



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

CULTURAL ARCHITECTURE AND RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

Aparna Joshi

Humayun was the second Mughal Emperor of India. He had an unstable reign due to the fact that he was deposed for a decade by Sher Shah Suri. He died an accidental death in 1556. Humayun's tomb was built by his First wife Bega Begum, she travelled to the Safavid Empire in order to bring architects and artisans to India specially to built the Humayun's Tomb. In the complex, there are a number of smaller tombs but the largest is the octagonal tomb of Humayun.

This is one of the first identifiable examples of an Islamic Octagonal tomb in the Indian Subcontinent. This is a shape peculiar to the Islamic context and culture. The reason for this was that the Quran mentions 8 gates of 'Jannat' often called paradise.

The First was Baab-As-Salat: this was for the individual who was a punctual and attentive Muslim

The Second was Baab As Jihad: This was the gate for those who died in the Fight for Islam

The Third, fourth were the Baab-As Sadaqat and Baab Ar Rayyan

They were for those who died in works of charity and those who remained sincere to Islam

The Fifth and Sixth were Baab Al Hajj and Baab Al-Kaazimeen Al-Ghaiz Wal Aafina Anin Naas : they were for those who observed the Hajj pilgrimage and Those who suppressed and controlled their anger

The last two gates of Paradise were for those who were steadfast and those who continuously remembered Allah.

Therefore, Islamic tombs were and still continue to be octagonal in shape in order to represent the 8 gates of Jannat. This tomb also features the concept of Charbagh or four symmetrical gardens that represent Jannat or heaven. The location of this tomb is very close to the 'Dargah' of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, a well known Sufi Saint of the Chishti Silsila. The description of Jannat can be found in the first Surah of the Quran and were portrayed in the qawwali Kun Faya Kun literally translated as 'He wished it and it was'

This idea can be seen in the later work Dante and Dan Brown in the Inferno that was an idea mirrored in the Bible.

The Nine stages of Hell were codified and explained in the seminal work of Dante Alighieri, 'The Divine Comedy'. In this book, Dante describes in great detail the actions that would lead to being placed in the Nether world.

The First Circle of hell is called the 'Limbo' is for virtuous Pagans (Those who did not convert to Christianity) and unbaptised Christians. This was the outer Circle of Hell, therefore furthest away from the burning Inferno at the centre of Hell.

In Hindu philosophy, a parallel can be found to the stage of 'Limbo' in the Epic Ramayana and Mahabharat with the legend of ' Trishanku', a direct of the Sun who wanted to go to heaven alive. He therefore, hangs in Limbo between Heaven and Earth. Similarly, Ashwatthama the son of Dronacharya, the teacher of the Pandavas is also said to be in Limbo between this world and the next as a punishment for his misdeeds in the War of Mahabharata.

The Second Circle of Hell, is the Circle of 'Lust' in this circle are those who performed lustful and adulterous actions on Earth, Dante famously places Helen of Troy and Cleopatra in this circle for their lusty deeds.

The Third Circle of Hell, is 'Circle of Gluttony' is for those who consider themselves Foodies, do not control their Taste buds, he places Roman and Greek heroes in this circle.

The Fourth Circle of Hell is the ' Circle of Greed' Dante, depicts those who were greedy on Earth and usurped another individuals property. He placed the Medici Family in this circle as part of the Catholic Church banking or usury was seen as a sin. This was studied by Max Weber for the Protestant Community in his Seminal Work ' The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' and directly contradicts Dante.

The Fifth Circle of Hell is the Circle of ' Circle of Anger', this circle of Dante was for those who could not control their anger and indulged in outbursts. This circle of Hell was contrary to the Islamic gate to Jannat.

The Sixth Circle of Hell is the 'Circle of Heresy', Heresy in the Dante was an integral part of society, it connoted an ideology negating the religion taught by the Church. It also implied the use of magic, charms and black magic. In this circle, Dante places those women who were identified as Witches as the reformation swept across Europe.

The Seventh Circle of Hell was the ' Circle of Violence' this circle was home to those people who died as a result of violence this could be in the situations such as war, hanging, suicide and other violence that could seen as crimes.

The Eighth Circle of Hell was the ' Circle of Fraud', this circle can be further divided into ten stages that can largely be classified as Material fraud, monetary fraud, Religious fraud etc.

The Ninth Circle of Hell was the 'Circle of Treachery' this circle was the closest to the Inferno, it was for those who rose against the established temporal power that governed the nation. This therefore, housed individuals such as rebels and other traitors.

However, the octagonal shape of the tomb as a base is dropped by Shah Jahan for a Cubical structure for the Taj Mahal in order to make it look more symmetrical and aesthetically pleasing.

References

Shah Jahanabad : Rana Safvi

Akbar: Ira Mukhoty

Inferno: Dan Brown

Hadith-Quran: stories for the Modern Reader: Rana Safvi

Daughters of the Sun: Ira Mukhoty

8 Doors of Jannat: Omam Khalid

Shapes in Islam: Various Authors

Jaya: Devdutt Patnaik

A visitor's guide to Dante's 9 stages of Hell : Penguin random House

