

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Afterlife

## Life After Death

Eternal life has been the dream of most humans for as long as they have existed. This wish has been memorialized in the folklore and literature of many traditions and cultures – as symbolically captured in the elusive Holy Grail. While the experiences of human life are both painful and exhilarating, those amply bestowed with the blessings of a good life wish for it to last perpetually. Life, however, does not last forever. It never has for anyone in the past and never will for anyone in the future. Death is one of the few certainties in life. Every human being that comes into this world eventually dies sooner or later without exception. No matter how much wealth, power, beauty, fame, or intelligence one has, none will make him escape death. Death is the great equalizer that levels the king and the slave, the rich and the poor, the intellectual and the ignorant, the mighty and the meek, the proud and the humble. The life of every human being ends when he encounters death.

While the life of a human ends when he dies, does it mean that his life's chronicle ends there for good? Is death the final chapter in the story of a human being? Or is there more to it? Most cultures, traditions, and beliefs have a concept of the afterlife – that there is life after death. The nuances of the afterlife are many and vary: The soul of a human continues to live even though

his body has capitulated; the human being is reincarnated as another living being; the human being achieves nirvana; the human being will be resurrected on the day of judgment; and so on. There may be merit to such claims, or there may be none. As individuals, we don't remember anything before we were born. We do not have experiential knowledge about what happens to us after we die. No one who may have experienced the afterlife has returned from the dead to reveal life beyond this world. We cannot have a face-to-face conversation with any being – living or dead – beyond the realm of this worldly existence. Our sense of perception and consciousness is limited to our living existence.