon most characteristic of Life they have thrown no explanatory light ... Reason has had remarkable success in formulating relationships between physically observed quantities, of this success the edifice of modern science is the evidence. To the degree, however, in which reason has been applied beyond the field of physics and chemistry to that of biological enquiry, its success has been less spectacular, and this is because a new element, Life is now involved. Life I shall regard as a state of organic association of mind with matter; dissolve this association and the organism

loses the characteristics of life and is no more than a complex aggregate of chemical substances.⁶

This is the impression of a physicist about the elusive line of demarcation between life and death. It obviously stresses the fact that life does not emerge from chemical interactions taking place within the body, nor is it sustained by circulation of blood or heart-beat. On the contrary, the circulation, heart-beat, metabolic processes and the very existence of the body itself depends on the fact that 'mind' or 'spirit' is present in it. Let us presume that a man dies in an accident and his heart is removed for transplantation in a needy patient. Now, when he was declared dead, was his heart functioning or not ? If it was functioning, what were the criteria to declare the man dead ? If indeed, it had ceased to function at the time of 'death', how does it regain 'life' to start functioning normally in the recipient's body after transplantation ? Again, if nucleic acid was the basis for all vital functions of the body, why do all these vital functions cease with the cessation of heart-beat ? It is a commonly observed fact that, on one hand, a fully functioning body full of vitality and verve turns into a corpse on sudden stoppage of heart, while on the other, an extremely emaciated body with extensively damaged organs and ebbing vitality, manages to pull on for quite a while by hanging on to dear life by its very teeth as it were. In such enfeebled body too, the process of metabolism continues, while an otherwise normal body has to be pronounced dead on mere stoppage of heart-beat, why ? With death, how come all organs with their constituent cells begin to decompose simultaneously ? If each cell were to possess its individual vitality, why should all such independently 'living' units shut down "en masse" ?

The Miracle of Hatha-Yoga :

If one only keeps an observant eye on the goings-on in the world around without going into scientific research, one's common sense and practical logic enable one to conclude

that there does indeed, exist an entity that transcends the body and its physical attributes. Sudden death following a heart attack is not very unusual now-a-days; but instances of Hatha-Yoga feats wherein voluntary control over vital functions like breathing, circulation and even heart-beat through one's will-power brings about a state of 'suspended animation' for hours or days only to be reverted to normalcy later do hit the headlines in the newspapers now and again. Quite a few of them could be examples of journalistic sensationalism or hoaxes played upon the gullible to create an image of a god-man with super-natural powers to earn cheap popularity and make easy money. However, it would be injustice to the science of Hatha-Yoga, if we fail to take notice of some genuine cases that have been proved authentic after stringent scrutiny by competent authorities.

Dr. Paul Brunton, an English journalist who visited India in search of mysticism, reports his personal experience in this field as follows :

On different occasions and different places in Asia and Africa, the writer has encountered yogis and faqueers who could exhibit the exceptional power of suspending the breath and stopping the heart and blood circulation, and who could even emerge alive after being 'buried' for some hours or days in an airless coffin or below ground. The author has carefully examined their feats in order to sift the imposters from the genuine owners of such exceptional powers. He is completely satisfied that these powers truly exist. Yet he does not wish to put forward such personal evidence in this connection; although one of these yogis was lately buried in a sealed cement tomb for no less than forty days. Independent and less disputable testimony exists - all dated as recently as 1936.

The first is a cutting from a reliable Indian newspaper, The Madras Mail, British owned and edited by an

Englishman with a lifetime's experience in sound journalism :

BURIED ALIVE FOR THIRTY MINUTES
Yogi's feat witnessed by 15,000 people

Masaliputam, Dec. 15

A remarkable feat of Yoga was exhibited by Yogi Sankara Narayanswami of Mysore on Sunday evening in front of Sri Ramalingeshwarswami's temple in the presence of a gathering of about 15,000 people. He was buried alive for about half an hour.

Lt. Col. K.V. Raman Rao, IMS, District Medical Officer, who acted as observer took a letter from the yogi before the ordeal, stating that he was performing the feat on his own responsibility.

The yogi was seated in a box specially prepared for the purpose and let down into a pit, which was covered with earth. After about half an hour, the box was removed, when the yogi was found sitting in it in a state of trance. The Yogi regained consciousness half an hour afterwards, when he was cheered by the people."

The second comes from a friend Major F. Yeast-Brown, who served for twenty years in the Bengal Lancers, an Indian Cavalry Regiment. He published these statements in the London Sunday Express :

"Resurrection of the dead" is a fairly common exercise in Indian magic. I have seen it done twice. The adept undergoes twenty-four hours of secret preparation, which consist in purgation, fasting and 'swallowing' air.

Before the trance state is induced, the adept is in a state of oxygen intoxication. Then, pressing his carotid arteries, he passes into unconsciousness. His disciples

bury him.

On one occasion when I was present, the adept remained thus for an hour, on the other occasion he remained in the death-trance for only fifteen minutes.

Doctors who examined the 'corpse' stated that there was no sign of life. When the given time had elapsed, the adept came to life.

The third is from the Sunday Times of Madras, February 1936, it runs as follows :

CONTROLLING HEART AND PULSE A Yogi's strange feat

In the presence of Col. Harty, Civil Surgeon of Ahmedabad and several other doctors, a yogi named Swami Vidhyalankar performed the strange feat of controlling his heart and pulse, while squatting on the floor with eyes closed. During the period his heart was auscultated and electrocardiogram was taken. The test showed that he had complete control over these organs.

He also showed several other feats, including that of remaining buried in a pit for 25 hours.

The evidential value of this last case lies in its occurrence in the presence of an educated Englishman, who happened to be both an Army man and a qualified surgeon. That rigid test conditions were therefore imposed one may be sure.⁷

During the reign of Ranjitsingh in Punjab, a Hatha-Yogi named Haridas had remained buried like a corpse in a state of deep trance for forty days under equally stringent scrutiny and round-the-clock vigil by armed guards.

Resurrection after 28 days in a grave :

Even amongst our contemporaries, there exist individuals with such extraordinary powers. One such person is the famous mystic of Egypt Dr. Tahra Bey. He is not an orthodox faqueer. He has received medical education at Constantinople, Turkey and is open-minded about his unusual powers to willingly submit himself to scientific investigation. He was trained in Hathayoga from his very childhood. After medical graduation, he started his practice in Greece, where he undertook a record feat of remaining entombed in a grave for twenty eight days at a stretch. This demonstration of resurrection from the grave by unusual powers irked the local leaders of Christian Orthodoxy who tried to interfere but as Tahra Bey was a qualified physician, the government authorities permitted him to proceed with his project. Later, when he visited Italy, he invited well-known scientists of that country to scrutinise and test his unusual powers. Under their stringent inspection, he was placed in a lead coffin filled with sand and its cover nailed shut. This hermetically sealed contraption was then lowered into a swimming pool. After half an hour, the police arrived on the scene and put a stop to this 'demonstration' but during that crucial half hour, the test had successfully proved its point. Later, in France too, he remained in watery 'grave' for twenty four hours where his performance evoked great interest in members of medical profession who did not spare any effort to 'expose' him. Of course, it did not bother Tahra Bey at all. He, on the contrary, welcomes scientific investigation in this field and permits the coffin to be lowered in water so that vigilant observers can satisfy themselves that no trick has been played.

The author of the book, *"The Search in Secret Egypt"* has given a comprehensive report (pp. 104-126) on the impressive display of Tahra Bey's extraordinary powers and has included Bey's own explanation for such superhuman feats. If biologists and medical men would care to study it, they will be convinced that the human body holds many secrets which

have remained beyond the reach of conventional science.

The genuine yogis with such extraordinary power prefer to keep themselves away from the limelight. It is very difficult to induce them to come out of their self-imposed shell of seclusion and meditative solitude. A few belonging to mediocrity could sometimes be enticed to condescend and play to the gallery. Reports of such authentic incidences are very rare; nevertheless, these rare ones too are quite a revelation by themselves.

Transcendental existence :

In a victim of fatal heart attack, the heartbeat ceases completely, so also is the case in a person inducing a state of 'suspended animation' by yogic practice. Yet, the former has to be declared irreversibly dead, while the latter revives himself at will. Why this difference ? In suspended animation the heart-beat comes to a standstill, yet the yogi remains alive, and although the vital signs indicating life i.e. heart-beat, respiratory excursions, blood circulation etc. remain suspended in such a trance, the body does not disintegrate; at its scheduled time fixed and pre-planned before entering into such a state the yogi brings his body, which for all practical purposes and by known physiological parameters can be considered dead, back to life. The dead body of a heart failure victim if left to itself, will begin to undergo decomposition, while the yogi's body in trance does not show any such tendency despite remaining 'suspended' for several days. Why doesn't life perish in suspended animation where all vital functions considered absolutely essential for sustaining the vital spark, remain in abeyance for considerable length of time ?

To any rationally thinking man, these points provide sufficiently convincing evidence of the fact that the vital principle that inhabits the body is certainly not a product of body's metabolic activity nor of the chemical interactions going on at cellular or organic level in the body.

Biology has failed to prove its claim that life is an end-product of chemical synthesis; its proposed theory has so far remained only a tentative hypothesis, unconfirmed by empirical evidence. In all its attempts at creating life out of chemical synthesis, biology has met with nothing but failure. As against that, other branches of science have already provided several concrete proofs about the existence of a transcendental entity - the spirit - abiding within the physical body of all living beings.

Rebirth : Acceptance At The Scientific Level

We have already noted in chapter 1 some very impressive evidence from sources of scientific research regarding ESP that strongly suggests the presence of some extra-physical principle in us that is responsible for such ESP capabilities.

Along with ESP, phenomenon of rebirth too has been extensively researched in recent times by parapsychology, the results of which have had far-reaching repercussions in the western world that had so far maintained an antagonistic posture towards it. In the West, even the traditional religious belief has been against its acceptance and yet, the evidence emerging from these scientific investigations is so strong that rebirth is rapidly gaining acceptance there.

Recollection of past life : some instances :

In India too, the parapsychology department at Jaipur University had conducted research in this field. For their study they could manage to collect more than five hundred cases in which recollection of past life had been reported. From the notes of Prof. Banerji, the director of this research project, a couple of examples are cited here as sample cases.

At Jatia village in Bihar, a two-year old boy used to insistently repeat " My mother is in Ceylon I have a brother too living there who wears spectacles. I want to go there. " The significance behind his so-called baby-talk became clear and it began to make sense when a Ceylonese gentleman

named Anand Maitreya visited Jatia village in search of a child born to Savitridevi, sired by Ramesh Asisingh.

The story goes back to a Buddhist monk of Ceylonese origin named Suresh Maitrimurthy who in 1955, before his death, had predicted that in his next life, he will be born in Northern India. Two years after his death, one of his relative and his preceptor mounted a search to trace him. In this connection, Anand Maitreya contacted an astrologer in Madras who practised predictive astrology based on Bhrigu-Samhita (wherein details about the previous life as well as future birth of the subject are invariably mentioned along with the prediction for the present life.). The astrologer's reading pointed to Bihar as the likely place of birth for Suresh, and gave Ramesh Asisingh and Savitridevi as names of his parents in the present life. It was also predicted that at ten years of age, he will join the Buddhist holy order and will settle down in Ceylon. On the basis of this information, Anand started his search for Suresh in Bihar. He soon realised that it was an uphill task but after many frustrations and difficulties, he ultimately managed to track down 'Suresh' at this far-off village in Bihar.

Munesh was born at a small village called Chandgiri in 1951 A.D. From his very childhood, he would talk about a Bhajansingh of Itarni and claimed that he himself was Bhajansingh in his previous life. He would recollect stories about his family including his wife and daughter of previous life but nobody paid any attention to his 'weird' talk. Eventually, his grandfather took some interest in it and once, while travelling to Jamalpur, made a stop-over at Itarni, where on inquiry he was told of one Bhajansingh who had died in 1951. He traced the family and could persuade one of the brothers of Late Bhajansingh to accompany him to Chandgiri. Munesh instantly recognised him as his brother. He was then taken to Itarni where he not only recognised each and every member of the family, but could identify the belongings of Bhajansingh and could correctly point out the changes made in the house after Bhajansingh's death. Bhajansingh's widow who was at her

parents' place at that time, came back to her in-laws' house on hearing about Munesh. Munesh easily picked her out from a group of her friends and could narrate some intimate details of events from their marital life which convinced Ayodhyadevi (Bhajansingh's widow) that she had indeed met her late husband in the person of Munesh.

The daughter of Mr. C.L. Sharma and Mayadevi used to recite obscure scriptural verses with perfect accent and ease at the age of only two and a half years. She gave public demonstration of her unusual talent at a function attended by no less a personality than the governor of U.P., the chief justice of Rajasthan and the vice-chancellor of Rajasthan university along with many well-known figures and received high praise from all for her clarity of diction and miraculous memory.

It should be emphasised here that in this kind of research work regarding rebirth phenomenon, evidence is scrutinised by a carefully conducted on-the-spot investigation with meticulousness of a judicial inquiry and only those cases which pass muster through such strict cross-checking are included in the study and are accepted as genuine 'rebirth' cases. This is well borne out on going through the various monographs entitled 'Munesh', 'Prabhu' etc. published by Jaipur university.

Like Dr. Banerji, Dr. Ian Stevenson from the department of Parapsychology, Virginia university, USA is also doing research in rebirth phenomenon. He has a collection of twelve hundred cases wherein there is inkling of rebirth. Out of these, more than two hundred have been scrutinised by him or his colleagues personally. Full reports of selected cases with details of on-the-spot investigations of the evidence and thorough cross-checking of witnesses have been published as sizeable volumes by university press of Virginia. This would form quite convincing evidence. Reviewing these volumes, American Medical Association Journal has thus opined, " the evidence is difficult to explain on any other grounds.... "

Rebirth - difficult to 'explain away' :

Karl E. Muller, ex-president, International Spiritualist Federation, Zurich, Switzerland, states,

They (the groups) are all established by a total of some seven hundred cases, from different countries and with few exceptions, from the past 80 years In view of the diversity and variety of various groups it becomes very difficult to explain away reincarnation. There is strong evidence in favour of the simple fact of reincarnation, but it is clear that a number of secondary problems (such as change of sex, the 'intermission' - the time spent in the beyond counting from death till next birth etc.) arise.⁸

Age-regression experiments suggest that reincarnation is not an exception but that the overwhelming majority of mankind has a previous incarnation on earth.⁹

Irrefutable evidence from a novel source :

Apart from the study of cases of recollection of 'past life', a new technique of investigation is being applied in the research of rebirth phenomenon. This is called hypnotic age-regression. In USA where psychiatric practice has wide coverage, one of the psychoanalytic techniques used in uncovering subconscious complexes that may be at the root of various psycho-somatic illnesses is, hypnotic trance. In this technique, the patient is made to recollect his past and re-live the earlier events of his life under hypnotic trance. Normally we can recall only significant events from our distant past, but it is not possible to recall each and every occurrence of a particular day of say, ten years ago; under deep hypnosis, however, one can recall a particular day from one's past with such vivid details that it appears as if one is literally re-living that day in the present.

Formerly, the common practice was to ask the patient

to recollect his past life, say of ten years ago, then fifteen years ago and so on till he would regress back to his infancy. During such age-regression sessions under hypnosis, it was noticed that, at times, the patient would start recalling things which could not have happened in his present lifetime and let us see how this strange phenomenon led Dr. Alexander Cannon, an internationally acclaimed medical man and scientist who was at one time a staunch opponent of rebirth theory to come around and accept it whole-heartedly. Here is the account in his own words:

For years the theory of reincarnation was a nightmare to me and I did my best to disprove it and even argued with my trance-subjects to the effect that they were talking nonsense, and yet, as the years went by, one subject after another told me the same story inspite of varied conscious beliefs, in effect until now, well over a thousand cases have been so investigated and I have to admit that there is such a thing as reincarnation.

In everyone of over a thousand cases I have looked into, the existence has gone back to a previous existence on earth over a period varying from a hundred years previously to two, three or more thousand years B.C.¹⁰

After furnishing some details of his research, he further states,

The reader will see that my remarks ... are not based upon supposition, but upon tested evidence which has been most remarkably and encouragingly constant throughout the investigations which number over thirteen hundred to date. Such evidence as this defies the attacks of the most materialistic doctrinaires and cannot lightly be passed over, even by the most hardened cynic.¹¹

Hypnosis :

During these investigations, he found convincing

evidence reiterating validity of theory of Karma to which we shall turn later.

Under deep hypnotic trance or what is known as somnambulistic trance, it has been observed that the subjects display ESP capabilities transcending barrier of time and space. In such a trance state, reminiscences not only of one's immediate past life but of number of previous births could be tapped and along with the recall of an event, speech, accent, gestures and sentiments take on the tone appropriate to the event recollected. For example, if the event relates to childhood, the vocal expression changes to childhood babble with immature diction and high-pitched voice; or if it relates to some painful state, the voice turns into a plaintive moan as if the recollected incident is being acted out by a competent actor bringing it alive in the present. This fact provides strong evidence in favour of it being a genuine event that had occurred in the subject's past life and not a flight of his fancy.

Psychotherapist Dr. Edith Fiore from Saratoga, California, in her book *'You Have Been Here Before'* asks sarcastically,

Are they putting on an act ? If so, most should be nominated for academy awards. I have listened to and watched people in past-life-regression under hypnosis for thousands of hours. I am convinced there is no deliberate nor conscious attempt to deceive. The tears, shaking, flinching, smiling, gasping for breath, groaning, sweating, and physical manifestations are all too real.¹²

Another psychotherapist, researcher and author of *'Past Lives, Future Loves'* and *'Unseen Influences'* Dick Sutphen says,

.... He may refuse to answer a question, but if he does answer from a somnambulistic level, he will tell the truth. I know of no case where a subject in deep trance has ever been able to lie. I believe the

subconscious cannot stray from the truth when it moves from known reality into unknown past lifetime.¹³

The book *"A Search For Bridey Murphy"*¹⁴ is recommended to those interested in this subject. Written by an American banker in a gripping style of a novel, citing at length a case-study of age-regression experiment done by the author, the book describes in absorbing detail, the technique of hypnotic age-regression, It also describes the wealth of information unearthed by this method, the reason why such information provides irrefutable evidence in support of the rebirth phenomenon and how such accumulating evidence is resulting in ever-widening acceptance of reincarnation by intellectual elite of the American society.

In the mid-fifties, the book was a total sell-out reaching a million copies mark. Paramount Pictures had also produced a movie titled 'Bridey Murphy'.

Christianity does not believe in rebirth while the book presented evidence to the contrary, hence vested interests tried to kick up a cloud of controversy regarding its validity. But, impartial journalists after visiting century-old birth place of Murphy in far-off Ireland and cross-checking the evidence by carrying out on-the-spot investigation gave the verdict, 'Research is Bridey's best ally'.

Owing to widespread publicity received by Bernstein's book, in the thirties public attention was quickly drawn to Edgar Cayce's 'Life readings'. It was, therefore, quite natural that the American public mind, already impressed by Cayce's exceptional powers of diagnosis and treatment of diseases, was easily convinced of Cayce's reincarnation statements. Thus, Edgar Cayce's contribution towards acceptance of rebirth theory in USA is considerable; for couple of decades, he created quite a flutter in America.

The 'Miracle Man' of Virginia beach :

As already mentioned earlier, during deep trance as spiritual powers of ESP are awakened, it is possible even to 'read' the past or the future of others. During deep trance, Cayce thus revealed previous life-histories of twentyfive hundred persons. Here a doubt may be raised that while recollecting one's own past, the subject under trance acts out the event and the overt emotional expression is self-evident and consistent with the event so recalled. But when 'reading' someone else's life-story, such self-evident proof is lacking, hence the validity of such 'life-reading' would be questionable. How can one be sure that it is not just imagination let loose ? However, this objection could not apply to Edgar Cayce who had given ample proof of his ESP capability by correctly diagnosing the disease and pointing out the effective line of treatment in more than thirty thousand cases without even examining the patients who, in some case, were physically separated from him by some thousands of miles.

This fantastic story of Edgar Cayce goes back to the time when he was twenty-one. He was down with a serious illness from which he managed to scrape through but suffered a loss of speech as a consequence. All attempts at recovery of his speech failed. Once, a visiting hypnotist put him under trance and made him regain his speech temporarily during that brief spell. On awakening from the trance, he relapsed into speechlessness. The professional hypnotist who could make him talk in the trance had left for elsewhere, but an amateur hypnotist who had witnessed Cayce regaining speech during that brief trance, felt that the cause underlying Cayce's inability to speak could be elicited from his subconscious mind itself during a trance and hence thought of giving it a try. He put Cayce under trance and lo ! during this experimental trance, Cayce who had very limited education upto ninth standard only, rattled off the diagnosis, the causative factor and the line of treatment in a thoroughly professional manner of a qualified physician. When Cayce's suggested line of treatment was followed, it resulted in complete cure with his speech returning

to normal. The amateur hypnotist who was suffering from long-standing abdominal ailment proposed to Cayce to try out the same method for arriving at the diagnosis and treatment to cure his chronic complaint. Cayce obliged and on following the line of treatment suggested during trance, the hypnotist was also relieved of his trouble. Gradually, word about this amazing phenomenon spread among the doctors who began taking Cayce's help in solving some difficult diagnostic dilemmas. Thus began the long series of some thirty thousand health-readings by Cayce. Later, it became apparent that physical presence of the patient in question was not a 'must' for successful result and it was sufficient for Cayce to know where the patient was located at the time of inquiry. By then, Cayce had become adept at inducing the state of trance by self-hypnosis and during such a trance when he was questioned about a patient, he would start commenting as if he was visualising the body of a patient through an x-ray screening machine. Thus, he may exclaim, "We can see the body ... etc ...". Cayce who did not have an iota of medical knowledge would pronounce the diagnosis, the etiology and line of treatment in the manner of an expert medical consultant advising a referring family physician about the management of a case. His suggestions regarding the treatment used to vary from case to case and were not restricted to any one particular medical system like allopathy alone. Some of the complicated cases, given up as hopeless by expert specialists recovered under Cayce's treatment although he had no textbook knowledge of medicine. Some of his successes were so spectacular that even today his methodology and records of case-histories are being keenly researched by medical men.

Cayce's 'Life-readings' :

Arthur Lemurs of Ohio, USA, a well-to-do publisher, on hearing about Cayce's mystic powers, wondered why such extraordinary perceptive capability could not be put to use for solving the age-old questions plaguing human mind e.g. what is the purpose of human life ? Is there life after death ? Which philosophical school is nearer to truth ? etc. For this specific

purpose, Lemurs came down to Selma, Alabama where Cayce was staying at that time. Lemurs was first man who could see in Cayce's unusual talent the potential for exploring fields other than medicine. He met Cayce with this idea and proposed his plan of action. Cayce agreed to give it a try and at the very first attempt, Lemurs was taken aback by a surprise revelation made by Cayce that he (Lemurs) was himself a priest in his previous life. It was 10th August 1923; thus began Cayce's 'life-readings'. Cayce could not only disclose the details of the previous birth but would also indicate how actions and mental trends of previous life would affect the course of events in the present life. He could indicate with astonishing accuracy even the traits of personality, interest, habits and mental development of a person without ever having seen him or heard about him. Those who had personally witnessed this extraordinary power of Cayce at work, were so impressed that they had no reservations about the accuracy of his readings. Thus Cayce's life-readings also totalled a good two and a half thousand in number.

Cayce's admirers founded an institution named after him during his lifetime itself.* Cayce died in 1954 at the age of 68. This organisation has carefully preserved the records of his thirty thousand health-readings and two and half thousand life-readings which form the basis of many research projects going on under its aegis. A monthly bulletin is being published by the organisation. Thus, Cayce's two and half thousand life-readings too have contributed substantially towards rebirth phenomenon getting a surer foothold in USA. For those couple of decades, America was set arocking with Cayce phenomenon. **

*Association for Research and Enlightenment, 67th. Street and Atlantic Avenue, P.O. Box 595, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

**Some of the popular books on reincarnation published by Warner Books, New York, and others are as under :

- (1) *There Is a River* - Thomas Sugrue
- (2) *Many Mansions* - Dr. Gina Germinara

Past Life Therapy :

Dr. Alexander Cannon came to accept rebirth Phenomenon after conducting age-regression experiments that went into past lives in cases numbering between thirteen to fourteen hundred. Not only that, he began to use freely pre-natal age-regression technique to trace the roots of phobias and anxiety neurosis in patients' past lives rather than looking for their causes in the present as was commonly practised by other psychiatrists. He had by then become an adept in unraveling complexes/influences arising out of painful events of past lives on the subconscious mind of the patients. He declared, "Most patients do not benefit from psychoanalysis because the roots of complexes are linked to some events in the past lives rather than those of the present life."

An American businessman used to experience unexplained fear whenever he faced a situation involving use of escalators/elevators (lifts). Through prenatal age-regression technique, Dr. Cannon could locate the cause of his irrational fear in his third past-life. In that birth, this person was a military officer in China. He met with his death in an accidental fall from a hill in that life. Hence, he went on experiencing the fear of falling down from heights in his later lives.

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- (3) *Edgar Cayce : Man of Miracles* - Joseph Millard
 - (4) *You Will Survive After Death* - Sherwood Eddy
 - (5) *Venture Inward* - Hugh Lynn Cayce, (Harper & Row)
 - (6) *Edgar Cayce - The Sleeping Prophet* - Jess Stearn (Bantam Books)
 - (7) *The Case For Reincarnation* - Joe Fisher
 - (8) *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* - Ian Stevenson
 - (9) *The World Within* - Gind Cerminara
 - (10) *Survival ! Body, Mind and Death in the Light of Psychic Experiences* - David Lorimar (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984).
 - (11) *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* - F.W.H. Myers, (University Books Inc. N.Y. 1961).
 - (12) *Afterlife* - Collin Wilson (Grafton Books, 1988).
 - (13) *The Presence of Other Worlds* - Wilson Van Dusen (Harper & Raw, N.Y. 1974).

After the upheaval caused by Edgar Cayce and Bridey Murphy in USA regarding rebirth, many psychotherapists have begun to peep into the past lives of their patients through hypnotic age-regression.

One such psychotherapist Dr. Edith Fiore, discussing how she turned towards past-life therapy, states,

I was brought up attending various denominations of protestant churches ... I do not remember ever being taught or hearing about living more than one lifetime on earth ... not once in the nine years I spent studying psychology - either in colleges (Mount Holyoak college and Goucher college) or graduate schools (university of Maryland and University of Miami) - was the concept, or even the word reincarnation, used ... I cannot recall one lecture or one demonstration on the subject; ... Almost by accident ... it started out as something exciting to share ... when I first began using hypnosis I, like many other hypnotherapists, asked my patients to comb back through the years ... startlingly, a problem - for example, one of forty years' duration - could sometimes be traced back to first months or even to birth experience itself ... gradually, I went back even further, discovering emotional problems arising from those supposedly cloistered months in the womb...

Many of my patients have discovered that the causes of their phobias, fears and even aversions were rooted in some traumatic event of a previous lifetime.¹⁵

A girl had abnormal fear of snakes. During age-regression, it came out that in one of her remote past lives, she had witnessed priests dancing in front of the pyramids with poisonous snakes held in their mouths; this had frightened

her extremely. A lady having difficulty sleeping alone at night was afraid of being murdered; the root cause of this was traced to an event in her previous lifetime in which she was murdered under similar circumstances. A woman's lifelong aversion to train journey was traced to an incident in her previous life in which she had seen her own sister getting crushed under the wheels of a train.

Dr. Edith Fiore has given details of ten such cases in one of her books. This statement including the question-answer series with the patient under trance while recollecting events from past lives through age-regression in order to trace the cause of one's present problem, is made with such force that it will set even a staunch non-believer in reincarnation thinking again.

Tracing back the root cause of one's present problem in past lives in this fashion, does take considerable time but once it is found, the improvement is quite rapid, sometimes the relief is almost instantaneous. That is why many psychotherapists have turned to past-life therapy in USA. Dr. Dick Sutphen from Malibu, California Dr. Edith Fiore Saratoga Cal. and Dr. Morris Netherton of Los Angeles, are some of the leading names in this field.

Consciousness: The eternal existence :

One can see that in the materialistic west also rebirth concept is rapidly gaining credence. Dr. Raynor Johnson from Melbourne University who has been involved in the study of rebirth phenomenon, rounding off the discussion on parapsychological research in his book '*The Imprisoned Splendour*' concludes, "to sum up, we have enough trustworthy evidence to anticipate our survival of the change called death."¹⁶

Reminiscence of one's previous birth in the present life has not only substantiated the phenomenon of rebirth but has seriously challenged the modern scientific belief that our memory is based on perception-images recorded in our brain

cells by chemical changes induced by sensory input during our intercourse with the world around. Even after complete disintegration through burial or cremation of the bodies that provided the physical basis for existence in the previous life, the fact that memories connected with the previous life can be aroused in above manner itself provides a valid proof that the base for these memories is not the body but an independent element that takes up a new physical form after discarding the old one.

Thus, the fact of recollection of previous births establishes three corollaries as under :

1. Body is not the base of knowledge.
2. An element independent of the body does exist within it and
3. That element continues to exist even after total disintegration of its physical counterpart (body).

A psychiatrist from New York goes even further to state, "Prenatal psychology may shatter the last fetters with which scientific materialism has bound our minds."¹⁷

It would not be out of place to review here an unusual instance which, although it is quite different from common reincarnation phenomenon, throws new light on totally independent existence of the spirit with reference to the body. This incident is narrated by Dr. Banerji like this.

Few years ago, seven-year old Jasbir died at night in the village Rasalpur. His parents were inclined to delay his last rites till next morning. In the meanwhile, some signs of life were detected in Jasbir who progressively recovered almost to normalcy within couple of days; but he was, thereafter, quite a changed person. After his resuscitation from near-death, he refused to accept meals cooked in his home and insistently maintained that he was a Brahmin, son of one Shankerlal Tyagi residing at Vehadi situated some 22 miles

away from Rasalpur. Hence, it was so arranged that his meals were prepared by a local Brahmin woman. About a year and half went by in this manner, when Pandit Ravidutt, a teacher from Vehadi came to Rasalpur. Jasbir instantly recognised him and engaged him in conversation about the family of Shankerlal Tyagi and other folks of Vehadi with great ease and intimacy which surprised everyone. Jasbir was then taken to Vehadi where he could identify quite a few local inhabitants. With one thing leading to another, it soon became apparent that there was extraordinary coincidence of timing between the bizarre resurrection and transfiguration of character in Jasbir and the accidental death of Shankarlal's youthful son - suggesting as if that the spirit finding the mutilated body unsuitable for its abode, discarded it and transmigrated into recently vacated form of Jasbir.

Consciousness-body interrelationship; a modern simile

Those unfamiliar with the spiritual concept but well-acquainted with modern scientific terminology would be able to grasp the interrelationship between the soul and the body through an analogy of a TV set and the high-frequency electromagnetic waves that are employed to relay a telecast. In order to locate the origin of audio-visual signals that make the TV set come 'alive', even if one takes the whole set apart, what would one find there ? Various modules, tubes and transformers contained therein do contribute towards functioning of the set, but the energy waves that generate the audio-visual signals are surely different from the parts of the TV set. It is the high-frequency waves of the telecast that produce their effect on the TV screen without betraying their presence. In their absence, even the most powerful set cannot bring on any picture or sound. These high-frequency waves are invisible to us and we do not have any special sense-organ to perceive them. Yet, when they enter the TV set, their presence becomes evident to us. Similarly, the soul is beyond the range of our perceptive sense-organs but when it enters the body - like high-frequency TV waves entering a TV set - we can perceive

its existence through animation brought about in the body. In the 'set' of our body with brain as its screen and transformer, perception, emotion, memory etc. evoke a colourful 'live' picture. However, it is not the 'transformer' or the 'screen', but the life-energy which corresponds to the high-frequency waves that activate the 'set'.

We may choose to call this energy by any name, but without this vital force, the 'set' does not come alive. When, after prolonged use, the picture tube fails or the transformer conks out due to wear and tear, these electro-magnetic waves cannot manifest themselves as a picture in the 'dead' set. The energy waves, however remain unaffected by the deterioration of the set. If a new set is installed, the wave-forms will immediately enliven it by projecting an animated picture on the screen. The interrelationship through this apt analogy, between the body and the consciousness thus becomes quite obvious as between the TV set and the electro-magnetic waves. When the old framework of the body is no longer capable of projecting the soul-energy, the consciousness enters another body and manifests itself as life there. The death and dissolution of the previous body do not affect the soul in any way. It can exist independent of the body, soul needs the body merely to manifest itself, not for its EXISTENCE. Hence, the body cannot be equated with the soul on this count alone. The energy that enlivens a body is quite distinct from the physical form as are the electro-magnetic waves from a TV set.

A Peep into the Yonder World with the Aid of Modern Cosmology and Parapsychology

The existence of soul - a principle that survives after death has been well established as scientific truth by leading authorities like Sir Oliver Lodge, Prof. Mc Carthy, J.B. Rhine, Dr. Alexander Cannon and Dr. Raynor Johnson from earlier years and 'Past-Life' therapy promoters like Dr. Netherton and Edith Fiore in recent years. So, no unbiased, rationally thinking person can negate it. The phenomenon of reincarnation thus becomes an undeniable fact. We have already discussed it in earlier chapter. The question that now remains to be sorted out is of the spatial relationship between different incarnations.

When someone sees the everloving glance of one's dear one turned into a fixed death-stare with non-reacting vacant look drained of all emotions, a realisation cannot escape him even if he were a hardened atheist that the occupant of that physical frame has vacated the 'room' of his caravanserai and has left on his journey into the unknown as a Gipsy is wont to do. It is indeed at such a moment that one yearns to know the likely destination of that dear departed soul. Is it possible to find his whereabouts ? Wouldn't it gladden the heart of the bereaved, if he could meet someone with ESP powers (Extra-Sensory Perception) who could locate his beloved for him ?

Well, the privilege of tracing individual addresses of such 'Gipsies' who are off on their cosmic journey into the unknown after vacating their old habitat on this earth may be reserved for the yogis with unusual perceptive powers, but faint inklings of the yonder world to which the soul transmigrates are being provided by the modern science as well.

The astronauts who visited the moon have stated that there is no possibility of life on the moon. Does it then necessarily mean that the spirit after death is reborn on this earth only ? The scriptures do not accept such restricted interpretation that the earth is the exclusive planet capable of sustaining life. Scriptural authorities emphatically state that life exists on many more planets which are much bigger than our earth and that some of them are populated by human beings too.

There are references to numerous celestial sites inhabited by angels and demigods with superhuman power and superabundant luxury. Well. How does one reconcile with the astronauts' denial of life on the moon on one hand and scriptural assertion of life out there in the yonder world on the other ? Such questions may perplex any thinking person; fortunately, modern astronomy comes to our aid and gives enough clues to solve this puzzle.

Boundless universe :

The moon that the astronauts explored is considered by modern astronomy to be a satellite of our planet earth which, in turn, is a member of our solar system. In our galaxy, it is estimated that there are trillions of such suns with their own families of planets and satellites. And such vast galaxies are not a few. According to modern cosmology, trillions of galaxies are scattered over immense distances in outer space.

Our galaxy was thought to be the entire universe by astronomers at large, until discoveries in 1920. Today, we know the milky way galaxy is only one of the billions of galaxies. In whatever direction we look deep into outer space, we can detect clusters of galaxies.

Let us first see how the huge proportions of the cosmos as envisaged in the scriptures match with the expanse of the universe envisaged by modern astronomy that explores it with telescope, spectroscope, radio-telescope and other sophisticated equipment.

Normally on a clear night, we can see about three thousand stars with naked eye, but the astronomers inform us that this figure runs into infinity because in the area of sky as large as that covered by moon when seen by naked eye, there could be as many as six hundred galaxies packed in the outer space; and remember, there is not a single corner of the cosmos untenanted by galaxies.

The wonders of the milky way :

Ancient scriptures had devised much bigger units of time and space to describe astronomical distances, where day-to-day measurements would fall inconveniently short. Similarly, science too has adopted different units of measurement to show interstellar distances which cannot be put in conventional units like miles or kilometers. One such unit is light year. A light year denotes the distance covered in one year's time by light which travels at the speed of one hundred eighty-six thousand miles or roughly three hundred thousand kilometers per second. Light from the moon takes about one and a quarter seconds to reach the earth - a distance of about two hundred twenty-five thousand miles or 3,84,000 kms.; light from the sun takes about eight minutes to reach the earth - a distance of ninety-three million miles or

1,490,000,000 kms. and light from Neptune takes four hours to reach us. In terms of light-year units, we can say that the moon is one and a quarter light seconds away from the earth, the sun about eight and a quarter light-minutes away and Neptune about four light-hours away from us. In astronomy, these distances within our solar system are, of course, comparable to the dimensions of one's backyard.

The nearest neighbour of our sun i.e. another 'sun' is so far away that its light takes about four years to reach us and this, astronomically speaking, is rather close neighbourly distance. There are other stars whose light takes fifty, hundred or five hundred years to reach us. For example, the light from the pole star takes about 450 light years to reach the earth. Our sun is a solitary star but in outer space, there are stars bunched together to form constellations which are scattered far and wide, the distant ones among them appearing nebulous. Our galactic formation contains an infinite number of stars, constellations and solar systems, probably more than hundred thousand million stars spread out in a biconvex elliptical shape of space with a diameter of about hundred thousand light years.

One of our neighbourly galaxy is Andromeda or May-31 that looks like a patch of smoke seen with naked eye but on telescopic viewing, appears as a galaxy of stars that is twenty-two hundred thousand light years away from us and radio-telescopes have picked up signals from over ten thousand million light years away which are stronger than the ones coming from known neighbourly galaxies. Modern astronomy has named these sources of powerful radio signals as quasi-stellar or star-like, because they are neither stars nor galaxies. No quasar is at a distance less than ten thousand million light years from earth. At such distances, it is not possible to see stars (or their light) while quasars are hundred times brighter than some of the brightest galaxies; however, they are quite

small in size compared to the galaxies. Within last couple of decades, more than a hundred quasars have been discovered.

Life on other planets :

Keeping pace with the widening horizons of scientific exploration of outer space, our concept regarding the size of our universe is also expanding rapidly. What are the chances of discovering life on planets and stars in the part of the cosmos that has been explored by science upto date ? According to Hoyle, of the hundred thousand million stars in our galaxy, about ten million may have planets and out of these, on a million of them it may be possible for life to flourish and sustain itself. According to Dr. Stephen Dall, an American astronomer, our own galaxy could have five hundred million planets that could support life. Even if the probability of intelligent life is given the odds of one in every ten thousand of them, there could be fifty thousand planets where advanced, intelligent civilisation could be flourishing.

Dr. Ponam Peruma of Maryland University speaks of a distinct possibility of life having evolved in outer space, while Dr. Carl Sagan has already formulated a programme of research for intelligent life in outer space, which is named 'Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence' (SETI in short). According to this project, radio-telescopes placed at various locations on earth continue round-the-clock probing of outer space.

It is now a scientifically acknowledged fact that we receive rhythmic pulses of signals at regular intervals from outer space although exact mechanism and location of their origin is not yet known - if these signals are generated artificially, the sources emitting them must possess highly advanced technology and the senders must be members of a highly intelligent civilisation far ahead of us.

There is lot of skepticism towards immensely vast dimensions of astral bodies, terrestrial continents and heavenly kingdoms described in the scriptures, but dimensions of stars and galaxies calculated by scientific observation by competent authorities also appear equally fantastic at first glance. They however have to be accepted as true because they have been arrived at through geometric, trigonometric and teleradiation measurements.

According to this, Jupiter is estimated to have a diameter of 80,000 miles, large enough to accommodate as many as 1300 planets of the size of our earth. Diameters of the sun, Aldebaran and antares or alpha scorpi is eight lakh miles, eight crore miles and 39 crore miles respectively, the last named being so vast that it can take in as many as three crore suns within its bulk. These are some of the figures accepted and acknowledged by science today; Epsilon, a star from Aurigo constellation has a diameter 2700 times bigger than that of the sun and the lately discovered V-381 Scorpio has diameter 3000 times greater than the sun. In comparison, 800 miles diameter of our earth sounds Lilliputian.

During 'age-regression' experiments referred to earlier in connection with parapsychology research, there have been several instances where information about life in outer space on other planets has been hinted at. If we go through the reports of Dr. Cannon who has conducted 1382 experiments of this type, we come across convincing evidence about life existing elsewhere in the universe and also notice descriptions that match those given in the scriptures regarding heavenly places and celestial abodes of angels and demi-gods. Let us sample a few of them here. During one of the experiments, Dr. Cannon asked the subject under trance to regress beyond her present birth and recollect her memory five years prior to it. Dr. Cannon writes :

We then took the subject's memory back another five years and found that she was then living on the planet Venus. Here, however, a question arose which caused us little difficulty at first. The subject pointed out that our computations were based on Earth-time and that this created a confusion because there was no such time-factor on Venus. Some interesting details were given to us as to the nature of life on Venus. I asked her what went on there and she replied that instruction in the art of living was the main activity; also she indicated that work as we know it on Earth did not exist on that planet. The medium informed us that the light on Venus was constant and extremely bright; so brilliant, in fact, that our earth was described as 'dark planet' even on its brightest day.¹⁸

'Astral world' :

An American housewife named Ruth Simmons, while describing her previous birth history during age-regression experiment, said that she was in the astral world, where they do not need to eat or sleep, nor does one get tired. Here are some interesting portions of this dialogue :

How did you spend all of your time ?

Oh ... just ... watching ...

Did it seem like it was long time, or did time mean anything ?

No, no night or no day ... like you had it.

While you were ... in this astral life ... could you tell what was going on in Belfast at Brian's house ?

No.

You didn't know ?

I didn't watch ... You could.

You could watch ?

You could ... but I didn't watch ... you could just see ... just anything.

You could see anything you wanted to see ... just by wanting to see it ?

Just willing it so you just think you see everything.

I see, Could you read his thoughts then, could you read his thoughts all the time?

... If I thought of it ... I could know what he wanted and think.

I see ... Was there anything, were there anything in the astral world such as death, disease or old age ?

There was no death, there was just a ... passing off ... you passed from that existence ... to another existence. That's all, there is to death.

Any disease ?

No.

Could you look at the people on earth and see what was going to happen to them?

Yes.

You could ?

Yes.

You could see the future ?

Yes.

I see, What makes you say that you could ? Give us an example.

Because ... before ... you were born ... you would pass ... just see things that were going to happen ... they could see ... people knew what was going to happen ... if you were there.¹⁹

The readers should note that these descriptions are not taken out of some scriptural text but are reports of modern parapsychological research. It is indeed, very interesting to know that quite a few descriptions of life at astral level show remarkable resemblance to what has been mentioned in the scriptures regarding heavenly kingdom and celestial life. For example, there is no diurnal variation of day and night, there being a permanent state of illumination. Each celestial being possesses a certain degree of ESP so that he can "read" into the past or the future. They do not require actual food or sleep to satisfy their bodily needs which can be fulfilled by just mentalising them. They have knowledge of their life-span and come to know of its termination in advance. There is no embryonic or infantile period of growth as we have; with birth, one starts life as a full-fledged adult straightaway. How extraordinarily these points tally with the scriptural descriptions !

A further example of instant maturity attained on birth in the astral world is seen in this narration from Prof. Arvind Jani, Professor of Parapsychology, who has been working in USA on recollection of earlier incarnation or rebirth principle.

“ I can recollect the morning of my death. It was almost ten o'clock; my parents and family had gathered around my bed. Pain in my chest was quite severe and became so agonisingly unbearable that it seemed impossible to breathe. I felt as if a million scorpions were stinging me all at once ... the world around me was beginning to sink ... and all at once ... suddenly, my pain disappeared completely. Where was I ? It wasn't the interior of my house, I was in the open somewhere ... in a lovely garden ... where I found myself resting in the shade of a luxuriant tree. When I opened my eyes, I found myself alone there; then, I saw someone dressed in silvery white robes approaching me. As he came closer, he greeted me with a smile and spoke, “Come along, I shall take you around”.

“ What things are we going to see around here ? ”

“ Well, your lodgings and the rest of the things too.”

“ I tried to lift myself up bodily and found to my great surprise that I could do so with so much ease and without any pain. I took a few steps gingerly and realised that I could now walk with a brisk stride. There was no bodily pain or discomfort at all.”

“ When I looked at my body, I found it to have undergone complete transformation. I looked quite bright, beautiful and full of verve and vigour. ”

“ Where had my old form gone ? To heck with it, I couldn't care less. There was nothing but agony and suffering in it which I did not wish to undergo again even if it meant losing my parents and my darling fiancée whom I was so yearning to see before. The memory of

that excruciating pain sends shivers down my spine even now."

A group of beautiful ladies and handsome youths was heading our way carrying musical instruments and fragrant bouquets in hands.

" Who are these people ?" I asked my companion.

" The angels, celestial gods and damsels."

" Which way are they heading for ? "

" Out on a picnic. "

" Can I join them ? "

" Sure, you are welcome. "

The moment I joined that happy group enjoying their fun-filled outing, I forgot my past on the earth completely. ²⁰

Does it not sound like the heavenly abode described in the scriptures that could well exist somewhere in this universe ?

An alien world on the moon ?

Within the rational framework of scientific principle, it is quite possible that where we perceive today a certain type of existence, there may in fact, be a completely different form of existence altogether. The physicists believe that the objective world seen and sensed by us is nothing but a play of electromagnetic radiation of varying length and frequency. The

knowledge of science acquired by laboratory methods depends entirely upon the grasping capability of our senses or the input of information fed to our senses by the instruments and gadgets. Our perceptive range to pick up electro-magnetic waves from the environment is limited. Our eyes can pick up stimuli of wavelength ranging from .00004 to .00007 cms . The object emitting waves longer or shorter than this range is not visible to us; Infra-red rays that have slightly longer wavelength ranging from .00008 to .032 cms. cannot be seen by our eyes, although we can feel them on the skin in the form of heat. Similarly the wavelength of the Ultra-Violet rays ranging from .00003 to .000001 cms. falls short of our visual perceptive range but can be recorded on suitable photographic plate. X-rays that have still shorter wave-length can also be recorded on X-ray films. There are other electro-magnetic waves with wavelengths shorter or longer than the ordinary light, namely radio-active emissions of Gamma rays from Radium, cosmic radiation, radar waves, radio and television transmission waves, that are not visible to our eyes, although they can be easily picked up by means of various instruments. The world of stimuli beyond the range of these instruments, however, remains unknown to the physical science today. The Lunar landscape known to science today is also subject to this restriction in perceptiveness of scientific instruments. Even science concedes the possibility of discovering an altogether different perspective of the world around us, if we could develop perceptive capability finer and subtler than what we possess by way of our senses or instrumental sensors in use today.

In this reference, following quotes are quite telling :

These philosophical subtleties have a profound bearing on modern science ... for the human eye is sensitive only to the narrow band of radiation that falls between the red and the violet ... it is evident, therefore,

that ... what man can perceive of the reality around him is distorted and enfeebled by the limitation of his organ of vision. The world will appear far different to him if his eyes were sensitive, for example, to X-rays.²¹

There is no reason why nature should terminate at the point where our senses cease to register it, and no reason why, beyond this point, it should be governed by unfamiliar laws.²²

Our perception of an object varies depending upon the various electro-magnetic waves that project its image. What cannot be perceived by science today, may become accessible tomorrow through development of finer gadgets and then, barren-looking lunar landscape may appear full of life. One cannot categorically rule out the possibility of change in science's view regarding life on the moon.

It may be hard to swallow the proposition of experiencing a world other than what one is used to perceive through ordinary sensory apparatus in day-to-day life. So, let us take a simple example of everyday experience in order to grasp the point made earlier. When we are in a room which has no radio-set in it, we do not hear any sounds other than the ambient noise and the conversational voices of the occupants present therein. However, all the sound-waves of radio broadcasts from various centres like Delhi, London, Moscow etc. are very much in existence in the atmosphere of that room without interfering with one another or disturbing the peace. Our ears can, however, pick up only a particular range of sound - from 16 to 32768 frequency per second - the sound waves with higher frequency or longer wavelength remain inaudible to us. The transistor of the radio-set, of course, can pick up and convert them into wave forms that fall within our audible range and thus we become aware of their presence.

The same holds true for other sense-organs too, each having its inherent limitation of sensitivity. The eye too, like the ear, can grasp the image within its perceptive range (from .00007 to .00004 cm. wavelength). Thus, we cannot deny the existence of images or forms in our surroundings just because we fail to perceive them on account of our limited visual range. The images on TV screen are its example. The TV has an arrangement within itself to catch the high-frequency waves that are invisible to us directly and to convert them by rediffusion into an image on the screen that is visible to our eyes.

Now, if it were possible to so alter the sensitivity of our eyes and ears that they begin to perceive those impulses which normally remain beyond our range of perception, there will be complete change in the scenario of the world around us from what we have been conditioned to see and hear so far. The yogis state that after certain breath-control exercises, one ceases to feel the ground on which one walks, because the range of sensitivity of our skin to grasp the electro-magnetic waves that generate the sensation of touch gets altered. Referring to the dangers involved in the practice of yoga without proper guidance or expert supervision especially for the newly initiated who in their enthusiasm are likely to overstep the limit, a yogic teacher, (most probably Mr. Selvraj Yesudi, whose book *'Yoga and Health'* has been very popular in Europe) has mentioned an anecdote of his personal misadventure at an immature stage. Instead of a gradual increase in the duration of breath control exercises, he once undertook a rather strenuous stint of yoga lasting over forty-five minutes at a stretch at the end of which, when he tried to get up from the sitting posture, he suddenly noticed to have lost the sensation of touch in his feet. This alarmed him considerably and it was not until the normal sensations returned after fifteen minutes that he could breathe a sigh of relief.

Vera Stanley Adler, in her book *'The Finding of The Third Eye'* has cited an experiment wherein altered sense of gravity through breath-control exercise enabling one to lift heavy weights without feeling any strain is described. She has also mentioned about subsidence of painful bodily sensation by rapid, shallow breathing.

Considering the above points, we come to realise that our view of the phenomenal world is not truly objective but is, to a great extent, a subjective experience.

Shortcomings of research :

Dr. Raynor Johnson states,

The commonsense picture of the world is adequate for the ordinary business of living, but as soon as we want to know meanings, we have got to approach on a higher level of significance, and then we discover a world very unlike the familiar one - a world of which the latter is only a partial aspect ... from the viewpoint of lower grade of significance, the very existence of a higher grade may be unrecognized, and even to postulate it may seem imaginative or mystical. This general standpoint indicates the inherent limitation present in any type of inquiry. Natural science has ordered and classified and correlated data on one level of significance; the physical level of sense - data ... so to fully understand the physical world, we must penetrate into and interpret from a higher significant grade.²³

Today, the parapsychologists employ the ESP potential of humans in their research work thus carrying science into the realm of extra-sensory phenomena. On the basis of such research data, Dr. Alexander Cannon states,

All the subjects so far used, have stated that the earth is populated not only with physical beings but also with astral and etheric beings ... The existence of other levels of consciousness, and of worlds within worlds which are interpenetrating but not in mutual conscious contact, has not only been stated by the subjects as a matter of fact, but has also been demonstrated by them in ways which permit of no doubt in the matter. ²⁴

Thus, the scriptural belief that the spirits coexist with us on this earth receives further support from a scientific authority. - the inventor of Cannon psychograph. *

The way pioneering scientists of earlier era used test-tubes and microscope as integral part of their laboratory kit, the modern scientist has begun using human mind as his exploratory tool. What is asserted by science today as a fact, on the basis of continuous research in this field, was once, i.e. a century ago, ridiculed by the high priests of science as raving delusions of the spiritualists.

* Based on the principle of mental activity affecting our respiratory rhythm, like an electrocardiogram recording the heart muscle action, Cannon Psychograph registers the tracing of respiratory excursions which are interpreted as indicative of various mental states like a state of tranquility or tension, deep thoughts or adrowsiness, mental waywardness or concentration, meditation or sleep etc. (for further details refer '*Power Within*' PP 79-95)

5 *The Vital Question*

Twentieth Century Science is moving towards the spiritualist camp willy nilly; Dr. Paul Brunton in his book '*The Quest of The Overself*' states,

A silent revolution is taking place in physical sciences ever since the great war. The naive materialism of the nineteenth century no longer appears credible, and is pitifully out of date, while the theory of relativity, the quantum theory and wave mechanics are transforming our view of the universe. When the solid atom was broken into electrical charges and then dissolved into pristine ether, materialist was robbed of his matter. We are beginning to expound the doctrines of the ancients, the teaching of Babylonia, Egypt and India, but we are doing so by the light of modern scientific progress. Evidence accumulates that science is beginning to say the same things as those forgotten ancients, albeit in a different way. ²⁵

Twentieth century scientific discoveries afford the intelligentsia of today, an opportunity to witness how science has been stumbling upon fundamental truth expounded by the enlightened mystics thousands of years ago.

Insight attained through spiritual refinement : Its direct evidence :

Sir Jagdishchandra Bose provided modern science the

recorded evidence by way of crescograph that plants also register the sensations of pain or pleasure just like us humans. It was considered a noteworthy achievement in the world of science and brought him international recognition. The above discovery that astonished the intellectualistic western world, was common knowledge to even an uneducated Jain, because the mystic seers like Lord Mahavir had asserted this truth about presence of life in plants and their extreme sensitivity (human touch could also be painful), twentyfive hundred years ago. In Jain families even babes in arms are also aware of this notion as a matter of course.

The fact that such profound mysteries of Nature were fathomed by the enlightened without any help of external aid or equipment is now being reaffirmed with greater conviction through evidence provided by modern science itself. A keenly observant and alert mind can pick up evidence of this truth from his day-to-day life without going into the details of scientific research.

Now-a-days, in crime detection work, specially trained dog-squads are employed by the police. These dogs can pick up the trail of the fugitive by his body odour, a trace of which can be sampled by the dogs from any object that has remained in contact with the subject for some time e.g. clothes, footwear or personal belongings. Their exceptionally well-developed olfactory sense registers it and using it as a reference, they can trace the trail upto twelve or sometimes twentyfour hours later. Thus, if the particles signifying one's presence could be detected upto an interval of 12 to 24 hours after one has merely passed through a place, it is not too difficult to understand that at the site where one has sat for some time, the concentration of one's tracer element is bound to be higher which could prove disturbing to the nervous system of someone belonging to the opposite sex when that person occupies that

seat without allowing sufficient time to elapse for the aftermath of personal vibrations to die down. Such subtle points were taken into consideration by Lord Mahavir while formulating the code of conduct aimed at protecting one's celibacy, wherein immediate occupancy of the seat used earlier by a member of the opposite sex is prohibited. This example provides a direct proof of the depth of his enlightened wisdom and penetrating knowledge.

Science and spirituality - both need openness :

When such enlightened wisdom that fathomed the secrets of Nature without any scientific aid or equipment propounds something that may be at variance from modern scientific thought, does it not behove the followers of modern science to keep an open mind about it and try to establish the truth rather than jump to rash conclusions ? Our former president, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has charged the self-styled intellectuals in these words,

In the thought and life of the modern man self-conscious intellect, with its clear analysis and limited aims, takes the highest place and suicidal scepticism is the result; for while it accepts the evidence of the senses and the results of judgement and inference, it rejects as spurious and subjective the deeper intuitions which discursive reason must take for granted. Faith in conceptual reason is the logical counterpart of the egoism ... ²⁶

On the other hand, the believers in scriptural authority also should not indulge in argument for argument's sake against some new idea proposed by science that may not be in agreement with one's scripturally-based belief without first going into its scientific details. Such hasty attitude does not help in generating any faith or goodwill in the opposite camp of

scientism nor does it add to the dignity or stature of one's religious mentors. Scientists could be wrong in their enunciation because of an error in judgment rather than any malintent, but their ardent zeal to seek the truth and capacity for unbiased observation, analysis and evaluation of facts should be acknowledged and given its due credit. It is a well-known fact that science would accept as true only that which stands the test of experimentation. Such a stand of science is fully vindicated by the reality and reliability of gadgets of creature-comfort developed by science for day-to-day use which we all have become so used to. However, it is but natural that a believer in scriptures or follower of the science of self-realisation envisaged by the enlightened would hesitate to accept the statements of modern science as the ultimate truth; because, science itself is an ever-flowing stream wherein new waves of changing ideas keep cropping up now and again. Scientific beliefs also remain in a state of flux all the time, subject to change with the passage of time. Even the staunch believer in Scientism will have to accept this hard fact.

Changeability of scientific concepts :

About a century ago, electricity and magnetism were considered as independent entities but Oestred and Faraday experimentally proved that electric current is always surrounded by magnetic field and under certain conditions, magnetic forces can generate an electric current. This led to the concept of electro-magnetic field that unified the electric and magnetic forces into one single entity of energy.

All scientific concepts are not necessarily derived from experimentation alone. Scientific postulates are based on two systems; one inferred from experimental data and the other based on mathematical calculations. Some of the prestigious concepts of modern physics, like quantum theory, theory of

relativity and unified field theory were all arrived at by mathematical calculations. Two excerpts from *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* will clarify this point.

'All attempts failed until Plank found by mathematical means an equation.. the extra-ordinary feature of his equation was that it rested on the assumption that radiant energy is emitted not in an unbroken stream but in discontinuous bits or portions which he termed quanta.

Plank had no evidence for such an assumption, for no one knew anything (then and now) of the actual mechanism of radiation. ²⁷

The unified field theory..sets forth in one series of mutually consistent equations the physical laws governing the two fundamental forces of the universe, gravitation and electromagnetism.²⁸

Quite a few of such mathematically derived principles are found deficient afterwards on passage of time and are corrected, entailing changes in several other by-laws based on such enunciations.

For more than two centuries, experimental evidence and scientific enunciations emphatically maintained that light exists as wave-forms and yet, Einstein's photoelectric law proved with as much conviction that light consists of particles called 'photons'. Similarly, in 1925, Louis-de-Broglie, a young scientist in France, proposed that, if electrons are considered as special wave-forms and not as particles, many queries lacking satisfactory explanations can be solved. "This audacious concept flouted two decades of quantum research in which physicists had built up rather specific ideas about elementary

particles of matter.”²⁹

The unified field theory met the same fate. Originally proposed by Einstein in 1929, this theory was found deficient by himself later; discarding it, Einstein presented new theory in 1949. “The steady state theory” regarding the origin of universe was proposed in 1948 by Herman Bondy, Thomas Gould and Fred Hoyle but was later rejected as untenable by Fred Hoyle himself who was its chief architect to begin with. Similarly, electrons that were considered as the ultimate units of matter—the imperishable foundation stones of the universe — until 1925, are now relegated to the status of being mere electrical charges.

The scientists themselves, today, are well aware of the impermanency of scientific principles. Sir James Jeans says it in such words:

So at least we are tempted to conjecture to-day and yet who knows, how many more times the stream of knowledge may turn on itself ?.... everything that has been said, and every conclusion that has been tentatively put forward is quite frankly speculative and uncertain.³⁰

Science gravitating towards philosophy :

A major plus-point in Science’s favour is its readiness to admit its error and willingness to modify its stand the moment it finds itself in the wrong. Science does not hesitate to discard its theories and principles prestigiously installed as truth one day but found to be inconsistent with factual knowledge later on. This has fostered greater ideological freedom and liberalised thinking in Science today. The present-day scientist is not as dogmatic as his nineteenth century counterpart. As the author of *“The Universe and Dr. Einstein”* Notes,

It would be difficult today to find any scientist who imagines himself, because of his ability to discern previous errors, in a position to enunciate final truths. On the contrary, modern theorists are aware, as Newton was, that they stand on the shoulders of giants and that their particular perspective may appear distorted to posterity as that of their predecessors seemed to them.³¹

The father of quantum theory, Max Planck states that, on solving one problem, another one, more complex and difficult than the earlier, looms large in front of us like a higher peak coming into view after climbing one during a tough mountaineering expedition ... with the mysterious element of truth remaining elusive as ever, thwarting all our efforts to master it. A leading scientist like Eddington also opines that the physical world would lose its significance if divorced from the concept of universal intelligence.

The leading luminary of the modern science, Dr. Einstein states,

The cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest mainspring of scientific research...The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead.³²

Western thinkers are already visualising the possibility in near future when science itself will reiterate the truths enunciated by ancient philosophers. Paying his homage to the spiritually enlightened sages of ancient India, an eminent

Westerner Dr. Brunton states,

What is of special interest is that science is also unwittingly moving into the camp of the hidden philosophy, for some of its latest tenets as formulated by Einstein, Planck, Heisenberg, Jeans and others were anticipated and affirmed by the Indian sages at a time when western civilisation was babbling in its infancy.³³

In such circumstances, it is obvious that nobody can justifiably insist on total and unconditional acceptance of all that science offers today as the final truth without raising any queries or entertaining any doubts. Strides of scientific progress in the physical world may be of gigantic proportions, but in the spiritual world, let us not forget, it has barely begun to toddle yet.

A call for awareness in religious circles :

On the other hand, the powers that may be at the helms of religious affairs cannot afford to be indifferent to the reality of an urgent need to rationally satisfy the inquisitiveness of modern generation in order to sustain their faith in religion and credence in spirituality of man. It is futile to hope for the present generation to continue its credulousness for long, if timely intellectual assuagement is not forthcoming from the religious hierarchy to slake the newly awakened thirst for knowledge in the masses. Whenever scientific discoveries appear to be in conflict with one's belief - supposedly built on the scriptural basis enunciated by the enlightened - it behoves the orthodox religionists not to oppose them or to turn a deaf ear to them and label their propounders as materialistic charlatans out to deviate the religiously faithful from the right path but to first verify whether such belief does, indeed, enjoy

explicit support and concrete backing of the knowledgeable in actual reality and is not a presumptive inference tailored to suit some half-baked hypothesis.

The other point worthy of note in this regard is that one's belief, though based on the enunciations of the enlightened, could be erroneous due to lack of correct interpretative capability on one's part and failure to grasp properly its implied meaning. It, therefore, becomes imperative for us to know whether our comprehension of the gist of the wisdom of the enlightened is accurate or not, however authentic and veritable the original enunciation might be. There should be no hesitation in scrutinising one's capacity to comprehend the truth enunciated by the enlightened. The question of validity of the wisdom of the enlightened does not arise here, but it becomes quite pertinent vis-a-vis its comprehensibility at our mental level. We cannot afford to lose sight of the twin facts that the enunciation of the enlightened is perfect and our understanding of the same is far from perfect and even liable to error.

There could be several factors giving rise to such a state of affairs; one of them being the fact that we do not have in our possession well-preserved, comprehensive and authentic record of the sayings of the sages of yore. It is an accepted fact among Jain religious circles that the available literature forms a very small fraction of the scriptural text originally composed by the arch-disciples of Lord Mahavir. The twelfth voluminous part consisting of fourteen subdivisions has become untraceable today. Only fragmentary glimpses of it could be had in other books containing some abstracts or reference to it. Of the other eleven what is available today is, in fact, only a relic of the historic text of scriptures authored by the arch-disciples originally. Same sad state of affairs prevails regarding the divine discourses of Lord Buddha, Krishna, Jesus Christ and prophet Mohammed. The preachings of many a pioneering

founder of religion were composed in book-form centuries after their time; hence these volumes, naturally, represent only a part of the original that could be recalled from memory by their followers at the time of their writing and are, therefore, handed down the succeeding generations as their religious heritage. Based on such fragmented sources, our comprehension of their words of wisdom is likely to be incomplete and inconsistent with the whole truth enunciated originally and could suffer from a deficiency in deciphering the significance of some symbolic allusion or in interpreting the nuances of its implied meaning.

Let us consider one example. In the scriptural tomes of Kalpa-Sutra etc., there is reference to a system of measurement of time. Accordingly in Jain tradition, 3773 respiratory cycles = Muhurta or 48 minutes. (7 respiratory cycles = one Stoka, 7 Stokas = 1 Lava, and 77 Lavas = 1 Muhurta) is currently prevalent. Anyone digging deeper into it can notice an obvious discrepancy, because an average man has a respiratory rate of about 16 cycles per minute; in the yoga adepts, it would be still slower. At this rate, 3773 respiratory excursions will take not 48 minutes as mentioned earlier but will cover a period of about three and a half hours. In stipulated period of 48 minutes, an average of 800 or 850 respiratory cycles could be completed. Thus, the whole calculation comes to nought. However, in the original text, the word used is 'pana' by which the knowledgeable could be hinting at the pulse vibration and not the respiratory cycles. By accepting this interpretation, the authenticity of the scriptural statement is well substantiated and the confusion in our understanding gets cleared.

This glaring example provides direct evidence of the fact that our interpretation of the scriptures cannot always be unmistakable and should serve as an eye-opener for us. Does it not imply for us to be humbler and more tolerant towards those who happen to maintain views not quite in agreement

with ours ?

Not unlike the above-mentioned confusion regarding time element, there is a possibility of discrepancy in our interpretation of the symbolised units of spatial measurement mentioned in Jain scriptures which has resulted in our failure to understand various distances between places and sizes of cities mentioned in scriptures.

Religious leaders with keen insight would easily realise that, under the present circumstances, instead of magnifying the points of difference between modern science and scriptural texts, they would be rendering better service to the cause of religion, if they would highlight the common ground of mutual agreement between these two. This would help generate in the camp-followers of scientism respect for scriptures and reverence towards their enunciators. Looking at the manner in which science is forging ahead to unravel the mysteries of mysticism, time is ripe for such a move.

Common ground of concurrence :

From the deliberations so far, we have seen that those who swear allegiance to science will have to endorse the validity of the following assertions.

1. In addition to our physical body, we possess within ourselves an element eternal, imperishable and immortal.
2. After disintegration of present physical form, the 'I' dwelling within has to be reborn elsewhere and
3. For transmigration of soul, apart from this earth, there are other locations in this boundless universe with varied conditions of life obtaining therein. We may

choose to call them planets or astral world in scientific jargon or celestial habitats and distant island in scriptural terms.

In short, we all are cosmic travellers in this infinite, boundless universe, not permanent settlers of any particular place.

The crucial issue confronting us now is, 'what is the purpose of our journey in the infinite ?' 'Whither lies our goal ?' 'What steps need to be taken in our present incarnation to ensure our travel ahead in the cosmos - future transmigration of our soul- to be free from delay, digression or discomfort ?' These are the questions of highest importance to all of us, whether we belong to those who have staked their lot with science or those others who have placed their faith in scriptures and spiritualism. Keeping in sight the major areas of unanimity in beliefs of both sides on points of concurrence mentioned above, and without wasting time in argument over trivial differences, it is mandatory for us to channelise all our energies towards solving the vital question of how best to conduct the affairs of one's present life in the larger perspective of our grand journey of spiritual transmigration.

6

Invisible Shadows Cast Over Many Lives

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the holder of high academic distinctions in theology, philosophy and music before the age of thirty, suddenly decided to serve the suffering and the needy amongst the native negroes in the heart of African jungles. Giving up a brilliant career awaiting him, he began afresh the study of medicine at the age of thirty and having completed them in 1913, left for Africa. Voluntarily relinquishing a life of comfort and luxury, he set up the centre of his activities on the bank of river Congo amidst the aboriginal tribes. Fighting against all odds and adversities, he devoted his entire life in the service of backward masses of humanity. What factors inspired Schweitzer with such noble sentiments and lofty ideals of selfless service amidst the materialistic and self-centred society of modern times ? One can get an inkling of it from his childhood years of life.

It so happened that once, his mother had stitched an overcoat for Schweitzer and gave it to him to wear. Young Albert protested, saying, "Mummy, it isn't very chilly today so I don't need to wear it." His mother admonishingly told him, "Put it on, my son ! it is quite a foggy frosty day." Albert refusing to give in, said, "Oh Mom, none of the other boys have any overcoat to wear so how can I alone use it ?" Reluctantly, his mother relented and left the matter at that for

the day. Next day, when the issue was brought up, his father scolded him and ordered him to put the coat on, but young Albert refused to oblige. So, changing the pitch of his talk, his father cajoled him, "Well, why do you act stubborn ? Be a good boy and put it on ; do you know how hard your mother has worked in preparing it ? At least, to please her, you should wear it." But Albert could not comply with this request because his innocent mind could not reconcile with the idea of accepting preferential treatment reserved for the privileged few like himself and denied to his other fellow beings. Infuriated by such adamant attitude, his father pushing him out of the house, threatened, "Until you give up your obstinacy, keep out of the house". And poor Albert sat kneeling and crying outside. In earnestly practising the preaching of Christ - love thy neighbour as thyself - young Schweitzer outdid his father, an ordained priest.

Repercussions of acts of previous births :

From many examples of precocious spiritual development, intellectual excellence or artistic achievement in the field of poetry, music, dance etc. at a young age, the fact emerges that qualities developed and merits achieved by an individual in the previous life, continue to manifest in his ensuing births. Henry Ford has been reported to have said that, "Discovery of rebirth has cleared my doubts ; I can now let my mind rest easy. I felt that life, after all, had some sensible scheme or purposeful plan evolved around a definite goal and did proceed along a predetermined pattern. Having realised this truth, I have given up my futile search for an answer to the riddle of life."

An American boy named G.P. Bidder, became a master mathematician at the age of four and could solve complex sums involving strings of numbers at the speed of a computer.

William Hamilton of Ireland at the age of twelve, wrote a thesis on Light and received his Ph. D. without attending any school or college.

We often hear about child prodigies who have shown extraordinary talents in music, painting etc. The author of 'A Case For Reincarnation' has quoted one such example,

In 1971, the author Frank De Felita and his wife Dorothy were relaxing by the pool-side at their home in Los Angeles when they heard the strains of jazz music played on the piano coming from their house. When they went in to find out, they saw their six-year old son Raymond's fingers expertly moving on the keyboard; they were dumbfounded. At no time earlier, had he touched the piano ever. Fearing that her son was possessed, Dorothy was too scared to go near him. The boy said, "Papa, my fingers keep on playing by themselves." Later on the boy went to become one of the finest pianists in USA. After witnessing this incident, Frank De Felita, an author, became convinced about reincarnation and wrote a novel revolving around the theme of reincarnation.³⁴

Sant Gyaneshwar, who wrote 'Amrutanubhav' a composition replete with enlightening knowledge, yoga and devotion, and Gyaneshwari a first-rate critique on Geeta, while still in his teens; Shrimad Rajchandra who composed a concise version of Ramayana and Mahabharata in verse at the age of nine and gave demonstration of telepathic vision and other ESP powers at the age of ten and Shri Raman Maharshi who attained spiritual self-realisation during his school-days without undertaking any formal religious practice during this life are some of the leading luminaries of spiritual trail whose examples are worth quoting in this reference. The success and attainments that are hard to come by without prolonged endeavour, swirled at the feet of these spiritual prodigies without any exertion on their part in this life. How did this come about ?

The roots of our present status—heredo-familial and social as well as the capabilities or limitations-physical, mental or spiritual inhered in our present life — are traceable to our attitude and actions adopted during our previous births.

In chapter 3 reference has already been made to Dr. Edith Fiore the psychotherapist who, using hypnosis as a psychotherapeutic tool, arrived at the theory of reincarnation. In this regard she says,

In my work reincarnation theory, I am finding that there is not one aspect of character or human behaviour that cannot be better understood through an examination of past-life events. My patients and subjects have gone into previous existences to find the sources of their talents, skills, interests, strengths and weaknesses as well as specific symptoms and problems. The tapestry of our life is woven with threads that are ancient and the pattern is complex. ³⁵

Dick Sutphen, one more research worker, who has written about ten books on the subject and has conducted age-regression experiments on television, says,

Today's situation could be explained by what happened yesterday. Or, to put it another way, because of 'cause and effect' which is Karma the effects you are feeling now, both positive and negative, are the results of causes from this life-time or from previous life-times. The seeds (cause) you are sowing now will bring forth the effects yet to come in this lifetime or future life-times.

Your entire life—your mental state, your health, your relationships with others, the money that you have or haven't made—all are effects, but somewhere in your

backgrounds in this life or in previous lives, these effects were set in motion by causes.³⁶

Inviolable law of Nature :

There is a sacrosanct and inviolable edict of Nature, according to which repercussions of one's thoughts or actions by reward or retribution as the case may be, are inevitable. Howsoever secretly a sin may be committed, it is bound to attract proportionate chastisement. No one can escape his nemesis. Nature cannot be hoodwinked. Any sinful thought nurtured in one's mind, will bring upon oneself retributive wrath of Nature. By the same reason, every act of kindness whether witnessed by others or not, gets automatically recorded and is suitably rewarded by the invisible hand of natural justice.

Various events of our present life are repercussions of our attitudes and actions from past life-times. Our past is reflected in our present; our present moulds our future. This is the theory of Karma. Linked inseparably with the theory of reincarnation, this Karmic theory explains our present circumstance of life on one hand and provides an answer, on the other hand, to the question of how to make our future brighter and more beautiful. If one clearly comprehends the implication of this fact, one can develop right perspective for giving proper direction to one's present life.

The question may arise as to the mechanism that would ensure fruits of action-attitude taken in any corner of the universe by a particular living being from among the multitudes to inevitably reach him without fail. The explanation given by Jainism is as follows :

In the entire macrocosm including the environment surrounding us, over and above visible gross things, there are very fine, invisible material particles at subatomic level. Depending upon the degree of their grossness or subtleness,

they are categorised variously; one of which is known as 'Karmana Vargana'. By themselves, these particles of Karmana Vargana remain inert having no capacity to cause any pain or pleasure to the living being. But, just as the passage of electric current through a piece of iron produces magnetism in it, when a living being gets involved in any activity-attitude under the influence of infatuation, attraction or revulsion, the karmic particles in his vicinity are influenced by the vibrations good or bad (instinct, attitude or thought) and there develops a potential in these karmic particles to create conditions that can cause pain or pleasure and they get themselves attached to the soul of that being. These Karmana Vargana particles clinging to the soul are known as Karma in Jain terminology. This karma then carries the mechanism to deliver the consequent effects of the action/attitude like a time-bomb to the individual at their time of ripening in accordance with the law of cause and effect.

The law of Karma explaining in clear terms this unique phenomenon of action and reaction occurring in our lives, has been well incorporated in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu philosophy. Recent research in parapsychology has also provided further evidence supporting its validity. In reply to the query, 'whether it is possible to select the location of one's next birth place ?' the research findings from age-regression experiments suggest that choice of one's next birth-place is not in our hands, but is based on the merits or demerits of life led by the individual in earlier incarnations here on earth or at some other extra-terrestrial locations; the type of physical body and social status to be had in the next life too are predetermined, accordingly. ³⁷

Having studied over a thousand case-histories of recollection of previous births under hypnotic trance, Dr. Alexander Cannon reports,

The study explains the scale of justice in a very broad way showing how a person appears to suffer in this life as a result of something he has done in a past life through this law of action and reaction known in the East as Karma many a person cannot see why he suffers one disaster after another in this life, yet reincarnation may reveal atrocities committed by him in lives gone by. Others, no matter what they seem to do, 'fall on their feet' as it were, and may it not be the reward for services rendered in lives gone by ? ³⁸

The present life of an individual takes its shape after the Karmic image of his previous incarnation in terms of action and attitude adopted then. This has been well borne out from Cayce's life-readings.

..... the detailed projections made by Cayce, which were based, he had indicated, on their former earth-experience, have proved singularly true, even to the extent of predicting skills, traits, hobbies interests and professions. ³⁹

While studying the life-histories of previous births of subjects undergoing age-regression it has been observed that some deep rooted impressions from past-life may manifest in the very next life or may be carried forward to resurface after an intervening period of several births. ⁴⁰

Successful practitioner of age-regression technique and staunch supporter of reincarnation theory, Dr. Helen Wambach in her book '*Life Before Life*' says,

From my research data, I can say that links from past-lives are much stronger than even blood relations. ⁴¹

Such opinions are not restricted to western researchers

only. Research in reincarnation is being conducted in Russia behind iron curtain too. Highly respected by Russian scientists, Moscow-based research scientist Madam Varvara Ivanov has surmised that age-regression is helpful not only in explaining the cause of a person's present happiness or sorrow but also in understanding the underlying reasons behind his habits, mental attitude and unconscious behavioural patterns. ⁴²

Root-cause of our present state :

Just as the Karmic cause of action or attitude adopted in earlier lives brings about consequences in the present life, Karma formed in present life too can generate an instant reaction manifesting in the very same life. This fact is increasingly accepted in the western world today. The happy moments or sad times of our present life are not necessarily linked to the causes from previous lives; it may be that seeds were sown in the present life itself and not only actions but our emotions and thoughts too could cause such reactions. As Dr. Paul Brunton states,

Here it is not always necessary for the thoughts to translate into deeds before they can become karmically effective. If they have sufficient intensity and if they are prolonged over a sufficient period they will eventually bring appropriate results even in external circumstances. This can be made clearer by an actual illustration. If a man persistently and intensely hates somebody even to the point of ardently wishing his death, but if through fear of consequences, he lacks the courage to slay the other person, then his murderous thoughts will one day react upon himself in an equilibrated form. He may then himself experience a violent death or fall victim to a fatal accident or suffer from a disease which is as corrosive to his body as his hatred was to his character. Thus, although not actually guilty of committing murder, he undergoes a physical penalty for 'thinking' murder.⁴³

The West is poised for accepting Karmic law :

To the western world, parapsychology research has thus provided convincing proof of the validity of Karma and reincarnation theory. Consequently demand for reinstallation of these principles is gaining ground in the west now. The famous English author Paul Brunton observes :

Although Karma is really a scientific law, it was appropriated by the Asiatic religions as well as by the pagan faiths of primitive Europe It lived in Christian faith for five hundred years after Jesus; then, a group of men, the council of Constantinople, banished it from the Christian teaching because it offended their own personal petty prejudices. Thus, a little band of foolish men.... have robbed the West of a religious belief which, in the turn of history's wheel, must now be restored to the modern world for the scientific truth that it really is.

It is the duty of those who rule nations, guide thought, influence education and lead religion to make this restoration. Truth demands it in any case, but the safety and survival of western civilisation imperiously demand it still more. When men learn that they cannot escape the consequence of what they are and what they do, they will be more careful in conduct and more cautious in thinking. When they comprehend that hatred is a sharp boomerang which not only hurts the hated but also hater, they will hesitate twice and thrice before yielding to this worst of all human sins.

.... A sound ethical life will follow naturally as a function of such understanding. The west has great and quick need for the acceptance of Karma and rebirth because they make men and nations ethically self-responsible as no irrational or incoherent dogma can

make them hence the urgency of popularising the karma doctrine.⁴⁴

Our Shackles :

We have already noted so far that every action and thought whether good or bad, invariably affects our lives by generating corresponding reaction. Raynor Johnson has aptly observed that the universal principle of cause and effect or Newtonian law of action and reaction of the physicists, becomes the Karmic law of the spiritualists when applied to our lives at physical, mental and sentimental levels, covering our actions, thoughts and emotions under its jurisdiction. From our experience of life, we realise that every individual's existence is subject to certain limitations; No one can claim complete freedom from these constraints. Man has waged many wars in the hope of gaining control over his external circumstances and modifying them in a way that would permit him to enjoy the liberty of action and freedom of thought. However, such an independent state of existence free from the compulsions of circumstances and struggle for survival has remained only a distant dream for most of us because the fundamental cause of our self-imprisonment is lying within ourselves and not in the external world. We all are slaves of our passions, cravings, habits, ambitions, prejudices and preferences. Not only political or socio-economic conditions but, our intellect and physique, environment and mental make-up-all have a sway upon us. We all are prisoners incarcerated in the cells of our making; give or take a difference of few feet in diameter, our freedom of movement is restricted to the outer limits of our individual circles of captivity with each of us pegged to its hub with a leash. For most of us this zone of confinement is quite narrow and claustrophobic, but it is a pity that we are neither aware of its existence nor mind its constraint.

Exposition of Karma principle takes us to the very core

of this circle of confinement and by unraveling the role played by us in tightening the ropes around ourselves, places in our hands the key to our freedom, the way out from this entanglement, the trick to undo the knots of this self-created snare.

Prime source of peace and prosperity :

Pain or pleasure, whatever we offer to the world will be returned to us; we will be paid back in the same coin. Hence, if we wish improved conditions of living for ourselves, we shall have to exercise restraint in our conduct and attitude so as not to cause hurt or hardship to others. The golden rule to gain peace and happiness for oneself in life is, to adopt a way of life that brings bliss and cheer in the lives of others. 'Reap as you sow' is the universal law of Nature. To reap the rice crop, one has to sow rice; it is futile to expect roses to grow on cockleburs, one has to plant a rose twig for that. Similarly, give happiness to gain joy in return. Share your pleasure and give away the gift of glee to others, just like the farmer who joyously offers the seeds to the soil.

If this fact is well grasped, one comes to realise that generosity of heart generates material prosperity and selfish greed gives rise to scarcity and want. Co-operation not conflict, sympathy not censure, compassion not cruelty and admiration not envy are the mainsprings not only of spiritual progress but for success in one's mundane life too. This truth has been well accepted by science and has secured a place as a master-prescription for cure in the disturbed world of mental disorders. Conducting the affairs of life with an attitude of amity towards all living beings at par with oneself as manifestations of the same spiritual energy, not only brings peace, prosperity and equipoise to life but keeps obstacles away from the path of one's spiritual progress.

A clear comprehension of Karma concept inspires one to pursue one's goal in life with greater purpose and zeal rather than engendering inertia as is mistakenly assumed by those who equate it with fatalism. On the contrary, it enthuses one with the renewed hope and banishes all thoughts of pessimism and passivity. Just as we have built our present on the actions and attitudes in the past, we can build our future to our liking by making the most of our present opportunity by putting our best foot forward. Not only that, but by following this line, we can also modify to a certain extent the present set of circumstances inherited as karmic consequences from our previous births.

Spirituality - Triumph Over Inner Nature

With the knowledge of Karmic law, one can modify the future chain of events by abstaining from ignoble thoughts or improper actions that can result in adverse consequences, but in doing so, one cannot totally escape the binding terms of this cause and effect phenomenon and get exempted from undergoing the fruits of one's karma for ever. Willy nilly, we have to fulfil our part in the obligatory cycle of events under the karmic law. Is there any way out from this slavery of soul to its predestination ? In other words, can there be any activity that does not generate this chain reaction ? Will this clockwork of perpetual motion - series of actions followed by their reactions - never cease ? After settling the fundamental issues like the existence of soul, the yonder world, reincarnation and karma principle with finality, deliberative minds face this important question, How to secure exemption from the karmic cycle ? What makes this clockwork tick and what can put a stop to its motion ? These are the crucial points of our concern.

In physics, the law of action and reaction being equal and opposite prevails and keeps the cycle of perpetual motion going, with reaction following every action. However, a rare exemption to this rule has been noted. To study the state of matter under various conditions, attempts have been made to lower the temperature to absolute Zero (-273.15°C), a proposition almost impossible to achieve in actual practice; however, during such attempts, scientists have noticed an

amazing phenomenon. When the temperature reaches a point in the vicinity of absolute zero, suddenly, matter loses all its physical resistance. This miracle of near-zero point in physics has, as it were, its identical twin in spiritual world too.

Through one's spiritual endeavor (sadhna), when one manages to dissolve the 'I' existence or awareness of selfhood completely, one attains an egoless state, where his actions fail to provoke the proverbial karmic reaction. In other words, he transcends the barrier of karmic compulsion; karmic bondages can no longer hold him prisoner in their clutches. The archaic walls holding his innate joy, intuitive knowledge and eternal bliss locked within, now disintegrate. The phenomenon of reaction-free action during egoless state, the exception that only serves to prove the over-all validity of karmic rule, is the discovery of those enlightened explorers of the inner world who have established the ground-rules governing man's inner nature.

Triumph over the inner nature :

Science is striving to gain control over the elements in external world of objects while spiritualists' aim is mastery over emotions. The victory over nature externally is tantalisingly spectacular but mastery over the inner nature is the supreme attainment of all. Having learnt the laws of Nature that govern all matter from atomic particles to planetary bodies, to engineer an atomic explosion or to undertake lunar expedition may be a thrilling experience but to attain self-realisation by transcending mind and ego and rising above passions, cravings and emotional upheavals and thus entering into deep samadhi state is by far the most ecstatic and exciting experience.

The aspirant out to conquer instinctual desires has no option but to follow the trail of self-realisation as shown by the enlightened masters. Many thinkers among scientists today have begun to accept this truth.

Dr. Raynor Johnson to whom reference has been made on more than one occasion in this book, clearly states,

The fact is that we are too much slaves of sense perception. We are hypnotised by space and by time—the forms under which we try to understand the outer world. We live in a dream from which the only way to wake up is to take the ancient path of self-realisation. All those who have found their feet upon it and travelled a little way have seen the material world differently. ⁴⁵

That science has made sincere efforts to unravel the mysteries of universe cannot be denied. In doing so, it has reached a stage where its established yard-sticks fall short. In addition, the tendency to exploit every scientific invention for selfish purpose has endangered the entire mankind. Scientists dedicated to pure science are worried about these trends. Under the circumstances, it is natural for them to look in the direction of religion and spirituality. Modern scientists working in physics, especially the subatomic physics, appear to be talking in spiritualistic language; that too not one or two; they include the celebrities like Nils Bohr, Schrodinger, Planck, C.V. Raman, David Bohm etc.

Dr. Fritjof Kapra, the physicist who unhesitantly places the thoughts of mystic seers not at par but much above science, states, in the preface to his book, *'The Tao of Physics'* :

..... the connection between physics and mysticism
..... shows that the results of modern physics have opened up two very different paths for scientists to pursue. They lead us - to put it in extreme terms - to the Buddha or to the Bomb, and it is upto each scientist to decide which path to take. It seems to me that at a time when close to half our scientists and engineers work for

the military, wasting an enormous potential of human ingenuity and creativity by developing ever more sophisticated means of total destruction, the path of Buddha, the 'path with a heart', cannot be overemphasised. ⁴⁶

The great scientist and father of quantum physics, Max Planck states, " I consider life as fundamental. I believe the matter to have originated from life." ⁴⁷

The well-known Indian scientist, Dr. Raja Ramanna also thinks on similar lines :

" Even if science progresses with the help of its amazing powers, the fundamental questions will persist; and we (scientists) may never be able to survive without religion or philosophy, it may happen that they may assume different nomenclature by then. " ⁴⁸

Plus points of science :

Having noted the limitations of science, it would not be proper to accuse that nothing good has ever come out of scientific discoveries. Modern inventions have at least made the constraints of time and space to nearly vanish. The world has grown smaller. Various parts of the world have come in closer contact with each other despite geographical distances. This is the handiwork of technology/engineering. Atomic science, on the other hand has revealed the fact that our experience of the universe is not objective but subjective i.e. observer-related. In other words, not the world existing outside but the one that our sense-organs tell us about and our mind interprets it as - that is our world. Every individual's world, therefore, is different. The significance of such inference in our quest for self-identity can have very important bearing.

With removal of geographical barriers, at mundane level, peoples of the world are beginning to unite into a world community. Not that politicians have given up their divisive games to keep the races and nations apart, but they can no longer prevent them from benefitting from cross-cultural exchanges. At the same time, science too has imparted a new impetus to religion. Religious sects and tribes that used to cause division amongst people through their narrow parochial outlook, are losing their larger universal relevance in this context. The fundamental core of religion that unites mankind, has been made more topical and relevant with the help of scientific discoveries. The essence of religion or spirituality is : 1. life of high moral conduct and ethical values and 2. Self-experience of the ultimate truth. Objectivity-oriented ideology of science has helped curb dominance of emotionalism and and irrationality in the society and has focussed on the 'realistic' attitude instead. This is a major plus point in favour of science.

The newer disciplines of science e.g. Ecology and psychology are emphasising the importance of religious mottos (non-violence, morality, simplicity and contentment etc.) by underscoring their rationale in maintaining ecological balance. Astronomy, atomic science, space science etc. are bringing the esoteric mysticism to the conference table again. This contribution of science i.e. pure science is likely to go down in the history of mankind as a notable milestone. Science cannot afford not to take spiritualism-religion into its reckoning, because it is the exigency of the times. Sheer technological development has encouraged only mindless consumerism with increased craving for sensual gratification and information only about the external world has pampered human go. Together, these two have put a questionmark on the peace and security of mankind. And, perhaps, it is this stark reality that has compelled the ancient moral and spiritual wisdom to intervene. The extraordinary point in this case is that it is science that

has come out in the open to say that morality and spirituality are not just figments of imagination but are, in fact, the fundamental note and its sympathetic overtone in the harmony of universal music.

The trail of self-experience treaded by the sages :

The science wants to reform the world but it has its limitations. Everything cannot be regimented. It may succeed in controlling some of the extrinsic matters but human mind and heart are beyond its field of operation. This field is the exclusive domain of spiritualism.

The passions, cravings, selfishness and envy all originate from the ego-complex and over-possessiveness of man. Spirituality provides man the insight necessary to identify these complexes. The know-how and the strength to cut across their deeply entrenched roots are to be had from nowhere but spirituality.

Science may add polish to the veneered exterior of one's life, but it cannot transform the human core that makes man what he is, a complex bundle of contradictions and pot-pourri of passions. If man who has his ignoble instincts of greed, selfishness and jealousy left intact, finds access to unlimited power with the help of science, he will bring nothing but trouble upon himself as well as the world. Unlimited energy of the atom was presented to mankind by scientists after discovering it during atomic fission experiments in the laboratory; the first act of man's adventureism with it ended up in instant death of millions of living beings-men, women and children of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the victims of first nuclear holocaust of infernal proportions. Science has brought many appliances of creature comfort and labour-saving devices to man's aid, but let us not forget, it has also played a major role in adding to human misery and suffering. Science puts potent sources of power

in man's hand but does not teach him the sense of discretion or caution that would ensure its correct use. This wisdom of discrimination and sense of judgement is offered to man by spirituality. In words of Vinobaji :

"Science is the life-energy of human existence and spirituality its master mind. Life energy tends to flow along the guidelines provided by mind, hence science too should accept spiritual guidance ... without spirituality, science will not be able to proceed in the right direction ... Spiritual enlightenment is the 'eyes' and science is the 'feet'. Without such guidance from spiritual 'vision', man will be blind and would run into who knows what ... science is a double-edged weapon with constructive as well as destructive potential. It can serve as well as play havoc. The discovery of fire by man led to its use in the kitchen to cook food, but the same flame can burn the house down; Science does not tell us which of the above alternatives to opt for. This discriminatory sense can come only from spirituality. Like a bird flying on its two wings, man can also progress on the strength of dual forces of spirituality and science towards lasting peace and prosperity." ⁴⁹

Spirituality drives out all ignoble sentiments from the heart of man. After such spiritual ablution, whatever power abides in man will bring peace and happiness in life; man may perhaps, attain power and prosperity in life with the help of science, but true bliss and sustained serenity will elude him for ever.

External circumstances and temporal factors are transient and short-lived. They cannot be depended upon to provide lasting peace and joy for ever. Perennial peace and eternal bliss are attainable from within. To those who fail to imbibe

this primary lesson in the nursery of spirituality, Nature drives home its teaching the hard way. Uprisings, wars and nuclear explosions - all handiworks of the destructive genius of man - or natural disasters like floods, earthquakes and droughts can deprive many a man of their homes, families and valuables - the very basis of their mundane existence - in a flash of fury unleashed in an instant. The hardheaded men who refuse to accept the verdict of the enlightened on the ephemeral nature and illusory quality of one's earthly existence or material possessions are taught punitive lesson and are made to revise their stand by way of such natural chastisement. This offers them one more chance to change their extrovert outlook and begin an introspective reflection.

Of the two alternative ways to gain this insight, one is to learn at the feet of the enlightened masters the spiritual truth about life with eventual disenchantment with materialism and the other to arrive at the same conclusion after undergoing prolonged torture and chastisement through deprivation, desolation and defeat at the hands of the Elements. Nature in her inscrutable style, has left this tricky choice to us.

8

*World as seen by saints and Scientists**

Be he a Jain aspirant achieving self-realisation by experiencing communion with the Lord Arihanta, or a Buddhist seeker attaining Nibbanic state (nirvana), or a self-realised Hindu adept undergoing spiritual rebirth, all experience a sea-change in their outlook and philosophy of life. Their outlook towards life differs from that of those having no experience of self-realisation. This is so because their first hand experience reveals the fact that the world - including one's physical body too - is, in fact, an illusion. Modern atomic scientist's vision of the world is also somewhat similar in principle.

Modern atomic science reiterating the sayings of the mystic savants :

Let us observe how closely the picture of the physical world presented by modern science resembles that visualised by the selfrealised. The savants who authored the scriptures have stated that the spiritual adept absorbed in self-knowledge sees the whole material world - macrocosm - as unsubstantial as a magical conjuration. ⁵⁰

Normally, we believe / experience that physical things which we daily encounter in life - chair, table, house, land,

* A part of the fourth chapter from the author's another Gujarati book 'Atmagnan ane Sadhnepath' has been extrapolated here as chapter No.8. This will give an overview of the interaction between science and spiritualism and its outcome. In addition, it will also give the reader some idea of the highest accomplishment in spiritual field.

etc. - are solid and stable and our body too is a solid framework made up of bones, flesh and blood. All these things that we perceive as solid and unchanging are according to physical science itself, only unstable conglomerations of atomic and subatomic particles spinning around at extremely high speeds. The true picture of our physical body also, according to science, is quite different from our day-to-day perception of it. The anatomists tell us that the constituents of our body-bones, flesh, blood etc. - are made up of cells. It is estimated that an adult human body is composed of about fifty trillion cells, of which about fifty million perish every second and get replaced by equal number of new ones. These cells that change at such fast rate are all, in turn, made up of atoms and subatomic particles.

Scientists state that even the atoms of things we consider as solids are not tightly packed, but stay in place because of mutually interacting force-fields of these atoms. When we touch a book, atoms of our hand and those of the book do not come in contact at all in actual fact; it is only the force-fields of the atoms of our hand that interact with those of the book.

Scientists studying the atomic structure have found that in the nucleus of an atom, the electrons spin around the proton. Every atom is a miniature solar system wherein the distance between electrons and the proton is as much as that between the sun and earth relative to their size. On further exploration of the atomic nucleus, it is found that even the nucleus is not a solid/indivisible entity but consists of smaller particles of nuclear matter. This means that there is lot of empty space entrapped in the structure of an atom, the inevitable inference being that all things of our day-to-day contact - this chair, table, house, land and our body too, as much as 99.9% parts, consist of empty space only. Atomic scientists of today unanimously state, 'If our eyes could see the atoms that make

up the material world, the solidity of objects around us would disappear and we would see clouds of swarming, energetic particles in their place.'

The objects appear solid and separated from one another only at the gross (macrocosmic) level of our sense of perception but, at a finer, more subtle (microcosmic) level of atomic and subatomic particles, the apparently solid objects become finer and finer particles of matter within other particles and finally exist only in the form of pure energy. Thus, science is reaffirming the eternal truth that has already been stated by mystic savants centuries ago.

Though the world-view of the scientist theoretically approximates that of a spiritual seer, the scientist has not experienced it so; his experience at sense perception level remains similar to that of ordinary human being. Hence, his outlook towards life is also similar to that of a man living next door to him - he too is equally susceptible to human frailties like greed, craving, lust, anger etc. that enslave ordinary mortals.

Foundation of our attachment :

It has been our common experience that whenever we are fully seized of the ephemeral nature of the object or circumstance, we do not feel very strong attachment towards it. Wherever there is a sense of permanence/stability, there is greater scope for feelings of jubilation or frustration. For example, while discarding a bouquet of flowers costing twentyfive rupees the very next day (when it goes stale), there is no sense of loss or shock, but what if an earthen-pot costing only a rupee accidentally cracks after a fortnight's use ? It is because of our understanding/expectancy that the pot would last six months, that it hurts when it cracks up much earlier. In other words, its short-livedness was not understood/accepted by our mind, hence the sense of attachment.

As the mind of a Vipasyana meditator progressively becomes more sensitive to subtle perceptions, his capacity to grasp finer, subtler sensations goes on developing further. While thus continuing, a stage is reached, when he experiences his body not as a solid entity but as ever-changing 'clouds of swarming energetic particles as described by the scientists quoted above.*

The physical scientist comes to know about the continuous process of destruction and recreation of fifty million cells per second in his body with the help of technology in the laboratory; the same truth becomes known to an advanced practitioner of Vipasyana through his self-experience. Grossly speaking, he perceives his body only as a curl of smoke, hollow, unsubstantial and utterly unstable. How long then, can the sense of constant 'I' or sustained self-hood remain in will-o-the-wisp body looking like ever-changing coils of smoke rising from an incense-burner ? Hence, sentimental detachment follows in the wake of such experience without conscious effort. His cravings ebb away and he manages to free himself from the clutches of lust, greed, likes and dislikes.

It is our universal experience that when we know that our concern with any object, individual or circumstance is transitory, there is no involvement or attachment. For example, during a long journey, who would bother about the faded paint or cracked plaster on the walls of a caravan-serai room that one occupies for few hours of a night halt ? Mostly, we would not even notice it, and if by chance we happen to see it, we ignore it saying, 'we are not going to stay here for a life-time'. Only matters considered as of lasting significance by our mind,

* Starting with mental concentration, how this process of Vipasyana takes one towards mental refinement and firsthand experience of reality/truth progressively can be better understood by perusal of author's book (Gujarati) 'Muktipath Vipasyana'.

bring on the sense of deeper attachment. The things which are known/experienced as ephemeral by us, e.g. a shadow, a waft of wind, the sea-waves and smoke-curl figures from burning incense or cigarette, no one tries to hold them in a bear-hug. If one experiences one's body also like a fleeting, unsubstantial shadow, there would be no attachment towards it in one's mind.

Witnessed by eye, yet untrue :

The perceptions fed to us by our senses and information-input made available through these channels about the world around us create a visual impression and compel us to believe that the world is, as it appears. Based on this belief, we conduct the usual affairs of our lives. Not only that, to reinforce the veracity of some matter, at times we emphatically say, 'I have witnessed it !' or 'I have experienced it myself !' But the fact is that we do not receive the realistic picture of the world through our senses. The wise, therefore, warn us by saying, 'Even eyewitnessed matter also cannot be taken as absolute truth'. Our perception of the world through our senses is incomplete and distorted. The French astronomer Alexander Ananoff convincingly presenting this fact, says,

Owing to the infinite distance between us and the stars and the interminably long time it takes for light from stars to reach us, what we may see today as star is really its appearance as it was thousands of years ago. It may be possible that the star we are actually looking at today could have become extinct since long. Thus it can be said that to study astronomy is to study the history of long lost past. If we could reach a star and could observe the activities of life on our earth from there, we may not see the modern civilisation at all; But instead, it is possible we may get to see the scene of community living in some ancient civilisation like the Egyptian, for example.

If we take a sample of potable water from a water-jug and carry out naked-eye examination, we would not know it as anything other than transparent, sterile liquid; but what if we mount a drop of it on a slide, and put it under microscope ? It will appear to be teeming with organisms. Similarly, if we look skyward through a powerful telescope, we would see a series of galaxies which did not exist for us earlier. The fact of the matter is that our senses are not capable of seeing / experiencing the reality of the physical world. For example, the sunrise visible at dawn and the passage of sun across the sky from East to West and sunset in the evening - is all an illusion of our eyesight. In reality, the sun is steady, but the earth rotating on its axis keeps the sun out of our sight for some time that causes us to see it rising, setting and traversing the sky from east during the day; the sky touching the earth at horizon, trees running when seen through a moving train and a series of still frames projected in rapid succession appearing as 'movie' are all optical illusions.

So also, all objects appearing solid and in steady state are an illusion created by the limitations of our senses in the matter of gaining knowledge. We have already noted the fact that solid and steady-looking objects are in fact, conglomerations of atomic particles spinning around at tremendous speed like satellites and are 99.9% parts just vacuum. The electron within the atom spins at a rate of thousand million orbits per one millisecond. But limited capacity of our eyes prevents us from seeing its velocity of movement. And, just as in place of separate blades of a fast-rotating fan, we see a single blur of a circle, the objects formed of fast-moving atomic and subatomic particles appear solid even when they are made of 99.9% vacuum.

How does Illusion arise ?

Science affirms that the world apparent to us and

experienced by us firsthand is an intricate play of electromagnetic waves of varying wavelengths and frequencies of which only a fraction is perceived by our sense-organs. Our ears can pick up the waves from 16 to 32768 frequencies per second. Those beyond this range remain inaudible to us. So is the case with our eyes. Like ears, the eyes can see the lighterays of wavelengths ranging from 0.00004 cm. to 0.00007 cm. only. The object having wavelengths higher or lower than this range remains invisible to us. Other sense-organs too have their limitations e.g. our sense of smell; a person having passed through a place leaves a trail of his specific body-odour particles (pheromone) in such large quantity that about twelve to fourteen hours thereafter, there are enough left around for a dog's sharp sense of smell to detect and follow them on a fugitive's trail. But our nose cannot make it out. As Lincoln Barnett observes :

It is evident therefore, that what man can perceive of the reality around him is distorted and enfeebled by the limitations of his organ of vision. The world would appear far different to him if his eyes were sensitive, for example to X-rays. ⁵¹

In short, what we can perceive and experience through our senses and mind is not necessarily the only existing reality.

Physicists state that in a particular place at any one given time there are multiple worlds and planes of reality coexisting within each other. With the change in one's level of perception, one can enter from one plane of existence to another. The answer to where all these worlds are ? is that they are all here only, interpenetrating our present world. They coexist simultaneously and in the same space just as different wavelengths and frequencies of the electromagnetic spectrum do. A plane of being is not a place, it is a state of being,

meaning thereby that the objective world that we are experiencing is a creation of our own consciousness, an illusion, a phantom, a dream.

In Berkley's word's, "Behind all objects and material expansion in outer space and on the earth that combine to present the picture of the cosmos in front of us, there is no other element or reality except that of the mind itself." In Upadhyaya Yashovijayji's words, "This sprawling world, is nothing but a handiwork of our mind and is, therefore, unreal." In above context, how closely the wisdom of the sages approximates with the newly found knowledge of modern science !

False Identification of soul with body :

'World is an illusion'; this age-old vision is now a 'scientific' discovery. Observe, how emphatically it is being stated by the scientists :

The great German scientist / mathematician Leibnitz writes : "I am able to prove that not only light colour, heat and the like, but motion, shape and extension too are mere apparent qualities." Just as our visual sense, for example, tells us that a golf ball is white, so vision abetted by our sense of touch tells us that it is also round, smooth and small - qualities that have no more reality, independent of our senses, than the quality which we define by convention as white.

Thus gradually philosophers and scientists arrived at the startling conclusion that since every object is simply the sum of its qualities, and since qualities exist only in mind, the whole objective universe of matter and energy, atoms and stars, does not exist except as a construction of the consciousness, an edifice of conventional symbols shaped by the senses of man.

As Berkeley, the archenemy of materialism, phrased it, "All the choir of heaven and furniture of earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any substance without the mind So long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind, or that of any other created spirit, they must have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit."

Einstein carried this train of logic to its ultimate limits by showing that even space and time are forms of intuition, which can no more be divorced from consciousness than can our concepts of colour, shape, size etc. Space has no objective reality except as an order or arrangement of the objects we perceive in it, and time has no independent existence apart from the order of events by which we measure it. ⁵²

Thus even gross perception of our body is also mind-based. In fact, it is merely a compilation and interpretation by our mind of innumerable bits of information of data-input transmitted through our sensory apparatus.

A common example of how our senses can create an illusion due to their limitations is the movie or the motion picture. The spectators watching the movie in a cinema theater do not see the screen. The film-reel that moves across the light-beam from the projector, creates an illusion of movement due to fast-moving images on the screen. Due to these superimposed fast-moving images, the screen - which is very much existent in reality - remains unnoticed to the viewers. The pictures on the film reel are also quite static, yet due to their rapid projection, an impression of mobile - live - world of motion picture is presented to the viewers, and due to their deep absorption with it, they fail to notice the backdrop formed

by the screen. In a similar fashion, the illusory cognition of our body through the senses and the mind prevents us from knowing the reality of our being in its true characteristic.

We live in the shadow of stunted knowledge :

This is the story of distortion/illusion created by our narrow-ranged sensory system. There is yet another way our knowledge gained through cognitive senses suffers stunting/distortion. All the information gathered from our sensors does not reach our mind. Normally, we consider our senses as windows for knowing the world around us, but this viewpoint, though correct partially, does not amount to complete truth. Because, on the whole, the main function of our nervous system including the sense-organs, seems to be that of filtering out the inflow of unnecessary information - a kind of self-imposed censorship.

Just as the editor of a newspaper, in his office, extracts useful news according to the policy of his paper from the continuously pouring inflow of information from its reporters posted worldwide as well as from other news agencies via telegraph, telephone, telex or fax so our sensors and nervous system filter out unnecessary information from outside world and project on our conscious level only a limited portion of it selected as per the dictates received from the mind. In accordance with our upbringing, profession, age, prejudices, likes, dislikes, and inborn tendencies carried over from earlier incarnations, our mind compartmentalises what is 'useful' and what is 'useless'; based on this division, the nervous system and sense-organs carry on further functioning. If all the information available to us at any given moment is allowed to rush into our consciousness, we would not be able to cope with it and life would become difficult - we would not be left free to be alerted of any impending dangers in time e.g. an onrushing vehicle or a suddenly falling tree etc. Hence,

uneventful flow of routine and familiar information with no security significance is not registered, while any departure from normal is immediately detected. For example, our attention is immediately drawn to the odour of new atmosphere on entering it, but after a passage of time there, we lose its awareness. People residing near railway lines or an airport can sleep soundly at night, because their sense of hearing does not pass on the signal of this daily familiar sound to the brain to ensure peaceful sleep. Their guests staying overnight, however, find their sleep disturbed by the noise of train/plane traffic. The beauty is that the hearing sense of the residents would ignore the loud din of a passing train or plane but if their names are called out, then that signal is immediately relayed to the brain, so that they could respond to it appropriately. Similarly, the mothers residing there continue to sleep soundly through landing of a plane, but would wake up on hearing a faint cry of their baby sleeping in the next room.

It is the function of sensory system, then, by their physiological design to reduce the amount of 'useless and irrelevant' information reaching us and to serve as selection systems. The information input through the senses seems to be gathered for the primary purpose of biological survival.⁵³

To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funnelled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular planet. To formulate and express the contents of this reduced awareness, man has invented, and endlessly elaborated those symbol-systems and implicit philosophies which we call languages. Every individual

is at once the beneficiary and the victim of the linguistic tradition into which he has been born - the beneficiary in as much as language gives access to the accumulated record of other people's experience, the victim in so far as it confirms him in the belief that reduced awareness is the only awareness and as it bedevils his sense of reality so that he is all too apt to take his concepts for data, his words for actual things. That which, in the language of religion called 'this world' is the universe of reduced awareness expressed, and as it were, petrified by language ... certain persons, however, seem to be born with a kind of by-pass that circumvents the reducing valve. In others temporary by-passes may be acquired either through hypnosis, or by means of drugs. Through this permanent or temporary by-passes there flows, not indeed the perception of 'everything that is happening everywhere in the universe' (for the by-pass does not abolish the reducing valve, which still excludes the total content of mind at Large) but something more than, and above all something different from, the carefully selected utilitarian material which our narrowed, individual minds regard as complete, or at least sufficient, picture of reality. ⁵⁴

To repeat William Blake, "If the doors of perception were cleansed, man would see everything as it is, infinite." ⁵⁵

This world, a creation of our own :

Twentieth century physics and astronomy have established the fact that our experience of this world is subjective, it is not objective. It means that we do not experience outside world as it really is, but as that which our senses allow us to know and what our mind interprets; so, everybody's world remains different. For example, when a

husband and wife pass through a marketplace, the wife's brain would take note of what is on sale at a bangle-shop, while the husband would mostly remain unaware of it. Similarly, on seeing a traffic accident on the road, a passing policeman would first think as to who is responsible for the accident, while in a lawyer's mind under similar conditions, an idea will first occur about the possibility of someone getting compensation out of this or the grounds for defence in case of litigation. On the other hand the dead body of the young lady riding the car lying sprawled on the street with exposed thighs or full breasts would arouse thoughts of sexual excitement in a lecher, while a thief among the crowd would concentrate upon the ornaments worn by the victim. A spiritually awakened one would see in this scene the transitoriness and fragility of human life. Thus, different individuals grasp different aspects of the same incident and evaluate it differently according to their uptake. Everybody's own world depends on the quality, efficiency and training of one's intellect, senses as well as mental attitude - one's likes-dislikes, cravings/ambitions/expectations/attachments, prejudices etc. A physical type like a tribal/aboriginal person considers his body to be himself and his whole lifestyle gets orientated around this belief. Fulfillment of bodily needs - food, sleep/rest, recreation and sexual satiation - and procuring the resources for such fulfillment becomes the focal point of his life. Someone, highly civilised and intellectual type, would identify himself with his mental abilities and development of his special talents and would accordingly mould/spend his life. Yet another who feels himself aptly aligned with social rank and prestige, reflects snobbish self-importance in his egotistic roar. Thus, while each one is absorbed in the world of his making, the self-realised saints who have transcended the mental and sense barriers - their wisdom is unadulterated by the limitations of mind or senses state that our total experience of this world is a dream, a hallucination a delusion - 'maya'. The wise saint-poet Akha says, 'The whole construct of this

three-tiered world is the outcome of mind's inspiration, just as the sun is the cause of day and night.' In the words of Maharshi Ramana, similar thoughts are echoed, 'In reality, this body is in the mind ... it is a creation of mind.' and Nisarga Dutt Maharaj, who till the beginning of this decade was amongst us, explicitly explains :

All exists in the mind, even the body is an integration in the mind of a vast number of sensory perceptions, and each perception also a mental state both mind and body are intermittent states. The sumtotal of these flashes creates the illusion of existence. ⁵⁶

A scientist or a lay person well-versed with modern physics knows/understands that solid-looking body of ours is, in fact, a mental construct and interpretation by mind of the immense inflow of sensory signals; meaning thereby that physical experience of the body is, after all, mentalised phenomenon. If a reader with some exposure to science ponders upon this statement, he will quickly comprehend this fact. The self-realised saints have been reiterating this fact for centuries. Nineteenth century science used to ridicule it as illusion of the spiritualists, but now the same truth has emerged in front of the scientists struggling to figure out the innards of an atom and its elementary constitution.

With self-awakening, the world disappears :

The scientist has not experienced this fact but has come to this conclusion by logical deduction and intelligent guesswork based on the data provided by intricate tools developed by science. The self-realised spiritualist has arrived at this conviction regarding body-spirit confabulation through his personal experience. Further, with this conviction, he also comes to know that just as compilation/interpretation of sensory input by the mind creates the illusion of gross body-existence

so too the false recognition of 'I', as an integrated personality - which is non-existent really - is experienced by us in the bundle of innumerable desires, expectation, ambitions, prejudices and preferences accumulated over a number of births.

Because of it, his outlook/perspective towards life is radically changed. True acquaintance with one's real self-hood through firsthand experience and true assessment of the objective world as a dream/fantasy - Addition of these two new dimensions to his perspective bring about such revolutionary changes in his attitude/outlook towards life, that the spiritual adept after achieving self-realisation is considered to have been born anew.

In mathematics, all calculations - addition, subtraction, division, multiplication - would go wrong, if one starts with a wrong equation of two plus two as five; similarly, the conduct of whole life goes awry when based on the false notion of identity of soul with the body. When this fact is realised through one's self-experience, one's amazement finds expression in following words :

" Awakened, I find the world all gone
What fantasy filled my sleep till morn.

- Narshinh Mehta

or

" When dawn of experience broke the day,
Night of illusion faded away.

- Chidanandji

An atomic scientist knows about the illusion of body-soul mix-up, but it is only at intellectual level; he has no personal experience of it. A bibliophile may acquire this knowledge

from scriptural sources, could perhaps rattle it off ad-lib, write a thesis on it and get a doctorate or even manage to browbeat his opponents into accepting this doctrine with logic and force of argument, yet, without practising it himself, he would continue to remain entangled with the dualities of like-dislike, honour-insult, gain-loss. So too, the atomic scientist, like any ordinary mortal continues to suffer from abberations of lust, craving, attachment etc. just as before. The scholar or the scientist do not have firsthand experience/ knowledge, it is borrowed from others, hence their mis-comprehension does not break. Disillusionment does not take place without personal firsthand experience. Intellectual understanding by itself is insufficient to bring about radical changes in one's attitude towards life. Only wisdom born out of self-experience gained after transcending the mind, can accomplish it.

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- 5. PRAVIN PRAKASHAN**
Rajkot (Saurashtra)



H.H. Muni Shri **AMARENDRAVIJAYJI** was a dedicated explorer of the spiritual world and an exceptionally enlightened exponent hailing from the Jain tradition. His lifetime's work involved an in-depth study and earnest experimentation in search of true spirituality inherent in various age-old traditions of religious thought. His writings bear testimony to his keen insight in this field. Modern scientific knowledge and ancient spiritual wisdom are blended beautifully in his thinking. Touching the very core of religion, the sincerity of appeal, balancing of arguments and wide-ranging ambit of his writings place him at par with the leading luminaries of Jain literary and spiritual trait.

He firmly believed in the traditional values preserved in our cultural and religious heritage but insisted on putting them in practice in a rational way.

His books are a boon to spiritual seekers of all traditions, two of which are now available in English; '**CANCER DISSOLVED BY DIVINE GRACE**' and '**SCIENCE DISCOVERS ETERNAL WISDOM**'.

Born in 1925, he was initiated in Jain Holy order in 1951 and discarded his mortal shell on 23rd. June 1992.