

Death, After-Life and Rebirth: Cultural Transfusion of Ideas

Diana Petkova
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”

Abstract

On the basis of a cross-cultural comparative analysis this paper studies the ideas of death and rebirth in two cultures – India and Bulgaria. The results of the empirical research show that there is a significant shift in the perception of religion in the two countries. In Hinduism the phenomenon of death is tightly intertwined with the concepts of karma and reincarnation. Although it has been an ancient tradition in India there are many people nowadays who do not share the belief in reincarnation. While in Bulgaria, where the Christian church has officially denied the existence of rebirth, this concept is not so unusual. Thus, in postmodernity there is a process of cultural transfusion of ideas, in which new beliefs are incorporated into old traditional systems. In this way, the old systems of thought are rejuvenated, so that individuals gain sense, meaning and purpose in their lives. The paper also investigates the interrelation between the concepts of fate/karma, on the one hand, and death, on the other. In outlining the postmodern thinking, the paper also introduces the concept of “cultural transfusion”, designating with this term the incorporation of new ideas into old belief systems without the latter to undergo significant or major transformations.

Keywords: after-life, rebirth, Bulgaria, India, cross-cultural study

Life-after-Death: Concepts and Ideas

What happens during and after death? For thousands of years philosophers and scientists have been pondering on this question. While even at present times they have not found a definite answer, all religious ideologies teach that during the process of death the core of the being, or the soul, does not die. According to the religions it is only the body that dies but the spirit continues to exist. After death the soul starts its journey into the unknown and vast universe of the non-material existence. However, while the narrative about life-after-death is universal, there are some differences in different cultures about what this after-life might be. In the traditional Christianity and Islam the after-life is depicted as “heaven” or “hell”, where the soul is paid off for its good deeds and punished for its sins. Thus, the belief in retribution becomes a central concept in both Christianity and Islam. Similar is the concept of karma in Hinduism and Buddhism. Life after death and next reincarnations are determined by the deeds of the individual. Whether good or bad acts, he is paid for all of them. In Hinduism and Buddhism reincarnation is one of the most important concepts. According to the belief in reincarnation after death the soul enters into a new body. The time spent without body between lives is usually not specified and depends mostly on the particular karma of the individual. In such a way, in Hinduism and Buddhism it is believed that every person has lived numerous lives.

The idea of rebirth is not unknown in the doctrines of Christianity and Islam. The Book of Revelation, also known as the Apocalypse of John, promises that at end times all the dead

bodies will be restored into life in the same way as Jesus Christ was resurrected to heaven. The concept of resurrection has, thus, become a central belief in Christianity. In one form or another, the idea of rebirth exists in all religious doctrines. Many scientists, too, have studied the process of dying and the possible existence of after-life. The psychologist Raymond Moody (1975) is one of the first scholars who investigate near-death experiences. On the basis of many interviews conducted he concludes that almost all people who have experienced clinical death report about life in a different time and space dimension. In fact the idea of life-after-death is one of the universal narratives from the antiquity to the present times and it does not depend on any racial, ethnic or cultural differences.

Spirituality and religious beliefs have not lost any significance today. On the contrary, there is a revival of the spiritual and religious consciousness. Despite the existing secularization in the Western countries, the empirical results of Norris and Inglehart (2004) show that the world as a whole has not become less religious. In contrast to the modernist European value of secularization, in the postmodern world there are more people with traditional religious views than ever before and they constitute a growing proportion of the world's population. The demographic thesis of Norris and Inglehart (2004) has been confirmed by many other studies (Diener, Tay and Myers 2011). Hayward and Kemmelmeier (2011), find out, too, that nations and states with more difficult life conditions are more likely to be highly religious, while in societies with more favorable circumstances religiosity is less prevalent. According to these studies the strength of religiousness depends on the social demographic characteristics of society as well as on its economic development.

Other studies focus on the psychological processes of adaptation and show that the adoption of religious or spiritual beliefs might be a response to the prevailing multiculturalism in society (Sarouglu 2010). In studying Turkish-Belgian adolescents, for example, Gungor, Bornstein and Phalet (2012) observe that they reaffirm their religion in the process of their acculturation to the new homeland. Moreover, Turkish-Belgian adolescents often put stronger accent on their religiousness than their counterparts in Turkey. For the young Turks in Belgium reaffirmation of their religiousness is equal to establishing individual and ethnic identity. The religious ideas are, thus, used as a tool in forging their unique personality. While traditionalism might be a response to multiculturalism, other individuals, in accommodating with the new cultural environment, develop totally new identities. This is a process of "creolization" (Hannerz 1992) or "hybridization" (Hall 1993, Pieterse 2004), in which migrants accept new concepts and beliefs, which intermingle with their old values to the point of a creation of a totally new cultural construct.

The revival of spiritual ideas, such as life-after-death and rebirth, is a part of the individuals' quest for sense and meaning in the postmodern world. In this respect the Western interest in Hinduism and Buddhism has always been acute. Traditional Hinduism teaches that life and death are predestined. In Vedic astrology (Jyotish) the particular sequences of the events in one's life can be judged by the individual's kundli, or natal birth chart (horoscope). Even nowadays it is believed in India that a good astrologer can predict with accuracy the exact time of one's death on the basis of their kundli and the current planetary transits. It is believed also that knowledgeable astrologers can provide information about past lives of individuals. Not just the time and conditions of death are prefixed according to the Hindu thought. In the traditional Indian culture life is measured by the number of breaths one can take. It is believed that an individual cannot live even a single breath or a second longer than what is predestined for them. In other words, nobody can choose the time or the conditions of their death. This is

valid for all the cases of death except for the suicide, which in Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as in Christianity, is considered a violation of God's or nature's laws and is condemned as one of the biggest sins.

The techniques of Vedic astrology (Jyotish) and the concept of karma have attracted many Western scientists to do research and ponder on them. Scholars, such as Max Muller, K.G. Jung, and David Frawley, have studied the Hindu thought and spiritual ideas in details. The meeting of K.G. Jung during his trip to India with one of the most famous Indian astrologers of the 20th century, B.V. Raman, is memorable for both of them. It is followed by an intense correspondence between the two. K.G. Jung writes about the meeting with Raman in his "Autobiography". Later, the astrological knowledge acquired in India is used by Jung as a foundation of his theory of synchronicity (Jung 1960, 2018). B.V. Raman (1991), too, mentions the meeting with K.G. Jung in his book "How to Judge Horoscope" as an evidence of the Western interest in Vedic astrology.

Contemporary research data show that a significant minority of Westerners believe in reincarnation. According to the European Values Survey (EVS, 4th Wave 2008) a growing number of Europeans profess the idea of physical rebirth. For example, more than 1/4 of the population of the UK (27,8%) believes in reincarnation. If this tendency can easily be explained with the huge Hindu minority living on the territory of the UK, in the other European countries the reasons for the adoption of this belief are not so obvious. Thus, according to the EVS 28,8% of the people in Austria, 23,1% in Spain, 19,2% in Italy, 28% in Switzerland, 31% in Portugal, 18,4% in Germany and 22,6% in France believe in reincarnation. In countries, such as Latvia (41%), Lithuania (37,4%), Ukraine (37,1%) and Iceland (36,2%) the belief in physical rebirth is shared by a significant number of the population. Another representative study, ALLBUS, conducted only in Germany (from 1981 – to the present), has found out, too, that 22% of the contemporary Germans believe in reincarnation. Thus, the results received by the EVS and ALLBUS opinion polls raise many questions. If the European population is predominately Christian and the Christian church officially denies the phenomenon of physical rebirth, why are so many individuals attached to this concept?

There might be different hypotheses for the growing number of Europeans who accept the idea of reincarnation. The first one relates to the demographic characteristics of the Old continent. Europe becomes a melting pot of people with different ethnicities, religions and cultures and migrants already constitute a big minority. The second hypothesis relates to the principle of acculturation. There is a significant number of Europeans who follow ideologies other than the traditional Christian, such as the New Age, for example. This means that the process of acculturation is two-sided and mutual. Not only the migrants accommodate themselves to their new European homelands but the Europeans, too, broaden their vision and accept new teachings and beliefs. The third hypothesis underlines the importance of religious beliefs for the psychological well-being of individuals. In studying the reincarnation beliefs in the UK, Walter (2001) finds out that narratives about physical rebirth are used by individuals as a postmodern play and as a means to forge their personal identity. In the postmodern play of identity one can easily pretend or truly believe that they have been a historical figure from the past. In certain cases the border between true beliefs and pretensions are not clearly visible, which, in fact, is in full accordance with the ethics of postmodernism.

Whether a postmodern play or a play of consciousness, the belief in reincarnation has a strong impact on the individuals' self-concepts. Even in the cases when someone claims that they have been Cleopatra, Jeanne D'Arc or Queen Victoria the play of consciousness, and of

identities, is used as a technique for self-enhancement. With it the individuals underline their importance, uniqueness and prestige. The identification with somebody important from the historical past might thus serve as a tool to overcome the inferiority complex. However, in most of the other cases the idea of physical rebirth underlines an image of the true self that is eternal continuum beyond time, material destruction and death. In such a way, the belief in reincarnation refers, too, to multiple identities – the past selves merge into the present self that in turn will melt into the future selves of individuals. Moreover, this pluralism of identities relates to the universal principle of creation, as it is believed that one has lived many lives in different bodies, sexes, races and ethnicities and even in different living forms and entities.

Despite the varieties of the reincarnation narratives, their social psychological significance can be observed on two different levels: on the level of separate individuals and on the level of culture. Both on the individual and collective levels the belief in reincarnation may function as an ideological and psychological tool to deal with the fear of death and its consequences. Thus, this paper launches a fourth hypothesis about the significant rise of the reincarnation beliefs in contemporary European cultures. It states that there is a process of cultural transfusion of ideas, in which, in the same way as in the blood transfusion, new ideas or elements, taken from donor cultures are being incorporated into old systems of beliefs, so that the recipient culture regains its life and vitality. Moreover, in this process of cultural transfusion the old belief systems do not undergo major transformations or significant changes but they maintain their basic structure and organization. Thus, the new ideas implanted revive life and give new existence and viability to the old philosophies and worldviews.

The paper will further study the importance of life-after-death and rebirth in the cultures of India and Bulgaria. It will dwell on concepts, such as karma /destiny and free will that are tightly intertwined with the idea of death and rebirth. The cross-cultural comparison will also demonstrate the mechanisms of the cultural transfusion of ideas and its significance for both individuals and societies in contemporary times.

Death and Rebirth in Two Cultures: a Comparative Study

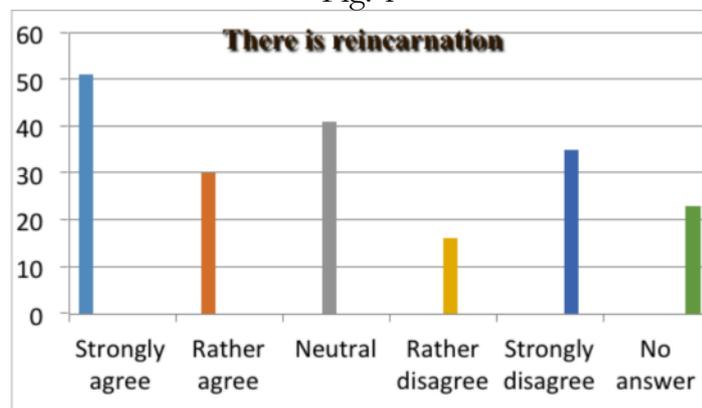
In India an empirical research with a written questionnaire was conducted in Food Corporation of India, a governmental company, where only top level managers and officers were interviewed. The survey included 196 Indian respondents coming from the sphere of businesses. This study cannot be representative of all the people in India. Rather, it represents only individuals from the intellectual and economic elite of the Asian country. The research in Bulgaria comprised 400 students from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky” and Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarsky”. Similarly, this study cannot represent the people in Bulgaria, because it focuses mostly on younger and more educated individuals.

In the two countries questionnaires with different questions were used, which makes the task of the cross-cultural comparison a challenging one. Some of the questions in the Indian questionnaire are not relevant for the Bulgarian respondents and vice versa. For example, questions about predictions in Vedic astrology would not be understood by most of the Bulgarian respondents and questions about some beliefs, typical of the Bulgarian culture, might not be clear for the Indian interviewees. Thus, in the two studies different questions have been asked and the data received is only used here to track the contemporary dynamics of ideas, spiritual beliefs and practices in the two countries.

The preliminary hypothesis of this study is that beliefs in karma and reincarnation would be so prevalent in India that (almost) everyone would adhere to them. However, this turns out not to be the case of India. Rather, such a supposition reflects the researcher's stereotypical assumptions about the country. In reality in the study in India the majority of the people who believe in karma and reincarnation belong to the cultural traditions of Hinduism. Informants, who determine themselves as "Christian" or "Muslim", claim that they do not profess these beliefs.

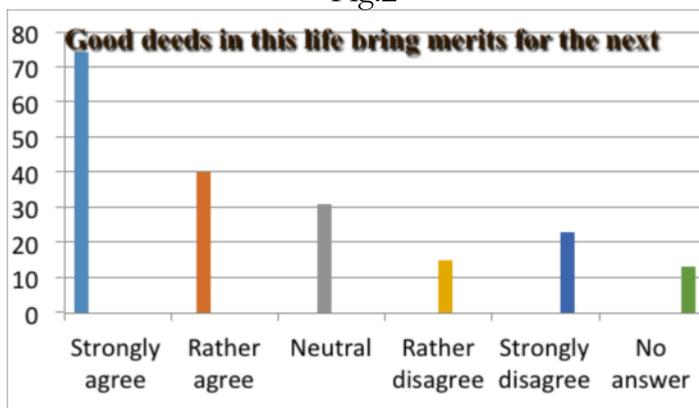
The questionnaire in India is structured as statements and answers using a Likert-type scale, and the respondents have to choose the answer that is the most appropriate for them. The questions are constructed according to some beliefs that have been found to be prevalent in the traditional Hindu culture. Question one states: "There is reincarnation and we have lived many times before". Out of 196 people 51 (26%) strongly agree with this statement, 30 (15,3%) agree to a certain extent, 41 (20,9%) choose the option "neutral", 16 (8,1%) rather disagree and 35 (17,8) strongly disagree. A considerable number of people, 23 (11,7%) have not left any response to this question (Fig.1).

Fig. 1



The results received from the answers to this question are a real surprise for the researcher. Less than 50% of the interviewed Indians claim that they believe in reincarnation. However, in the answers to the following questions some paradoxes can be outlined. The next statement is "Good deeds in this life-time bring merits for the next". 74 (37,7%) informants strongly agree with it, 40 (20,4%) rather agree, 31 (15,8%) have ticked the option "neutral", 15 (7,6%) rather disagree, 23 (11,7%) strongly disagree and 13 (6,6%) have not answered this question (Fig.2).

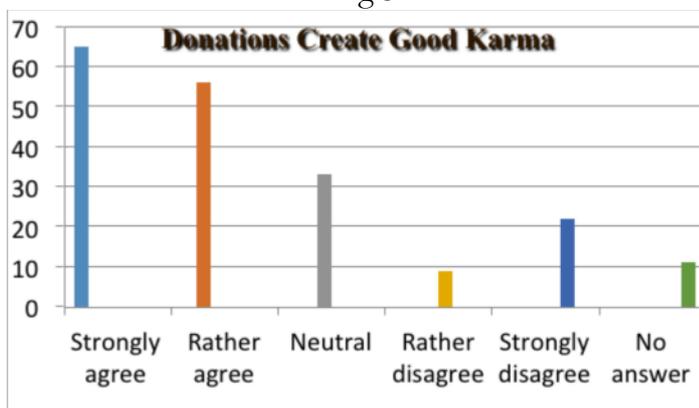
Fig.2



The answers to this question indicate that while a considerable number of the interviewed Indians explicitly disagree with the concept of reincarnation, many of them simultaneously agree with it implicitly. The answers to the next question, too, are a proof of this tendency in the Indian study.

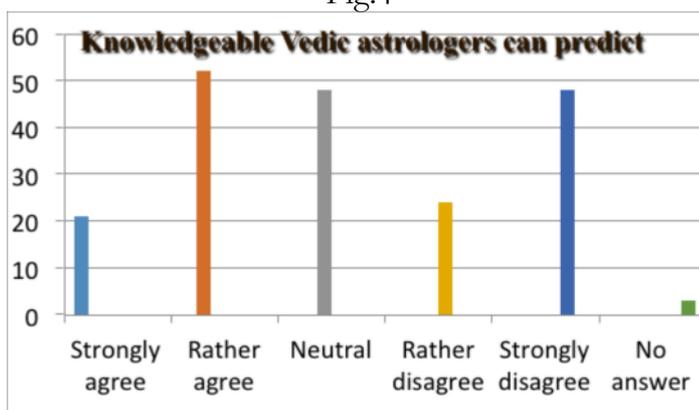
The next statement is: “Donations create good karma”. 65 (33,2%) respondents strongly agree with this statement, 56 (28,5%) rather agree, 33 (16,8%) have chosen “neutral”, 9 (4,5%) disagree and 22 (11,2%) strongly disagree. 11 (5,6%) respondents have not answered this question. Thus, the results show that the majority of the interviewed Indians believe, at least to some extent, in the concept of karma. (Fig.3)

Fig.3



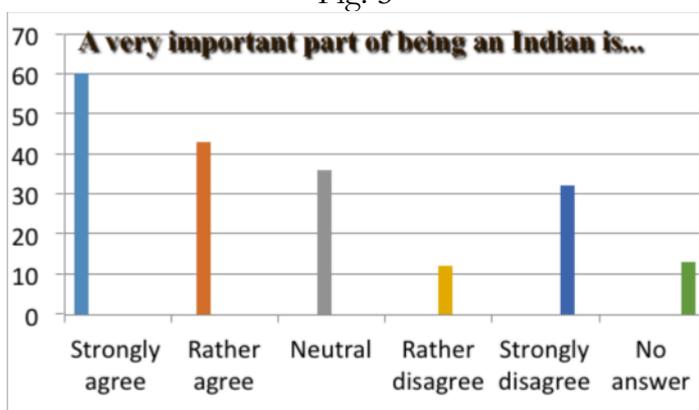
The following question tests to what extent Indians believe that life and death are predestined. It states “Knowledgeable Vedic astrologers can predict events accurately”. Only 21 (10,7%) informants strongly agree, 52 (26,5%) rather agree, 48 (24,4%) are neutral, 24 (12,2%) rather disagree and 48 (24,4%) strongly disagree. 3 (1,5%) informants have not left any answer to this question. The results show that a considerable number of respondents express doubt in the prediction of events. However, from the answers to only this question it does not become clear whether the informants place their doubt on the ideas of fate and prediction or on the abilities of the astrologers to foresee future events (Fig.4)

Fig.4



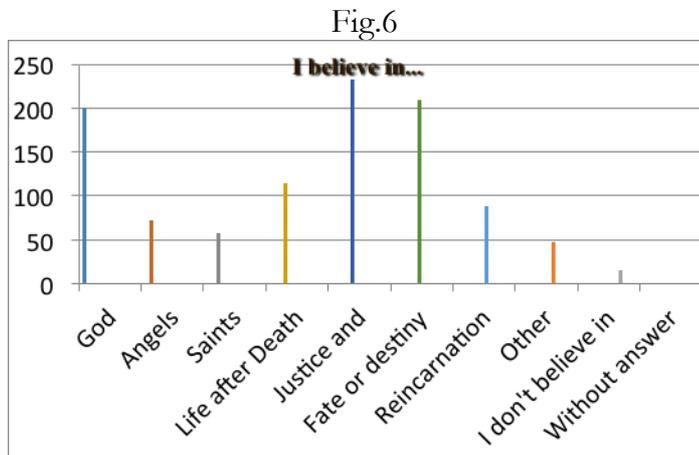
The next statement in the Indian questionnaire is: “A very important part of being an Indian is following one’s own religion. 60 (30,6%) respondents strongly agree with this statement, 43 (21,9%) rather agree, 36 (18,3%) have checked the “neutral” option, 12 (6,1%) rather disagree and 32 (16,3%) strongly disagree. 13 (6,6%) informants have not left any answer to this question. Thus, only about half of the Indian informants think that following the religious traditions is an essential element of the Indian culture (Fig. 5)

Fig. 5

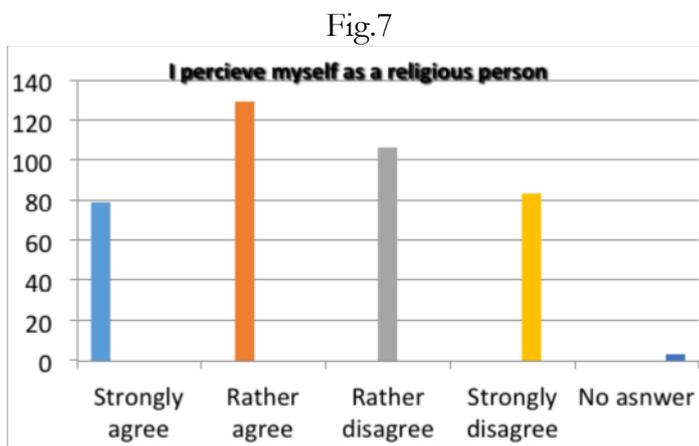


If the results in India are surprising, the received data in Bulgaria do not correspond to the preliminary expectations either. While a considerable number of Indian informants express explicit doubt in reincarnation, it turns out that it is not so unusual for Bulgarians to profess this belief. In the Bulgarian questionnaire the informants are asked what they personally believe in. The question is structured and the respondents have to choose between different options. Out of the 400 respondents 200 (50%) claim that they believe in God, 72 (18 %) believe in angels, 52 (13%) in the saints and 115 (28,7%) in life after death. A considerable majority – 233 (58,2%) claims that they believe in justice and retribution and 209 (52,2%) have chosen the option “fate or destiny”. 89 (22,2%) respondents also state that they believe in reincarnation. Only 16 informants (4%) claim that they do not believe in anything. 1 person (0,2%) has not answered this question and 47 (11,7%) have chosen the option “other”. They have also written they believe in: “oneself”, “energy”, “the Universe”, “nature” or “the supernatural”, “love”,

“the extra-terrestrials”, etc. The total sum of answers is more than 100% because many informants have chosen two or even three options (Fig.6).

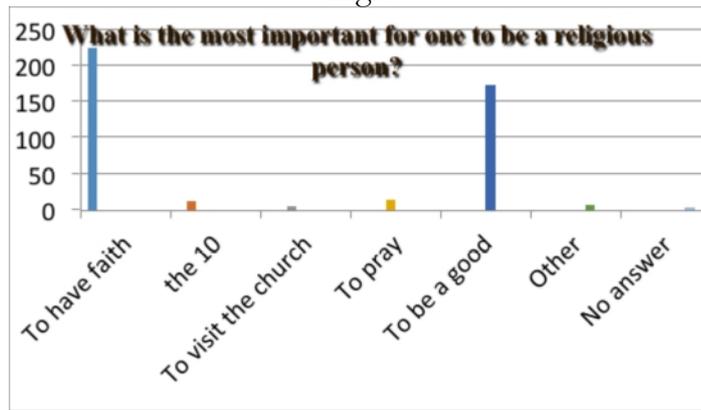


The next question in the Bulgarian questionnaire asks whether the respondent would agree with the statement that they are a religious person. 79 (19,7%) informants strongly agree with it, 129 (32,2%) rather agree, 106 (26,5%) rather disagree and 83 (20,7%) strongly disagree. 3 informants have not answered this question. This means that half of the Bulgarian respondents perceive themselves as religious persons. (Fig. 7).



The following question asks what is the most important for one to be a truly religious person. 223 (55,7%) respondents claim that for them to have faith is the most important and 172 (43%) informants state that the most important for them is to be a good person. 11 (2,7%) have chosen “to follow the 10 commandments”, and 14 (3,5%) – “to pray”. Only 5 (1,2%) people think that it is important to regularly visit the church. The respondents who have chosen the option “other” have written in the questionnaire that the most important for them is to “read the Bible”, to “believe in Jesus Christ”, “to be baptized”, etc. (Fig.8).

Fig.8



The last question that will be discussed here is included in both the Bulgarian and the Indian questionnaires. It consists of several statements and the informants have to choose which one of the statements is the most correct for them. This question aims to find out what the locus of control of the Indian and Bulgarian informants is. “Locus of control” is used as a term in psychology to indicate to what extent individuals believe they can control the events in their life. Strong interior locus of control corresponds to individuals’ conviction that their life depends entirely on them. In the opposite, strong exterior locus of control relates to the tendency of individuals to place the control outside of them and to think that there are other factors that mould their life.

In Bulgaria out of the 400 respondents 145 (36,2%) believe that they are fully responsible for all the successes and failures in their life. 136 (34%) have ticked the option “The majority of my successes and failures are due to me but there is some fate too”. 111 (27,7%) informants perceive their life as an equal mixture of efforts and fate and only 5 (1,2%) people believe that they have very little control on the events in their life. 3 (0,7%) respondents have not answered this question (Fig 9).

Out of the 196 informants in India 78 (39,7%) think that they are fully responsible for their successes and failures. 54 (27,5%) have chosen the statement “The majority of my successes and failures are due to me but there is some fate too”, 54 (27,5%) also claim that their life is an equal blend of efforts and fate and 18 (9,1%) state that everything that happens in their life is beyond their control (Fig.10).

Fig. 9

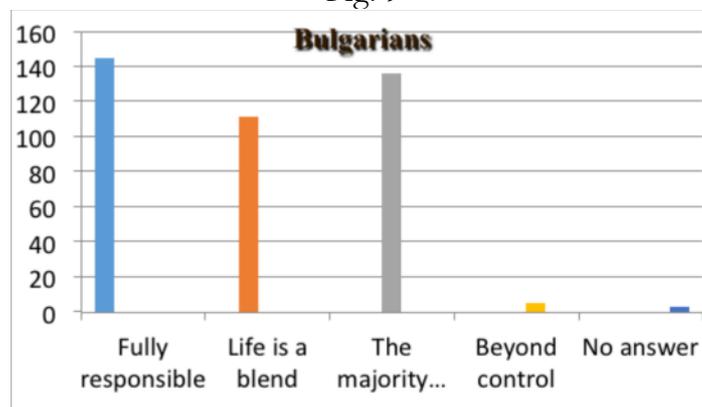
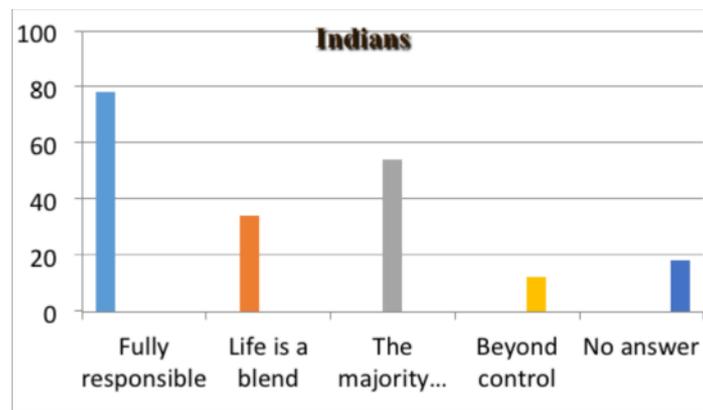


Fig.10



From the answers to this question it is evident that the majority of the Bulgarian and Indian respondents demonstrate interior locus of control that varies from strong interior to moderately interior. Simultaneously, in the two countries a significant number of people also think that fate or destiny has a certain role to play in their life.

Discussion

Although the results received in India and Bulgaria seem to be contradictory, in reality it is not so. Together with the individuals who stick to the traditional beliefs in the two countries, there is a bigger group of people who accept religion as cultural traditions and heritage, rather than as an attachment to a particular ideology or doctrine. Only about half of the Indian respondents state that following one's own religion is an essential part of the Indian culture. Similarly, half of the Bulgarian informants perceive themselves as religious, the other half claim that they are not religiously inclined. Also, the majority of the Bulgarian informants share the belief in justice and retribution. The latter might be taken as a concept from the Bible but in the context of the Bulgarian culture it functions mostly as a general guiding principle of ethics. At the same time very few Bulgarians claim that they do not believe in anything.

The data collected in Bulgaria shows interesting tendencies. While 50% of the Bulgarian respondents profess the Christian idea of God, the rest might perceive God as a kind of energy, power or supernatural presence, rather than as a religious figure or personality. So, together with those who cherish the traditional doctrine of the Orthodox church, there is another group of individuals who are open to different ideas. A proof of this tendency is the fact that among the Bulgarians more people believe in reincarnation than in saints or angels. This also means that some religious concepts of the church might have significantly eroded and that there are loopholes in the traditional system of belief that need to be filled with new ideas. This is how the process of cultural transfusion develops. An indication of this process is also the fact that in the Bulgarian study very few people state that it is important for them to regularly visit the church. According to the informants the most important factor for one to be religious is to have faith or to be a good person. In fact this is a serious sign of the decline of the trust in the traditional religious institutions. Thus, nowadays religion is perceived by individuals more as a cultural attitude, personal psychological experience or ethical code, rather than as particular rituals or ideological doctrines to follow.

The Indian respondents share similar convictions. In the study in India a considerable number of people express doubt in the traditional concept of reincarnation. Simultaneously, the majority of the respondents agree with statements, such as: “Good deeds in this life bring merits for the next” and “Donations create good karma.” This means that while some informants can doubt in the existence of reincarnation or even deny it, they accept the idea as a broader cultural context, in which individuals express and communicate their spiritual or religious feelings. This is why also, these informants might associate concepts, such as “reincarnation” and “karma”, with a cultural behaviour or an ethical principle, rather than with a particular ideology. However, it should be underlined once again here that the two studies are not representative of all the people in Bulgaria and India. In the rural areas or remote parts of India the majority of individuals might still relate to their religious traditions and follow the patriarchal customs.

So, in the comparison between the Bulgarian and Indian data it can be observed that a considerable number of people in the two countries do not share the traditional religious convictions. In Bulgaria there might be several reasons for this phenomenon. First, as it was already mentioned above, there is a significant decline of the trust in the Orthodox church. Second, after the collapse of socialism in Bulgaria there is a revival of the esoteric doctrines or philosophies that were forbidden during the time of socialism. In fact the idea of reincarnation is not a new one for the Bulgarians. The White Brotherhood of the Bulgarian philosopher and spiritual teacher Petar Deunov (2005), known also with the name Beinsa Douno (1864-1944), has professed the idea of reincarnation. With the establishment of democracy after 1989 his followers have significantly increased. So, the traditions of the occult have always been strong in the South Eastern European country except during the time of socialism. And third, there might be some contemporary influences too that come from new ideologies, such as the New Age.

In order to understand the role of religion in individuals' lives in India, one has to take in consideration the existence of huge religious minorities, such as the Muslims and Christians. In this respect it is not occasional that in the Indian questionnaire almost all the informants who “totally disagree” with the concept of reincarnation have determined themselves as “Christian” and one respondent has written that he is a “Muslim”. Many informants also who claim that they are “Hindu” have chosen the options “neutral” or “rather disagree”. However, those who manifest open resistance and strongly disagree with the Hindu concepts of reincarnation and karma, are predominately people coming from the social circles of the Christian and Muslim communities. In reality this fact confirms the theory of “resistance identity”, proposed by Castells (1997). According to it ethnic or religious minorities may stick stronger to their ethnic, racial or cultural characteristics in order to differentiate themselves from the culture of majority. In this way, the Christians in India might be more devoted, sincere and ardent believers than many of the Christians in Europe who perceive their religion mostly as cultural traditions or as an ethical code to share. Thus, the Christians in India, too, would resist the prevailing religious ideology in the country in order to maintain their religious identity and to shape their cultural uniqueness.

At first sight the research data received in India and Bulgaria seem to be paradoxical. In the country where the concept of reincarnation has been a millenniums-old-tradition, there are religious and social communities, which clearly differentiate from it. And vice versa, in the country, where the idea of rebirth has been for a long time excluded from the official doctrine of the church, there is a growing number of people who profess this belief. However, a closer

look at the culture of India and Bulgaria shows the same tendency: there are more individuals nowadays who perceive their religion mostly as a set of cultural or ethical principles. One reason for this process might be the secularization of society, which, in the case of Bulgaria, is combined with the total collapse of the trust in the traditional religious institutions. This does not mean that in dropping out of the church individuals have become less religious, as some authors state (Diener et al 2011). Many of the Bulgarian informants who claim that they do not visit the church still consider themselves religious. This means that religion is not perceived by them as a collective participation in religious institutions. Rather, it is seen by many individuals as a particular way of life and personal experience. The shift is in the consciousness – from a more collective and institutionalized concept of religion to a more personalized perception of the belief system. This in fact is an intense process of de-institutionalization of religion.

Thus, in contemporary times many people can adhere to their traditional religion as a major framework of beliefs but they can be open to new ideas too. This is why some individuals who profess the Christian idea of a personal God may also believe in reincarnation, which is the case of the Bulgarian study. This is not necessarily a process of “creolization” or “hybridization”, in which old and new beliefs are intermingled to the point of a creation of an entirely new cultural construct. Rather, the new idea is incorporated into the old belief system without the latter to be significantly transformed. This process represents the cultural transfusion of ideas. For example, an individual may still believe in God, angels, retribution and life-after-death. But to these traditionally Christian beliefs they can add new ideas, such as the concept of reincarnation. In the process of cultural transfusion, in the same way as in the blood transfusion, the implant does not provoke any major changes in the recipient system but revitalizes and rejuvenates it. In this way, in order to regain new life, the existing gaps or inconsistencies in the old structures of beliefs are filled with new ideas.

A confirmation of this process can also be found in the EVS, where from 18% to 40% of the Europeans in the different countries share the belief in reincarnation, thus accepting a new and untraditional for their religious system belief. It also seems that the transfusion of ideas is not only European or Indian phenomenon. To one or another extent it affects all societies and cultures in the postmodern world. As an example, according to the EVS 28,4% of the people in Turkey believe in reincarnation too. Thus, it can be hypothesized that the cultural transfusion of ideas may have an impact on other Muslim societies in the world too. In this process the majority of the Christians and Muslims would not transform the major framework of their ideological beliefs. Rather, they would continue to define themselves as “Christians” or “Muslims” but simultaneously they incorporate some new elements in their traditional worldviews. It is evident that nowadays some Christians and Muslims accept ideas typical of Hinduism and Buddhism, while some Hindu people open up to Christianity or Islam. In this global *mélange* of cultures new components are added to the old traditional systems through cultural transfusion, so that individuals can rejuvenate their personal lives and rediscover their individual selves.

Conclusions

On the basis of the comparative analysis of the data collected in India and Bulgaria four models of religiousness can be outlined. The first one is the traditional model where individuals stick to their traditional values and beliefs. In contrast to it the second one is the model of withdrawal, characterized by individuals who are skeptical or fully disagree with any religious

ideas. However, both in Bulgaria and in India very few people represent this model. The third is the model of resistance. The religious feelings and concepts in it are underlined in opposition to other dominant ideologies and thus they function as a tool of individual and collective self-enhancement. And the fourth one is the open culture model that is represented by people who perceive religion mostly as a set of cultural or ethical principles. However, the fact that the individuals do not adhere to the church does not mean that they are less religious. Rather, many of them perceive themselves as religious. This means that there is a shift of the consciousness from a more collective and institutionalized perception of religion to a more individualized set of beliefs. This is a proof of the intense process of de-institutionalization of religion in some societies in the postmodern world. The open culture model of religiousness embraces new concepts and ideas more easily. This is a process of cultural transfusion of ideas, in which the implantation of the new ideas and convictions often functions within the old systems, without the latter to undergo significant transformations. In such a way, the postmodern world represents varieties of religious feelings and attachments. In this broader context the old ideas, such as life-after-death and rebirth, are given new meanings and are redefined in old and new structures.

Gratitude

The author expresses her gratitude to Prof. Dr. Mathukutty Monippally for inviting her as a Visiting Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and thus creating the opportunity for her to study the Indian culture. Many thanks are also due to Mr. M. S. Sarang, Regional Manager of Food Corporation of India, for his precious help in the research in India. Special gratitude is expressed also to GESIS, Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Cologne, Germany, for supporting the author's studies with EUROLAB Grant in December 2017 and thus providing access to all the European data used in this paper. And finally, many thanks to all the anonymous informants who participated in the two studies in Bulgaria and India.

References

- Castells, M. (1997). *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Deunov, P. (Douno, B.) (2005). *The Beauty of Life*. Sofia: Bialo Bratstvo Publishers.
- Diener, E., Tay, L., Myers, D. (2011). The Religion Paradox: If Religion Makes People Happy, why are So Many Dropping Out?, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(6), 1278-1290.
- Gungor, D., Bornstein, M.H, Phalet, K. (2012). Religiosity, Values and Acculturation: a Study of Turkish, Turkish-Belgian and Belgian Adolescents, *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 36(5), 367-373.
- Hall, S. (1993.) *The Question of Cultural Identity*. In Hall S., Held, D. and McCrew, T. (eds.) *Modernity and its Futures* (pp. 274-314). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hannerz, U. (1992). *Cultural Complexity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hayward, D. R., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2011.) *Weber Revisited: A Cross-National Analysis of Religiosity, Religious Culture, and Economic Attitudes*, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (8),1406-1420.
- Jung, K.G. (1960). *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, K. G. (2018.) *Jung on Astrology*, Selected and Introduced by Safron Rossi and Keiron Le Grice. London and New York: Routledge.
- Moody, R. (1975). *Life after Life*. Mockingbird Books.
- Norris P., Inglehart, R. (2004). *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pieterse, J. N. (2004) *Globalization and Culture*. Global Mélange, Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Raman, B.V. (1991). *How to Judge Horoscope*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publ.
- Saroglou, V. (2010). Religiousness as Cultural Adaptation of Basic Traits: A Five-Factor Model, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(1), 108-125.
- Walter, T. (2001). Reincarnation, Modernity and Identity, *Sociology*, 35(1), 21-38.