

A CHAPEL FOR DEAD

Nayansi Jain

Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Since the time humans became conscious and aware of their own existence, there has been a need to understand where we exactly are in this incomprehensible universe and combined with the need for cooperation, led to the rise of religion. The ideas of religions did four things: provide existential comfort, guide us morally, foster a sense of community and took care of fitting the local events of life into a larger pattern.

But with science we have been able to pull things out of the realm of religion. Creation myths are replaced with the Big Bang. Demon possession is supplanted by schizophrenia, fanaticism related with religious mandates exposed how religion is equally effective at dividing people and atheism is the fastest growing religion in the world.

But still we bear the uncertainty of existence. We are in a universe that is utterly beyond our control. As we grow we encounter within ourselves a similarly complex and chaotic world—of emotion and intellect, desire and revulsion, love and fear. We need a way to reconcile ourselves with the uncertainty of living.

The project aims at resolving this predicament by making people realize through symbolic spatial experience that no matter what they follow or believe in, the journey from birth to death is a universal experience. The events change, and even the sequence of those events with respect to the ages changes. But the fundamental core remains the same and can be used as the ultimate unifying force. Death being so final can be used to remind us that our time here is fleeting and should be spent doing fulfilling things rather than making sure of the next ten years.

The designed spatial experience is based on the research which includes conversations with psychiatrists, psychologists and surveys to understand the driving forces of life and cathartic experiences in the city older than history itself: Benaras. A city for every caste, creed and religion and spaces having an agglomeration of Pancha-bhuta and Pancha-indriya: involving all the five senses and elements of nature connecting with us, giving a feeling of tranquility.

Keywords: Benaras, Celebration, Death, Pancha-Bhuta, Pancha-Indriya, Positivity, Journey of Life, Spirituality, Religion, Symbolism