



## MANIFESTING REINCARNATION IN *PUBG*

**Mahreen Anwar**

Institute of English Studies

University of the Punjab

[amahreen46@gmail.com](mailto:amahreen46@gmail.com)

**Maryam Raza**

Lecturer, Institute of English Studies

University of the Punjab

[maryam.english@pu.edu.pk](mailto:maryam.english@pu.edu.pk)

### Abstract

*The study aims to explore PUBG-PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds through the lens of Plato's theory of Reincarnation. The objective of the research is to explore rebirth and the impact of this belief on the player's performance and engagement. Furthermore, the study's objective is to probe into the aftermaths of reincarnation through certain events in the selected game. By linking the religious doctrine of rebirth to the digital realm of gaming, the research aims to provide an innovative view of digital spirituality. The significance of the study lies in analysing the religious philosophy of reincarnation and the concept of digital karma –in-game actions–and its consequences. The research shows both the philosophical understanding of the concept and the academic discourse on how traditional ideas evolve in modern contexts and in the gaming arena. The study challenges the traditional understanding of video games, and it expands the scope of game studies by researching on game insights from the lens of philosophy and theology.*

*The primary tool of research is a game titled PUBG launched by Krafton. Whereas Reincarnation and the Law of Karma by William Walker Atkinson serves as the secondary tool of research. The study's elemental drive is the dearth of scholarly research on reincarnation in the digital world of games, limited attention to the role of repeated failure and how it parallels philosophical concepts, such as growth through reincarnation. Future researchers can explore reincarnation inspired models for artificial life or simulated reality. It can help philosophers in exploring digital ethics in AI. It is a qualitative, inductive and interdisciplinary research.*

**Keywords:** Reincarnation, Digital Karma, PUBG, Virtual Reality, Spirituality, Psychoanalysis.

### Introduction

The aim of the study is to explore the concept of reincarnation by diving within the digital realm of video games, with special reference to famous multiplayer game *PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds-PUBG*. In addition, the study examines how the principle of reincarnation contributes to a player's engagement, performance and in-game cycle of death and revival. A significant objective is to unravel how the idea of rebirth in *PUBG* parallels traditional spiritual beliefs and its effect on player's power of decision making. Another objective of the study is to analyse the relationship between Digital Karma, along with its philosophical and ethical implications in the virtual environment. By linking reincarnation to the digital realm of *PUBG*, the research offers an innovative exploration of digital spirituality and ethics.

*PUBG* is originally developed by *PUBG Corporation* which is subsidium of *Krafton*, a South Korean video game company. Originally, this game was a modification of some other games, created just for military training purpose. However, ensuing *PUBG* became a separate game. It was released in 2017, becoming well known worldwide for being the game that brought the Battle Royale genre into the spotlight. It is a game whose theme mirrors a Japanese movie, *Battle Royale*. About 100 players are parachuted on to an island where they scavenge for weapons and resources to become the last person or team surviving and get the credit of 'Winner Winner Chicken Dinner'. It became one of the bestselling video games of all the times



in a very short time period as it crossed one million sales in just six hours after its release. The game is an emblem of best visuals combined with superb graphics and a high-stake, realistic battle ground. It blends realism with strategic combating gaming mode where its themes make it an ideal platform to study complex philosophical theologies like Reincarnation.

The main objective of a *PUBG* player is survival. They must hunt for weapons and armours as soon as they land on the barren Island maps, in order to safeguard them from other players who are continuously hunting them, waiting to eliminate wandering players. As the game progresses, the red zones or bombing zones emerge on the map's different locations in order to eliminate players in the week zones. A shrinking safe zone or area also forces the players into the closer zones that increases the chance of encounter with the other players of opposite teams. Furthermore, a blue zone is introduced in the game. It is a prohibited area so that the careless players in that blue zone can be eliminated. In this high-stake environment, the elimination of players, either by danger zones, other players or suicide, is obvious. This renders a lot of stress and frustration harbouring in the minds of players. To provide them with a second chance, the game introduces the feature of recall towers which can be used by the teammates of eliminated players to recall that dead player into the game again. This option is for a limited time only. In some updates, respawn card is used for this purpose as well. It allows automatic re-entering of the card holder, if he/she is knocked out. In certain maps, various reincarnation chances are available. While in some updates, chances are limited. It is felt that this cyclical nature of life and death in *PUBG* resonates with the theme of Reincarnation or Metempsychosis. It is a spiritual belief about rebirth, karma and immortality of a soul.

Plato was an influential philosopher of ancient Greece who carved the theory of Reincarnation. Although, the origins of the concept date to archaic times. In his dialogues, *Phaedo* and *The Republic*, Plato proposes that the soul is immortal, and it undergoes various cycles of rebirth. This idea of transmigration of souls has led to the evolution of various interpretations of the concept of reincarnation in both, Western and Eastern cultures. In Hinduism and Buddhism, there is a notion about the cycle of Samsara. It reflects the cycle of death and revival. It is deeply connected with the ethical law of Karma. Similarly, Christians and Judaists also believe in reincarnation.

Plato viewed rebirth as an opportunity for the soul to nullify past life mistakes. This concept has profound implications for how individuals understand life, death and their moral responsibilities imposed onto them by nature. In Plato's view, the ultimate journey of the soul is to move towards a state of complete purity and perfection. This can require multiple lifetimes. Thus, the soul undergoes the cycle of birth and rebirth after death. This continues until the soul achieves its highest level of peace, called Nirvana in Buddhism.

Plato's belief in reincarnation also reflects spiritual and philosophical concerns about existence and mortality of the human body. In addition to Plato's ideas, the research reflects on William Walker Atkinson's work *Reincarnation and the law of Karma*. Atkinson extended Plato's thoughts about spiritual and metaphysical ideas, linking reincarnation with the moral law of Karma. The later theorist offers a modern interpretation of how actions in one's life determine the circumstances of future lives, resonating with Plato's ideas. By applying Atkinson's views to a digital setting, the research examines how players in *PUBG* deal with a form of digital Karma, where their in-game choices affect their in-game experiences.

In *Reincarnation and the Law of Karma*, William Walker Atkinson explores the ideologies of reincarnation and karma as fundamental rules that govern human existence. He sees reincarnation as the journey of the sou. It transmigrates from one body to another, evolving

through experience and learning. As it is difficult to remember past existences due to lower spiritual stage of a person, signs such as innate talents, instincts and déjà vu hints at the reincarnation of that person. Atkinson connects Eastern philosophies, particularly beliefs of Hinduism and Buddhism, with Western mystical traditions to universalize these ideas.

Regarding Karma, Atkinson believes it as the law of cause and effect. He posits that individuals face the results of their deeds. Thereby, fostering moral responsibility and justice. He opines that Karma is a balancing force that aligns actions with their expected outcomes. This shatters the negative connotations associated with Karma as merely being punitive. Atkinson presents reincarnation and karma as interconnected concepts that formulate the destiny of humans and shape their experiences across different lifetimes for personal and spiritual growth.

**The research endeavours to answer these questions:**

- How do player's karmic beliefs affect their in-game moral choices?
- Can *PUBG*'s recall mechanics be seen as a mirror of real world philosophical beliefs?
- How is the regional ideology of reincarnation portrayed through digital media?

**Literature Review**

*PUBG* “Players may be more motivated and engaged in the game when they are emotionally aroused” (Ali et. al. “Emotions in Video Games”). Such emotional arousal is introduced in *PUBG* in the form of in-game eliminations, as “in-game death can drive player perceptions of difficulty and greatly impact the core player experience” (Cuerdo and Melcer “I’ll be Back”). These eliminations have the potential to create an atmosphere of “increased stress, anxiety, and frustration” (Tajjuddin and Bramantoro “Emotions in Video Games”) as the battleground becomes the showcase for Darwin’s concept of “survival of the fittest” (Cunningham “Survival of the fittest”).

Such mechanics provide players with a sense of agency and keep them interested as “resurrection adds a layer of continuity to the gameplay experience” (NPC “Destiny 2”). *PUBG* incorporates the concept of death to “teach players the mechanics and provide a sense of growth” (Juul 47). It also introduces the idea of resurrection to boost interest. while providing a form of entertainment, post challenges and foster confidence amongst the players. Through the introduction of recall feature in the game “players can come up with new strategies for pushing (their) rank higher” (Adhikari “Recall Tower in *PUBG*”). This mirrors the concept of elevating your soul with good deeds, in every reincarnation.

The idea of resurrection in a game aligns with a broader philosophy of reincarnation where “the soul discards its worn-out body and enters a new one” (Sivananda “Bhagavad Gita”). In the virtual world, the dead or eliminated player is recalled. Likewise, in the real world a dead person can come to life again through a “cycle, often referred to as ‘samsara’ in Eastern philosophies” (Kumar “Critical Perspectives”). In Buddhist idealism, the Vijnana is a state or an aspect “of consciousness that is reborn in a new individual” (McKenna “Reincarnation”). The concept of Reincarnation is an ancient belief where “metempsychosis is the English rendering of the Greek term μετεμψύχωσις that was used in ancient times to refer to the doctrine of reincarnation “(Matlock “Reincarnation: An Overview”). It means revival or “rebirth of the aspect of an individual that persists after bodily death—whether it be consciousness, mind, the soul, or some other entity” (McKenna “Reincarnation”). In the process of reincarnation, the “non-physical essence of a living being begins a new lifespan in a different physical form or body after biological death “(“Reincarnation”). Moreover, “the essence that reincarnates often is called the ‘soul’” (Matlock “Reincarnation: An Overview”). According to this, the soul

leaves the body when it is of no use and enters a new one as “the immortality of the human soul is one of the most fundamental tenets” (Maher “Immortality”) of the ancient doctrine of Reincarnation. Many people believe in this ideology as “In a survey in 2005 in the USA, about 20% of adults showed a belief in reincarnation” (“Reincarnation (Rebirth)”).

The Law of Karma decides in which form the soul is going to be reincarnated. Scholars “talk of karma as an inexorable law of cause and effect” (Walter and Waterhouse 95). True to form, “the universe operates on a moral economy where every good or bad deed is accounted” (Kumar “Critical Perspectives”). Rebirth of a dead individual depends on his deeds in past life as “rebirth is not a reward or punishment but the natural result of karmic actions” (Keown 32). Therefore, “karma isn’t just about past. It’s also about future” (Regan “The 12 Laws”).

There are many scholarly works on gaming experiences and player behaviours, but there is a research gap on realism portrayed in games, especially *PUBG*. Thus, the research aims to portray ancient doctrines analysed a in world-wide famous battle royale game, *PUBG*.

### **Research Methodology**

The research incorporates critical analysis of *PUBG* game as a primary tool. The applied theoretical framework is Plato’s theory of reincarnation. The secondary sources also employ both print and electronic media. William Atkinson’s book *Reincarnation and the Law of Karma* is the main secondary tool of research.

The critical study embodies a qualitative, inductive and inter-disciplinary research, exploring game studies and philosophy. The significance of the research lies in the use of religious doctrine as a source to affirm the concept of reincarnation manifested in the digital realm of gaming.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Recall can be seen as an extension of the idea of reincarnation. The way a player is recalled by his/ her mates in order to re-enter the game, using recall towers, highly resonates with the idea of rebirth and Metempsychosis. The belief in the ability to be reborn and reincarnated into the game gives the players confidence to play with boldness and valour. By getting the opportunity of reincarnation, it boosts players’ confidence to use one of their mates as a pawn to locate the opponents, when the opponents attack him/her. By using this strategy, they can find the coordinates of the enemies and then attack and kill them. They can easily reincarnate their dead partner from the reincarnation tower afterwards. Another possibility is the reincarnation of the dead partner in the same red zone in the presence of the enemies so that he/she can take revenge from them.

William Walker Atkinson in *Reincarnation and the Law of Karma* discusses how a person goes through a series of births and deaths until he reaches salvation. The birth of a person after his demise and then the perpetual cycle aligns with the revival and rebirth of the players in the *Player’s Unknown Battlegrounds – PUBG*. Recall towers are symbolic for reincarnation. They are the linking spots, the connection between the living and the dead.

The equipment, the loot and all the inventory items a person holds are the adjectives for the essence of a person. They are the currency of the game. They are equivalent to the abilities of the player. Once a player dies, his loot is scavenged by his partners as a tribute to the memories of the fallen. However, once a person is reborn, he reacquires his possessions. Thus, it is seen as a form of reincarnation. The items carry a certain kind of energy which becomes a part of

the player. If a player is able to loot his previous life's items, it provides him with the opportunity to reconnect to his older life. This is deemed to be the highest form of reincarnation.

Another proximity to being re-alive is the ability to spectate the happenings. This can be traced in the reincarnation theory as the revival or the rebirth of the soul into another body or being and then re-watching the affairs of the world from a different point of view or perspective. This allows the player to improve and exacerbate their experience as they cannot participate in the events but they have the liberty to watch the tactics and techniques of the opponents.

The process of reincarnation can be the ability to relive our past, to reshare our experiences and to have a keen look at the life we spent. The game, *PUBG*, allows the players to replay the whole matches, the happenings and the events of the match which in essence allows them to re-experience their rivalries, clashes and their ultimate demise at the opponent's hands.

*PUBG* also depicts Digital Karma. Karma is reflected in the digital realm as when a very skilful player dies, he is deprived of his ammunition, equipment and other consumables when reincarnated. Such a reincarnation is punitive for his lack of vision and sharp wit in the previous game. Thus, he is reincarnated but sans laurels. This notion denotes the theme of Digital Karma. Furthermore, a player has the opportunity to avenge a dead fellow player. Thereby, uplifting Digital Karma.

The game also has a Companion mode. It is the mode in which a player can enter the game in the form of an eagle, bot or a highly expensive lion. This entry is allowed after the player's death. Companion Mode allows one to keep a look at the happenings in an altered form. It allows the dead to enter and engage passively as an overseer, without having the ability to actively change the course of the events. The research aligns this mode in compliance with the theory of Reincarnation, as the player is resurrected in another form.

The Allah-din 3.1 update confers the choice between peace and violence to its players. In order to exit from the world of Alladin, the player must select one path from the aforementioned. The ones who seek the path of war face demise as a punitive end. The other players are allowed to exit through the gates. The research probes into how *PUBG* fosters a sense of decisive rationality, which subtly prepares the player for the real world. The digital platform becomes a place of spiritual cleansing too. In addition to that, reincarnation is reflected in this update by resurrecting the players who chose violence but at the cost of losing all of their consumables. The study of *PUBG* thereby affirms the presence of the soul. It is always present in one form or the other, it never degenerates. It can change its form from one being to another or simply revive in the same body again, but the soul never perishes for infinity. The game also reinforces the idea of reincarnation, specifically the Déjà Vu.

### **Conclusion**

*PUBG* is a showcase for digital exploration of reincarnation and karma, as it blends complex philosophical ideologies with engaging gameplay. Reincarnation, in the form of recall and other ways, is more than just being the part of gameplay. It is the thematic element of the game that makes it rich with realities of the human world. The game's mechanics highlight intricate digital environment that mirrors life cycles and challenges. By exploring digital karma through certain battlegrounds, *PUBG* provides players with a platform to experience the timeless principles of growth and renewal. Hence, self-discovery. In this way *PUBG*'s exploration of reincarnation makes it a profound narrative for human evolution.



The game's influence on player's thinking and strategies makes the integration of reincarnation and digital karma unique. Players learn resilience, adaptability and mindfulness. Whereas Digital Karma highlights the importance of ethical actions in shaping a positive community. These concepts in *PUBG*, woven with philosophical threads, make it more than a game. Rather, it becomes a platform for exploring deeper human truths. The gaming arena becomes a teaching ground where it is taught that every setback is a new beginning and every action leaves lasting marks in a game, as well as in real life.

### Works Cited

- Adhikari, Atith. "Recall Tower in PUBG Mobile: The Ultimate Guide." *Gaming Up-to-date*, [www.gaminguptodate.com/pubg-mobile/recall-teammates-in-pubg-mobile](http://www.gaminguptodate.com/pubg-mobile/recall-teammates-in-pubg-mobile). Accessed 2 February 2025.
- Ali, Nurwathiqah et. al. "Emotions in Video Games: An Investigation of Game Mechanic Influences." *IEEE Engineering Management Review*, vol.6, 2023, pp. 1, <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/10367383>. Accessed 02 February 2025
- Cuerdo, Marjorie Ann and Edward F. Melcer. "I'll Be Back: A Taxonomy of Death and Rebirth in Platformer Video Games." *ACM Digital Library*, 2020, pp. 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3334480.3382863>. Accessed 01 February 25.
- Cunningham, Conor. "survival of the fittest". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/science/survival-of-the-fittest>. Accessed 2 February 2025.
- "Game and Legal Info." *PlayStation.Store*, [https://store.playstation.com/en-us/product/UP5082-CUSA14081\\_00-PTSBUN0000000000](https://store.playstation.com/en-us/product/UP5082-CUSA14081_00-PTSBUN0000000000). Accessed 01 February 2025.
- Gould, Elie. "PUBG update: what's new in PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds." *Tech Radar*, <https://www.techradar.com/news/pubg-news-and-updates-whats-new-in-playerunknowns-battlegrounds>. Accessed 01 February 2025.
- Johns, Jay. "Designing player death: Using Intention and Meaning to Add Depth." *Game Developer*, [www.gamedeveloper.com/design/designing-player-death-using-intention-and-meaning-to-add-depth](http://www.gamedeveloper.com/design/designing-player-death-using-intention-and-meaning-to-add-depth). Accessed 2 February 2025.
- Jooste, Shaun. "A free action-packed battle royale." *Softonic*, <https://playerunknowns-battlegrounds.en.softonic.com/?ex=RAMP-2639.0>. Accessed 25 February 2025.
- Juul, Jesper. *The art of failure: an essay on the pain of playing video games*. The MIT Press, 2013.
- Keown, Damien. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Kumar, Prince. "Critical Perspectives on the Theory of Rebirth." *Philosophy Institute*, <https://philosophy.institute/philosophy-of-human-person/theory-of-rebirth-critical-perspectives/>. Accessed 2 February 2025.
- Maher, Michael. "Immortality." *Catholic Answers*, [www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/Immortality](http://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/Immortality). Accessed 31 January 2025.
- Matlock, James G. "Reincarnation: An Overview." *PSI Encyclopedia*, <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/reincarnation-overview>. Accessed 29 January 2025.
- McKenna, Amy. "Reincarnation." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/reincarnation>. Accessed 2 February 2025.
- NPC, Jarvis The. "Destiny 2: The Never-Ending Cycle of Resurrection." *THE PORTAL*, [www.zleague.gg/theportal/destiny-2-the-never-ending-cycle-of-resurrection/](http://www.zleague.gg/theportal/destiny-2-the-never-ending-cycle-of-resurrection/). Accessed 2 February 2025.



- “PLAYERUNKNOWN’S BATTLEGROUNDS.” *Fandom*,  
[https://pubg.fandom.com/wiki/PLAYERUNKNOWN%27S\\_BATTLEGROUNDS](https://pubg.fandom.com/wiki/PLAYERUNKNOWN%27S_BATTLEGROUNDS).  
Accessed 01 February 2025.
- “PLAYERUNKNOWN’S BATTLEGROUNDS.” *Liquipedia PUBG*,  
[https://liquipedia.net/pubg/PLAYERUNKNOWN%27S\\_BATTLEGROUNDS](https://liquipedia.net/pubg/PLAYERUNKNOWN%27S_BATTLEGROUNDS).  
Accessed 01 February 2025.
- “PLAYERUNKNOWN’S BATTLEGROUNDS.” *Wiki.gg*,  
[https://pubg.wiki.gg/wiki/PLAYERUNKNOWN%27S\\_BATTLEGROUNDS](https://pubg.wiki.gg/wiki/PLAYERUNKNOWN%27S_BATTLEGROUNDS).  
Accessed 01 February 2025.
- “PUBG: Battlegrounds.” *Store.Steampowered*,  
[https://store.steampowered.com/app/578080/PUBG\\_BATTLEGROUNDS/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/578080/PUBG_BATTLEGROUNDS/). Accessed  
01 February 2025.
- “PUBG: Battlegrounds.” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*,  
[en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/PUBG:\\_Battlegrounds](en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/PUBG:_Battlegrounds). Accessed 25 February 2025.
- “PUBG Mobile Game Review: A Comprehensive Analysis.” *Pro Gamer Inside*,  
<progamerinside.com/pubg-mobile-game-review-comprehensive-analysis/>. Accessed  
01 February 2025.
- Regan, Sarah. “The 12 Laws Of Karma: What Are They & Why Do They Matter?”  
*mindbodygreen*, [www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/laws-of-karma](http://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/laws-of-karma). Accessed 2  
February 2025.
- “Reincarnation (Rebirth).” *Hinduism Facts*, [www.hinduismfacts.org/reincarnation/#a-top](http://www.hinduismfacts.org/reincarnation/#a-top).  
Accessed 2 February 2025.
- “Reincarnation.” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*,  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reincarnation>. Accessed 2 February 2025.
- Rupam, Monsoon. “What is Modernization? Causes, Importance, Pros and Cons.” *Sociology  
Group*, [www.sociologygroup.com/modernization/](http://www.sociologygroup.com/modernization/). Accessed 2 February 2025.
- Skoroplyas, Pavlo. “Game Over: Death as a Gameplay Mechanic in Video Games.” *Kreonit*,  
<https://kreonit.com/game-mechanics-and-features/game-over/>. Accessed 2 February  
2025.
- Sivanada, Sri Swami. *Bhagavad Gita*. The Divine Life Society, 2000.