

A decorative banner with a golden background and a dark border. It features the word "SHANTI" in a stylized, orange, serif font, flanked by two golden Om symbols (ॐ).

## - Romantic Reincarnation?

The unconventional storyline of Om shanti om featuring the rebirth of both the hero and the heroine – and its immense popularity – are strikingly indicative of the growing social acceptance of reincarnation. The pioneering efforts of rigorous researchers like Dr Ian Stevenson, Dr Brian Weiss and Dr Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, to name a few, have provided scientific evidence for afterlife. Moreover, many eminent personalities including US Presidents like Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, business magnates like Henry Ford, philosophers like Socrates and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and psychologists like Carl Jung have believed in reincarnation. Not only that, rebirth has always been a central theme in Vedic and Buddhist scriptures, as is quite well-known. Perhaps less known is the fact that reincarnation is explicitly mentioned in Judaeo-Christian and Islamic texts too.

Going back to om, its novel storyline - a frustrated romance being fulfilled in the next life - has mass appeal. But is this just a reel fantasy or is it a real possibility? The mechanism of reincarnation, as described in the Vedic literature, is a precise higher-dimensional science involving cosmic justice and divine sanction. We are spiritual beings, souls, temporarily inhabiting various bodies that are like dresses, as stated in Bhagavad-gita (2.22). Just as in this life we change dresses as per our likes and our budget, similarly at the end of life, we change our bodily dress, that is, transmigrate into new bodies, as per our individual desires and deeds, which are like our karmic budget. If we do good deeds, we get healthier, stronger and more attractive bodies in our next life. And the converse also holds true. In general, because all of us have different desires and perform different deeds, so normally we will all go in entirely different directions after this life.





Nonetheless, the longing for reunion with the beloved after rebirth has a spiritual fulfillment - there is indeed a divine realm where romance, reincarnation and reality intersect. As souls, our natural and eternal object of love is God, Krishna, who possesses in full all the qualities - beauty, wealth, knowledge, strength, fame and renunciation - that attract us to different people in this world. Krishna already loves us and is simply waiting in our own hearts for us to reciprocate with his love. So unlike in reel life, where one has to be a Kapoor, a Khanna or a Kumar to succeed, in real life, the only K that matters is of Krishna; if we make the right choice to love Krishna, then anyone and everyone can attain the highest spiritual success. The Bhagavad-gita (7.8) declares om to be a manifestation of God, Krishna. So, when we take shelter of Him by devotional service centered on chanting his holy names, then we can experience the ultimate shanti of divine love. In that shanti of divine love, we can "live happily ever after", because divine love conquers all obstacles -- even death. Our bodies will inevitably succumb to death, but we will not experience the traumatic rupture of relationships that befalls those who have restricted their love to only this world. Rather, death will free us from the bodily limitations that impede us in expressing and experiencing divine love. Further death will serve as the doorway to usher us into the kingdom of God, where we will delight in endless love with our beloved Krishna. Indeed the recurrent assertion in om "If you wholeheartedly desire something, then the entire creation starts endeavoring to assist you in that quest" becomes true specifically when that object is none other than the Lord of the creation and the original Lord of our heart, Krishna Himself. If om shanti reminds us of that glorious destiny which is our spiritual birthright, then it will go beyond providing fleeting entertainment to directing us towards everlasting enlightenment.

