

REINCARNATION

Karma Revealed, or Nearly

from our New York Correspondent

CAN an English girl find true happiness as an Indian in her next life? Dr Jamuna Prasad, who has been investigating this and five other cases of reincarnation, believes she cannot. In a talk to the American Society for Psychical Research in New York last week, Dr Prasad presented the findings of a study on how the earlier personality determines the personality of the reincarnation.

Dr Prasad, who is deputy director of education, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, India, and head of a parapsychology unit there, believes he has found that newly reborn children between the ages of two and five show strong memories of their previous life. When these memories are in strong disagreement with their present way of life—because of pressure from their new parents and their present socio-economic situation—conflicts emerge.

Is it only "the residues of personal experiences" or the entire personality that carry over into the new incarnation? To study this problem, Dr Prasad sent out teams to conduct personality trait questionnaires for both the past and the present incarnations. To control the study, a team of impartial judges was asked to match the past and present personalities. Their success rate was quite high, but since there were only six pairs of subjects, two of whom were girls, Dr Prasad admitted that it would not be difficult to match them by elimination.

In general, the degree of similarity between the two members of each pair was quite strong, except in one case where the first incarnation had such a passion for a certain type of gruel that he finally died of overeating; his reincarnation, naturally enough, could not stand the sight of it.

Unfortunately, since these tests were not carried out under the most rigorous and ideal conditions, the results are still open to some doubt. In the first place, in all but one case the two parts of each pair live or lived near each other so that the reincarnation was discovered first by the two families and their friends, who then called in Dr Prasad. The only exception was the case of the Indian girl who had lived in England in her previous life, and she was unable to recall enough specific details to enable the investigators to identify her previous incarnation.

Secondly, the first incarnations not being extant, their personality questionnaires had to be filled in by their relatives who, already having decided that their kinsman had been reincarnated, would tend to relate his character to that of his new incarnation. And thirdly, since specific likes and dislikes are often controlled by the social and physical environment and since all but two of the pairs came from similar backgrounds within the same area, it would be difficult to say on the basis of these tests alone that the similarities were due to reincarnation. Significantly the Indian girl who had previously lived in England could not adjust to her present life—she preferred meat to the diet of her present vegetarian family and missed eating with a knife and fork. Another boy who had previously been a Brahmin was reincarnated into a

lowly caste and was very unhappy, refusing to eat any food cooked by his new family.

Dr Prasad is anxious to carry out more extensive work, with more cases and follow-ups through adulthood. "There is a great need to enlarge the number of cases and improve the tools, for if we can understand these seemingly impossible cases, they may completely change our philosophy and our outlook on life."

Miscellaneous Intelligence

DESPITE the unfashionability of its trade, the Pentagon has apparently had no difficulty in recruiting all the scientists and engineers it needs this year. Indeed, the quality of scientific manpower has been improving, if degrees are anything to go by. More than 10 per cent of the scientists and engineers now employed by the Department of Defense hold PhDs, compared with 8 per cent two years ago.

"CLOAKED with dull invisibility, the House of Representatives has plodded along its disastrous course, largely unaffected by citizen outrage." So says Environmental Action, a movement which has drawn up a list of the twelve Congressmen whose defeat in the approaching elections would best improve the environment. To qualify for this list a Congressman must, among other tests, have demonstrated a singularly bad voting record on environmental matters. Curiously, no less than four of the "dirty dozen" are Republicans from Indiana.

EARTHQUAKES and the San Andreas fault permitting, the 180th meeting of the American Chemical Society will be held in San Francisco on August 24 to 29, 1980. The terrible compulsion that makes it necessary to plan the dates and sites of the society's six monthly jamborees a whole decade in advance is the Gargantuan size, beyond all modesty and proportion, to which these events have swelled. Admittedly only 8,500 delegates attended the meeting that was held at Chicago last week, compared with the usual turn-out of 12,000 to 14,000, possibly because travel grants are in shorter supply this year. But the delegates could listen to any of 2,049 papers, embodying the labours of some 4,000 individual authors. Doubtless the sum total of human knowledge is considerably added to on these occasions but the verbal pollution engendered by 2,000 papers every six months seems somehow excessive.

"EVEN though the rise of science might have something of the impact of a 'revelation' in sociological terms—that is, as a creation of evolutionary potential which is realized as the years go by—it is still a revelation which is very firmly embedded in human society and must be visualized as a phenomenon taking place, as far as we know, wholly within human society. We have to regard science as a 'phylum' (as the term is used by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin), that is, as an expanding movement within the four-dimensional space-time continuum of the social system." From an article in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* by Kenneth W. Boulding of the Institute of Behavioural Science at the University of Colorado.