

# What is Reincarnation?

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**reincarnation**, also called **transmigration** or **metempsychosis**, in religion and [philosophy](#), rebirth of the aspect of an individual that persists after bodily [death](#)—whether it be [consciousness](#), [mind](#), the [soul](#), or some other entity—in one or more successive existences. Depending upon the tradition, these existences may be human, animal, spiritual, or, in some instances, vegetable. While belief in reincarnation is most characteristic of South Asian and East Asian traditions, it also appears in the religious and philosophical thought of local religions, in some ancient Middle Eastern religions (e.g., the Greek [Orphic](#) mystery, or [salvation](#), religion), [Manichaeism](#), and [gnosticism](#), as well as in such modern [religious movements](#) as [theosophy](#).

In many local religions, belief in [multiple souls](#) is common. The soul is frequently viewed as capable of leaving the body through the mouth or the nostrils and of being reborn, for example, as a bird, a butterfly, or an insect. The [Venda](#) of southern Africa believe that, when a person dies, the soul stays near the grave for a short time and then seeks a new resting place or another body—human, mammalian, or reptilian.



Among the ancient Greeks, the [Orphic mystery religion](#) held that a preexistent soul survives bodily death and is later reincarnated in a human or other mammalian body, eventually receiving release from the cycle of birth and death and regaining its former pure state. [Plato](#), in the 5th–4th century BCE, believed in an immortal soul that participates in frequent incarnations.

The major religions that hold a belief in reincarnation, however, are Asian religions, especially [Hinduism](#), [Jainism](#), [Buddhism](#), and [Sikhism](#), all of which arose in India. They all hold in common a doctrine of [karma](#) (*karman*; “act”), the law of [cause and effect](#), which states that what one does in this present life will have its effect in the next life. In Hinduism the process of birth and rebirth—i.e., transmigration of souls—is endless until one achieves [moksha](#), or liberation (literally “release”) from that process. *Moksha* is achieved when one realizes that the eternal core of the individual (*atman*) and the Absolute reality (*brahman*) are one. Thus, one can escape from the process of death and rebirth ([samsara](#)).

[Jainism](#)—reflecting a belief in an eternal and transmigrating life principle (*jiva*) that is akin to an individual soul—holds that karma is a fine particulate substance that settles upon the *jiva* according to the deeds that a person does. Thus, the burden of the old karma is added to the new karma that is acquired during the next existence until the *jiva* frees itself by religious [disciplines](#), especially by [ahimsa](#) (“nonviolence”), and rises to the place of liberated *jivas* at the top of the universe.

Although [Buddhism](#) denies the existence of an unchanging, substantial soul or self—as against the notion of the *atman* it teaches the concept of [anatman](#) (Pali: *anatta*; “non-self”)—it holds to a belief in the transmigration of the karma that is accumulated by an individual in life. The individual is a [composition](#) of five ever-changing psycho-physical elements and states, or *skandhas* (“bundles”)—i.e., form, sensations, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness—and terminates with death. The karma of the deceased, however, persists and becomes a *vinana* (“germ of consciousness”) in the womb of a mother. The *vinana* is that aspect of [consciousness](#) that is reborn in a new individual. By gaining a state of complete passiveness through [discipline](#) and meditation, one can achieve [nirvana](#), the state of the extinction of desires and liberation (*moksha*) from bondage to *samsara* by karma.

[Sikhism](#) teaches a doctrine of reincarnation based on the Hindu view but in addition holds that, after the [Last Judgment](#), souls—which have been reincarnated in several existences—will be absorbed in God.

From <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/reincarnation>>

## Academically Published Cases

Reincarnation researcher Jim Tucker has written about two cases of children whose apparent previous incarnations were famous in their times.

### Lee / Sydney Coe Howard

Tucker was contacted by a mother who suspected her three-and-a-half-year-old son Lee (not his real name) was remembering a previous life. He had been insisting for a year that his middle name was 'Coe' and his birthday was June 26, not June 21, which is his recorded date of birth. He had also developed an obsessive fascination with Hollywood. When the parents asked if he'd played in movies, he said he'd written them, rather. They read down a list of movie titles, and he said he'd written *Gone With the Wind*. The parents researched and found that the classic film had been written by Sydney Coe Howard, and that his birthday was June 26. Lee also had phobias that seemed to relate to Howard's death at age 48, from being crushed against a foundation by a tractor. He was afraid of tractors, and also didn't like being caught between his mother and a piece of furniture, or anything tight around his upper body. However, he gave few details to verify, and during a visit with members of Howard's family at the farm where Howard had died, he showed no sign of recognition. By this time he was five and had stopped talking about his memories.<sup>[7](#)</sup>

### Hunter / Bobby Jones

The second case involves the boy Hunter (not his real name) who, having been given a set of plastic golf clubs on his second birthday, played with them incessantly. After catching a glimpse of the Golf Channel on television, he wanted to watch nothing else. Once when he happened to see an infomercial about a legendary American golfer of the 1920s, Bobby Jones, Hunter said he had been Jones when he was big, and began wanting to be called 'Bobby' instead of 'Hunter.' Deciding to test him, his mother showed him six photographs of 1920s golfers. Not only did he say 'That me' about the picture of Jones, but he pointed out another photo and said 'This, Harry Garden, my friend.' The pictured golfer's name was Harry Vardon. They also tested him with pictures of houses, and he recognized Jones's, saying 'home.' Hunter's golf skills were so prodigious that he was accepted at age two for instruction at a golf club that usually only accepts students at age five. Several older golfers at the club remarked that his swing reminded them of Bobby Jones's. He also liked to design golf courses with his blankets, and his favourite golf course was Augusta National Golf Club, which Jones had founded and helped design. As of Tucker's writing, Hunter dominated the child golf circuit.<sup>[8](#)</sup>

## Commercially Published Cases

Informal FPL claims abound on social media and Internet forums. Several have been published in print, and a small number have been investigated by researchers. The following are some of the better-known examples, of varying degrees of persuasiveness.

### AJ Stewart / James IV of Scotland

AJ Stewart, born Ada Kay, is an English playwright who recalled from early childhood having being killed on a battlefield by blades and staves. By her own account, she was confused about why she was a girl, why her surname was not Stewart, and why she lived in a small house rather than a castle. As an adult she continued to feel like a male and dressed in a masculine way. She changed her surname to Stewart, and moved to Scotland. Her attempts to repress the memories failed, and she realized the incidents and surroundings matched the life of a king—specifically James IV of Scotland, of the Stewart clan. At the age of 38 she was invited to visit the site of the battle in which James had been killed, and she was able to lead others to the precise spot where he had died, having never visited the place before. Stewart wrote a past-life autobiography of James, presenting it as a historical novel,<sup>[9](#)</sup> and later a memoir which vividly describes not only her memories but also the sensations of having them.<sup>[10](#)</sup>

### Barbro Karlen / Anne Frank

Barbro Karlen is a Swedish writer who claims to have been the renowned adolescent diarist and Holocaust victim Anne Frank. By her own account,<sup>[11](#)</sup> she had nightmares as far back as she can remember, of men and dogs coming after her, kicking down the door of her small room. Aged two, she told her mother her name was not Barbro but Anne, and she wanted to be with her real parents. Like her claimed previous incarnation, she was a child prodigy writer; her first book of poetry and essays was published when she was twelve and remains popular in Sweden; by the time she was sixteen she had published eleven books. During a visit to Amsterdam at the age of ten, she was able to lead her parents to the house where Anne Frank had lived, and noticed accurately that the stairs had been changed and pictures that should be on a wall in Anne's former room were missing. She had no plans to reveal her FPL until she became the object of a vendetta by co-workers, and realized that it was a continuing pattern from her life as Anne, and that she had remembered in the first place so as to understand and overcome the pattern of being persecuted. By Karlen's account, she was introduced to the actor Buddy Elias, Anne Frank's last living relative, by a publisher who told neither of them who they were about to meet, and they recognized each other immediately. He supported her claim despite harsh criticism, and the two remain close.

### Christian Haupt / Lou Gehrig

Christian Haupt is an American born in 2008 who has been obsessed with baseball since he was a toddler, practicing constantly and insisting on wearing a baseball uniform as much as possible. In terms of skill, he is a child prodigy. According to Christian's mother, Cathy Byrd, he told her while he was still a toddler that he remembered being a 'tall baseball player', that he'd played for the New York Yankees, and that Babe Ruth had been mean to him (Ruth and his fellow American baseball legend Lou Gehrig had a longstanding feud). Christian also described details about major-league baseball in the 20s and 30s, the era in which Gehrig played, that were accurate. Byrd has published two versions of how she discerned that her son had been Gehrig. In a newspaper article in 2014,<sup>[12](#)</sup> she quotes him as saying that he had played for the New York Yankees and his favourite position was first base (Gehrig's position), and added that she had shown him a picture of Gehrig and another man. In her 2017 book about him and her own regression-based claim to have been Ruth's mother,<sup>[13](#)</sup> Byrd writes that when shown a group picture of the team, Christian picked out Gehrig and said 'That's me.' Neither version contains the details found in the other. Dr Jim Tucker, Stevenson's successor at the Division of Perceptual Studies, learned of the case but declined to investigate it. Plans for making her book into a major motion picture seem to be at a standstill.

### Sherrie Lea Laird / Marilyn Monroe

Sherrie Lea Laird is a Canadian rock singer who began claiming to be the reincarnation of Marilyn Monroe after a series of regression sessions with hypnotherapist Adrian Finkelstein, as recounted in a 2006 book by Finkelstein.<sup>[14](#)</sup> Laird claims to have had a sense as a child that she had lived before as a 50s movie star. She had a mole above her left lip that she wanted removed, and her aunt said it was just like the one Marilyn Monroe had. Haunted by the notion she had been the ill-fated screen legend, she was tempted by suicide as a teen, but Finkelstein claims to have cured her and brought out more memories of Monroe's life. The case was well-promoted by Finkelstein and widely reported in the media.<sup>[15](#)</sup> Treated with skepticism on the Internet, Laird reacted with rage. On her current Facebook page, she calls herself 'Lady Sherrie Lea,' promotes anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and supports the claim of a man who says he is Jesus reincarnated.<sup>[16](#)</sup>

### Walter Semkiw / John Adams

Walter Semkiw is a medical doctor and self-described reincarnation expert. He claims to have been John Adams, vice president of the United States of America under George Washington, based on a psychic reading, a perceived facial resemblance and personality similarities. Semkiw further claims that some 60 people he knows had past lives as people Adams knew.<sup>[17](#)</sup> He also claims to have matched scores of current celebrities to FPLs by the same three methods, using the trance channeler Kevin Ryerson.<sup>[18](#)</sup> The reading method is weak by parapsychological standards: rather than blinding Ryerson, (not letting him know the theorized answer prior to the reading), Semkiw simply asks him whether each identification is right or wrong.<sup>[19](#)</sup> Semkiw frequently references the work of Ian Stevenson in his works, but his own reincarnation cases entirely lack indications that Stevenson considered crucial: there are no recorded past-life memories, verifications, behavioral signs at any age, physical signs other than the supposed resemblances, announcing dreams, supporting witnesses, personal recognitions or place recognitions. These signs are only found in cases Semkiw cites that were developed by Stevenson and others.

### Donald Norsic / Nicholas II of Russia

Donald Norsic is an American art director in the advertising field who claims to have been Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia. In his book<sup>[20](#)</sup> he tells of having been haunted for years by nightmares of being murdered, then remembering and verifying details of events and places of the Tsar's life. He reports some childhood precursors such as obsessively drawing crowns and being fascinated with the English royal family. However, Norsic's process of regression and verification was not tracked by a researcher or other independent party, and his memories, especially of the timing of the deaths of the family, conflict with the historic and forensic record. His claim to have been killed along with the rest of his family, in November of 1918 rather than on July 17, 1918 as historians generally consider to be the case, is refuted by more recent findings.<sup>[21](#)</sup> Norsic also depends at times on somewhat tortuous coincidences, such as his surname being comprised of three letters that stand for 'Nicholas Of Russia' followed by the word 'sic', meaning 'exact replica thereof'. The title of the book is derived from Norsic's belief that he was personally responsible for the downfall of the Soviet Union by writing a predictive story in which it happens.

### Laurel Phelan / Guinevere

Laurel Phelan is a Canadian bookkeeper turned regression therapist who claims to have been Guinevere, wife of the legendary King Arthur. She published a book about her experiences with a mainstream publisher, a rare feat for an FPL claimant.<sup>[22](#)</sup> According to her, her memories started when she was age 21, with a gruesome scene of her killing a man with a dagger. In the story, she relates her memories as a solid narrative, including scenes where her claimed previous incarnation was not present, portraying Dark Ages Britain in a realistically harsh and primitive way. The weakness of her claim is that no trustworthy historic record or archaeological record of Guinevere exists. The primary source on Arthur is scant and portrays him as a warrior and war-leader more than a king; nor does it mention Guinevere,<sup>[23](#)</sup> who was created as a character in a pseudo-history of England by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century.<sup>[24](#)</sup>

## Edgar Cayce's Claimed Identifications

The renowned American clairvoyant Edgar Cayce performed hundreds of past-life readings for clients, and claimed to see many FPLs among their lives, including Alexander the Great and Thomas Jefferson (reincarnated as the same person), Noah, Helen of Troy, Marie Antoinette, Methuselah, Augustus Caesar and Ann Boleyn.<sup>[25](#)</sup> However, it has not been shown that any of these clients ever had any memories, verifications, behavioral signs or childhood precursors, and Cayce's past-life readings show a degree of sameness that should not be present in a random sample of past lives. It has been noted that the lives clustered anomalously in certain patterns, particularly Atlantis, ancient Egypt, medieval Europe, colonial America, and that the Atlantean, Egyptian and European lives tended to be of people in the political or spiritual elites.<sup>[26](#)</sup> One published past-life account based on a Cayce reading concerns the claimed reincarnation of suffragist leader Frances Willard.<sup>[27](#)</sup>

From <<https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/famous-past-life-claims>>

# Past Life Regression

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**Past life regression** is a method that uses [hypnosis](#) to recover what practitioners believe are [memories of past lives](#) or [incarnations](#). The practice is widely considered discredited and unscientific by medical practitioners, and experts generally regard claims of recovered memories of past lives as fantasies or delusions or a type of [confabulation](#).<sup>[1]</sup> Past-life regression is typically undertaken either in pursuit of a [spiritual](#) experience, or in a [psychotherapeutic](#) setting. Most advocates loosely adhere to beliefs about reincarnation,<sup>[2]</sup> though religious traditions that incorporate reincarnation generally do not include the idea of [repressed memories](#) of past lives.<sup>[3]</sup> The technique used during past-life regression involves the subject answering a series of questions while hypnotized to reveal identity and events of alleged past lives, a method similar to that used in [recovered memory therapy](#) and one that, similarly, often misrepresents memory as a faithful recording of previous events rather than a constructed set of recollections. The use of hypnosis and [suggestive questions](#) can tend to leave the subject particularly likely to hold distorted or false memories.<sup>[4]</sup> The source of the memories is more likely [cryptomnesia](#) and [confabulations](#) that combine experiences, knowledge, imagination and [suggestion](#) or guidance from the hypnotist than recall of a previous existence. Once created, those memories are indistinguishable from memories based on events that occurred during the subject's life.<sup>[5][6]</sup> Investigations of memories reported during past-life regression have revealed that they contain historical inaccuracies which originate from common beliefs about history, modern popular culture, or books that discuss historical events. Experiments with subjects undergoing past-life regression indicate that a belief in reincarnation and suggestions by the hypnotist are the two most important factors regarding the contents of memories reported.

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Past\\_life\\_regression](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Past_life_regression)>

## Past Life Regression (PLR)

Past Life Regression is a gentle form of hypnotherapy which takes an individual back through time to their previous lives or incarnations by accessing memories and experiences that are normally hidden in their subconscious mind. Life today is so busy and so 'noisy' that these memories are usually concealed beneath the noise of everyday thoughts. A PLR session guides you out of the noise and into a deeply quiet and peaceful state where it's far easier to locate the memories held in your subconscious mind.

Past Life Regression can help you to:

- Reconnect with past life experiences.
- Help you understand why you feel a deep connection with certain places.
- Explore your past life and current Soulmate experiences.
- Identify physical ailments you have, which may be remnants of past life experiences.
- Explore unresolved emotions which have carried through into this lifetime, creating fears or beliefs which you have been unable to explain.
- Acknowledge and embrace the key lessons learned through those lives.

From <<https://outlanderpastlives.com/past-life-regression/>>

## Rebirth and Reincarnation in Buddhism

### What the Buddha Didn't Teach



Would you be surprised to learn that reincarnation is *not* a Buddhist teaching?

"Reincarnation" normally is understood to be the transmigration of a soul to another body after death. There is no such teaching in Buddhism--a fact that surprises many people, even some Buddhists. One of the most fundamental doctrines of Buddhism is *anatta*, or *anatman*--no soul or no self. There is no permanent essence of an individual self that survives death, and thus Buddhism does not believe in reincarnation in the traditional sense, such as the way it is understood in Hinduism.

However, Buddhists often speak of "rebirth." If there is no soul or permanent self, what is it that is "reborn"?

### What Is the Self?

The Buddha taught that what we think of as our "self"--our ego, self-consciousness, and personality -- is a creation of the *skandhas*. Very simply, our bodies, physical and emotional sensations, conceptualizations, ideas and beliefs, and consciousness work together to create the illusion of a permanent, distinctive "me."

The Buddha said, "Oh, Bhikshu, every moment you are born, decay, and die." He meant that in every moment, the illusion of "me" renews itself. Not only is nothing carried over from one life to the next; nothing is carried over from one *moment* to the next. This is not to say that "we" do not exist--but that there is no permanent, unchanging "me," but rather that we are redefined in every moment by shifting impermanent conditions. Suffering and dissatisfaction occur when we cling to desire for an unchanging and permanent self that is impossible and illusory. And release from that suffering requires no longer clinging to the illusion.

These ideas form the core of *Three Marks of Existence*: *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering) and *anatta* (egolessness). The Buddha taught that all phenomena, including beings, are in a constant state of flux -- always changing, always becoming, always dying, and that refusal to accept that truth, especially the illusion of ego, leads to suffering. This, in a nutshell, is the core of Buddhist belief and practice.

### What Is Reborn, if Not the Self?

In his book *What the Buddha Taught* (1959), Theravada scholar Walpola Rahula asked,

"If we can understand that in this life we can continue without a permanent, unchanging substance like Self or Soul, why can't we understand that those forces themselves can continue without a Self or Soul behind them after the non-functioning of the body?"

"When this physical body is no more capable of functioning, energies do not die with it, but continue to take some other shape or form, which we call another life. ... Physical and mental energies which constitute the so-called being have within themselves the power to take a new form, and grow gradually and gather force to the full."

Famous Tibetan teacher Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche once observed that what gets reborn is our neurosis--our habits of suffering and dissatisfaction. And Zen teacher John Daido Loori said:

"... the Buddha's experience was that when you go beyond the skandhas, beyond the aggregates, what remains is nothing. The self is an idea, a mental construct. That is not only the Buddha's experience, but the experience of each realized Buddhist man and woman from 2,500 years ago to the present day. That being the case, what is it that dies? There is no question that when this physical body is no longer capable of functioning, the energies within it, the atoms and molecules it is made up of, don't die with it. They take on another form, another shape. You can call that another life, but as there is no permanent, unchanging substance, nothing passes from one moment to the next. Quite obviously, nothing permanent or unchanging can pass or transmigrate from one life to the next. Being born and dying continues unbroken but changes every moment."

### Thought-Moment to Thought-Moment

The teachers tell us that our sense of a "me" is nothing more than series of thought-moments. Each thought-moment conditions the next thought-moment. In the same way, the last thought-moment of one life conditions the first thought-moment of another life, which is the continuation of a series. "The person who dies here and is reborn elsewhere is neither the same person, nor another," Walpola Rahula wrote.

This is not easy to understand, and cannot be fully understood with intellect alone. For this reason, many schools of Buddhism emphasize a meditation practice that enables an intimate realization of the illusion of self, leading ultimately to liberation from that illusion.

### Karma and Rebirth

The force that propels this continuity is known as *karma*. Karma is another Asian concept that Westerners (and, for that matter, a lot of Easterners) often misunderstand. *Karma* is not fate, but simple action and reaction, cause and effect.

Very simply, Buddhism teaches that karma means "volitional action." Any thought, word or deed conditioned by desire, hate, passion, and illusion create karma. When the effects of karma reach across lifetimes, karma brings about rebirth.

## The Persistence of Belief in Reincarnation

There is no question that many Buddhists, East and West, continue to believe in individual reincarnation. Parables from the sutras and "teaching aids" like the [Tibetan Wheel of Life](#) tend to reinforce this belief.

The Rev. Takashi Tsuji, a Jodo Shinshu priest, wrote about belief in reincarnation:

"It is said that the Buddha left 84,000 teachings; the symbolic figure represents the diverse backgrounds characteristics, tastes, etc. of the people. The Buddha taught according to the mental and spiritual capacity of each individual. For the simple village folks living during the time of the Buddha, the doctrine of reincarnation was a powerful moral lesson. Fear of birth into the animal world must have frightened many people from acting like animals in this life. If we take this teaching literally today we are confused because we cannot understand it rationally.

"...A parable, when taken literally, does not make sense to the modern mind. Therefore we must learn to differentiate the parables and myths from actuality."

## What's the Point?

People often turn to religion for doctrines that provide simple answers to difficult questions. Buddhism doesn't work that way. Merely believing in some doctrine about reincarnation or rebirth has no purpose. Buddhism is a practice that makes it possible to experience illusion as illusion and reality as reality. When the illusion is experienced as illusion, we are liberated.

From <https://www.learnreligions.com/reincarnation-in-buddhism-449994>

# Breaking the Cycle of Reincarnation

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## BUDDHISM, REINCARNATION AND TRANSMIGRATION

Reincarnation is the transmigration of the soul from one life form to another. It doesn't just apply to humans but to all creatures and some non-living things too. Transmigration of the soul can take place from a human or creature into another human or creature up or down a scale based on good and evil deeds (See Karma Below). If a person has lived a virtuous life he moves up the scale, say, from a low caste to a high caste. If a person has lived an unworthy life he moves down the scale, say, from a low caste to a rat.

Reincarnation is a belief found in most Asian religions and is a cornerstone of all the major religions found in India except Islam. Through constant rebirths, Buddhists believe they can escape the Wheel of Life and ascend to nirvana. In Theravada Buddhism a person can be reborn in one of three level of existence: 1) the world, 2) the hells below, and 3) the heavens above.

Buddhists believe in "karmic energy" rather than souls. Followers respond to life in their own self interest rather than out of allegiance to a god or creator. Since only humans can break out of the cycle of reincarnation, human life is seen as opportunity that must seized upon to improve one's fate and effort towards transcendence. The Hindu idea of reincarnation is roughly the same regardless of which Hindu god an individual venerates most.

Buddhist ideas about of reincarnation grew out of the Hindu concept of reincarnation, which first appeared in the Upanishads and is believed to have originated in the Ganges Plain and was absorbed by the Aryan-centered Hinduism as the Aryans moved into the Ganges Plain. Beliefs in reincarnation are not just found in India and Asia but are found in tribal cultures all over the world and were held by the ancient Greeks, Vikings and other groups in the West. Ideas about reincarnation are probably very old and were held by people who lived in Neolithic times.

Reincarnation is viewed as a never-ending set of cycles. *Karma* determines what a person is reincarnated as. Escape from the weary cycle of reincarnation can be achieved through escape into nirvana. According to Buddhist theology an internal self or soul dwells in each person as a kind of cosmic energy that exists beyond worldly reality and karma and doesn't require good deeds or prayers to improve on itself. The problem is that few creatures can tune into their self and thus require deeds and prayer to help them establish their place in the world. Reincarnation helps them do this and evolve to reach closer to their soul.

The cycles of birth and death are perceived a continuations of the disintegrating force of Creation while transmigration of the soul from one life to another is viewed a perpetuation of the separation of the individual from the unifying force of existence. The aim of the individual is to "get off the wheel," to escape the cycle and merge finally with the Oneness that was there before Creation began. into the original One. Methods used on the path of escaping reincarnation include yoga, meditation, and charity.

**Moksha** (/ˈmoʊkʃə/; **Sanskrit**: मोक्ष, *mokṣa*; **Tamil**: *vīdupēru*), also called **vimoksha**, **vimukti** and **mukti**,<sup>[1]</sup> is a term in **Hinduism**, **Buddhism**, **Jainism** and **Sikhism** for various forms of emancipation, enlightenment, liberation, and release.<sup>[2]</sup> It refers to freedom from *dukkha* and *samsāra*, the cycle of death and **rebirth**,<sup>[3]</sup> by knowledge of the true self (*Atman-jnana*),<sup>[4]</sup> c.q. the lack of a permanent essence, and the release from craving and clinging to passions and the mundane mind.

In Hindu traditions, *moksha* is a central concept<sup>[5]</sup> and the utmost aim of human life; the other three aims being *dharma* (virtuous, proper, moral life), *artha* (material prosperity, income security, means of life), and *kama* (pleasure, sensuality, emotional fulfillment).<sup>[6]</sup> Together, these four concepts are called *Puruṣārtha* in Hinduism.<sup>[7]</sup>

In some schools of Indian religions, *moksha* is considered equivalent to and used interchangeably with other terms such as *vimoksha*, *vimukti*, *kaivalya*, *apavarga*, *mukti*, *nihsreyasa* and *nirvana*.<sup>[8]</sup> However, terms such as *moksha* and *nirvana* differ and mean different states between various schools of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.<sup>[9]</sup> The term *nirvana* is more common in Buddhism,<sup>[10]</sup> while *moksha* is more prevalent in Hinduism

From <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moksha>>

Since the chances of escaping it are quite low people are encouraged to work to achieve a better position in their next life by doing good deeds, living simply and praying a lot.

From

<<https://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub398/item1332.html>>



# Hierarchy of Beings

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The **Great Chain of Being** or *scala naturae* is a classical conception of the [metaphysical](#) order of the universe in which all beings from the most basic up to the very highest and most perfect being are hierarchically linked to form one interconnected whole. Although this notion was viewed in various ways from antiquity and throughout the medieval period, its philosophical formulation can perhaps best be seen beginning with [Aristotle](#), moving through the [Neoplatonists](#), and culminating in the theological vision of the [scholastics](#).

Although many modern philosophers abandon the classical view, some alternate versions of the Great Chain of Being can be seen in the metaphysical rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Beyond the realms of academic philosophy, the Great Chain of Being characterizes a cosmology that in its essence traces back to the Egyptian and Greek civilizations in the West and is continuous through Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and ancient Chinese thought. Discarded by many or even most intellectuals under the critique from modern science and philosophy, the cosmology of the Great Chain of Being in various forms nonetheless remains powerfully attractive to millions of people who are uncomfortable and unfulfilled within the cosmology presented by modern scientific materialism.

## Aristotle

Although it was the Neoplatonists who fully developed the notion of a unified hierarchy of being, the roots of these ideas can be found in both [Plato](#) and [Aristotle](#). Aristotle, in particular, viewed the universe as being eternal and made up of a number of distinct forms of being. On the lowest rung were lifeless "artifacts" such as rocks, whose material composition was held together by physical forces. To break a piece of rock in two caused no substantial change, since the rock had no [essence](#) or [soul](#). In classical [philosophy](#) soul (*anima*) was attributed not only to human beings, but to all living things. Soul was defined as the inner organic principle animating the being such that it is alive. All living beings have essences or substantial forms that determine the kind of attributes or powers each particular being possesses. For Aristotle there was a kind of hierarchy of souls, which were classified according to each soul's specific powers. First, any being with life possess the powers to grow and reproduce. This includes all [plant](#) life, such as [trees](#), [grass](#), and [flowers](#). Next, the sensible soul is embodied in [animal](#) life. Although animal life itself can be broken up into various classes depending on the specific attributes, Aristotle located a number of powers that the higher animals all possess. These include the powers of the lower forms of life (growth and reproduction) along with higher ones (sense, movement, and memory). Above the sensitive soul is the rational soul, which defines the human being. Along with all the powers of both plant and animal life, the human being possesses the power of [reason](#) and all the functions of rationality.

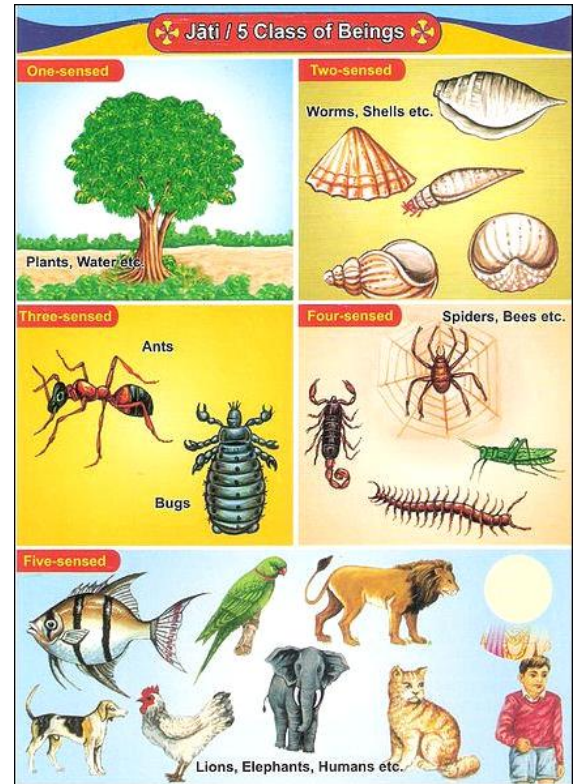
Again, in Aristotle's cosmology the universe was eternal. For this reason he considered the celestial beings ([sun](#), [planets](#), [stars](#), etc.) as also being eternal. These celestial beings were considered not only eternal but godly and so their circular course or movement was divine. Finally, in his *Metaphysics* Aristotle offers his famous argument for the existence of the Prime Mover, which is the ultimate source and principle of all movement throughout the universe. Although the scholastics will later translate Aristotle's "First Mover" into a personal God, Aristotle's understanding of this divine First Mover remains ambiguous.

## Neoplatonism

The Neoplatonists, such as [Plotinus](#) (205-270), took [Aristotle](#)'s hierarchy of distinct beings and "spiritualized" it into a quasi-mystical unity inspired by [Plato](#). While the basic hierarchical structure of Aristotle remained the same, the highest "forms" were transformed into purely spiritual or immaterial beings. Plato, in his famous 'Theory of the Forms', had thought of Ideas as immutable or unchangeable beings in which material beings on earth participated. For example, all individual dogs participated in the one eternal Idea of Dog (or Dogness), which exists in a higher, immaterial realm. Also, in his 'Analogy of the Sun' Plato speaks of the Good which is "beyond all being." The Neoplatonists develop these notions in such a way that the degree of goodness a thing possesses depends upon its degree of being, that is, the extent to which a being participates in the One or Good. The Great Chain of Being, then, is seen as a chain of emanation. The One is at the top and so all being flows downward from the One. Below the One, then, are the spiritual beings of Ideas, rational human beings, sensible animals, living plants, and finally inanimate things (which merely exist). [Human beings](#) hold a particularly interesting place in this perspective since they exist at once in both the immaterial and material realms. The more humans turn downward and absorb themselves in material things, the more they turn away from the good and become evil. In contrast, the more humans turn upward to the intelligible realm and the Good, the more being or goodness they possess. Moreover, in this conception pure evil does not exist. For evil, strictly speaking, is not a being or positive force but rather a privation or lack of being.

## Scholasticism

[St. Augustine](#) borrowed the basic scheme developed by Neoplatonism and theologized it into a Christian understanding. While the lower, material realm remained the same, the higher intelligible sphere and the notion of the Good shifted in important ways. First, the Good or One became the personal and triune God of Christianity. Below God there were the higher, spiritual beings called [angels](#). Finally, the Ideas or Forms of the intelligible realm remained in Augustine, but now they were considered to be Divine Ideas or [Universals](#), which existed in the mind of God.



Hierarchy of Beings according to Jain Thought but also applicable to Hindu, Buddhist Thought

The basic scheme of the Great Chain of Being endured throughout the medieval period, although disputes persisted regarding the exact nature of Universals and the extent to which human beings could participate in or know the thoughts of God. Moreover, in many of the more sophisticated, scholastic thinkers, the classification of earthly beings was subdivided into more distinct [species](#). Also, the great thirteenth century philosopher and theologian St. [Thomas Aquinas](#) (1225?-1274), determined that the angels could not be members of the same species, the way individual human beings are of the same species. The reason is that for Aquinas matter is what individuates all beings of the same species; angels, however, are immaterial; therefore, in order for angels to be separate and individual they must each be their own species, or "one of a kind."

Also, in the scholastic understanding of the Great Chain of Being, the place of human beings takes on a greater moral significance. Since humans participate in both the earthly and spiritual realms, their movement through life is considered to be a journey toward God. The temptations of the earthly or mortal flesh lead to evil, whereas the contemplation of things divine lead to transcendence of the spirit. Thus, the struggle between flesh and spirit becomes a specifically moral one. The way of the spirit lifts one up toward God, while the desires of the flesh sink one into the privations of evil.

In medieval society, one sees how the Great Chain extended into the political sphere as well. For here too there was a distinct separation or hierarchy between human beings. The king reigned supreme at the top, and below him were the aristocratic lords. At the bottom were the serfs. Solidifying the king's position atop of humanity's social order was the doctrine of the [divine right of kings](#). Likewise, in the family the father was head of the household and below him was his wife, then their children. The children were even often subdivided so that the sons were considered to be one rung above the daughters.

## Modern Rationalism

The emergence of modern science and the Copernican Revolution is often considered to have dismantled The Great Chain of Being as a worldview. Nonetheless, certain rational metaphysicians, such as [Rene Descartes](#) (1596-1650), [Baruch Spinoza](#) (1632-1677) and [G. W. von Leibniz](#) (1646-1716), created alternate versions of the Great Chain of Being. The distinguishing feature is that they all tried to devise rational systems which explain God or Being as the ultimate Perfection such that all other forms of being were lesser or imperfect modes or derivatives of the perfect Being. Most of these thinkers offer proofs for the existence of this highest Being and then from this necessary first principle they deduce all other beings or modes of being. Their rationalist systems have often been criticized for being too mathematical in their constructions and for equating reality with a mathematical demonstration.

From <[https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Great\\_Chain\\_of\\_Being](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Great_Chain_of_Being)>

# What Are the 12 Laws of Karma?



In Sanskrit, karma literally means “action.” According to experts, there are often misconceptions about what karma really is and how it applies to our lives.

This article will help shed light on what karma is, the philosophy behind it, and its core principles, known as the 12 laws of karma.

## What exactly is karma?

The true definition of karma can vary depending on who you ask. Some people adhere to the traditional meaning grounded in Eastern religions, while others interpret it from more of a Western view of good and bad. As a result, this can lead to different views on how karma applies to life.

For example, the Georgetown University Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs says karma is the Hindu view of causality in which good thoughts, deeds, and words, may lead to beneficial effects, while bad thoughts, deeds, and words, may lead to harmful effects.

However, many experts like to look at karma as more than just “good” or “bad.”

According to [Dr. Jennifer Rhodes](#), a licensed psychologist, karma is simply those situations or interactions that help us navigate our path toward our higher purpose.

“We are often easily distracted and miss messages which make us believe we have a lot of ‘bad’ karma. But those situations are simply signs for us to course-correct and move forward toward our higher purpose,” Rhodes explains.

“The journey is not about being perfect, it’s about undoing what is not us and becoming who we really are,” she adds.

[Tejal Patel](#), a meditation and mindfulness expert, looks at karma as a cycle of cause and effect that’s about action, not result.

“Karma is a philosophy of how to live our lives so we can truly become the best version of ourselves and live the most fulfilling life we desire,” she says.

And since the future isn’t set in stone, Patel says we can change the path of our life by the choices, thoughts, and deeds we choose right now.

## What are the 12 laws of karma?

Everything is energy, including your thoughts and emotions, which are energy in motion. So, in essence, everything you do creates a corresponding energy that comes back to you in some form, Patel explains.

“Simply, everything you do creates either a positive or negative consequence,” she says.

Using karma as a set of powerful guidelines for your life can incentivize you to be more mindful of your thoughts, actions, and deeds before you make decisions.

With that in mind, think of the laws of karma as guidelines to follow as you go through daily life. The 12 laws of karma can help you understand how karma really works and how to create good karma in your life.

Let’s look at each of these laws in more detail.

## 1. The great law or the law of cause and effect

When most people talk about karma, they’re likely referring to the great law of cause and effect, Patel says.

According to this law, whatever thoughts or energy you put out, you get back — good or bad. In order to get what you want, you have to embody and be worthy of those things. It’s the concept of what you reap, you sow.

“For example, if you want love in your life, be loving to yourself,” she says.

## 2. The law of creation

The law of creation underscores the importance that life doesn’t just happen to us. To make things happen in your life, you need to take action, instead of waiting for something to magically come your way.

“You are the co-creator of making what you want, based on your intentions,” Patel says.

She recommends asking yourself what you need to release so you can create space for the thing you desire to show up.

Also consider how you can use your skills, talents, and strengths to create something that not only benefits you but others, too.

### 3. The law of humility

According to Paul Harrison, creator of [The Daily Meditation](#), the law of humility is based on the principle that you must be humble enough to accept that your current reality is the result of your past actions.

For example, if you're blaming your colleagues for your poor performance at work, Harrison says you must accept that you created this reality by not performing as well as you could have.

### 4. The law of growth

Growth starts within us. To positively shape the world, you need to start with yourself. That's because real change or [personal growth](#) begins with what you have control over, which is yourself, not others.

The law of growth also looks at the things you can't control and how you deal with accepting this fate. Ultimately, your focus should be on you, not trying to control the people or things around you.



### 5. The law of responsibility

[Alex Tran](#), a yoga instructor based in Seattle, Washington, says the law of responsibility is her favorite law to teach in class.

"It's a reminder that you own what happens to you in life. It's a great reminder that what happens to you is because of you. This eliminates the opportunity for you to look outward to find the cause of your problems," Tran explains.

She likes to use this to describe the karma law of responsibility: "You are the product of the choices you make."

### 6. The law of connection

This law is based on the principle that everything in your life, including your past, present, and future, are connected.

"Who you are today is the result of your previous actions," Harrison says.

And who you will be tomorrow will be the result of your actions today.

### 7. The law of focus

Focusing on too many things at once can slow you down and lead to frustration and negativity. That's why the law of focus encourages you to [concentrate](#) on one thing at a time.

"If you focus on higher values like love and peace, then you're less likely to be distracted by heavy feelings of resentment, greed, or anger," Patel says.

### 8. The law of giving and hospitality

You must give to the things you believe in. This law helps you understand the importance of your actions, reflecting your deeper beliefs.

For example, if you want to live in a peaceful world, you need to focus on cultivating peace for others, Harrison explains.

### 9. The law of here and now

To experience peace of mind, you have to [embrace the present](#). This can only happen when you let go of negative thoughts or behaviors from your past.

If you get too focused on past events, you'll keep reliving them. One exercise Patel recommends to get in touch with the here and now is to get rooted into your senses.

"Look around the room you are in, focus your eyes on something, blink, and say 'I am here,'" she says.

### 10. The law of change

According to this principle, history will continue to repeat itself until you learn from the experience and take steps to do something differently to stop the cycle.

Change gives you a new path so that you can create a new future and a better version of yourself, free from the patterns of the past.

## 11. The law of patience and reward

To generate change in the future, Harrison says we must be consistent in our karmic deeds today.

"It's no good living healthily for one day and then sabotaging it in the next," he says.

Be consistent in your goals, and they will come to fruition.

## 12. The law of significance and inspiration

We all play a part and have something to contribute to this world. What we share may sometimes seem small to us but can make an enormous difference in someone else's life.

Patel says the law of significance and inspiration is a great law to focus on when you need a [motivational boost](#) or begin to feel like you don't have a purpose or matter.

According to this law, every contribution you make will affect the world. You have been born with a specific gift, mission, and purpose that only you can bring into the world with your uniqueness. Authentically sharing your skills and gifts is why you're here.

## The bottom line

The 12 laws of karma can serve as a guideline or road map to follow as you go through your daily life. These laws can help you understand how karma really works, and the effect that your thoughts and actions can have on you and the world around you.

Using karma as a set of guidelines in your life can incentivize you to be more mindful of your thoughts, actions, and deeds before you make a decision.

From <<https://www.healthline.com/health/laws-of-karma#bottom-line>>