

## Philosophy About Reincarnation From the Vedas

Reincarnation means that the soul is changing bodies. This change of bodies occurs not only at death, but throughout life; from boyhood to youth to old age, then to a baby's body. These moment by moment changes are too small for the person to be aware of, but when we consider greater amounts of time, then the change of bodies is obvious. The change of body known as death is the most apparent.

The Bhagavad-gita compares the change of body at the time of death to a person discarding old and useless clothes, and putting on new garments. Regardless of whatever plans and adjustments we make, our body eventually wears out, and we are obliged to accept a new one.

Although everyone must die, still we are making plans as though death was not certain. Saints have described this as the most amazing thing in this world. That is, even though we see that everyone is dying and getting old, we think that it will not happen to us, and we neglect the real purpose of human life: self-realization. One must inquire as to what happens at the time of death.

Although one may have the body of a man in this life, the soul may take the body of a woman in the next. One may have an oriental body in one birth, a western body in the next; or one may take birth in an animal or insect species as a result of one's activities and desires in this life. It is important to understand how the soul transmigrates from one body to the next.

### How is Our Next Body Determined?

There are two factors that determine which body we shall obtain in the next birth. The first is our karma -the reactions to our good and bad activities that were performed in this life and in previous lives. The second factor is our desire to enjoy particular sense objects.

The example of a man purchasing a car is appropriate in this regard. He has a desire to enjoy in a particular way with his car, and he also has a certain amount of money to spend. He takes both factors into account to determine which model to purchase.

Krishna tells us that the state of consciousness that we have upon leaving the present body determines the type of body that we will have in the next birth.' This is our "final exam" which we should study for throughout this life by cultivating remembrance of Krishna. One may think that at the time of death he will suddenly make up for the rest of his life by "getting religion." However, things don't work that way. The thoughts, desires and attachments that one has cultivated throughout his life will be reflected in those final moments. There is no way to cheat on this "exam."

As far as activities are concerned, we should only perform activities that carry no karmic weight (technically called "akarmic" activities), so that we will not have to return to this world either to receive bad or good results. Then we will return to the spiritual abode of the Lord.

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### About the Author

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