

Architecture and After Life

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Abstract—*The afterlife (also referred to as life after death or the hereafter) is the idea that the consciousness or mind of a being continues after physical death occurs. In many popular views, this continued existence often takes place in an immaterial or spiritual realm known as astral plane. It is believed that after the death of a body, the soul along with its mind goes to a resting place called astral planes and then at the time of its next birth, it comes back to earth to take the new body.*

Throughout the history of mankind, death has always been a fascination. People have always wondered about the causes of death, the aftermath of death, and whether it could be stopped. They performed certain rituals, to help them along their way and carry out several funerary rituals.

In this paper I have discussed about some commonly known religions and cultures (in sequence according to their time of beginning) and their views on the concept of life after death. Followed by how their beliefs led them to designing and making of different types of funerary monuments, which adds to the built fabric of the city.

INTRODUCTION

The afterlife is the idea that the mind of a person, continues after the death of physical body. In many popular views, this moving onto the afterlife is believed to take place in a spiritual world known as astral plane. It is believed that after the death of a body, the soul along with its mind goes to a resting place called astral planes and then at the time of its next birth, it comes back to the material world to take a new body and materialize. People, who believe in god, have a belief that there exists a life after the death of the earthly material body. However Atheists, who do not believe in existence of god or reject religious beliefs, believe that there is no life after death.

The views of life after death are of two different types. It includes one in which people believe in the concept of life after death, on the basis of religious views. It usually depends on the stories told by ancestors or written in religious books. The second one is on the basis of observation. It is based on observations made on the basis of research of instances of reincarnation, near death experiences, out of body experiences, astral projections and many more. This takes into consideration research of case studies.

The agnostics believe that like the existence of god, existence of soul after death is not verifiable and therefore is

unknowable. Many religions and civilizations, who believe in life after death, believe that the life of a person after the death of his body largely depends on his conduct during his life and that decides his quality of life after death. Below I have discussed these various views as followed and observed by various religions and civilizations over a period of thousands of years.

Though there is a long list of religions and cultures that have been followed or are being followed in the world, but some of the most commonly known religions and civilizations include some of the following Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Christianity, Baha'i religion, Egyptian civilization, Chinese civilization, Greek civilization, Roman civilization . This paper discusses some of these famous religions and cultures in detail.

Views of Life After Death in different Religions and Cultures and Beliefs

1. HINDUISM

Hindu's believe that every living thing has a spirit or soul, and a spirit is able to migrate in and out of physical forms (written in Upanishads). They believe in reincarnation and believe that a soul gets its next birth in accordance to his actions done in his previous life. Good actions direct a soul to a higher form of life. The soul of the evil doer, find their way to a lower form of life (written in their holy book Gita). Hinduism mandate open-air cremation. They see body as an instrument to carry the soul. Hindu philosophy says that the human body is a combination of five basic natural elements (Sanskrit — tattva), namely agni (fire), jala (water), vayu (air), prithvi (earth) and akasha (space). When one dies, fire (agni tattva) ceases, and the living form is sent to its original state of creation. Fire (in the form of cremation) is used to complete the fifth element.

1.1. Examples of funerary monuments

A memorial is an object which serves as a focus for memory of a person (who has died) or an event. Popular forms of memorials include landmark objects or art objects such as sculptures, statues or fountains (and even entire parks). In

Hinduism the body is cremated but to remember the people who have died, memorials are built (mostly for those people, who are of religious or political importance). Some examples of memorials built in Hindu religion are

1.1.1 Rajghat

Rajghat is the last resting place of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. The memorial stone of Mahatma Gandhi placed there is a simple square platform made of black stone, with the words "Hey Ram" inscribed near it. As homage to the Mahatma, an eternal flame, in a copper urn, keeps on burning there. Enclosing the memorial is a low wall, simple with no ornamentation. Every Friday, a remembrance ceremony takes place at the Delhi Raj Ghat National Memorial. Along with that, on the birthday (2nd October) as well as death anniversary (30th January) of Mahatma Gandhi, prayers are held here. The Mahatma Gandhi Samadhi, in New Delhi, is situated amidst a garden with fountains and numerous trees. Situated near Raj Ghat, are two museums dedicated to Gandhiji that house a number of possessions as well as photographs of Mahatma Gandhi.

1.1.2. Shanti van

Shanti Van, Delhi is the memorial or the Samadhi of the Great Nationalist Leader and the First Prime Minister of Free India, Jawaharlal Nehru. The spot is set around lush green lawns and trees to honour the great leader. Jawaharlal Nehru's Samadhi is to the north of the Raj Ghat and is known as the Shantivan, meaning the forest of peace. The area has a beautiful park adorned with trees planted by visiting dignitaries and heads of state. His grandson Sanjay Gandhi's Samadhi is adjacent to it.

2. ZOROASTRIAN CONCEPT OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

The Zoroastrians believe that when a person dies, his or her spirit leaves the body, but remains in its vicinity for three days and nights, suffering from temporary anxiety and distress caused by the sudden separation. In this period, an account of the good works and the sins of the soul are prepared, which is used to decide its fate in the spiritual world. On the fall of the third night the soul leaves the material world and enters into the spiritual world, led by an angel called Daena (who symbolically represents conscience). There it stands before the Chinavat Bridge or the Bridge of Judgment, where the deeds of the soul are reviewed. Good souls are led to the Paradise and evil souls are pushed to the world of punishment.

Zoroastrians neither bury their dead nor cremate them. Death is considered to be the domain of the evil being Ahirman and his temporary victory in the material plane. They isolate the dead body and stay as far away from it as possible to avoid any possible contact with the impurities that the evil forces impart to it by invading it and making it their residence

(written in their holy scriptures). Fire is a sacred symbol of God in the material plane. So fire should not be made impure by burning an evil ridden corpse with it. Similarly water and earth are also sacred element to them so bodies cannot be thrown in rivers, lakes and oceans or buried. In ancient time it was believed that touching a corpse intentionally, invited the penalty of death sentence. The best solution, therefore, was to let the body remain in the open and be consumed by vultures and crows. Zoroastrians therefore leave the dead in houses called dakmsas or silent towers.

2.1 Examples of funerary monuments

2.1.1. Dakhmeh in Yazd

"Silent hill" or Dakhmeh, is on top of a hill where Zoroastrians bring dead bodies for vultures to eat, as a funeral formality. The place is surrounded by walls over 40 inches high, built to prevent others from seeing sight of the big birds using their powerful beaks, picking on the body of the deceased.

After the body is eaten, Dakhmeh guardians gather the remains and place them inside a hole at the centre of the structure. The bones are then sprinkled and washed with pure nitric acid and slaked lime for further purification. Under the hole, lie 3 sand filters which work to prevent the sacred earth from getting polluted by the skeletons. The guardians live in a tiny roofed place near Dakhmeh on top the hill, while relatives of the deceased stayed in a house down the hill, never allowed to enter inside.

2.1.2. Tower Of Silence – Mumbai | Parsi Tower Malabar Hill

This Structure of Mumbai, known as 'Tower of Silence' or Parsee Bawdi, is on top of Malabar hills. Body of the Parsi people are sent to this Bawdi, a circular big structure like 'Well' which is then consumed by Birds like eagles and vultures. It is located very high up in hill and strictly allowed for members of Parsi community. It consists of 3 rings, first for Male Bodies, Second for Female Bodies and Final one for Children.

3. LIFE AFTER DEATH IN ISLAM - THE HEREAFTER

In Islam it is believed that a human being comes into this world only once, and after death, soul is again resurrected on the Day of Judgment. Depending on his deeds he will either dwell in heaven or in hell. Life in this world is a test for the hereafter. If they follow the commandments of the Almighty Creator and pass the test, they shall enter Paradise, which is Eternal Bliss, on failure they are condemned into hell. (Qur'an). It is mentioned in the Qur'an, *Jannat* or paradise is a place of peace and bliss. It contains river of milk unchanging in flavor and rivers of purified honey. It contains fruit of every

kind and no fatigue, anxiety, trouble can be felt there. Hell is a place of torment where evil-doers undergo the most terrible pain and suffering caused by being burnt by hellfire, a fire whose fuel is men and stones.

Muslims bury their dead. Before burial the corpse is washed for ritual purification and clothed in simple cloth. Muslims offer a funeral congregation and then place the dead in the grave which is dug mostly rectangular. The corpse is laid in such a position as its head is in the direction of the Ka'bah in the city of Makkah. They bury their dead to show respect to them and also because the humans will be resurrected from the earth of which he was first made.

3.1. Examples of funerary monuments

3.1.1. Taj Mahal

It was built by a Muslim Emperor Shah Jahan in the memory of his wife and queen Mumtaz Mahal at Agra, India. It is a Mausoleum that houses the grave of Queen Mumtaz Mahal at the lower chamber. The grave of Shah Jahan was added to it later. The Taj stands on a raised, square platform, with its four corners truncated, forming an unequal octagon. The architectural design uses the interlocking arabesque concept, in which each element stands on its own and perfectly integrates with the main structure. It uses the principles of self-replicating geometry and symmetry of architectural elements. The mausoleum is a part of a vast complex comprising of a main gateway, garden, a mosque, a guest house, and several other palatial buildings. The Taj is at the farthest end of this complex, with river Yamuna behind it.

3.1.2. Charbagh

In Islamic style of architecture, the garden symbolizes spirituality. According to the Holy Koran, a garden is symbolic of paradise. From this concept the Charbagh style of garden planning took root. On entering the Taj Gateway, there is a garden up to the plinth of the Taj. The guiding principle in creating this garden is of the symmetry. In Taj Mahal the four regions of the garden within the Charbagh were divided into flowerbeds. Trees were planted with the symmetry of the overall plan. The trees generally preferred were either cypress (signifying death) or fruit bearing trees (signifying life).

4. CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Christians believe that there is only one life on this earth. After death, an eternal life awaits everyone either in Heaven or Hell. The majority of Christians reject the notion of reincarnation. They believe in only one God and every person has exactly one soul and Jesus is the only way to God.

Christians believe in an afterlife. It involves heaven and hell, with an intermediate realm of purgatory. Although the body dies and is buried, they believe that their unique soul lives on

and is raised to new life by God. Most believe in the idea of judgment after death, and that God will treat people in the afterlife according to how they lived their life on earth. Entering Purgatory after death cleanses one of sin period of suffering until one's nature is perfected, which makes one acceptable to enter heaven.

They believe in burying the dead. As said in their sacred scriptures, "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (quoted in bible). It does not talk about ashes, so they believe that man must not interfere with God's plan.

4.1. Examples of funerary monuments

Christians generally bury the dead in church graveyards. For example Shrine of San Vittore in ciel d'oro, Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio, Milan. However some shrines were also made over the tomb of the dead. For example Basilica of the National Shrine of St.Thomas.

4.1.1. Basilica of the National Shrine of St.Thomas

In the whole world, there are only three churches built over the tomb of an Apostle of Jesus Christ - the Basilica of Saint Peter built over the tomb of St.Peter in Rome, Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela built over the tomb of St.James in Spain and Basilica of the National Shrine of St.Thomas built over the tomb of St.Thomas. Basilica of the National Shrine of St.Thomas is in Chennai, India. The National Shrine of St.Thomas is built over the tomb of Saint Thomas the Apostle, who came to India. After preaching on the West Coast, he came to Chennai, and suffered martyrdom on a hill at the outskirts of the city, today known as "St. Thomas Mount." His body was buried on the spot over which the present Basilica stands.

It is 72 feet long and 20 feet wide, and can accommodate 150 faithful at a time. A statue of St. Thomas in a lying state is installed over the tomb covered in glass, and over that a marble altar is erected.

5. EGYPTIAN MYTHS AND THEIR RELATION TO PYRAMIDS

Egyptians believed that an eternal life awaited them, after their death. Dying was only first stage of transition to the next life, in a better world. Death unites the soul with Oiris (God of Death). To get a rebirth, a lot of conditions had to be fulfilled. The first of these was the preservation of the integrity of body and soul. A person's life consists of a unique combination of all sorts of different aspects, none of which was viable on its own. Death separated these aspects, and it was the task of the priest and embalmer to unite them, so that new life became possible. A person had to protect two things; one is his body which cases all sorts of non-physical facilities and his ka, which is person's identity and energy. Each Ka acquired

energy from food, and this intake of food had to be continued after death, that is why the Egyptians brought food and drink to the tombs. To ensure that the Ka did not stray from the human body, statues of the person were made to make it feel at home. A narrow opening was left between the statue room and the offering chapel through which the odor of the offering could reach the statue.

The body was also the dwelling place of the Ba or soul, which was usually shown as a bird. Ba represented human consciousness, which would immediately flee when confronted with shock, injury or drunkenness. The prospect of flight was even more likely with death. When the Ba lost its safe dwelling and was under threat of destruction, the Ba preferred to be united with the heavenly powers during the day, but could not survive without returning to its earthly body at night. The unification of body and soul was the reason for making the body durable, through mummification. Only by a periodic reunification of Ba and mummy could the deceased acquire divine status (known by as Egyptian: Akh), which was expressed by a shining halo. Then the deceased became identical to the sun god himself, travelling across the heavens during the day in the solar bark, returning to the primeval waters in the evening, or to the mysterious kingdom of Osiris under the earth.

This belief led to the development of an elaborate mortuary cult and extensive funerary architecture. The first pyramid was in the shape of a hill, built over a system of chambers cut out of the rock. The true pyramid developed during the Fourth Dynasty, from the step-shaped monuments of the Third Dynasty such as the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara. The pyramid symbolizes a shaft of sunlight along which the king could ascend to heaven. The kings of the Old Kingdom and the Middle Kingdom were buried in pyramids; those of the New Kingdom were buried in complicated rock-cut tombs.

Tombs could contain a great variety of other items, including statues of the deceased to serve as substitutes for the body in case it was damaged and Canopic jars containing the organs removed during the mummification process. Because it was believed that the deceased would have to do work in the afterlife, just as in life, burials often included small models of humans to do work in place of the deceased. The use of these model workers replaced the practice, used by the earliest pharaohs, of burying human servants along with the king. The tombs of wealthier individuals also contain furniture, clothing, and other everyday objects intended for use in the afterlife, along with amulets and other items intended to provide magical protection against the hazards of the spirit world. Further protection was provided by funerary texts inscribed on the tomb walls, the burial shroud, the coffin, or on separate rolls of papyrus. The tomb walls also bore artwork, including images of the deceased eating food which were believed to allow him or her to magically receive sustenance even after the mortuary offerings had ceased.

5.1. Examples of funerary monuments

5.1.1. Valley Of Kings

The valley of kings was the burial ground of ancient Egyptian Pharaohs. The interesting fact about this place is that the tomb of Tutankhamen on its entrance had the warning that "Death shall come on swift wings to him who disturbs the peace of the King." After the opening of this tomb, the funder of this expedition was the first person to die. It was believed that the mysterious death of the funder was related with the curse of the Pharaoh.

The Egyptians created false doors in tomb complexes, the doors which do not link spaces physically but according to their belief, acted as doors between the gods or the deceased and the living world. They created a link and allowed interaction to happen between the two and allowed the people to present their offerings and do their rituals. They were made in such a way that it combined the look of an offering niche. They created a place in front of these doors in form of slabs, where they could keep the offerings. This shows that they made it according to its function, otherwise an actual door (between two rooms), would never have a slab in front of it. Thus a physical object like door, had led to an important element known as false door in Egypt, which was the main way to connect the worlds of the living and dead.

5.1.2. Pyramids of Giza

Complex of pyramids in Giza Necropolis, Cairo is one of the largest and famous pyramids in Egypt. Their amazing engineering work can be seen by the fact that it has base sides as 147m and 231m. It was built using blocks weighing 1.5 tons, yet they had an error of only 58mm in the structure. It consists of the Pyramid of Khufu (known as Pyramid of Cheops), the smaller Pyramid of Khafre, and modest-size Pyramid of Menkaure, along with a number of smaller satellite edifices, known as "queens" pyramids, causeways and valley pyramids, and the Great Sphinx.

The Pyramids of Giza were constructed to house the remains of the deceased Pharaohs who ruled over ancient Egypt. The features of the Great Pyramid of Giza are so large they are visible even from the Moon. The Pyramids of Giza are **one of the seven wonders of the ancient world**.

6. CHINESE CIVILIZATION

According to the belief of Chinese, at the moment of death, one's spirit is taken by messengers to the god of walls and moats, Ch'eng Huang, who conducts a preliminary hearing. Those found virtuous may go directly to one of the paradises, to the dwelling place of the immortals, or the tenth court of hell for immediate rebirth. After 49 days, sinners descend to

hell, located at the base of the mythical Mount Meru. There they undergo a fixed period of punishment in one or more levels of hell. When the punishment is complete, the souls in hell drink an elixir of oblivion in preparation for their next reincarnation. They then go to their next reincarnation, or, they are thrown off the bridge of pain into a river that takes them to their next life.

Tombs were considered to be the portals between the worlds of the living and the dead. The soul of the departed was divided into two parts--one went to heaven and one resided within the body. The soul going to heaven was thought to give protection or even bring good fortunes. To encourage their ancestors in heaven to do a favorable job, the living did everything possible to ensure the deceased were well-provided for in the afterlife. Tombs were believed to house the spirits of the world's most powerful emperors, as well as their empresses, servants, and mighty warriors.

6.1. Examples of funerary monuments

6.1.1. The Thirteen Tombs of the Ming Dynasty

It has world's largest concentration of Royal Tombs. It stands in form of an arc-shaped cluster of hills fronted by a small plain. 13 emperors of the Ming dynasty were buried here and the area is known as the Ming Tombs.

These tombs were built over an area of 40 square kilometres. Each tomb is located at the foot of a separate hill and is linked with the other tombs by a road called the Sacred Way. The stone archway at the southern end of the Sacred Way is decorated with designs of clouds, waves and divine animals. It is also the largest ancient stone archway in China. They believed in existence of an after-world, where the dead lived a life similar to that of the living. Emperors, therefore has grand mausoleums built for themselves.

The Sacred Way inside the gate of the Ming Tomb is lined with 18 pairs of stone human figures and animals. These include four each of three types of officials: civil, military and meritorious officials, symbolizing those who assist the emperor in the administration of the state, plus four each of six types of animals: lion, griffin, camel, elephant, unicorn and horse. The soul tower, which tells people whose tomb it is, rests on a circular wall called the city of treasures, which surrounds the burial mound. Thus it can be seen that belief of life after death led to such vast expanse of funerary monuments.

The site of the Ming Dynasty Imperial Tombs was chosen according to Feng Shui principles. According to these, bad spirits and evil winds descending from the North must be deflected; therefore, an arc-shaped area at the foot of the Jundu Mountains north of Beijing was selected. This area enclosed by the mountains fulfilled all the necessities as per

Feng Shui and thus had become the necropolis (city of dead) of the Ming Dynasty.

6.1.2. Tomb of First Emperor, Qin Shi-huang-di,

Inside the tomb of the emperor is furnishings designed to support a comfortable afterlife included the items and people the emperor had used throughout his life. This included servants and warriors. Since the lives of royalty revolved around power and wealth, their mortuary goods reflected their extravagant lifestyles. Objects for religious rites such as sacrificial cooking, storage vessels, and weapons to defend the spirits were buried in their actual size. It is believed that the burial ground of first emperor of china, also included great treasures. Jades were also used. Jade was believed to have the power to ward off evil and preserve the corpse from decay.

Tomb guardians, made of terra-cotta, played a significant role in burial practices. These guardians were believed to have the power to protect the dead from evil spirits and tomb robbers. Qin Shi-huang-di, had the greatest number of tomb guardians. Around his burial chamber, sculpted armies of more than 9,000 life-size soldiers and horses were buried for his protection. Each soldier had different details of facial features, expressions, hair styles, and uniforms denoting rank.

7. CONCLUSION

In the past, the attachment and emotions of people towards their close ones, who died and their concern, that what would happen to these people after their death, led to formation of different belief systems in different religions and cultures. These beliefs encouraged them to build structures to protect and honor the dead. This led to the development of new form of architecture, known as funerary architecture.

According to their beliefs and their interpretation, they developed different kinds of funerary monuments and made different elements interpreting their beliefs in different ways. Since the construction involves lot of money, so in general they were built mostly for the people, who had power or for the people who played an important role in a religion or culture.

The fact that some of the funerary monuments have been included in the seven wonders of the world, shows that a lot of effort, money and time has been spent on these structures and the fact that they became so famous proves that the people who had built them, had put in all their efforts, which shows the feelings that were attached to these monuments. Thus it is clearly visible that funerary monuments had a lot of importance in life of people in past.

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