

## **A Replication Study: Three Cases of Children in Northern India Who Are Said to Remember a Previous Life**

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**Abstract**—This replication of Ian Stevenson's studies of spontaneous cases suggestive of reincarnation presents data from 3 of the 10 cases investigated by the author in northern India during 5 weeks in the summers of 1987 and 1988. The purpose of the study was to see if an independent investigator, following Stevenson's methods, would reach conclusions similar to his. Stevenson reports that the numerous cases in which a child speaks and acts from the point of view of a verifiable but deceased person about whom the child could not have normally known are best explained as cases suggestive of reincarnation. With one possible exception the author was satisfied that the cases she studied were not cases of deceit or self-deceit, although she noted that acceptance of the concept of reincarnation played a part in the diagnosis and unfolding of the case. While in some instances the child said no more than could be presumed to be known by the parents, in other cases the child's accurate and intense identification with someone unknown to the parents indicates something paranormal has taken place.

At the invitation of Ian Stevenson, M.D., in August and the first week of September 1987, in July 1988, and for 3 weeks in December 1988–January 1989, I investigated 10 cases of children in northern India who had been reported to spontaneously identify themselves as being someone in fact deceased. The purpose of the study was to ascertain if an independent investigator using methods similar to those developed by Stevenson would reach conclusions comparable to his, that while none of the cases offer irrefutable proof that reincarnation has taken place, they suggest that no normal explanation accounts for the phenomena of children who make accurate statements about and identify themselves with someone about whom they could not have had prior knowledge.

Stevenson has made detailed studies of cases which he calls suggestive of reincarnation in a number of cultures, in most of which the majority of

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people believe in reincarnation: for example, India (1974, 1975a); Sri Lanka (1977a); Thailand and Burma (1983a); Lebanon and Turkey (1980); Brazil (1974); among the Indians of the Northwest Coast of North America (1966, 1974, 1975b); as well as describing characteristics of cases among the Igbo of Nigeria (1985). However, he has also reported 79 cases among American children (1983b, 1987). He reports that while cases vary from culture to culture they tend to follow a similar pattern: An otherwise normal child on occasion speaks and acts from the point of view of someone else, typically beginning between the age of 2 and 4. Such children usually cease making these statements by the time they are 7 or 8 years old, although behavioral characteristics of the reputed previous personality often persist much longer. Many investigated cases show that there was a verifiable person meeting the child's description. Such a person often died a violent or sudden death, usually less than 2 years before the child's birth (Stevenson, 1986, 1987).

Because the implications of Stevenson's research are far-reaching and controversial (cf. Stevenson, 1977b), he has sought to have his studies replicated. In 1979 Pasricha and Stevenson conducted a partly independent replication of cases of the reincarnation type, comparing cases studied by Stevenson with those studied by Pasricha. Later (1987) they conducted a longitudinal survey comparing cases in which the subject was born before 1936 with those in which the subject was born in 1965 or later. Both studies indicated stability in the patterns of the cases. Since Pasricha was trained by Stevenson, she could be expected to make studies of comparable quality to Stevenson's, but her association could have subtly influenced her to expect to find his data confirmed. Pasricha and Barker (1981) and Pasricha (1983) have demonstrated how different investigators assessing the same case can differ in their interpretations of its authenticity. Stevenson has therefore sought other qualified persons to carry out further replication studies.

I first met Stevenson in 1984 when he inquired at the Anthropology Department of the University of British Columbia if anyone would be interested in pursuing his studies among the Northwest Coast Indians. Through extensive field work with the Beaver Indians, a Northern Athapaskan tribe in northeastern British Columbia, Canada, I had learned that reincarnation played an integral part in their world view (Mills, 1986). In research for my doctoral dissertation (Mills, 1982) I sought to see how prevalent belief in reincarnation was among a sample of 10 different tribes from 10 different North American culture areas. I found that the information in the literature is quite sporadic and incomplete on the topic of reincarnation. Having met Stevenson and learned of his studies I agreed to make a survey of cases among the Beaver Indians in the following summer, while working on another project, and to ask some outstanding questions from Stevenson's studies among the Gitksan. The month with the Beaver and 5 days with the Gitksan produced much interesting material (Mills, 1988, 1989). I applied for and received a 2-year postdoctoral grant to study belief in and cases

suggestive of reincarnation among the Beaver, *Wet'suwet'en* and Gitksan Indians of British Columbia, Canada.

Among these peoples, children with what are interpreted as past life memories are born to close relatives of the previous personality.' While some of these British Columbia cases present evidence suggestive of the existence of reincarnation, it is often difficult to eliminate the possibility that many of the apparent past life recollections are based on information the child has learned through normal means when the child is close to relatives with intimate knowledge of the alleged previous personality. Information can be internalized, reworked and even improved upon without the source of the information remaining accessible to the individual. Helen Keller offered an example of this kind of source amnesia or cryptomnesia in composing a story for which she was accused of plagiarism (Keller, 1954, pp. 342-362).

India offers a better opportunity to control the variable of contact between the child and people knowledgeable about the previous personality, because in 43% of 183 cases analyzed by Stevenson the subject and the previous personality are from families unknown to each other (1986, p. 211), sometimes from villages widely separated from each other (Barker & Pasricha, 1979; Stevenson, 1987). Therefore I was interested in accepting Stevenson's offer to investigate cases in India so as to study the phenomena in a culture where more opportunity exists to eliminate the factor of normal means of obtaining knowledge of the previous personality. As of July 1988 I accepted a joint position with the Division of Personality Studies and the Anthropology Department at the University of Virginia, but in order to preserve the independence of my evaluation, Stevenson has not read my notes or any reports I have written.

### Procedure

Stevenson gave me addresses for 9 cases about which he had learned during his studies or through contacts in India. One of these he and Pasricha had already investigated. The other 8 cases Stevenson has not studied nor does he have any first-hand information about them. Although comparison of 2 independent investigations of the same case might offer the best replication, I found that in the case previously studied by Stevenson and Pasricha the child had been intimidated from revealing his past life memories, and I was therefore not able to complete the study of the case.<sup>2</sup> A 10th case which came to our attention was also studied in the summer of 1987.

In the summer of 1988 I reinvestigated 7 of the cases to ask questions I found to be still outstanding and to catch witnesses who had eluded me during the first trip, and I investigated an additional Hindu case and 5 cases in which the subject or the previous personality was Moslem. These half Moslem cases will form a separate report. In December 1988 and January

1989 I returned to ask further questions and began investigation of an additional 3 cases. As the information on these latter 3 is still incomplete, I have not included them in the analysis. This paper is based on the original 10 cases studied. All 10 cases were in northern India, 9 in Uttar Pradesh province, and 1 across the border in the province of Rajasthan.

Stevenson has described the methods he has developed to investigate cases of the reincarnation type (Stevenson, 1974, 1975a, 1987). In the summer of 1987 I attempted to follow this procedure as closely and thoroughly as possible. In each case I endeavored to interview the child, its family members and other witnesses to the child's speaking of what was eventually identified as a past life, and subsequently the relatives of the previous personality. The statements of these people were checked for internal consistency and accuracy. Accounts of the child's meeting with the family and friends of the previous personality and the recognitions made were also solicited from the child, his relatives and independently from the witnesses among the previous personality's family. Descriptions of the previous personality's nature and likes and dislikes were obtained.

After the informants had recalled all the details that spontaneously came to their minds, I asked further questions using the "Registration Form for Cases of the Reincarnation Type" and sometimes the "Computer Codebook for Rebirth Cases" which Stevenson has developed, to ensure that I gathered demographic and other information Stevenson has found useful for analysis. I also took notes of relevant behavior on the part of the child. Written records of births, deaths, postmortems, or journals were sought and copied whenever they existed. In the summer of 1988 I asked additional questions to ascertain more information about the place of the subject in the parent's affections and assess the similarity or difference with Multiple Personality Disorder (cf. Coons, Bowman, & Milstein, 1988).

All 10 cases investigated follow the pattern of "solved" cases in which the child and/or his family had been successful in tracing and meeting the relatives of a deceased person who corresponded to the child's statements. Ideally the investigator should arrive before the case has been solved in order to obtain a record of statements made before contact with the family of the previous personality and to witness the child's first meeting with and apparent recognitions of the relatives of the previous personality (Stevenson & Samararatne, 1988). Unfortunately, it is difficult to find cases at this stage of development. The 2 unsolved cases we came across in the course of our study could not be pursued because there was too little information to trace the previous personality and the parents were reluctant to have the cases studied, for reasons described in the discussion section.

In some cases the child visited the previous personality's family again in our presence, which allowed us to observe the relationship between the child and the various members of the previous personality's family. However, statements made after the initial meeting generally lack the value of statements made before the meeting, as there is inevitably information exchange

between the family of the deceased person and the child and his relatives, information which in some, but not all, cases can account for the further revelations made by the child.

Dr. N. K. Chadha, Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Delhi, was my translator and assistant. Vinod Sahni, a graduate student of Dr. Chadha's at the Department of Psychology, accompanied us on most of the investigations and translated my interviews with women. When Dr. Chadha was translating, Ms. Sahni took notes, making an independent translation of what was said. These notes were compared with those of the author working from the translation of Dr. Chadha. The comparison revealed a high level of consistency between the two independent translations. In January, 1989 Ms. Geetanjali Gulati, a graduate student of Dr. Chadha's, replaced Vinod Sahni.

### Results

In 5 of the 10, or 50% of the cases, the previous personality was initially unknown to the child and his or her family. In the other 50% of the cases, the child's family had either heard of the existence (or the demise) of the previous personality or was slightly acquainted. In none of the initial 10 cases I studied was the child related to the previous personality.

In 6 of the cases the child was between the age of 4 and 6 years old at the time of the interviews and still speaking from the point of view of being someone else, while in 4 cases the child was between 8 and 16 and recalled only what he or she was said to have said. Six of the subjects were male and 4 female (see Table 4 for a comparison of these features with Stevenson's data).

For the purpose of brevity, only 3 of the 10 cases are presented below in some detail so that the reader can evaluate the evidence these cases present. Data from the other cases are included in the discussion section. I intend to publish similar reports on the other cases.

#### *Case 1: Reena Kulshreshtha of Agra*

The informants for this case in Agra were Mr. and Mrs. Kripa Shanker Kulshreshtha, their son Pankaj Kulshreshtha, Kailash Kumari (former neighbor of Shyam Babu Yadev), Shyam Babu Yadev and his second wife Urmila. Phoowati Devi, Shyam Babu's mother, was interviewed in Tilitila.

According to her parents, Reena Kulshreshtha was born on September 13, 1976 at their home in Agra. She is the youngest of six children: she has a sister 20 years her senior, a sister 17 years her senior, a brother about 13 years her senior, a second brother 9 years her senior, and a sister 6 years her senior. Her father began working some years before her birth for the Telecommunications Department. Raised initially in Agra, where her father owns a house, after her father was transferred to the Telecommunications

office in Lucknow in 1980, Reena spent part of her time in Lucknow, and part of her time in Agra, as her mother maintained the house in Agra during the time her husband was assigned to Lucknow. In 1988 Mr. Kulshreshtha was reassigned to Agra. The Kulshreshthas are of the Kayastha subcaste of the businessman's caste of the Hindu caste system. The name means "upper most ancestry."

When Reena was approximately 9 months old, Reena said the word "groom," and then got up and lay down on the bed and mimed dying by lying down and stopping breathing (refer to Table 1 for further notes on the chronology and differing estimates of Reena's age when the various events in the case occurred). For approximately the next 8 months Reena looked through magazines or books every morning for several hours. At first it was not apparent to her parents what she was doing. Eventually she found a picture which resembled her "groom" and was greatly attached to it. She would stare at it for some time every morning.

When Reena was about 10 months old, Reena's mother reported that she said she had died on a day like this (on which a storm was brewing) from an injection that produced blisters all over her body. After hearing a song "Radhay Shyam" on the radio when she was about 12 months old, Reena said her husband was named Shyam. She used to ask her parents to find her husband.

When Reena was about 18 months old, she tried to point out the route to "her" home when she was on the roof of her parents' house, but when brought down from the roof where she could no longer see the turns in the maze of lanes in the neighborhood, she could not direct her parents there.

From earliest childhood Reena identified herself as a married woman and a mother. She insisted on wearing, for months at a time, the necklace that is in India a mark of being a married woman. At the age of 2 and a half Reena said to her mother that she understood why her mother liked to lie down with her father, which her mother interpreted as an indication that Reena had an unusual awareness of sexual relations for a child so young. She was observed carefully covering a doll with a cloth, and when asked by her mother what she was doing, Reena said, "My son is feeling cold. I am keeping him from the cold."

When Reena was less than 3 years old, she described all the steps of her cremation. When she first began speaking about this, her parents could not make out where she said she had been cremated. Reena said that after cremation she was made to lie down for many days in a temple with a mat on the floor; after questioning her, her father concluded that this was a description of her state after death.

When Reena was about 3 years old, Shyam Babu Yadev, a fellow employee of the Telecommunications Department in Agra, of the "backward" of lowest caste, came to her house to drop off some dried tea. Shyam Babu had a side line of selling tea. Reena was happy to see him. After he left, Reena told her mother, "He is my groom. Call him." Her mother did.

In fact, Shyam Babu had met Reena when she was 14 months old. As a

colleague of Reena's father, although of a lower or "backward caste," Shyam Babu had come to the Kulshreshtha home to attend the wedding of Reena's eldest sister. Reena's father remembers Shyam Babu remarking, "Whose influence is upon this child?" because Reena was dark complexioned, unlike her parents (but only somewhat darker than her eldest brother). Because Reena used the word "groom" rather than "husband" to describe the picture, I wondered if Reena had begun the identification of herself as Shyam Babu's wife at the time of her sister's wedding. Both her parents were adamant that she had used this word, indicated how she had died, and sought a likeness of her groom before the sister's wedding. Table 1 shows some of the variation in the age they attributed to Reena when these events began.

Shyam Babu had indeed had a wife, one Gompti Devi (who had the same dark complexion). She had died on February 18, 1975 after about 15 years of marriage to Shyam Babu (19 months before Reena was born). She was approximately 30 years old at the time of her death. According to Shyam Babu, Gompti Devi died when given an injection to which she was allergic which produced blisters on her body. She was cremated that same evening at the white temple near the Taj Mahal. Mr. Kulshreshtha, Reena's father, being a colleague of Shyam Babu Yadev, was asked to attend the funeral but could not go. Gompti Devi was the mother of two daughters and a son. The son was about a year old at the time of her death.

After meeting Shyam Babu when she was about 3 years old, Reena insisted that Shyam Babu was her "husband," and repeatedly asked her parents to "call him" to attend the special events in the family. Hearing from Reena's parents the statements that Reena had made, and seeing that Reena responded to him as her husband, Shyam Babu was convinced that Reena was his wife reborn and came on about 10 such occasions. At these functions Reena would act appropriately for a Hindu wife: She would serve him food and tea and then retire. After he was gone, she would ask her parents to call him again and ask for and give gifts in keeping with a husband-wife relationship. For example, she asked that Shyam Babu give her material to make a long dress. Reena insisted that her parents provide her with a sweater and a baby bonnet for her to give to Shyam Babu.

Shortly after Reena met Shyam Babu when she was about 3 years old, she requested that her mother accompany her to his home. The directions Reena had given her parents to "her" house from the roof of the Kulshreshtha home, prior to her identification of Shyam Babu as her husband, correctly described the way to the house Shyam Babu owned and occupied with Gompti Devi in Agra. The house was about a half kilometer from the Kulshreshthas' home. Reena's parents had been ignorant of the location of his home until Reena asked to go there after she had identified Shyam Babu as her husband. As they approached, Reena led her mother to the correct house.

When Reena arrived at Shyam Babu's house, he was absent but his second wife was present. Reena learned for the first time that Shyam Babu had remarried. Reena did not ask to go back to this house again but frequently

TABLE 1  
Summary of statements and recognitions and behavior of Reena Kulshreshtha

| Item   | Informants   | Verification   | Comments   |
|--|--|--|--|
| 1. She had a "groom."  | Mrs. Kulshreshtha,<br>Reena's mother                     | <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev,<br>Gompti Devi's<br>husband | Reena's father said this occurred when Reena was 6 months old; his wife corrected him, saying this was when Reena was 9 months old (07/08/87). Later (01/09/89), her mother said Reena was 1 and a half when she said this, but thought she was 2 and a half at her sister's wedding when she was in fact 14 months old. <b>Shyam</b> Babu attended this wedding and commented on Reena. However her parents are both sure she said this before the wedding, when she was very little. |
| 2. She mimed her death.  | Mrs. Kulshreshtha  | <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev                              | Reena lay down and held her breath when she was old enough to stand.   |
| 3. She sought and found a likeness of her husband.   | Mrs. Kulshreshtha<br>Mr. Kulshreshtha,<br>Reena's father | Mr. Kulshreshtha                                     | Reena began her search in magazines and books at 9 months and continued until she found one that satisfied her. Reena's father noted that the picture she finally selected was not of <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev but resembled him. (Note: there is a similarity of face and physical type between Reena's father and <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev.) Reena's parents noted she made her search of her husband in the morning, at 5 or 6 a.m.   |
| 4. She said her husband's name was <b>Shyam</b> .  | Mrs. Kulshreshtha  | <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev                              | Reena said this after hearing the radio play the song "Raday <b>Shyam</b> ."   |
| 5. She said she died from an injection and had blisters all over her body.                                   | Mr. Kulshreshtha   | <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev                              | On 01/09/89 Reena's mother said Reena said this when she was 10 months old. On 07/05/88 Reena's mother said Reena said this when she was 12 months old.  |
| 6. She described the steps from her death to the cremation of her body.                                      | Mr. Kulshreshtha   | <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev                              | At first her parents could not make out the name of the place where she said she was cremated. Reena described the cremation when she was 3 years old, before she met <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev.   |
| 7. She said that after the cremation she was made to stay in a temple with a mat on the floor for many days. | Mr. Kulshreshtha<br>Mrs. Kulshreshtha                    |  | Her father sought to learn the location of the temple by asking if there were tea shops near the temple. Reena said there was no desire to take tea. Her father interpreted this to refer to an after-death state. He had also interpreted her talk about sparrows to refer to an intervening life, but after learning the interval between Gompti Devi's death and Reena's birth he thought that less likely.   |



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|---|---------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| 8. She repeatedly said, "Find my husband."  | Mrs. Kulshreshtha                     |                  |  |
| 9. She said she was protecting her son from the cold when covering a doll.  | Mrs. Kulshreshtha                     | Shyam Babu Yadev | Gompti Devi's son was about a year old at her death. She had also raised her half brother after her step-mother's death.   |
| 10. She insisted on wearing the necklace that is the sign of being a married woman, as well as other jewelry typically worn by married women. | Mrs. Kulshreshtha                     |                  | She insisted on wearing such a necklace for months at a time for several years. I did not ask if Gompti Devi wore one. Such a necklace is typically tied by the groom around the bride's neck at the wedding.  |
| 11. She pointed out the route to her former house.  | Mr. Kulshreshtha<br>Mrs. Kulshreshtha | Mr. Kulshreshtha | Reena pointed out the route from the roof of her house, but could not direct her parents when she could not see the maze of lanes when on the street level. After her parents learned Shyam Babu's address they saw that her directions were correct (see 21 below).   |
| 12. She told her mother that she understands about sexual activity.   | Mrs. Kulshreshtha                     |                  | This began at 2 and a half years old. Mrs. Kulshreshtha says she continues to talk without embarrassment about sexual matters.   |
| 13. She became very upset when taken to the Taj Mahal, near where she said she was cremated.  | Mr. Kulshreshtha<br>Mrs. Kulshreshtha | Shyam Babu Yadev | Shyam Babu confirmed that Gompti Devi was cremated in the white temple near the Taj Mahal. While not visible from the Taj Mahal, the cremation ground is adjacent to it. One route to the Taj Mahal goes right past the cremation ground.<br><br>Reena's father thought the trip was before she identified Shyam Babu as her husband, but Reena's mother was not sure which came first and thought that perhaps the trip to the Taj Mahal came after the identification. Reena has henceforth refused to go to the Taj Mahal and is upset if she hears it mentioned in songs, or hears the cremation ground referred to. |
| 14. She recognized Shyam Babu Yadev.  | Mrs. Kulshreshtha                     | Shyam Babu Yadev | Reena's age at this meeting was given as 2 and a half by her mother and between 3 and 4 by her father.   |
| 15. She predicted her father would be promoted.   | Mr. Kulshreshtha                      | Mr. Kulshreshtha | The exact interval between the prediction (in 1979) and the promotion (in 1980) is unclear. Reena did not predict that the promotion would entail a move to Lucknow, as it did.  |

(continued)

TABLE 1 (continued)

| Item   | Informants  | Verification   | Comments   |
|--|---|--|--|
| 16. She has a phobia of injections and has not lost this phobia.                       | Mrs. Kulshreshtha   |  | According to her mother, Reena has not had any injections since her birth and first saw one occur when her mother was ill when Reena was about 4 years old.  |
| 17. She asked that <b>Shyam</b> Babu come to her home for special occasions.           | Mrs. Kulshreshtha<br>Mr. Kulshreshtha   |  | <b>Shyam</b> Babu says that he came about <b>10</b> times on such occasions.   |
| 18. She acted like a wife in <b>Shyam</b> Babu's presence.                             | Mrs. Kulshreshtha<br>Mr. Kulshreshtha   | <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev                                | She was shy, <b>served Shyam</b> Babu tea and food and then retired, correct for a Hindu wife.   |
| 19. She insisted on giving <b>Shyam</b> Babu gifts such as sweaters and a baby bonnet. | Mrs. Kulshreshtha<br>Mr. Kulshreshtha<br><b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev<br>Pankaj Kulshreshtha,<br>Reena's brother |  | The first baby bonnet Reena may have thought was for Gompti Devi's son who was c. 1 year old at her death. See Item <b>23</b> for Reena's gift of a baby bonnet to the grandchild of <b>Kailash</b> Kumari.                  |
| 20. She asked to be given material for a long dress by <b>Shyam</b> Babu.              | Mrs. Kulshreshtha<br>Mr. Kulshreshtha<br><b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev  |  | Young girls typically wear short frocks, while long dresses are worn by women.   |
| 21. She insists on going to <b>S.B.</b> 's home, and leads the way as they approach.   | Mrs. Kulshreshtha   |  | The house was in the direction Reena had indicated when c. <b>18</b> months old.   |
| 22. She led her mother to <b>Kailash</b> Kumari and recognized her.                    | Mrs. Kulshreshtha   | <b>Kailash</b> Kumari,<br><b>Shyam</b> Babu's neighbor | <b>Kailash</b> Kumari was a surrogate mother-in-law who lived just in front of Gompti Devi whom Gompti Devi visited daily. Reena persistently asked to visit the neighbor of Gompti Devi.                                    |
| 23. She acted as Gompti Devi had in <b>Kailash</b> Kumari's presence.                  | <b>Kailash</b> Kumari   | <b>Kailash</b> Kumari                                  | Reena would not eat in the presence of <b>Kailash</b> Kumari. Neither had Gompti Devi, as a sign of respect as for a mother-in-law. Reena asked her parents to give a baby bonnet to <b>Kailash</b> Kumari's new grandchild. |
| 24. She said there was some trouble in her house.                                      | Mrs. Kulshreshtha   | Urmila Yadev,<br><b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev's second wife | This occurred when Reena was about <b>3</b> years old. Urmila confirmed that she had a very difficult delivery as the cord was wrapped around the baby's neck.   |

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| 25. She announced the birth of a son to <b>Shyam</b> Babu and celebrated the event.              | Mrs. Kulshreshtha  | Urmila Yadev                            | The birth occurred at Tilitila, 145 km from <b>Agra</b> . Reena's mother went to Kailash Kumari to ask if this was true. Kailash Kumari asked <b>Shyam</b> Babu who did not know. Sometime later he received a letter announcing the birth of a son on the date noted by Reena. Her parents knew of the pregnancy, however. Reena asked that her mother-in-law send <b>laddu</b> (a <b>kind</b> of sweet) so they could celebrate, and did, taking little for herself.           |
| 26. She recognizes Phoowati Devi.  | Phoowati Devi,<br><b>Shyam</b> Babu<br>Yadev's mother<br>Mrs. Kulshreshtha |   | Phoowati Devi estimated Reena was 3 at this meeting; while Reena's mother said <b>2</b> and a half. Phoowati Devi saw Reena weep but she did not observe Reena when she went inside and covered her head, as appropriate for a daughter-in-law, nor did she hear her say, "My bangles are with you [mother-in-law]," and, "I died in her house," as Reena's mother did. Phoowati Devi was brought by Kailash Kumari. Clues to Phoowati Devi's identity may well have been given. |
| 27. She does not recognize Gompti Devi's son.  | Urmila Yadev<br>Mrs. Kulshreshtha  | Urmila Yadev<br>Mrs. Kulshreshtha       | Reena went to <b>S.B.</b> 's house to see Phoowati Devi. She saw Urmila, <b>S.B.</b> 's wife, (for the second time) and saw Gompti Devi's son for the first time but apparently did not recognize him.   |
| 28. She repeatedly asked her father to go and get her four rings and her bangles from her house. | Mrs. Kulshreshtha  |   | <b>Shyam</b> Babu confirmed she had bangles, but couldn't recall the kind. Age at which she asked this was not ascertained.  |
| 29. She correctly described the colors of Gompti Devi's saris and sweaters.                      | Mrs. Kulshreshtha<br>Kailash Kumari  | Urmila Yadev<br><b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev |  |
| 30. She announced death of <b>Shyam</b> Babu's "elder brother."                                  | Mrs. Kulshreshtha<br>Mr. Kulshreshtha                                      | <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev                 | Three days later <b>Shyam</b> Babu learned his cousin whom he called "elder brother," had died three days before in Tilitila. Reena has never been to Tilitila. Like Item 11 the statement was made while on the roof of her house.  |
| 31. She named the gods represented at the temple at the cremation grounds.                       | Mrs. Kulshreshtha  | Not confirmed                           | When in <b>Lucknow</b> we have checked some of the temples in the cremation ground, and have not found pictures of the three gods named.   |
| 32. She announces that her husband has had an operation.   | Mrs. Kulshreshtha  | <b>Shyam</b> Babu Yadev                 | When about <b>9</b> years old, Reena asked her mother what an operation was and how one was made unconscious and said her husband had had an operation. The Kulshreshthas did not know at the time (as <b>Shyam</b> Babu was at Tilitila when he became ill), then learned through the office that he had had an operation.  |

asked her mother to accompany her to the home of the lady who lived across the lane from Shyam Babu, one Kailash Kumari Yadev, who had acted as a surrogate mother-in-law to Gompti Devi. At Kailash Kumari's home, Reena would be shy and would not eat the food offered her in Kailash Kumari's presence, just as Gompti Devi had not eaten in her presence, as a sign of respect as for a mother-in-law. When Reena repeatedly asked to visit Kailash Kumari, her mother would oblige her by taking her, but chide her saying, "At home you are always troubling me to bring you here, but when you are here, you are shy."

Reena continued to call Shyam Babu to her house after learning that he had remarried. He did not bring his second wife to Reena's home, "because of how she would feel," but he discussed the situation with his second wife, and they agreed to give Reena material for a long dress as well as bracelets, sweets, toys and some coins.

Gompti Devi had spent a considerable amount of her married life in the home of her mother-in-law in the village of Tilitila, 145 km from Agra. Gompti Devi's children were largely raised by her mother-in-law, Phoowati Devi, after her death. After Reena had declared Shyam Babu was her husband, when Phoowati Devi came to Agra she came in the company of Kailash Kumari to see Reena. To what extent introductions were made that identified Phoowati Devi in Reena's hearing remains unclear. Reena's response to Phoowati Devi was interpreted as a spontaneous recognition of her by Reena's mother: Reena wept upon seeing Phoowati Devi, went inside and covered her head with a cloth, as Gompti Devi and all traditional daughters-in-law do in their mother-in-law's presence. Reena said in her mother's hearing, "I left my bangles in your house. I died in your house." (This phrase is used generally, not just by Reena, to mean "when your daughter-in-law," rather than that the death occurred at her home; Gompti Devi died in the hospital in Agra.) Many other times Reena said she had a particular kind of bangle and four rings, and asked that her father get them for her.

After Phoowati Devi visited her, Reena went to return the visit. This was the second time she went to Shyam Babu's house. When she arrived Gompti Devi's son was there, but Reena did not greet him. Reena's mother felt this was because she was uncomfortable in Urmila's presence. This is the only time Reena has seen any of Gompti Devi's children.

Reena first went with her family to the Taj Mahal when she was about 3 years old. Her father thought this visit was before she had recognized Shyam Babu as her husband, while her mother thought that the trip to the Taj Mahal was perhaps after their meeting. At the Taj Mahal Reena became very upset. She said it was near the place where she had been cremated. Reena had a phobia of the area, and had not been willing to return to the Taj Mahal since. Reena continued to become upset if she heard songs that mention the Taj Mahal, or heard the cremation ground mentioned.

After Reena was in Lucknow when she was about 4 years old she saw a hypodermic needle for the first time when her mother became ill and was given injections. Reena was very alarmed. She continued to have a phobia of injections, and runs away at the mention of a hypodermic needle although she has not had an injection since her birth.

Although Reena did not visit Shyam Babu's house again, she preserved a striking psychic connection with Shyam Babu and his family even when it was in Tilitila. Stevenson (1975a, p. 101) reports that children reputed to have past life memories are sometimes credited in India with extraordinary powers, but he has found no evidence to substantiate this concept. Nonetheless, on three occasions described below Reena told about events relating to Shyam Babu and his family which she had no apparent means of knowing. Two of these events took place in Tilitila. The only other instance in which Reena exhibited ESP also bore some relation to her contact with Shyam Babu.

When about 4 years old Reena said, "Mother, I don't feel like eating because there is some problem in my house." Later the same day she said, "Shyam Babu has been blessed with a son. Tell my mother-in-law to send laddu [a kind of sweet] to distribute. Let us celebrate and distribute sweets."

Reena's mother went to Kailash Kumari and inquired if it was true that Shyam Babu's wife had had a son. Kailash Kumari did not know, as Shyam Babu's wife was in Tilitila, but asked Shyam Babu when he returned from work. He said that he had not yet heard any news. As Kailash Kumari and Reena's mother knew, his wife was expecting a child but was in Tilitila. Some days later Shyam Babu received a letter announcing the birth of a son on the day on which Reena had announced the birth. Urmila, Shyam Babu's second wife, said that the birth had been very difficult as the cord was wrapped around the baby's neck.

On another occasion Reena said, "My husband's elder brother died." Three days later Shyam Babu learned, according to Reena's parents, that his cousin, whom he called "elder brother," had died in Tilitila on the day Reena made this statement (Shyam Babu had forgotten this incident).

Reena continued to speak from the point of view of Gompti Devi up until she was about 7 years old, even when in Lucknow. When in Lucknow she named three gods whose pictures she said were in the temple where she was cremated. This statement has not been confirmed. When Reena was about 7, Shyam Babu withdrew from the family, feeling that the attachment of a growing girl for a remarried man as her husband was not to be prolonged.

In February 1985, when Reena was 8 and a half years old (and back in Agra), she asked her mother what an operation was and how a person was made unconscious and said, "My husband has had an operation." Reena's family then learned through the office that Shyam Babu had become seriously ill when he was on leave at Tilitila. He had been hospitalized in Etawah and then transferred to Agra where the operation was performed,

after which he was unconscious for 2 months. Reena announced that he had had an operation before her father had learned this news. Reena went with her family to visit him in the hospital.

Reena's parents reported that on one occasion she had shown extrasensory perception of an event in her own family: In 1979 she predicted that her father, Mr. Kulshreshtha, would be promoted, as he was in 1980. The promotion affected her relationship to Shyam Babu's family as her father was transferred to Lucknow.

Reena was 11 and 12 years old when I investigated and reinvestigated the case and was no longer talking from the point of view of being Shyam Babu's wife. She would not allow me to interview her, although she sometimes answered questions put to her by her parents during the course of our interviews. She continues to show precocity in the housewifely tasks of cooking, selectively shopping for vegetables and other items, sewing and knitting. These skills were markedly developed from the time she was 5. Her mother noted that she could follow directions to knit complicated patterns in sweaters from that age, earlier than her sisters.

Her father remarked that she was never like a child, and she still is more adult than childlike. Her parents report that she is a particularly punctual and methodical person with an excellent memory, who studies before she allows herself to read for pleasure and prefers adult company to that of children. She is well liked at school where she is known as a peacemaker who calms people down when they fight. Reena was then in the sixth grade, in which she was doing well.

Independently we were told by Gompti Devi's husband and mother-in-law that Gompti Devi had these qualities of being a peacemaker, and was very fond of knitting and sewing. Gompti Devi had received an eighth grade education.

When I returned in January 1989, I learned that Reena still related to Shyam Babu as her past-life husband. On December 25th, he was among 400 guests invited to a dinner the Kulshreshthas held in honor of the birth of Mr. Kulshreshtha's first grandson. Reena was eating dinner when Shyam Babu arrived, but on seeing him, she stopped and retired, as a proper Hindu wife should do in her husband's presence.

*Evaluation of the Paranormal Features of the Case.* Reena made 10 verified statements or acts before meeting Shyam Babu and 15 afterward. Reena correctly recognized three people and two locations related to the previous personality. All of her statements and recognitions were correct, except her statement about the gods at the temple where she was cremated. However, she gave no indication of having recognized Gompti Devi's son. If Reena had been taken to Tilitila during the period when she strongly identified herself as Shyam Babu's wife, her apparent memory of Gompti Devi's life might have received a more thorough check.

This case does not fulfill the criteria of having no contact between the

subject and the previous personality's family. Aside from Reena's apparent foreknowledge of the day and difficulty of the birth of Urmila's son, the death of Shyam Babu's cousin, and Shyam Babu's operation, the information contained in the statements Reena made was either within the scope of her parent's knowledge or potentially so. Reena's father had been told the cause of death of Shyam Babu's wife, although Reena's mother only recalls being told that she had died leaving small children behind, which caused Mrs. Kulshreshtha to feel sorry for Shyam Babu's family.

Mr. Kulshreshtha and Mr. Yadev did not have a great deal of contact as they worked in separate buildings across the road from each other. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Kulshreshtha had met Shyam Babu's first wife, but other people in the Telecommunications office doubtless had and knew where they lived.

The striking features of the case are Reena's intense identification of herself as a married woman, her description of her death in a previous life, her search for a likeness of her husband at an early age, her phobia of injections and the cremation ground and her apparent foreknowledge of events related to Shyam Babu's family. There is no apparent motive for her to identify herself as the wife of a lower caste colleague of her father.

### *Case 2: Ashok Kumar Shakya of Ritaur*

The informants for this case in Ritaur were Ashok Kumar Shakya, his mother and father Mr. and Mrs. S. B. Shakya, and his brother Awadesh. In **Bandha** the informants were the late Kishen Behari's eldest son Laxmi Narain Jatev, Kishen Behari's widow Savitri Jatev, Kishen Behari's brother Bhatishwar Dayal Jatev, Kishen Behari's father's younger brother Shyam Lal, the latter's wife Gian Shri, Kishen Behari's mother Teeja Jatev, and the head man of **Bandha**, Udal Singh.

Ashok Kumar is the third and youngest son of Shyam Babu Shakya and Chandra Wati of the village of Ritaur, District of Etawah, in Uttar Pradesh. Ritaur has a population of approximately 5,000. According to his parents, he was born at home on August 16, 1982. Ashok Kumar's brother Awadesh is 11 years his senior and his brother Sarvan is 9 years his senior. They have no sisters. His father, S. B. Shakya, has a high school education and taught school before joining the army. He was unsuccessful in a competition and returned to farm his ancestral land. The Shakyas are of the Kshatriya caste.

At the time of our first investigation he had just turned 5, and then, as at the time of my second investigation, was still talking from the point of view of being a married man and the father of five children. When I visited him in January 1989, his father reported that he was saying less as a result of being teased for being a *chamar* or untouchable.

When Ashok Kumar was still unable to talk, he would sometimes mime limping. As he grew more verbal, which he did quickly, he once became annoyed at his mother and said, "I will not stay with you. I will go to my

own house. There I have all my family." When asked the name of his village, at first he answered by trying to walk towards it, limping; then he said "**Bandha**" and then that he was from the village of **Bandha**. His mother noted that he spoke very clearly in an adult fashion from an early age, and had only recently, at the age of 5, started speaking falteringly in the language of a child of his age.

Over time, Ashok Kumar said he had a wife and five children and was most concerned about whether they had enough to eat. He continually asked his parents to take him to see them. He would often say of things he saw at his parents' house, "My wife doesn't have this. Go and give it to her." He frequently would ask his mother to put aside her work so they could talk about his family. Table 2 lists Ashok Kumar's statements, recognitions and related behavior.

When the police were mentioned, Ashok Kumar said he was afraid of the police and repeatedly said the chief of police had beaten him with a stick after he had been in a fight near the fields. "If I happen to meet him I can recognize him and will beat him now," Ashok Kumar told his mother. Ashok Kumar told his father, "Let's go to the police station—you, me and Awadesh—and we will beat the policeman who is in charge."

Ashok Kumar continued to mime limping and frequently told his parents, "I came limping, limping to your house." He told us, "When I died, with great difficulty I found the house of my mummy [Chandra Wati] and she has walls of mud like this and I held onto those walls to walk and then only I entered the house of my mummy. . . . I started from there [**Bandha**, at death] and reached here at birth." In 1988 he added, "I came over here limping, limping. I found one door was closed. I found another door was closed. Then I found this door was open and I entered."

After Ashok Kumar had persisted in asking to go to his family in **Bandha**, his parents came to conclude that their son was remembering a past life. They thought he was from a good family because he used proper and polite terms of address for relatives, terms not used by his parents. Ashok Kumar's mother was familiar with the phenomenon of children claiming to be someone reborn because a girl, now about 29 years old, had identified herself as the reincarnation of Chandra Wati's sister who had died at the age of 5. However, Ashok Kumar's parents were annoyed at his continued demands to be taken to his family and tried to make him forget by, as his father said, "beating him and scolding him very badly." However, this did not have the desired effect. Ashok Kumar would be annoyed and would not eat for as much as 2 to 3 days.

On January 2, 1987 Ashok Kumar had not eaten for the whole day. When his brother Awadesh returned from school at 4:00 p.m., Ashok Kumar insisted, "I will only eat if you take me to my village. Let's start out from the road. There will be a railroad crossing, then there will be a canal bridge and near that is a small pond. Just near there I have built my own room and my wife is staying there. Take me to my home."



Awadesh and his parents thought Ashok Kumar was referring to a town named **Bandha** they knew of at some distance from Ritaur. Awadesh and Ashok Kumar set out that day and were joined by two boys, Kuldeep and Bablu. They carried Ashok Kumar on a bicycle but instead of pointing out the road to the town of **Bandha**, Ashok Kumar pointed out the route he thought they should take across the fields. As they got closer to a village Ashok Kumar got off the bicycle saying, "My village is there," and led the way.

The village of approximately 250 people that Ashok Kumar took them to (indeed called **Bandha**) is about 4 km from Ritaur this back way across the fields. To get to **Bandha** by road, one must go from Ritaur to Ekdil, from there to Etawah, and then on the road north which takes one over the railway crossing, and across the canal bridge, as Ashok Kumar had said. The last 2 km to **Bandha** are impassable except on foot. This road route is a total of 18 km.

No member of Ashok Kumar's family had ever been to this village of **Bandha** before. Until Ashok Kumar arrived at **Bandha**, none of the people we interviewed there had heard anything about him. The villagers of **Bandha** were aware of the larger village of Ritaur, but those we interviewed had no links with it. The closest market center to **Bandha** is Etawah, whereas the closest market center to Ritaur is Ekdil. Word that Ashok Kumar spoke of a past life had reached Ekdil, where an associate of Stevenson's had noted the case.

Outside the village, Awadesh asked a woman taking goats to the field, "Is there any man who died here? Maybe murdered, maybe hanged by bad people?" The woman said, "No," and they walked on. Ashok Kumar told his brother, "She is my mother." Awadesh scolded him saying, "You should not call everyone your mother." In the village Ashok Kumar went straight to the house of the late Kishen Behari Yadev and said, "This is my house."

A large crowd had gathered, and the village head man, Udal Singh, came up and took charge. Wanting to check the truth of Ashok Kumar's statement, he said to Ashok Kumar, "No, this is not your house," and took him around the village suggesting other houses, some much more substantial, were his. Again Ashok Kumar stopped in front of Kishen Behari's house and said, "This is my house. I constructed this house." Udal Singh called Kishen Behari's widow, Savitri, and said to her, "Come here. Probably your dead child has taken birth."

Ashok Kumar went up to Savitri and laughed, and she took him on her lap. He kept staring at her. She thought he was perhaps one of her two children who had died after her husband, but Awadesh said, "It's not your child. He keeps saying, 'I have five children and a wife,' so maybe your husband has taken birth." Someone in the crowd asked Ashok Kumar, "Who is she?" and he answered, "She is my wife." She then touched his feet and he did not object. This was considered an indication that he saw her as his wife.

TABLE 2  
Summary of statements and recognitions and behavior of Ashok Kumar Shakya

| Item   | Informants  | Verification  | Comments  |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. He mimed limping.   | Shyam Babu Shakya,<br>Ashok Kumar's<br>father; Chandra<br>Wati Shakya,<br>Ashok Kumar's<br>mother | Gian Sri, Kishen<br>Behari Yadev's<br>father's younger<br>brother's wife<br><br>Not verified by<br>Savitri Jadev,<br>Kishen Behari's<br>widow, and<br>Teeja Jatev,<br>Kishen Behari's | Ashok Kumar did this when he could first walk, before<br>he could talk.<br>Gian Sri said Kishen Behari could not stretch his legs<br>in his final illness (08/15/87).<br>Savitri Jadev and Teeja Jadev did not think anything<br>was wrong with Kishen Behari's legs (01/08/89).          |
| 2. He said he had his own<br>house and family.   | Chandra Wati  | Savitri Jadev   | Ashok Kumar said this when annoyed at his mother,<br>when about 2½ years old.   |
| 3. He said he was from <b>Bandha</b> .   | Chandra Wati  | Savitri Jadev   | When first asked the name of his village, Ashok Kumar<br>tried limping to it; later he said, " <b>Bandha</b> ," and then<br>that he was from <b>Bandha</b> . He said he had come<br>limping from <b>Bandha</b> to his mother's house.   |
| 4. He said he had a wife and<br>five children.   | Awadesh Shakya,<br>Ashok Kumar's<br>eldest brother  | Laxmi Narain,<br>Kishen Behari's<br>eldest son  | Kishen Behari Jadev had five children at the time of his<br>death. Afterwards, the two youngest children died.<br>Ashok Kumar seems to be unaware of these deaths.<br>Ashok Kumar told me he had five sons. This is<br>incorrect. The youngest of Kishen Behari's children<br>was a girl. |
| 5. He persistently asked his<br>parents to give food to his<br>wife as she didn't have<br>enough.              | Chandra Wati  | Savitri Jadev   |   |
| 6. He said he was afraid of the<br>police as the chief of police<br>had beaten him after he was<br>in a fight. | Chandra Wati<br>Shyam Babu Shakya<br>Awadesh Shakya   | Laxmi Narain,<br>Gian Sri   | Ashok Kumar wanted his father and elder brother to go<br>with him to beat the chief of police whom he said he<br>could recognize.   |

- |   |  |                                       |   |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| 7. He refused to eat when scolded for asking to be taken to <b>Bandha</b> .         | Chandra Wati<br>Shyam Babu Shakya                  |                                       | He would refuse to eat for "two or three days."   |
| 8. He described features on the way to <b>Bandha</b> , such as a railroad crossing. | Awadesh Shakya                                     | Observed by author                    | This is en route by road.   |
| 9. A canal bridge.  | Awadesh Shakya                                     | Observed by author                    | This is en route by road.   |
| 10. A small pond.   | Awadesh Shakya                                     | Observed by author                    | This is en route by road.   |
| 11. He pointed out the way to <b>Bandha</b> .                                       | Awadesh Shakya                                     | Awadesh Shakya                        | Ashok Kumar's parents thought he was referring to another <b>Bandha</b> , and did not know of the existence of the other. However, the two village boys, Kuldeep and Bablu, who accompanied Ashok Kumar and his brother, had heard of it (but never been there). Although <b>Bandha</b> is only 4 km. from Ritaur, it is on a different road system and none of Ashok Kumar's family were aware of its location or had been there previously. |
| 12. He recognized the village when it was within sight.                             | Awadesh Shakya                                     |                                       |   |
| 13. He said he had built his own home where his wife lived.                         | Awadesh Shakya                                     | Savitri Jadev                         |   |
| 14. He identified Kishen Behari Jadev's mother as his mother.                       | Awadesh Shakya                                     | Teeja Jadev                           | Ashok Kumar identified a lady Awadesh Shakya spoke to outside the village as his mother. Awadesh later verified that she was the mother of Kishen Behari Jadev.   |
| 15. He recognized his house.  | Awadesh Shakya<br>Udal Singh<br>Laxmi Narain Jadev | Udal Singh, head man of <b>Bandha</b> | Udal Singh tried to persuade Ashok Kumar that other houses were his but Ashok Kumar again went to Kishen Behari's house ( <b>after</b> being taken on a tour of the village) and said he had constructed it, which was true.  |
| 16. He recognized Savitri Jadev as his wife.  | Savitri Jadev                                      |                                       | Udal Singh said Ashok Kumar was her child reborn but Awadesh said he spoke of having a wife and five children. When asked who Savitri was, he said she was his wife.  |

(continued)

TABLE 2 (continued)

| Item   | Informants          | Verification                               | Comments  |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
| 17. He recognized his eldest son.                                | Laxmi Narain Jadev  | Laxmi Narain Jadev                         | When Ashok Kumar asked for his eldest son, anyone coming forward could be construed to be identifying himself as such.  |
| 18. He called the eldest son "Rakesh."                           | Laxmi Narain Jadev  | Not correct                                | Seven months later Ashok Kumar still gave the incorrect name "Rakesh," for Laxmi Narain. By 01/08/89 he was calling him by the correct name.  |
| 19. He recognized Bhatেশwar Dayal and called him by name.        | Awadesh Shakya      | Bahateshwar Dayal, Kishen Behari's brother |   |
| 20. When taken from <b>Bandha</b> , Ashok Kumar resisted.        | Laxmi Narain Jadev  |  |   |
| 21. He recognized a road he had made.                            | Chandra Wati Shakya | Verified by N. K. Chadha                   |   |
| 22. He recognized the place where he had been sick.              | Chandra Wati Shakya | Verified by N. K. Chadha                   | I failed to ask if <b>Kishen</b> Behari had been sick first by the pond.  |
| 23. He used to take baths in the canal with his wife.            | Chandra Wati Shakya | Savitri Jadev                              | Ashok Kumar not only mentioned this to his mother as they passed the canal, but invited his wife to go with him.  |
| 24. He expected his wife to treat his mother as a mother-in-law. | Chandra Wati Shakya | Savitri Jadev                              | Ashok Kumar asked Savitri to make food for his mother and brothers, and told his mother to take her back and she will cook for her, forgetting caste differences which mean the Shakyas do not take food from the Jadevs, as untouchables.  |
| 25. He recognized his <i>mama</i> (mother's brother).            | Awadesh Shakya      | Bhateshwar Dayal                           | <b>Kishen</b> Behari's <i>mama</i> slapped Ashok Kumar's knee in greeting at <b>Bandha</b> . At Ritaur he said that was his <i>mama</i> , and when checked, they found that Kishen Behari was close to this man and called him <i>mama</i> , although he was a village <i>mama</i> (or mother's brother) rather than an actual one. |
| 26. He recognized Mathura Prasad.                                | Bhateshwar Dayal    |  | Ashok Kumar's reported words were that he had seen this man cutting grass on his first trip to <b>Bandha</b> . If Ashok Kumar gave his name, we have not recorded   |

|   |                     |                          |   |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 27. He recognized his brother-in-law.   | Shyam Babu Shakya   |                          | <p>this. Thus what was assumed to be a recognition could have been merely a correct observation. When the brother-in-law visited him, Ashok Kumar said he had given his goat back, but did not name the brother-in-law. Kishen Behari had returned the goat lent by his sister and brother-in-law, when he was ill. He then fell ill again and died.</p>                                  |
| 28. He recognized his sister's husband's brother.   | Bhateshwar Dayal    |                          | <p>Recognition took place after Ashok Kumar was asked if he remembered returning the goat to his house. Thus mention of something Kishen Behari had done triggered Ashok Kumar's memory, although it is possible that Ashok Kumar learned of the goat incident after going to <b>Bandha</b>.</p>  |
| 29. Ashok Kumar was distressed that his mother does not give more <b>jaggery</b> to "my brother."                       | Chandra Wati Shakya |                          |   |
| 30. He identified area where he was beaten by five people.  | Ashok Kumar         | Verified by N. K. Chadha | As this was said after we left <b>Bandha</b> , it was not verified by the people from <b>Bandha</b> .   |
| 31. He asked that they bring a <i>dothi</i> [cloth] for his wife, and later says he cannot take her home until they do. | Ashok Kumar         |                          | As Ashok Kumar's father notes, his main attraction in for his wife.   |
| 32. He identified spot where he had buried some money.  | Shyam Babu Shakya   | Unverified               | <p>Ashok Kumar's parents asked that no verification be made as they suspect that in burying the money Kishen Behari had disturbed a <b>discarnate being</b> who is responsible for his death, and they fear it may attack Ashok Kumar as well. By 01/08/89 Kishen Behari's relatives have heard of this statement, but doubt its veracity, saying Kishen Behari had no money to bury.</p> |

Ashok Kumar called for his eldest son, who came, and was recognized by him, but when asked his name he said, "Rakesh." In fact Kishen Behari's eldest son's name is Laxmi Narain. Ashok Kumar persisted after three subsequent visits in calling him by the wrong name. The name Rakesh has no special significance to Savitri's family.

Kishen Behari's mother heard what was happening and returned from the fields where she had taken the goats; she was the woman that Ashok Kumar had told his brother was his mother as they approached **Bandha**. Someone asked Ashok Kumar who she was and he said, "My mother," but not in her hearing. She took Ashok Kumar on her lap and asked, "Am I your mother?" He did not say anything, but she said that he answered with his eyes that she was. In fact he had already recognized her.

On this first trip to **Bandha** Ashok Kumar is said to have recognized Kishen Behari's *chacha* [father's younger brother] Shyam Lal and Kishen Behari's younger brother Bhateshwar Dayal whom he called by name. When it was time to leave, Ashok Kumar told Awadesh, "You go. I will stay here." When they took him with them, Ashok Kumar cried. The relatives of the late Kishen Behari Jatev (as well as Ashok Kumar's relatives) were convinced that Ashok Kumar Shakya was Kishen Behari Jatev reborn.

Kishen Behari Jatev had in fact died in the month of Phaghan (February 12–March 12) in about 1981 when about 45 years old, we learned from interviewing his brother, wife, son, mother and *chachi* [father's younger brother's wife]. He had been a laborer without land who had worked for other farmers. He was a member of the lowest or *chamar* caste formerly considered outside the caste system or "untouchable." Once Kishen Behari had become involved in a fight over who owned some land he had been hired to work and was subsequently caught by the chief of police, who beat him.

Kishen Behari was described as a hard-working man who had been quite unhappy being a laborer only able to earn enough money for food for the day. Shortly before he fell ill he had built a small mud house for himself and his wife and five children. He had fallen ill, grew better, then worse and after an illness of 15 days, died with one leg paralyzed from the illness. Three or 4 days after his death, Kishen Behari's brother Bhateshwar Dayal reported that he appeared to him in a dream saying, "Why are you weeping? I have come to you."

On March 26, 1987 Ashok Kumar made a second trip to **Bandha**, in the company of his mother and two brothers. As they approached the village, Ashok Kumar pointed out where he had been beaten by the police, the road he had worked on, the canal where he and his wife took baths after slipping out of the village, and the pond near which he had fallen ill with vomiting and diarrhea. Once at Savitri's house, Ashok Kumar told her to prepare food for his mother and brothers, and suggested that his mother take his wife home as her daughter-in-law. However, both Savitri and Chandra Wati

know the Shakyas will not eat food cooked at the home of such low-caste people. Ashok Kumar spoke intimately to Savitri as a husband to a wife, saying, "Stop the mother over here and we will go to take a bath in the canal as we went earlier in the night." Savitri responded, "Stop these things. Don't talk like this," but later asked him, "Won't you take me back with you?" to which Ashok Kumar replied, "Not this time. Next time when I bring clothes for you I will take you." As Ashok Kumar left he stopped at Bhatেশwar Dayal's house. There a man slapped Ashok Kumar's knee in affection, asking, "Don't you recognize me?" At that time Ashok Kumar did not respond, but when he returned to Ritaur Ashok Kumar said, "He was my *mama* [mother's brother]." Later when Kishen Behari's brother came to **Bandha** to visit Ashok Kumar, he confirmed that he and Kishen Behari called this man *mama*, although he was a classificatory or village mother's brother rather than an actual one. The witnesses felt that Ashok Kumar could not have learned this identity while at Bhatেশwar Dayal's, although I would not rule out this possibility. This *mama* and Kishen Behari had been particularly close.

Between January and mid-August 1987, Bhatেশwar Dayal and Laxmi Narain and various other relatives of Kishen Behari visited Ashok Kumar in Ritaur three times. Ashok Kumar said to Mathur Prasad, a friend of Kishen Behari's who came with Bhatেশwar Dayal, "When I came to my house the first time you were cutting grass for the cattle." This was indeed true. He did not recognize Kishen Behari's sister's husband's brother until Bhatেশwar Dayal prompted him saying, "Do you remember you took a goat to his house?" Ashok Kumar said, "Yes. Now I remember you." Again, one cannot confidently rule out normal means of Ashok Kumar arriving at this information.

On one of these visits, after the Shakyas had given some brown sugar candy to Bhatেশwar Dayal, Ashok Kumar came crying to his mother saying, "You have so much *jaggery* here and you gave so little to my brother."

After going to **Bandha**, Ashok Kumar once beat his mother to try to get her to give millet to his family. Once when asked to eat Ashok Kumar said to his father, "Give *rasaya* [a dish made of cane sugar and rice] to my son and then I will eat." They told him they would send *rasaya* and then he ate. Another time he told his father, "Give *bajara* [millet] to my son because he is feeling cold." Ashok Kumar's father was struck by this statement because, "A child his age would not know that the composition of *bajara* is hot."

We took Ashok Kumar and his mother and brother Awadesh to **Bandha** on August 18, for what was Ashok Kumar's third trip, and observed his familiarity with Savitri and Kishen Behari's relatives. As we walked to the village, Ashok Kumar pointed out where he had worked and where he had been beaten and where he had become ill. As we returned I asked him if that was from the beating. Ashok Kumar said, "I got sick and I vomited and got a fever. I went to the doctor and I used up all my money and I was still sick. I

borrowed money and went to the doctor but I got worse and I died. Then I was limping, limping. My knee was broken from the sickness."

Kishen Behari's relatives seemed reluctant to answer my question about whether there was any association between the police beating and his death. However, some were clear that Kishen Behari's knee and leg were not affected by his fatal illness. This description fitted the information we had gathered in **Bandha** previously, in Ashok Kumar's absence, but by this time Ashok Kumar could well have heard a description of Kishen Behari's death.

On return from his third trip to **Bandha**, Ashok Kumar told his mother that he had buried some money near the pond at **Bandha** and he fell ill over there. From this his parents suspected that he had disturbed an evil spirit, by which they meant a discarnate soul who lurks around the pond, and that this had caused Kishen Behari's illness and death. The father asked that no verification be made of the buried money because he is afraid the evil spirit will pounce on Ashok Kumar and "I will lose my child."

When I returned in the summer of 1988, I learned that Ashok Kumar had been invited to the wedding of Kishen Behari's eldest son. He went in the company of Awadesh, and refused to return home, so Awadesh left him in **Bandha** over night, he and his mother fetching Ashok Kumar back the following day. He has not apparently made any further statements that were identified as being information that Kishen Behari knew and Ashok Kumar could not be expected to, although the conviction of Kishen Behari's relatives that Ashok Kumar is Kishen Behari is by now so complete that they would not necessarily note new revelations made by him.

*Evaluation of the Paranormal Features of the Case.* Ashok Kumar made 12 verified statements before going to **Bandha** or en route and 12 after arriving. He recognized eight people and correctly identified four locations. However, he gave the wrong name for Laxmi Narain, and persisted for some time in thinking he was named Rakesh. His statement to me that all his children are sons is also incorrect. In fact the youngest child of Kishen Behari was a girl who died, as did her next elder brother, after Kishen Behari's death. Ashok Kumar is apparently not aware that two of Kishen Behari's children have died.

To Westerners it seems extraordinary that the density of villages in this part of India could mean that people in one village would not know of the existence of another one 4 km away. However, I have found no one who does not concur that this was the case. If true, then Ashok Kumar had no normal means of knowing about a man from **Bandha** with a wife and five children who had been beaten by the police and died, and no motive for identifying with such a person.

### *Case 3: Toran Singh, Alias Titu, of the Village Bad*

The informants for this case at Bad were Toran Singh, his father Mahavir Singh, his mother Shanti Devi, his brother Ashok Kumar Singh, and Nardev



Singh (a friend of Suresh Verme). In Agra, the informants were Suresh Verme's wife Uma Verme; his brothers Mahesh Verme, Raja Babu Verme, Rajvir Babu Verme, and Om Kar Singh; his father Chanda Babu Singh Bharity; and his mother Burfi Devi Singh.

Toran Singh, called Titu, is the youngest of the six children of Mahavir Prasad Verme Singh and Shanti Devi of the village of Bad (population about 1,000), which is 13.5 km from Agra. Titu's eldest brother, Ashok Kumar, is about 13 years his elder; next is Titu's other brother, Raj Kumar, about 10 years his senior. Titu's eldest sister, Asha, is about 8 years his senior; the second sister, Kunta, about 6 years his senior, and the third sister, Guloo, was said to be somewhere between 1 to 3 years his senior. There do not appear to be any records of the exact birthdates.

Titu's father and his family are of the Vaishya caste and own considerable agricultural land around Bad which they farm. However, Mahavir Singh goes every school day to Agra where he teaches chemistry in grades 11 and 12 in Hubbulal Inter-College. Titu lives with his family in a substantial single story traditional cement house.

Titu's mother was ill the last trimester of her pregnancy with Titu and was admitted to the Military Hospital in Agra about a week before his birth under the name of a friend of the family's who was a member of the military personnel and therefore eligible to use this hospital. The only registration of a birth corresponding to the name of this friend and Titu's mother gives December 11, 1982, as the date of birth. It is possible that Titu's birth was not registered, and/or that the December 11, 1982 date corresponds to the birth of the friend's child. Titu's parents thought he was 4 and a half rather than 3 and a half in 1987, although Titu's father gave his birthdate as December 10, 1983, the first time we met before the hospital search.

According to Shanti Devi, Titu began talking when he was a year and a half, earlier than the rest of her children. Shortly thereafter Titu told her, "Tell my grandfather to look after my children and my wife. I am having my meals here and I am worried about them." When his mother asked, "Who are you?" Titu said, "I am from Agra. I don't know how I came here."

At an early age Titu also began saying, "Mummy, please don't go out in these clothes. I feel embarrassed by them. My wife had beautiful saris." Titu made a number of other complaints. He said, "Your house is dirty. I will not stay. My house is very big," and "My sisters-in-law are educated," and "My brothers had beautiful shirts which you have not seen." When he was expected to walk or go on a bus, Titu would say, "I used to go by car. I will not go on foot or in a bus."

When Titu was very young, he went with his family to a wedding in Agra. As they traveled to Agra, Titu said several times, "I have a shop in Sadar Bazaar," although they did not go near this district of Agra. His parents paid no attention to this remark at the time.

As Titu grew older he would cry almost every day, wanting to "go home." He commonly referred, as he continues to do, to his parents as "Guloo's

mother and father," rather than calling them his own. He frequently asked to go see, "My brother Raja Babu and my sister Susheela," particularly when scolded. Titu complained to his father, "You go every day to Agra but you don't bring any news of my family."

One day in April, 1987, Titu was crying very bitterly as his father once again left for Agra without him. A friend of Titu's eldest brother took him on his lap, and Titu said, in his brother's hearing, "My father doesn't take me. Can you take me there? I have a shop of transistor radios and I was a big smuggler and *goonda* [someone who uses force to get his way]. I am the owner of Suresh Radio."

After this, Titu's eldest brother and his friend sought out the Suresh Radio shop, which turned out to be in Sadar Bazaar in Agra. They had never been to the shop before. They told Uma Verme, the widow of the owner, what Titu had been saying. They learned that Suresh Verne, the owner of Suresh Radio (and a noted smuggler on the black market) had been shot dead August 28, 1983 in his car. He was about 30 years old.

Uma Verne related this to Suresh's family, and shortly thereafter they set out to visit this child. At first they went to the Bad which is near Mathura. They could not find any child meeting Titu's description, and then learned that there was another village called Bad on the other side of Agra. A party consisting of Uma Verne, Burfi Devi (Suresh's mother), Suresh's father (Chanda Babu Singh Bharity), and three of Suresh's four brothers (Rajvir Babu Verne, Mahesh Verne, and Raja Babu Verne) arrived in Bad early one morning in April, 1987.

When Titu saw the party approach, he was very excited. He recognized Uma Verne, Suresh's father and mother and two of the three brothers. He correctly described a trip he had taken to Dolpur with Uma and the children whom he called by their nicknames, Mono and Tono, and the *chatt* and *kulfi* they had eaten. Titu asked why his children had not been brought. When queried Titu correctly described how he [Suresh Verne] had been killed, saying, "While I was near my house, three people stopped me. One shot me and then they ran off. I did not see their faces." When asked where he was shot, Titu said, "They came from the left side and after shooting ran away." Titu described Suresh's home and some of its unique features, such as its shape, the placement of lamps, and a room "which remains locked."

Titu accompanied the Vermes as they went to the road and noted that they had not brought his car. "This is not my car. My car was white," he said. He played the tape deck in the car, although he had not previously seen one, and insisted on driving the car, which he did with Raja Babu's help, working the brake, gas and clutch pedals. When the party left, Titu wanted to go with them and threw his shoes at his mother Shanti Devi saying, "I am not yours. You are not my mother." In all of this excitement, Titu did not greet Suresh's brother Mahesh Verne, although neither did Titu deliberately slight him. Nonetheless, Mahesh Verne was hurt at not being acknowledged. Table 3 describes Titu's statements, recognitions and behavior.

Later that day Raja Babu Verme returned with two sisters of the late Suresh Verme. When Titu saw Susheela Devi, he said, "Susheela Gigi, Susheela Gigi." [Gigi means "sister."] Asked which was his elder sister, Titu said neither was. In fact Suresh's eldest sister is Munni Rani, who was not present.

Taken that afternoon to Suresh's brothers' radio and TV shop, Titu insisted it was not his, although Raja Babu tried to mislead him by claiming it was Suresh Radio. He was then taken by car to Suresh Radio, which is about 100 yards away. Titu said, "This is my shop." Inside Titu said, "This showcase was not here; who got it constructed?" Indeed the showcase he was indicating had been built and installed after the death of Suresh.

Titu identified a large, garlanded photo of Suresh on the wall as himself. He also identified the cash drawer (which looks like any of a number of drawers behind the counter in the shop), and recognized the manager of the shop by name.

Titu was then taken to the home of Chanda Babu Singh Bharity, Suresh's father. He said it was not his house [kothi]. This was interpreted by Mahesh to mean Titu did not recognize the house, while other members of Suresh's family interpreted this statement, I think correctly, to mean that it was not Suresh's home. Suresh Verme and Uma Verme had lived in their own modern house [kothi] which was the one Titu had described to Uma Verme earlier in the day and to which he apparently expected to be taken.

At Chanda Singh Bharity's home, Titu told Suresh's mother, "I am just passing through with these people who do not have a T.V., a car, a video. I will run away to you." When Titu's father, Mahavir Singh, tried to take him home to Bad, Titu hugged Suresh's father, and fought Mahavir Singh and tore his shirt. Chanda Singh said, "Son, go. I will come see you."

Suresh's relatives noted that day that Titu has a small round birthmark that looks like a bullet entry wound, at the site on the right temple where Suresh was shot (see Figure 1). They conjectured that several small birthmarks on the back of Titu's skull might be the bullet exit site. Suresh's mother and wife noted that Titu also has another birthmark on the crown of the head that corresponds to one which Suresh Verme had at birth (according to his mother) and at death (according to his wife).

According to Suresh Verme's postmortem report, which we examined at the hospital where he was declared dead, the bullet that took his life entered on the right temple at the site corresponding to Titu's circular birthmark. The postmortem report said that the bullet exited behind Suresh's right ear. After noting this, I returned to Titu and examined behind his right ear and found that Titu's skull is pushed out at the site indicated as the bullet exit site (see Figure 2). Titu's parents had noted this deformity of the skull, but had not associated it with Suresh's death. Titu had not mentioned the mode of death of Suresh until asked by Rajvir Babu Verme at their first meeting. This is noteworthy, as 77% ( $p < .05$ ) of the subjects in solved cases in India mention the previous personality's mode of death, and 98% ( $p < .05$ ) when

TABLE 3  
Summary of statements and recognitions and behavior of **Toran Singh**, Alias Titu

| Item   | Informants                                  | Verification                               | Comments  |
|--|---|--|---|
| 1. He said he had a wife and children.         | Shanti Devi Singh, Titu's mother            | Uma Verme, Suresh Verme's widow            | Shanti Devi said Titu was about a year and a half.  |
| 2. He said he was from <b>Agra</b> .           | Shanti Devi                                 | Chanda Babu Bharity, Suresh Verme's father |   |
| 3. He said his house was big.                  | Mahavir Singh, Titu's father<br>Shanti Devi | Observed by author                         | He also said, "This house is dirty, I don't know how I came here." Titu's parents' house is not dirty but a large cement village or country style house where cooking is done on a floor hearth. Suresh's parental home has three stories and modern amenities, e.g. TV, and a cooler. Suresh Verme's own home is modern. Note that there is no socioeconomic difference between Titu and Suresh's families. Both fathers were lecturers. Suresh's father notes that Titu's family has considerable agricultural land and is related to the royal family. |
| 4. He is embarrassed by his mother's clothes.  | Shanti Devi                                 | Observed by author                         | Shanti Devi was wearing older cotton saris three of the four times I saw her.   |
| 5. He says his wife has beautiful saris.       | Mahavir Singh                               | Observed by author                         | The three times I saw Uma Verme she was wearing very nice chiffon style saris appropriate for a wealthy business woman.   |
| 6. He says his sisters-in-law are educated.    | Shanti Devi                                 | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity                  | Mahesh Verme's wife has two post high school degrees, first class. I did not inquire about the education of the other sisters-in-law.   |
| 7. He says his brothers have beautiful shirts. | Mahavir Singh                               | Observed by author                         | Raja Babu particularly, but also Mahesh and Rajvir Verme wore stylish synthetic shirts, while Titu's brothers wore plain cotton ones.   |

|   |   |                                 |  |
|---|---|---------------------------------|--|
| 8. He said he had a sister named Susheela Devi and  | Shanti Devi                                       | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity       | Titu asked to see them often, saying he would tell his sister Susheela or brother Raja Babu, when he was scolded. (Titu gave an example of this behavior when we first visited him, telling the taxi driver he would tell Raja Babu the driver would not let him in the car, saying, "and he will set you straight," but this is after meeting Suresh's family.) |
| 9. a brother named Raja Babu.   |   |                                 |  |
| 10. He said he would not go by bus or on foot.  | Mahavir Singh                                     | Mahesh Verme                    | Mahesh Verme indirectly said it was like Suresh to refuse to go by foot. I did not specifically ask whether Suresh had an aversion to going by these means, but as a prosperous man with a foreign car, that is likely.  |
| 11. He said he had a shop in Sadar Bazaar.  | Mahavir Singh                                     | Uma Verme                       | Titu first said this when very small when he was taken to Agra for a wedding, although they did not pass near the Sadar Bazaar. He repeated this statement several times when very young. Suresh Radio is in Sadar Bazaar.   |
| 12. He cried daily to go to his family.   | Shanti Devi<br>A. K. Singh, Titu's eldest brother |                                 | He said to his father, "You go daily to Agra but you don't bring any news of my family."   |
| 13. He said, "I have a shop of transistor radios."  | A. K. Singh                                       | Uma Verme, Suresh Verme's widow |  |
| 14. He said he was a big smuggler and a <i>goonda</i> (someone who gets things by force). | A. K. Singh                                       | Informants in Agra              | While Suresh's family did not mention smuggling, understandably, other residents of Agra confirmed that Suresh was noted for dealing on the black market.  |
| 15. He said he was the owner of Suresh Radio.   | A. K. Singh                                       | Uma Verme                       |  |

(continued)

TABLE 3 (continued)

| Item   | Informants  | Verification              | Comments   |
|--|---|---------------------------|--|
| 16. He recognized Burfi Devi as his mother.                                | <b>Burfi Devi</b> , Suresh's mother   | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity | Suresh's parents said Titu hugged her, called her " <b>Mataji</b> [dear Mother]," sat on her lap, and they both cried. <b>Rajvir</b> Verme said his mother wept, but was not sure Titu had. Mahesh Verme, the brother who was not greeted, denied that Titu had "properly" recognized Suresh's mother. |
| 17. He gave the nicknames of his children.                                 | Mahesh Verme Suresh's third brother.<br><b>Rajvir</b> Verme, Suresh's second brother. | Urna Verme                | Titu had asked, "Why didn't you bring my children?" Asked if he had any, he said, "Mono and Tono," the nicknames of Suresh's sons, Sachin Singh and Amit Singh.  |
| 18. He recognized Chanda Babu Singh Bharity.                               | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity   | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity | Shanti Devi recalled that both Titu and Chanda Babu Singh Bharity wept. Titu hugged him and called him " <b>Papaji</b> [dear Father]."   |
| 19. He recognized Uma, Suresh's wife.                                      | Uma Verme<br>Mahesh Verme<br>Chanda Babu Singh Bharity<br><b>Burfi</b> Devi           | Uma Verme                 | Titu was asked, "Who is she?" by Suresh's father.  |
| 20. He described a trip he had taken to Dolpur with Urna and the children. | Chanda Babu Singh <b>Bharity</b>  | Uma Verme                 | <b>Rajvir</b> Verme recalled that Titu had said they went to Dolpur because his sister was living there (correct). I have not yet asked if anyone else heard this.   |
| 21. He said they had eaten chatt and <i>kulfi</i> on that trip.            | Chanda Babu <b>Singh</b> Bharity  | Uma Verme                 |  |
| 22. Titu asked if the children were at home or studying at school.         | Shanti Devi   |                           | The query contains no new evidence. At the time of Suresh's death they were preschool age.   |
| 23. He described his house, giving details of the shape, and the lights.   | Urna Verme  | Urna Verme                | Urna called this "confidential things." The lights were custom made.   |

|  |   |                              |   |
|--|---|------------------------------|---|
| 24. He said a room in the house was kept locked. | Mahesh Verme  | Mahesh Verme                 | One room was kept locked with scrap material inside. He used the word <i>kothi</i> for his house.   |
| 25. Titu recognized Rajvir Babu.                 | Rajvir Singh Verme, Suresh' second brother          | Chanda Singh Bharity Bharity |   |
| 26. Titu recognized Raja Babu.                   | Mahesh Verme  | Raja Babu Verme              | Titu called him by the name Suresh used, " <b>Raghubhaya</b> ."   |
| 27. He said he was shot.                         | Rajvir Babu Verme<br>Uma Verme                      | Postmortem report            | Titu had not mentioned the mode of death before he was asked. He then described Suresh murder in detail, some of which has never been verified. Once Mahesh said left, but he said right two other times.             |
| 28. He said he was shot from the right.          | Mahesh Verme  | Postmortem report            |   |
| 29. He says they have not brought his car.       | Uma Verme   | Uma Verme                    | Suresh Verme had a Fiat. They came in a <b>Maruthi</b> .  |
| 30. He said his car was white.                   | Uma Verme   | Uma Verme                    | The Fiat was white. This is the car in which he was murdered. They insist the <b>Maruthi</b> was his, but Titu insists it is not.   |
| 31. He insists he can drive.                     | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity                           | Chanda Babu Singh            | Titu insisted on trying, working the gas, clutch, and brake petals and steering, and drove it slightly with Raja Babu's help. Raja Babu noted Titu's and Suresh's common passion for cars.                            |
| 32. He plays the tape deck in the car.           | Mahesh Verme  | Mahavir Singh                | Titu had never seen a tape-deck or tape recorder before, but worked it on his own.  |
| 33. He asks to see his sister in Delhi.          | Rajvir Verme<br>Shanti Devi<br>Chanda Singh Bharity | Rajvir Verme                 | Titu was then told his sister who lives in Delhi was currently in <b>Agra</b> and he told them to tell her to come see him.   |
| 34. He recognizes Suresh's sister Susheela.      | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity                           |                              | He said, "Susheela <i>Gigi</i> [sister]." His own he does not call by this kin term but by name only. The informant was not a witness to this, and I failed to check this with the first-hand witnesses of this item. |

(continued)

|     |   |                              |                           |   |
|-----|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
|     | "Guloo's father,"<br>and "Guloo's<br>mother."   |                              |                           | relatives. Titu used the same method to refer to<br>and address his siblings. After meeting Suresh's<br>family, Titu wanted to go home with them. He<br>threw his shoes at his mother, saying, "You are<br>not my mother."  |
| 36. | He notes "his"<br>eldest sister is not<br>present.                                      | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity    | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity | This occurred later the same day when Suresh's two<br>younger sisters came to visit and Titu's mother<br>asked him which was the eldest. Suresh's father is<br>a second hand witness to this. Confirmation from<br>the primary witnesses has not yet been sought. |
| 37. | He insisted on<br>"going home."   | Raja Babu Verme              |                           | There is some confusion over whether Titu meant<br>going to Suresh's own home or Suresh's parents'<br>home.   |
| 38. | He recognizes<br>Suresh Radio.  | Raja Babu Verme              | Raja Babu Verme           | Raja Babu took Titu first to his own radio/TV shop<br>and claimed it was Suresh Radio. Titu was<br>adamant it was not. When taken to Suresh Radio<br>he said it was his.  |
| 39. | He identifies a<br>TV.  | Mahesh Verme                 | Mahavir Singh             | Mahesh asked this as a test, confident that Titu<br>would not have seen one. His father confirmed<br>that he had not. Mahesh said Titu had to rack his<br>brain to come up with the name.   |
| 40. | He identifies a<br>showcase made<br>after Suresh's<br>death as not there<br>previously. | Uma Verme                    | Uma Verme                 | Titu asked who had it made.   |
| 41. | He identifies a<br>photograph of<br>Suresh as himself.                                  | Uma Verme<br>Raja Babu Verme | Uma Verme                 | The prominence of the photograph in Suresh Radio<br>might suggest its identity.   |



|  |   |                           |  |
|--|---|---------------------------|--|
| 42. He identified the cash drawer.                 | Uma Verme<br>Mr. Raju, manager of<br>Suresh Radio<br>Raja Babu Verme<br>Raja Babu Verme | Uma Verme                 | When asked, "What is <b>this</b> ?" Titu answered correctly. The drawer looks like all the other drawers behind the counter.   |
| 43. He insisted on taking a transistor radio home. | Raja Babu Verme<br>Raja Babu Verme  |                           | His choice of the most expensive was construed as showing his continued knowledge of these matters. Titu had not seen such an item before, according to his father. This could have been a chance choice, or based on what was most attractive of the radios to any young child, however.  |
| 44. He said Suresh's parents' home is not his.     | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity   | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity | Mahesh Verme interpreted this statement to mean that Titu did not recognize Suresh's parental home. Suresh's parents interpret it to mean it is not Suresh's own home. Given that Titu had described Suresh's home earlier that day, it is likely that he expected to be taken there. Chanda Babu Singh Bharity and Titu recognized the parental home. Suresh's mother heard him say he had a different home. Suresh was the only son to have a separate house [ <i>kothi</i> ]. Titu's attachment to Suresh's parents was demonstrated by his telling Chanda Babu Singh Bharity that he was his only father, and resisting being taken home by his own father, whose shirt he tore. Titu told Suresh's mother, "I am just passing through with these people who have no TV, car, video. I will come back to you." |
| 45. He recognized one of Suresh's sons.            | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity   | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity | Suresh's two children were assembled with a group of other children to see if he would recognize them. This was a month and a half after the first meeting, so it is possible that Titu had seen a picture of them. He said, "You have not said <i>namastay</i> [greeted] me," to the elder son.   |

(continued)

TABLE 3 (continued)

| Item  | Informants                | Verification                      | Comments  |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 46. He said what happened to the money he had with him at the time he was murdered. | Chanda Babu Singh Bharity | Uma Verme (verification of money) | Titu said a policeman took the 15,000 rupees from the trunk of the car. This has not been verified. Whether Suresh was still conscious when the police arrived is not clear.  |
| 47. He said there are twelve Ashok trees at "his" home.                             | Mahavir Singh             | Mahavir Singh                     | Titu demanded that his parents take him there. I accompanied him a second time but failed to count the number of Ashok trees.   |
| 48. He recognized an old friend of Suresh's, Ashok Kumar.                           | Raja Babu Verme           | Raja Babu Verme                   | This friend had been out of town until 1987, when he came to see Titu. Titu asked what happened to the fans he had installed in his car. Raja Babu Verme recalled that Suresh had done so. This occurred when Titu was riding in a taxi with me, of the Ambassador make. Titu apparently thought this was Ashok Kumar's car, which was an Ambassador. |
| 49. He said one of the bullets hit the steering wheel.                              | In my presence            | Not confirmed                     | Rajvir Verme checked the car for bullets after the murder, and said the steering wheel was not hit. Uma heard two shots, however.   |

|   |                |                 |  |
|---|----------------|-----------------|--|
| 50. He said he went to Mahesh's wedding in Kanpur by car.                             | In my presence | Mahesh Verme    | This was in response to Mahesh's questioning in the summer of 1987. Titu could have learned this normally by then.   |
| 51. He slapped stool in Suresh Radio upon entering and leaving.                       | In my presence | Raja Babu Singh | This "macho" gesture was characteristic of Suresh, according to Raja Babu Singh.   |
| 52. He went swiftly by himself to the second floor of the shop and commended workman. | In my presence |                 | This was the first time Titu had gone upstairs in Suresh Radio. He did so spontaneously, without seeing anyone else do so, as if he knew what he was doing. The existence of a second floor was not obvious. |
| 53. He said there was a pole on the roof of his house.                                | In my presence | Uma Verme       | This had held a TV antenna. This was on his second trip to Suresh's house.   |
| 54. He said he had buried a gold belt under the tallest Ashok tree at "his" house.    | In my presence | Unverified      | Uma Verme did not think this likely enough to check. Titu sized up which tree it would be shrewdly.  |



**Fig. 1.** Birthmark on the skull of Titu which corresponds to the bullet entry site as described in Suresh Verme's postmortem report.

the mode of death was violent (Cook, Pasricha, Samararatne, U Win Maung, & Stevenson, 1983).

Suresh's family and Titu's family are not related but of the same caste. The name of the father of the accused murderer is the same as Titu's father. Both families are from the same general area and caste. This caused the Verme family to suspect (illogically) that Titu's family had fabricated the case to save their relative from conviction. Mahesh Verme, the brother to whom Titu did not speak at the initial meeting, was particularly suspicious. To date Titu had passed the tests Mahesh and his family have set up. For example, when Suresh's sons first returned home from the boarding school they attend in Dehra Dun (after the meeting between the Vermes and Titu),



Fig. 2. Birthmark on the skull of Titu which corresponds to the bullet exit site as described in Suresh Verme's postmortem report.

they were placed amidst a group of other children in Chanda Singh Bharity's home, and Titu was brought there. Titu went to Suresh's eldest son and said, "Why did you not say namastay [the polite and correct greeting] to me?" The family felt satisfied that Titu had recognized him.

During the course of our investigation, when we took Titu to Mahesh's shop Titu called him by name, which he could easily have learned to do by normal means. When a pleased and startled Mahesh asked Titu where his (Mahesh's) wedding had been ("Lucknow, Kanpur, Mathura?"), Titu correctly answered, "Kanpur." Asked whether he had gone Titu said he had. Asked how he had gone, Titu said, "By car." However, as with the recognition of Suresh's son, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that Titu could have this information through normal means.

Titu had insisted that his parents take him to Suresh's house (kothi), which Uma Verme is currently renting out. The tenants allowed him to come inside, where Titu described having had a particular cabinet made. He also insisted that he had buried a gold belt under a particular tree, a state-

ment which has not been verified (see Table 3). In January 1989, I took Titu to this house in the company of Uma Verme and her sons. Again Titu claimed he had buried a gold belt under a particular tree which he pointed out. He also went on the roof and commented that there used to be a pole there (now absent), which Uma verified. However, the other statements he made incorporated information he has learned through normal means since meeting the Verme family.

The Vermes note the similarity of temperament of Titu and Suresh: both are highly active, intrepid and hot-tempered individuals. I observed these qualities in Titu, who beat a boy as hard as he could with a sugar cane frond because he was annoyed at the crowd that had gathered when I wanted to photograph him. When we took Titu to Suresh Radio, Titu gave a stool inside the shop a resounding smack as he entered, a very "macho" gesture. Hearing music from upstairs, he went directly to the back of the shop and up the back stairs to a room above the shop where a worker was repairing a tape recorder, and said in the manner of a proprietor, "He is doing good work." Going back downstairs he brushed aside an offer to help him down the steep stairs and as we left, again gave the stool a resounding slap. Querying Suresh's brothers later, we were told this was a common gesture of Suresh's.

Later that day, Titu grew furious when it was time for him and his father to leave the taxi in which we had brought them to Suresh Radio and resume their travels on Mahavir Singh's motor scooter. Titu threw something at his father and tried to pull away from his grip as hard as he could. Another day at his home, Titu told the bangle seller whom his mother had called to fit bangles on my wrist, "I will shoot you if you charge them. I will kick you out of the courtyard."

Suresh's father said that Suresh was not afraid to fight. In 1975 eight *goonda* or "hit men" took Suresh and put him in their car. He kicked one and jumped through the window into the river, swam across and came out the other side, thus escaping. Within the year before his murder, Suresh went to recover two cars presumably stolen by the same man who had previously stolen his car (the man later accused of Suresh's murder). Suresh was fired upon but jumped from the car and caught one of the gunmen by the neck.

On my return trips in 1988 and 1989, Titu was still intensely identifying himself as Suresh. For example, two days before I returned to Agra in July 1988, Titu had insisted that his parents take him to the home of Chanda Babu Singh Bharity, Suresh's father. When they arrived Titu discovered that Chanda Babu Singh Bharity was sick, and gave orders for a doctor to be fetched and medicine administered.

When I returned in January 1989, Titu's father expressed concern about possible trouble if Titu persists in thinking he is entitled to Suresh's property as he grows older. I tried to reassure him by pointing out that Stevenson has found that children with apparent past-life memories seem to forget them by the time they are 7 or 8. Titu fairly shouted, "*I will not forget!*" Titu was

presumably 6 at the time. Although, as noted above, his statements may now incorporate information he has acquired since the two families have met, Suresh's family continues to be amazed at the knowledge Titu displays of Suresh's affairs.

*Evaluation of the Paranormal Features of the Case.* Titu made 15 verified statements or acts before meeting the Vermes, and 31 since (although some may contain information he has learned normally). One of these 31 statements is apparently incorrect: Titu said a second bullet hit the steering wheel. While Uma Verme heard two shots, Suresh Verme's eldest brother says he carefully examined the car after his brother's death, searching for the fatal bullet, and did not notice any sign of the steering wheel having been hit. Titu has correctly identified 10 people and four locations. Items 40, 46, 49 and 52 in Table 3 have not been verified.

The most discrepant piece of information in this case is the date of birth of Titu and the date of death of Suresh. If Titu was born December 11, 1982, the date given in the hospital register for the birth of a son of Titu's father's military friend, then he was born 8 months and 17 days before Suresh Verme was murdered. While there are cases on record of *Prakash Pravesh*, or the entry of the soul of a deceased person into the body of someone just dead (Stevenson, 1974), and of *Prakaya Pravesh*, or the entry of a soul into someone still alive (Stevenson & Pasricha, 1979), the entry of Suresh into Titu when Titu was a small child would not explain the existence of the mark Titu bore from birth which corresponds to the entry and exit of the fatal bullet, unless one posited some sort of complex preknowledge or foreshadowing of Suresh's murder and Suresh's entry into Titu, or chance coincidence. If Titu was born in December 1983, as his father told me, he was born 4 months after the death of Suresh.<sup>3</sup> Unaware of the uncertainty about the interval, Titu and Suresh's families and the Indian press have assumed that this is a simple case of reincarnation.

Prior to their meeting in April 1987 the two families had not known each other, as evidenced by the Verme party going initially to the wrong Bad. However, we cannot rule out the possibility of Titu's parents hearing about the murder. Nardev Singh, a man from the village of Bad, was a friend of Suresh's. Titu's mother thought Suresh might have known some advocates who are related to them. While Titu's father did not recall hearing of Suresh's murder, he commonly reads the local newspapers. I checked one of the papers he often reads and found it carried stories about Suresh's murder for 3 days running after Suresh's death. However, the papers did not include a list of Suresh's next of kin, and only included the information contained in items 2, 11, 13, 15 and 27 of Table 3. It is highly unlikely that the slight acquaintances of Suresh's who lived in his village knew the rest of the information Titu gave. Moreover, cryptomnesia would not explain the specificity of the correspondence of the two birthmarks, noted at Titu's birth, to the entry and exit sites of the bullet that claimed Suresh's life.

### Discussion

I have presented the data from 3 cases in some detail to assist the reader to make his or her own evaluation of the nature of the evidence. I draw on the experience of studying the additional cases in assessing the evidence for reincarnation or alternate interpretations of cases. Table 4 compares the 10 cases under discussion with the larger body of cases in India studied by Stevenson on a number of different features. The directions in my smaller sample cannot be expected to be as accurate as in a larger sample. Eventually the cases I have studied will be included in the files at the Division of Personality Studies and used for further analysis.

The question is whether the cases represent evidence that something paranormal is taking place or whether the cases are the result of conscious deceit (fraud), or unconscious self-deception and/or cultural construction. Infrequent cases of deception and self-deception have been reported by Stevenson, Pasricha and Samararatne (1988).

#### *The Accuracy of the Information: The Evidence for Conscious Deceit*

Before undertaking this investigation in India, I was prepared to find that some, perhaps all, of the cases I would investigate would be hoaxes perpetrated for any number of reasons by the participants, such as a desire of the child and/or its family to identify with a higher caste. This was my first experience in a caste society. The investigations did not substantiate these suppositions.

As Table 4 shows, in 3 of the 10 cases studied the subject was born into humbler circumstances (called Demotion in Table 4) or lower caste than the previous personality. Three of the cases showed no substantial caste or socioeconomic difference (called No Change in Table 4), while in 4 of the cases the child was born in a higher caste than the previous personality (called Promotion in Table 4). In Stevenson's Indian sample for which the relevant analysis has been made, one-third of the cases in which there was promotion or demotion recall worse material conditions, while two-thirds recall better conditions (1987, p. 215). Analysis of social status change for the larger body of cases from India will be useful, as well as its relationship to whether the previous personality was known or unknown.

In one of the cases in which the child was from a humbler caste, I entertained some question about motive because discrepant accounts of one important event suggested that two informants were misrepresenting the event, or one very elderly informant had incorrectly remembered it. In December 1989 I was able to gather further data on this complex case. I am now confident that this is not a case of conscious deceit, but a case in which there is unconscious construction on a larger scale than in the other cases I have studied. I hope to do justice to the complexity of the case in a separate report.<sup>4</sup>



TABLE 4  
Comparisons of features of cases of the reincarnation type in Stevenson's  
sample from India and in Mills' replication study

|                          | Sex of Subject                          |   | Percent Solved Cases                |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|
|                          | Related                                 | Acquainted                              | Unknown                             |
| Mills                    | 60% male<br><i>N</i> = 10               |   | 100%<br><i>N</i> = 10               |
| Stevenson                | 64% male<br><i>N</i> = 271 <sup>1</sup> |   | 77%<br><i>N</i> = 266 <sup>1</sup>  |
|                          | Related                                 | Acquainted                              | Unknown                             |
| Mills                    | 0%<br><i>N</i> = 10                     | 50%<br><i>N</i> = 10                    | 50%<br><i>N</i> = 10                |
| Stevenson                | 16%<br><i>N</i> = 183 <sup>1</sup>      | 41%<br><i>N</i> = 183 <sup>1</sup>      | 43%<br><i>N</i> = 183 <sup>1</sup>  |
| Social Status Comparison |   |   |                                     |
|                          | Promotion                               | Demotion                                | No Change                           |
| Mills                    | 40%<br><i>N</i> = 10                    | 30%<br><i>N</i> = 10                    | 30%<br><i>N</i> = 10                |
| Stevenson                | 28.6%<br><i>N</i> = 42 <sup>2</sup>     | 45.2%<br><i>N</i> = 42 <sup>2</sup>     | 26.2%<br><i>N</i> = 42 <sup>2</sup> |
|                          | Violent Mode of Death<br>(Solved Cases) | Recalls Mode of Death<br>(Solved Cases) | Phobia Related<br>to Death          |
| Mills                    | 70%<br><i>N</i> = 10                    | 60%<br><i>N</i> = 10                    | 20%<br><i>N</i> = 10                |
| Stevenson                | 53%<br><i>N</i> = 164 <sup>1</sup>      | 77%<br><i>N</i> = 172 <sup>1</sup>      | 26%<br><i>N</i> = 91 <sup>1</sup>   |

<sup>1</sup> (Cook, Pasricha, Samararatne, U Win Maung, & Stevenson, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> (Pasricha, 1978).

*Consistency and Accuracy of Statements.* In the other cases, I noted some minor discrepancies in the different eyewitness accounts of meetings and recognitions depending on what the person had happened to actually hear. I also noted that one informant attributed a statement to a subject which incorporated information learned only after meeting the previous personality's family, and some tendency to accept as evidence statements made after an obvious information flow had occurred. However, I found no indication that the witnesses had fabricated the information itself.

Indeed, like Yuille and Cutshall (1986), I found that cross-referencing numerous independent accounts indicated the testimony was generally consistent and accurate. Like Freeman, Romney and Freeman (1987), I found that informants who had witnessed a single meeting were better able

to provide a clear picture of that single event than people who had witnessed numerous meetings, whose reportage tended to blend information about the discrete meetings into a composite description. With the exception noted above, the various accounts were consistent rather than contradictory.

I found that minor inaccuracies sometimes occurred in estimations of the child's age when he or she said particular things, particularly if there had been a considerable lapse of time since the events took place. Table 1 records some of the differences in estimates of the age at which Reena said or did certain things. The inability to pinpoint the correct chronology is particularly significant in the (relatively rare) instances when parents are not sure if an event took place before or after the case was solved, at which time the child and his or her family learned additional information about the previous personality. The implicit assumption that the cases are examples of reincarnation raises the question of unconscious self-deception.

### *The Evidence for Unconscious Self-Deception*

The category of unconscious self-deception, as I see it, includes several alternative explanations: imposition or adoption of an alternate personality in response to serious pathology in the family, analogous to Multiple Personality Disorder; the adoption of an alternate identity without serious pathology; or misdiagnosis of normal fantasy on the part of the child in conformity with the culturally accepted category of reincarnation. When the previous personality was unknown to the child and his or her family before the case was "solved," these latter two explanations rest on the assumption that the discovery of someone that fits the subject's description is a question of coincidence and cultural construction.

*Unconscious Construction Hypothesis I: Adoption of an Alternate Personality in Response to Complex Family Dynamics.* Krippner (1987) has noted the similarities of some Brazilian subjects in cases said to be of the reincarnation type with North American persons suffering from dissociative tendencies. In Brazil, where the concept of reincarnation has been incorporated into spiritism, intrusive or alternate personalities are diagnosed by some practitioners as past-life personalities which the individual has not accepted or incorporated. (This differs from the cases, also reported in Brazil, in which children appear to remember previous lives without manifesting any pathology.) One may ask if cases reputed to be of reincarnation are, in fact, instances of the adoption of an alternate personality for reasons analogous to the etiology of Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD). Diagnosis of cases of this latter phenomena have been increasing in Western countries over the past half century (cf. Coons, Bowman, & Milstein, 1988; Greaves, 1980). Kenny (1986) sees MPD as a metaphor for American culture, analogous to cases diagnosed as spirit possession in other cultures (Kenny, 1981).

In cases of Multiple Personality Disorder the individual at times manifests one or more separate and quite different personalities, about which the main

or presenting personality has no conscious memory. A precipitating factor in the etiology of Multiple Personality Disorder appears to be a splitting of the personality in response to childhood abuse (DSM-111-R, 1986). In some instances the split in personality begins in childhood, and may be enacted as an imaginary companion who has the ability to deal with distressing situations in a way the primary personality cannot (Congdon, Hain, & Stevenson, 1961; Hilgard, 1977).

None of the cases of children said to have past-life memories which I investigated appeared to fit within the category of Multiple Personality Disorder. I found no evidence of pathology on the part of the subject or their families. Despite the anomaly of the subject's conviction that he or she was and still is someone else and, in some instances, his or her precocity, all the subjects seemed to be normal, integrated individuals. There was no evidence that they had adopted the conviction that they belonged to another family because they were covertly or overtly rejected by their parents or other family members, or had formed a defensive personality to cope with disturbing material or abuse as in Multiple Personality Disorder.

Indeed, one of the most salient features of the cases was the consistency of the apparent past-life and present-life personality. The children did not manifest two separate personalities. Although recollections of apparent past lives sometimes caused some of the children to become pensive, they consistently manifested a single personality without amnesia for any segments of that personality. The distinctive features of the personality typically were manifest before the case was solved, and the child and his or her family had an information about the nature of the previous personality. In the 3 cases I have examined in which the subject has grown past the stage of consciously identifying with a particular deceased individual, the child's personality remains consistent with that exhibited earlier.

However, further questioning of the parents indicated that they tended to give preference to their child with past-life memories because of the distress the child experienced in believing that they belonged simultaneously in two different locations and with two different families. This raises the hypothesis that children may construct a previous-life identity in order to gain special attention, in the absence of serious pathology.

*Unconscious Construction Hypothesis II: Construction of a Previous Life to Gain Attention.* The hypothesis that children unconsciously develop what are interpreted as past-life memories seems to me to be counterindicated by four factors: (1) it presumes that a very young child is aware that indicating a past-life identity would give it positive attention; (2) it presumes that a child gets only positive reinforcement for claiming to remember previous lives; (3) it presumes that the distress the child feels at separation from the apparent past-life family is feigned; and (4) it does not account for the child's apparently accurate knowledge of people and places about which the child has no normal means of knowing. Like Hypothesis I, it again presumes that

the child is not getting adequate attention. I found no indication that the children were motivated by a need for compensatory attention.

I found that there was considerable variation in whether the child's case had received notoriety, and in fact brought the child public attention. Reena's case was never made public or published in any journals. Ashok Kumar has had other enquiries about his case but I am not aware that it has even been described in the Indian Press. Titu's case has been reported in at least three magazines in India, and has entered the public domain in Agra. Uma Verme reported that an Indian film company is considering making it into a movie. The reader will have to decide for him or herself whether Titu's identification is based on such press coverage.

If a young child thought that claiming to remember a previous life would gain additional solicitude from his or her parents, I doubt that a child would find it worth the trouble to try to maintain an alternate identity on the basis of the parents' response. The parents of the subjects I investigated could not be accused of desiring their child to have past-life memories or encouraging their expression. In all 10 cases, the families found it distressing to have a child claim to belong to another family and cry to be taken to that family. They wanted their child to relate to *them* as the parents. In addition, some of the parents were upset at finding they had a child who spoke from what was apparently a remembered past life because they thought children with past-life memories have died prematurely of violent causes and returned quickly to finish the unfinished business of the truncated life, after which they will again die.<sup>5</sup>

In 8 out of the 10 cases, the fear of losing the child to premature death or to the relatives of the past incarnation prompted the parents to take measures to make the child forget and/or cease speaking from the point of view of a past life (Reena and Titu were the exceptions). These measures included scolding, beating or cuffing the child, turning the child counterclockwise on a grinding stone in the hope of making the child forget, and having a pandit or priest recite mantras "to erase the past-life memories from the child's brain." While the parents hoped these measures would be effective and felt some relief in performing them, most parents found them initially ineffectual in causing the desired amnesia. In the cases in which the child is now over 9 years old, parents found that the child's memories faded when he or she became about 7 years old (and sometimes attributed this relief to the suppression measures administered much earlier).

*Unconscious Construction Hypothesis III: The Phenomenon of Children Who Appear to Remember Previous Lives as Artifact of Cultural Construction of Natural Childhood Fantasy.* If the phenomenon is not, as I conclude, the artifact of the great or minor pathological imposition of another personality, one may ask if it is the result of parents' interpretation of their child's natural fantasies as past-life recollections. Watkins and Watkins (1986) report that adults under hypnosis can adopt a convincing personality separate

from their usual presenting personality. Stevenson (1987) notes that hypnotically induced "past-life regressions" can often be demonstrated to be the result of fantasy because they do not accord with established historic fact. This indicates that the intensity and conviction with which a child claims to be someone else does not indicate that this is necessarily the case.

This raises the question of whether parents create the phenomenon by labeling the child's statements and behavior as an example of reincarnation. Having provided the child with the mental rubric of past-life recall, does the child elaborate more details, and come, with the parents, to believe implicitly in the fantasy creation, which the parents unconsciously bolster by acceptance of it as a valid past-life recollection? Psychologists (Festinger, 1957) and anthropologists (Fiske & Shweder, 1986; Shweder, 1980) have made telling studies of the impact of cultural expectation on the evaluation of ambiguous phenomena. Anthropologists and psychiatrists (cf. Angel & Thoits, 1987; Hughes, 1985; Kleinman, 1980; Obeyesekere, 1981; Torrey, 1986; Waxler, 1979, *inter alia*) have pointed out that non-Western peoples use different explanatory models which affect diagnosis and prognosis of symptomatology. This raises the question of whether, or to what extent, cases of the reincarnation type are a culture-bound syndrome.

There is no doubt that cultural interpretation played an important part in the development of the various stages of the cases I studied. These stages are the initial diagnosis of the case, the reaction to the case, and the search for and identification of a corresponding previous personality, the "recognitions" of people and places from the previous personality's setting, and the interpretation of further statements by the child.

Diagnosis: Typically, after an initial period when the young child's statements were given little importance, the child's continued revelations were interpreted by the parents as relating to a past life. A prior belief in reincarnation certainly facilitated the parents' interpretation of their child's anomalous statements in terms of reincarnation. For example, Reena's mother is unlikely to have interpreted Reena's enunciation of the word "groom" and lying down and holding her breath as an attempt to communicate about a previous life in the absence of believing previous life memories to be possible.

Reaction to the case: Even when the parents were distressed to think that their child was remembering a past life, and tried to stop the child from speaking in these terms, this interpretation provided a framework for interpreting further action and statements. In some cases I investigated (although none of the 3 presented here), the parents did a very careful job of eliciting further information from the child so that they could trace the previous personality, motivated by a desire to satisfy the child with some information that would assuage its crying to go to the former home as well as by curiosity. In these situations the parents often began to assume aspects of the projected previous personality. Even when the parents tried to ignore the child's claim to belong elsewhere, their assumption that their child was

talking about a past life manifests in their verbiage. For example, parents made no distinction in pronouns in referring to the child or the presumed previous personality, making statements like, "He remembers his home and brothers."

It is likely that providing the conceptual framework of reincarnation encourages the child to continue to manifest more apparent past-life recollections or identity (and that not providing such a framework inhibits the continuation of this phenomenon in cultures which do not believe in reincarnation).

*Solving of the case:* In a culture which did not employ the category of past-life recall, little effort would be made to solve such cases. If Reena was a Rachel in Kansas, her mother would have been unlikely to recall the man her 3-year-old said was her husband. If Titu was Tom in Chicago, his brother would be unlikely to seek out the radio shop Tom claimed to own. In North America an Ashok Kumar would be unlikely to get his brother to set off to find the town or village the 5-year-old said he was from.

*Recognitions:* The interpretation of the "recognitions" is an area where the importance of culturally constituted meanings is most evident. I did not witness any of the initial "recognitions," but it became apparent in hearing them described, that the participants were seldom concerned with, or exacting about, standards of evidence for paranormality. It is difficult to rule out the possibility that the child was given subtle (or even not so subtle) hints about who was supposed to be whom. In one instance (see p. 155), Ashok Kumar was explicitly prompted to recognize someone he did not initially. The definition of recognition used may vary. In India, Reena's retiring and covering her head with a cloth upon meeting Gompti Devi's mother-in-law was accepted as clear evidence of recognition. In North America it would not. In other words there are no universal cross-cultural signs of recognition. However, I do not mean to imply that all "recognitions" are worthless as evidence of paranormal phenomena. For example, there do not appear to have been any initial clues provided for Ashok Kumar's initial spontaneous recognition of Kishen Behari's mother.

*Interpretation of further statements by the child:* Once the case has been solved, information gained through normal means may be interpreted as further validation of paranormal knowledge by the participants. I have included the description Ashok Kumar gave of the cause of death as we left **Bandha** on his third visit, as an example of such a statement. Ashok Kumar had not described the mode of death before going to **Bandha**. The information corresponded to what we were told there. While it is possible that being in the place where the events took place stimulated his memory, one cannot rule out the possibility that Ashok Kumar had incorporated information he or his relatives had learned and retold in his hearing. Further, his mother had come to believe that Ashok Kumar's depiction of limping to his new home meant that the previous personality had died with an impaired leg. This presumption was confirmed by one informant but denied by others.

Ashok Kumar's mother gave numerous examples of her acceptance of her son as a reincarnation case, saying to him as we approached **Bandha**, "Tell your wife to give us water when we arrive," and so on. This does not, of course, detract from the evidence provided by the body of statements that were made before Ashok Kumar went to **Bandha**.

The strongest evidence for a paranormal process occurs in those cases in which the child and his family had no knowledge of the previous personality before they met. Half of the cases I studied fit into that category. However, it is often difficult to rule out the possibility that the subject or his or her family could have learned something about the previous personality and then forgotten that they knew it. As Table 4 shows, the 10 cases I studied do not represent the full variation of contact in Stevenson's larger Indian sample. None of the 10 cases included subjects who were related to the previous personality. The 3 cases described demonstrate a considerable range in the possibility of the child having learned some information through normal means about the previous personality. The case of Reena represents the greatest amount of contact; her parents were acquainted with the husband of the previous personality. I have coded the case of Titu as unknown, although there was contact between an acquaintance of Suresh and Titu's father. In the case of Ashok Kumar there was no prior contact.<sup>6</sup>

However, even in Reena's case, neither the colleague relationship between **Shyam Babu Yadev** and **Kripa Shanker Kulshreshtha** which occasioned the latter's awareness that **Shyam Babu's** wife had died, nor their living in the same general neighborhood accounts for the child, from the time she was first able to communicate, indicating that she had a husband and had died, or the intensity of her phobia of the cremation ground and of hypodermic needles. **Shyam Babu's** alacrity in remarrying 3 months after **Gompti Devi's** death contravenes the usual Hindu 1-year mourning period, and indicates his willingness to forget his past loss. Neither he nor his second wife could legitimately be suspected of willingly transmitting the information to Reena. The **Kulshreshtha** family had nothing to gain by establishing a link between their daughter and a dark complexioned wife of a backward caste colleague of her father's.

On a continuum from most to least contact, Titu's case falls towards the end of no contact. The two families did not know of each other, although Titu's father may have read of the murder or heard about it from an acquaintance of **Suresh's** who lives in Titu's village and forgotten it. Nonetheless it is difficult to explain why Titu would identify as the owner of **Suresh Radio** on the basis of these possible sources of communication. If a motive could be found, it would not explain the correspondence of Titu's birthmarks to bullet entry and exit site on the **Suresh**.

It has been suggested that in these instances it is mere coincidence that a person meeting the child's description actually exists. However, it exceeds the bounds of credibility to imagine that it is mere coincidence that there existed a man in a village of **Bandha** with a wife and five children who had

been beaten by the police, as Ashok Kumar had said before going to the village; and that Ashok Kumar would insist on going to that village, be able to lead the way and once there recognize Kishen Behari's house and mother. In this case as in others, the spontaneity and familiarity with which the subject relates to the relatives of the previous personality belies prompting or molding of the child's behavior to fit any preconceived mold.

If some paranormal means of attaining the knowledge seems indicated, one must ask whether extrasensory perception offers a more compelling explanation than the reincarnation hypothesis. Reena's demonstration of extrasensory perception about four events suggests this alternative paranormal hypothesis.

There is evidence that Western children (as well as adults) sometimes seem to know and articulate others' thoughts without having been told them (Rhine, 1961). Children exhibit this property most often with a parent, that is, someone he or she knows intimately. Spontaneous telepathic impressions in adults are also typically between relatives (Stevenson, 1970). In Reena's case her parents knew something about the existence of a former wife of Shyam Babu Yadev. In Titu's case his father may have read or heard of the murder of Suresh Verme. However, in both these cases the information does not seem important enough or salient enough to the parent to explain the child's attachment to this particular person. It seems unlikely that the child would pick up the information from the unknown deceased individual's relatives. In Ashok Kumar's case the extrasensory perception hypothesis would rest on the presumption that Ashok Kumar was picking up on the thoughts of Kishen Behari's relatives in *Bandha*, whom he and his parents did not know existed.

Further, if some children can accurately pick up information contained in other's minds it would not account for the child's striking identification with one particular person. The ESP hypothesis would seem more credible if these children could accurately relate facts about a number of individuals unknown to them.<sup>7</sup> Three factors counterindicate the extrasensory perception interpretation. First, the specificity of information given by children in cases of the reincarnation type exceeds that in spontaneous childhood ESP. Second, in all the cases the target person with whom the child seems to be in extrasensory contact is a deceased previous personality. Third, extrasensory perception per se does not typically entail strong identification with or as the target person. The phenomena suggest that the consciousness of the deceased person at the time of his or her death has become partially accessible to the child.

### Conclusion

My examination of 10 cases of children who identified themselves as a deceased individual in India, 3 of which are described above, indicates that an independent investigator, using Stevenson's methods of investigation, finds comparable results. Some aspects of some of these cases cannot be



explained by normal means. I found no evidence that the cases I studied are the result of fraud or fantasy or could be explained on the basis of projection or assumption of an alternate identity in response to complex family dynamics. While the cultural acceptance of the concept of reincarnation and the category of children remembering a past life influenced the parents' interpretation of the child's behavior, it cannot be credited with causing all aspects of its occurrence, such as the high degree of accuracy of the statements these children make about an actual deceased person when that person is unknown to them and their relatives. The alternate normal explanations rest on the presumption that the existence of a previous personality fitting the child's description is a product of coincidence. The consistency and similarity of the child's personality with the personality reported for the previous personality is also significant. In the cases where there are striking birthmarks on the subject which relate to wounds on the previous personality or phobias related to the mode of death, the possibility of coincidence diminishes even further.

Like Stevenson I conclude that while none of the cases I studied (or the 3 cases cited) offer incontrovertible proof of reincarnation or some related paranormal process, they are part of the growing body of cases for which normal explanations do not seem to do justice to the data. The implications of these cases for understanding human psychology are sufficiently major to warrant further careful studies of such cases. We should be beware of the tendency to discount the evidence these cases present because the concepts of paranormal phenomena in general and reincarnation in particular are not a part of the Western scientific cultural construction. This replication study indicates that there is enough data inexplicable by normal means to warrant further investigation of children who claim to remember previous lives, and to suggest that such cases offer evidence of the survival of some element of the human personality after death.

Further studies of cases in India, should, whenever possible, concentrate on cases which offer the most telling evidence about whether some paranormal feature is involved. These are cases in which the child and his family did not know the previous personality and cases which are as yet unsolved, or in which a written record has been made of the child's statements before verification of the existence of such a person is made.

Further studies are indicated to further refine Stevenson's work on the interaction of specific cultural beliefs and the parameters of cases. I would recommend studying imaginative childhood identities of Western children to assess the similarity of what is considered "natural fantasy" in Western children to the alternate identities of children said to remember past lives in cultures that believe in the concept of reincarnation.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I am following Stevenson's usage of the term "previous personality" to refer to the deceased person of whom the child speaks.

<sup>2</sup> The subject recalls the murder of the previous personality. The alleged murderer and his family identified me and my assistants as undercover agents seeking information for the murder trial, and they threatened the child, his relatives, and the villagers with dire consequences if they should talk about the case. In addition, we were not able to meet the mother or father of the child, since they were (or were said to be) absent from the village on our repeated visits. For less dramatic reasons we were sometimes unable to find all the witnesses I wanted to interview in other cases as well.

<sup>3</sup> The questions raised by this case show the importance of obtaining records wherever possible of birth and death dates. Unfortunately, births and deaths often go unrecorded in India. The interval between the death of the previous personality and the birth of the subject in most cases studied by Stevenson is greater than 9 months, but there are a number of cases in which the subject was conceived before the previous personality's death (Stevenson, 1986, 1987). Further enquiries regarding the registration of Titu's birthdate have not yet settled the question, but indicate that the person under whose name Shanti Devi was admitted may be fictitious.

<sup>4</sup> In the one case (the one in which I found accounts to be seriously inconsistent), the child's parents were convinced of the validity of the case, whereas the previous personality's father (who had not witnessed any meetings) was not. His reservations were based on hearing that the subject had called both the previous personality's uncle and brothers as uncles, and a sense that the interval between his daughter's death and the birth of the subject (7 years) was too long. Other people attributed his lack of endorsement of the case to be the result of reluctance to believe that his daughter would return in the businessman's class, as he is a Brahmin.

<sup>5</sup> Stevenson (1974) reports a similar fear among the Tlingit that children who remember past lives will live a short life. I have found that the Beaver, Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en native children of British Columbia, Canada, with such past-life memories are prized and called "special child" and are typically born to close relatives who are solaced by having a deeply mourned relative return. In this context such children seldom bother their parents to take them to an unknown and different home and set of relatives, although all three tribes diagnose the crying or illness of preverbal children as caused by the baby's distress at not having some prized object of the previous personality, or missing some of his or her associates (Mills, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> In the case with the greatest prior contact of the 10 I investigated, the subject became a frequent visitor to the home of the previous personality when about 2 years old, and made statements about the previous personality after contact was established. In the 2 cases with the least amount of contact in my sample, the subject and his relatives were unaware of the existence of the previous personality, who lived in another village, and the subject has not visited the village or home of the previous personality, although the relatives of the previous personality have visited the child at his or her home.

<sup>7</sup> Stevenson (1987) reports that intermediate or additional past lives are recalled by subjects of cases of the reincarnation type infrequently, and are usually unverifiable. One of the subjects in my sample claimed to recall one, unverified intermediate life.

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