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Category : [January 1991](#)

Published by Anonymous on Jan. 02, 1991

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Holland Conference Defines, Discourses - even Doubts - this Pan-Asian Belief from a PhD Perspective

No one blurted out regression confessions like, "I was Mirabhai's sadhu confidant," or "I remember being a Tibetan monk," or "I was Cleopatra's plotting maidservant."

The Symposium on Reincarnation, held November 10th in The Hague, was strictly cool brain vs. brain, scripture vs. scripture - and logicum cum laude.

About a hundred souls gathered for the full-day event sponsored by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Arya Samaj and Study-Group Hinduism Holland. After a prayer by Swami Brahma Deo Upadhyaya the scholarly panel began its exploratory surgery as 90 coffee-sipping participants listened eagerly.

Symposium chairman Dr. Gautam of the University of Leiden woke up any nappers in the audience with: "When we look at the Vedic period, we see that it is not clearly said that there is reincarnation; it is said that there is a place of bliss, or paradise [for those] who perform proper rituals."

Swami Upadhyaya begged to differ, positing that the Vedas do clearly propound the fact that souls take successive births. Like a schoolmaster, he drew his arguments on a blackboard and reasoned that if reincarnation didn't exist, identical twins should logically, be of identical natures - same genes, same chromosomes. That they have different natures is because they are different souls

with different past lives. "After death of the physical body, the astral body, causal body and soul are transmitted to another place" before taking another birth, he explained.

Mr. Santokhi of the Arya Samaj astutely summarized, "Reincarnation is a cornerstone of spiritual thinking among Hindus."

Mr. Hoogcarspel, a Buddhist philosopher, endeared himself to the crowd with a friendly confession that he really didn't know if reincarnation exists or not. He clarified that "Buddhism could not have arisen if the law of karma and reincarnation were not there, because Buddhism is a religion of salvation, salvation from reincarnation," samsara, the cycle of births.

Christianity's clear-cut rejection of reincarnation came succinctly from Dr. Kranenborg. His additional comments on karma were real eye-openers for many Hindus: "[For Christians], accepting the idea of karma would explicitly mean that man has to face the consequences of his own deeds."

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