



Karma & Human Psychology: The Hidden Influence

By Charles Shahar

What is karma? It can be described as the law of cause and effect. Your actions in past incarnations influence your current traits and dispositions. This influence may be subtle or direct depending on the intensity of your past life experiences. It is perhaps surprising for some people to know that much of our personality and the choices we make in life are influenced by our karmic predispositions.

We have all reincarnated many times before. Before our human incarnations, we lived an earthly life as lower forms of consciousness, such as plants and animals. With each incarnation, our consciousness has evolved, and it is still evolving. Each lifetime brings new lessons and insights. In each lifetime, we have a special work to do.

Our karmic conditions often determine our psychological dispositions in this lifetime. We come into the world with what the Hindus call "sanskaras". These are the seeds of past life experiences, which exist as tendencies or predispositions in the mind of the incarnating soul. Whether these tendencies bear fruit or not depends on a number of factors, including one's upbringing, genetic factors, conditions during pregnancy, as well as other environmental variables.

People often talk about the role of genetic predispositions in personality development, but they fail to understand that our karmic predispositions precede our genetic ones. The sanskaras are stored in the causal body, which can also be described as the higher mental body, because it contains the subtle blueprint for the mental qualities that we carry from one incarnation to the next. It is also the level from which some dreams and spiritual revelations originate.

The causal body survives the demise of the physical body, whereas the etheric, astral and lower mental bodies do not. They eventually dissolve and merge into the surrounding ether. The individual ego-mind mechanism re-forms each time the soul incarnates. The causal body, and even higher bodies related to spiritual experiences, make up the individual soul.

It is the soul that moves from incarnation to incarnation. As long as that individual consciousness (or soul) is caught in the wheel of birth and death, the effects of karma will dominate the corporeal lives of all people.

Karma & Extreme Fears

Many of our greatest fears or phobias are the result of past life experiences. For instance, a fear of water may be caused by the experience of drowning in a previous life. In such cases, even the sight of a large body of water, such as an ocean or lake, can trigger anxiety. People with such fears will not venture into the deep

end of a swimming pool, and will even feel discomfort in the shallower parts. Taking a bath can be an ordeal for them.

A fear of being alone may relate to an experience of abandonment in a childhood of a previous life. Some people died alone in a previous incarnation, not getting assistance or emotional support while dying, and their soul suffered deeply as a result. Other people were aggressed or killed while alone, and their vulnerability carried over into their current incarnation. The fear of being alone is a very common one, and can often be traced to past life circumstances.

A fear of heights may have to do with falling to one's death in a previous incarnation. People who experience claustrophobia, or a fear triggered by confined spaces, may have been buried alive, crushed to death, suffocated, or had been confined as prisoners to small spaces for long periods in a previous lifetime.

People who have an extreme fear related to the element of fire may have burnt to death in a past life. For instance, those accused of witchcraft who were burnt at the stake in the Middle Ages, have this experience seared into their causal body. They may experience anxiety or panic whenever seeing a fire, smelling smoke or the odor of something burning.

There are numerous types of fears related to suffering in previous incarnations. Fear of pain may relate to the experience of torture in a past life. The fear of public spaces or crowds may relate to being lynched by a mob or crushed to death by a crowd. The fear of being touched may relate to the experience of being raped or molested in a past life.

The fear of diseases may relate to having a severe illness in a past life. People who experienced plagues often have such a phobia in later lives, but also those who had painful or debilitating chronic conditions, or had suffered at the hands of doctors with primitive methods of treatment.

Not all of these fears are necessarily attributable to past life events. Sometimes there are clear antecedents in the present incarnation. For instance, I developed a phobia regarding needles as a child of 5 years when I saw a little girl at a clinic screaming hysterically just as a needle was about to be administered to her.

In cases where current life trauma or classical conditioning are not obvious there may well be strong past life causes of intense fears. Moreover, past life events can account for predispositions that may make the likelihood of developing specific phobias more likely.

It is not necessarily the immediately preceding incar-



nation that is responsible for current life fears. Some fears in the current lifetime are activated by experiences that transpired several incarnations ago, but which, due to their intensity, might have been strongly imprinted in the causal body. For instance, experiences such as being burnt alive at the stake, dying violently in a battlefield, being hanged, crucified or experiencing a plague type disease will all have a searing effect on the soul.

These types of associations between specific phobias and past incarnations can be quite obvious or direct. However, our fears go beyond our immediate past lives. Some fears have a more archetypal significance. The causal body not only stores the seeds of our experiences in individual incarnations, but also our experience as a species. It represents what Carl Jung termed our collective unconscious. These fears are primordial in their origins.

For instance, the fear of snakes or spiders has a more archetypal significance, and represents our experiences as a species with these different types of creatures. Even the fear of elements such as fire or water sometimes relates to a deeper fear than that of our individual past life experiences. Other archetypal fears include an extreme fear of disease, death, darkness or falling asleep.

Karma & Personality Traits

People who are very needy for affection or attention in this lifetime (even as adults) were sometimes abandoned as children in a previous life. They may have been orphans in a past incarnation and may not have received the type of emotional succor they needed during their formative years. This type of deprivation could have imprinted itself very deeply on the soul.

People who are very unassertive or self-deprecating often had incarnations as slaves or generally lived a life of servitude. They may also have had generally powerless living conditions, as is the case of women in a past life subjected to repression and belittlement, or children with abusive parents. Those who belonged to lower castes or other persecuted segments of society would likely experience feelings of inferiority and insecurities in this lifetime.

Martyr-types of individuals, who sacrifice themselves for the needs of others, often worked as clergy in a past life, and were self-sacrificing then as well. Some people are martyrs because they need to satisfy a karmic debt, incurred because they caused people suffering in a past life. Those with a victim mentality in their current lifetime were often persecuted or badly humiliated in past incarnations.

People who are domineering or imperious often had strong leadership roles in their past lives. For instance, they may have had positions of power in the military, where they were responsible for giving orders and maintaining discipline. They may have also been slave

owners, figures of royalty, or had other positions where they were lording over people.

Individuals who have an exaggerated sense of entitlement and self-importance in the current lifetime were likely members of the aristocracy in a previous life.

Someone displaying extreme acquisitiveness, or a personality driven to make money, may have experienced withering poverty in one or more past incarnations. Thus, people who are miserly, and cling to every penny, were often impoverished in a past life. Since this is a compulsive need they never attain enough money to be satisfied or happy in this incarnation.

Overeating may result from having starved to death in a past life. Victims of famine are often compulsive over-eaters in their current life. Their appetites are rarely satisfied for long, no matter how full they feel. Many obese people experienced extreme hunger in past incarnations. Interestingly, compulsive over-eating is also possible among those who had extreme abundance in a past life, and had no measure or self-control as far as their eating behavior was concerned.

Some types of hoarding behaviors have past life antecedents. The compulsiveness of hoarders is usually an indication of extreme material deprivation they suffered in a past life. Someone who was wealthy in a previous incarnation and lost their fortune abruptly may also exhibit such extreme hoarding in their current lifetime.

People who are spiritually inclined have often done such practice for many incarnations. I sometimes meet people who take to yoga and meditation right away, seemingly the first time they try it. It feels like they have done this before because they seem so at ease performing such activities. When I taught yoga to three year olds, some would assume yoga postures I had never taught them. Just by looking at their meditation posture, I would feel that they were very familiar with such practices, and that they were yogis at heart.

Those who are considered "old souls" have had numerous incarnations in which they have learned many life lessons. Such accumulated wisdom is usually carried into future incarnations. They also do much learning between lifetimes where they are able to absorb spiritual knowledge more readily than younger souls, often in the higher astral or heaven planes. When they incarnate they are usually charged with helping less evolved souls deal with the challenges of corporeal life.

Karma & Physical Characteristics

Past lives also have an impact on our physical bodies. For instance, some physical weaknesses can be traced to past life experiences. A man with digestive problems in this lifetime may have been shot in the abdomen in a previous one. A woman with a constant tension in her neck may have been hanged in a past life. I am not

continued on page 29



continued from page 17

implying that all tensions and weaknesses result from violent past life experiences, but many chronic conditions can be traced to such past situations.

Current physical manifestations of past life trauma may be even more dramatic. Somebody with massive skin discoloration, as evidenced in certain pigmentation disorders, may have had severe burns in a past incarnation, and even died from them. A person born without a limb may have had it amputated in a previous lifetime. In fact, many birth defects can be traced to past life trauma.

A birthmark may also indicate an area where the person had received injury in a past life. These marks are often remarkable in terms of their color or shape. A round mark may indicate a bullet wound, whereas a long, thin mark could suggest a stab wound. Some people may have been impaled or suffered other types of grisly deaths and these usually leave prominent marks in subsequent incarnations.

Finally, some people have spent a particularly impactful incarnation as a member of a specific race or ethnicity. When they return it is interesting that they may assume certain features that uncannily resemble such a group. For instance, I knew of a Westerner who looked remarkably Asian, even though he had no Asian ancestors. Interestingly, he would spend much time at a local Chinatown and eventually married a Chinese woman. It was obvious to me that he had a strong prior incarnation in China.

I myself have a strong affinity for India. I have visited this country several times, and currently sojourn at a meditation retreat in the Himalayas. Just before the first time I visited India, I looked at my passport picture and was amazed just how East Indian I looked. I am sure that I have had many incarnations in India, and I feel a constant pull to visit the country that feels most like my homeland.

Charles Shahar lives in Montreal, Canada where he has been teaching yoga and meditation for the last 17 years, basing his techniques on the study of Vedanta philosophy.

For more on his work, visit www.lightfigures.com



Mindfulness and Running a Spiritual Business

By Dillon Forte

They say that running a business can be stressful, expensive and time consuming. Sure, but what if it didn't have to be that way? Mindfulness is an often overlooked subject in business and our daily practices such as meditation are often left to morning or night, to help unwind or remove the daily chatter and perceived threats that pre-occupy our minds. I believe that by expanding your mindful behaviors and weaving your spiritual practices with your business efforts, you can be happier with your current state of being and grow in ways that may surprise you.

I'm not saying you need to start selling yoga mats and singing bowls, but am suggesting that what works spiritually with your personal life will absolutely work for your career.

Your core purpose needs to be honored. When you live in a state of gratitude, honoring yourself and living in the moment, you make the process of running your business streamlined and less stressful. Injecting your purpose into your daily business practices will not only make your business stronger, but it will help you remove the things about it that don't make you happy..

What you visualize, you materialize. That upset customer? Lack of business growth? Not feeling like work today? Most of these things are attached to emotions, personal reflections and lack of manifestation. Although we cannot control everything that comes into our lives, we can control how we react, process and utilize each situation as a learning opportunity. The power of visualizing can lead to focusing on the things you want, while expelling the things within that may create undesirable emotions. Like attracts like, ah yes, the law of attraction principles. I think of the Abraham Hicks quote "What you think about activates a vibration within you", which I would translate to "think about positive outcomes, and receive those in return".

Do you ever notice that those who are stressed, in fear or even in a bad mood all the time tend to experience continued stress and seemingly endless bad situations while those who always seem to be in good spirits tend to make life look too easy? The same applies to business, and when you use your spiritual practices to transform your soul into one full of abundance and gratitude, things just get better. Your business seems to figure out growth and negative emotions simply melt away.

While spirituality can never fully replace raw talent, skill and getting past that 10,000-hour tipping point to success, I credit my daily spiritual practices in helping me visualize, actualize and remain resilient through both challenges and victories in business. Start today by consciously applying mindfulness to your business, and be assured you will enjoy the growth it creates.

*About Dillon Forte - Dillon Forte is recognized for his contemporary style of Sacred Geometry tattooing and operates Sri Yantra Tattoo out of California.
Dillon Forte <http://dillonforte.com/>
<https://www.instagram.com/dillonforte/>*