

**Light Cords:
The Phenomenology of Life and Death**

by Doug Phillips

A recent conference at CalTech explored the findings of research conducted by Sam Pernia of Southampton General Hospital in England where experiences typically deemed 'Near Death Experiences (NDE)' correlated with brain states, or lack thereof in most cases. Pernia suggests that there is significant scientific evidence to support the hypothesis that there exists beyond the brain a realm of Mind filled with light. This transcendent and eternal dimension is the place where we will eventually return upon the death of our bodies. In this piece, I would like to further explore the ramifications of this insight and draw our attention to the reports of 'cords of light' upon death in conjunction with our entry into this world through the umbilical cord.

In many accounts of the 'beyond death' experience, people report seeing a 'tunnel' or 'cord' of light opening before them as they move into another realm of existence. Upon entering this 'light cord,' a totally real, peaceful, and divinely loving presence embraces the newly departed as they transgress dimensions and planes of life. Often, subjects report coming into contact with deceased relatives and loved ones who help them to make the vital transition into the next world. Fortunately, most people who undergo this experience find it to be incredibly liberating. A profound sense of joy appears to infuse their newly formed 'light bodies' as they rise beyond their physical counterparts inhabited in on Earth.

Ironically, when we take a close look at the birth process into this world, there are some interesting correlations. As we grow and develop in our mother's womb, we are connected to the physical plane through the umbilical cord providing all the sustenance we need to begin life on the earth-plane. How are these two 'cords' related? Both seem to give us the necessary 'life-force' to begin life in the 'world' we are about to enter. Eventually, we are 'born again' as the 'light cord' connects us increasingly to the next phase of our existence.

Equally interesting is the idea that our birth into this world and the next are accompanied by 'family.' As we begin our lives on Earth, we find ourselves supported, guided, and ultimately loved by a group of individuals we commonly refer to as our 'family.' Near Death Experiences reverberate this theme as the 'tunnel of light' helps individuals re-connect with relatives and departed loved ones. Throughout both transitions, we are never alone, but intimately connected and guided by others who help us to make these difficult transformations. We enter expanded modes of consciousness through the mechanisms of death/re-birth. These processes appear to link worlds of being we seem only faintly aware of during our daily lives.

While we may never know exactly why 'cords' are used during our transitions, sufficient empirical evidence has emerged supporting the hypothesis that in both birth and death, a 'cord' connects us to the next stage of our life. Perhaps we can imagine swimming in our mother's womb in the early days of our development and looking down at our bellies wondering what is the nature of 'the cord.' Miraculously, we seem to be 'feeding' off the chord as our bodies and brains continue to grow. When we take a look at the umbilical cord in medical photographs, it invariably appears as 'white.' People who experience 'death' also describe the 'cord' as 'white' or as a pleasantly soft 'light.' Eventually in both birth and death, the 'light cord' takes us to another dimension.

Undoubtedly, the universe uses fantastic mechanisms to help procure life. Many people who report their experiences in the after-life sense a profound loving and benevolent presence they

often refer to as 'God.' Life appears to permeate the entirety of manifested existence ultimately supported by an 'infinite' presence beyond time and space. Here again I wonder what it must have been like in the mother's womb. Perhaps we only have the faintest idea how we are living in the sea of love. Like our ideas of God, the mother nourishes us and supports our growth. We seem to be barely alive as we begin life in this world. Yet, in most cases, experiences in the womb appear to bring about 'oceanic feelings' and tonalities. Similarly, mystical experiences of God repeat the theme of a 'loving, embracing, and comprehensive' existence that is everywhere present. In our mother's womb, our world is everywhere permeated by her body. We are part of her body and in her body. Perhaps with equal significance, we are in God's body and integrally a part of the divine presence.

Copyright © JOY: *The Journal of Yoga*