

Past life regression is thriving business, with so many people lining up for therapy. Gargi Gupta takes the plunge to find out how and why this therapy is so popular

### Past life in books and TV

# MY DEEP DANK PAST

I am reclining on a lounge with past life regression therapist Blossom Furtado sitting on a chair across me. The 'therapy' began with a conversation to determine who I am, what I do, and whether I have the right 'energies' to handle the 'memories' that might be revealed of my past life/lives. A square chit of paper before her, Furtado takes detailed notes as I speak. Presumably I qualify, since shortly thereafter Furtado asks me to close my eyes and starts the breath-control exercises that precede hypnosis.

Furtado is a trained psychotherapist, has been practising past life regression since 2000, and runs the Hypno-therapy Institute of India, which has trained more than 2,000 hypnotherapists in eight Indian cities and one in Sri Lanka. Such is the demand these days for past life regression therapy, she says, that in Bangalore, where she was recently, she would begin the first session at 7am, with appointments for every hour through the day.

How does past life regression therapy work, I ask Furtado. "We must recognise that we work with the mind and the mind collects memories from the past past [ie, past life] as well as the current past [this life]. We use hypnosis to take patients into a deep state and then command them to go back to the first time they experienced the disturbing feelings," she replies. What is revealed this way is then "re-scripted", using "subtle" drama, to realign the memories so that they stop causing painful thoughts.

But then how does she know that the memory arises from some past life, and not this one, or even from the imagination? "We know," says Furtado, with finality.

It's not just one lifetime that her patients and their memories/problems hark back to; often they go back many lifetimes. "One patient came to us because she was having problems in her marriage and had filed for divorce. There was another person involved. During therapy, we found the memories originated in a past life when

she was an alien and had come to Earth in a spaceship. There had been an incident involving two other people — her husband and his lover in this lifetime — and she had blown up the spaceship." The knowledge of where her problems were coming from helped her to deal with it. Furtado says she's had patients who've gone back to past lives in pre-historic ages; or when they have been animals in an earlier birth, or even a stone.

A lot of cases Furtado gets have to do with relationship problems, and she's found that most have their origins in a past life where the same people, rather "consciousnesses" had been involved. So is it then, somewhat, like the Hindu belief in *saat janam ka bandhan*? Yes, Furtado agrees, referring to several cases to make her point. One involves a woman who felt an inexplicable sense of 'shame' about her body; under regression, it was found, that she had been a prostitute in a past life.

Some ailments that past life regression therapy claims to help

- Phobias
- Rashes
- Spondylitis and other pain
- Addiction
- Insomnia

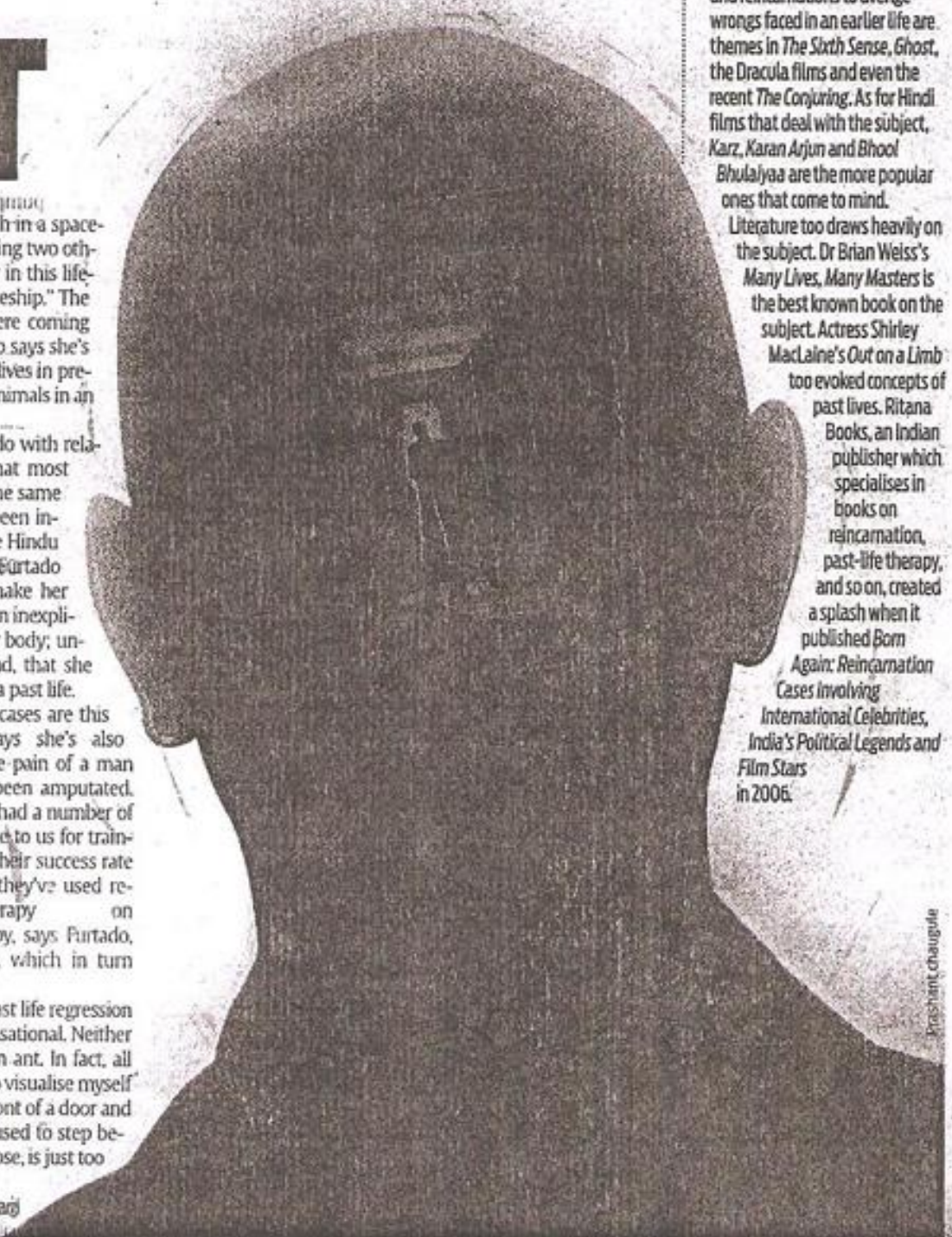
To be sure not all cases are this bizarre; Furtado says she's also helped alleviate the pain of a man whose wrist had been amputated. "Lately, we've also had a number of IVF specialists come to us for training. They say that their success rate has gone up after they've used regression therapy on patients." Such therapy, says Furtado, helps to relax patients, which in turn helps to induce conception.

As for my own session with past life regression therapy, the results were nothing as sensational. Neither was I an alien, nor a Neanderthal or an ant. In fact, all through Furtado's gentle exhortations to visualise myself above a staircase, go down it, stand in front of a door and go inside a room, my restless mind refused to step beyond this present life. This world, I suppose, is just too much with me.

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The paranormal genre is well developed in films, both American and Indian. Ghosts, near-death experiences, and reincarnations to avenge wrongs faced in an earlier life are themes in *The Sixth Sense*, *Ghost*, the *Dracula* films and even the recent *The Conjuring*. As for Hindi films that deal with the subject, *Karz*, *Karan Arjun* and *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* are the more popular ones that come to mind.

Literature too draws heavily on the subject. Dr Brian Weiss's *Many Lives, Many Masters* is the best known book on the subject. Actress Shirley MacLaine's *Out on a Limb* too evoked concepts of past lives. Ritana Books, an Indian publisher which specialises in books on reincarnation, past-life therapy, and so on, created a splash when it published *Born Again: Reincarnation Cases Involving International Celebrities, India's Political Legends and Film Stars* in 2006.



Prashant Chaugule