

**Spirituality,
World Religions
and NDEs**


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Spirituality, World Religions, and NDEs

Introduction




1. Afterlife in World Religions
2. Parallels between religious & NDE accounts
 - Holy Scriptures of 7 religions
 - How these religions accommodate NDEs
 - a. similarities between beliefs & values of world religion & character transformation of NDErs
 - Helpful for social services professionals

Hinduism

Afterlife in Hinduism

- Karma & Samsara
- Moksha




Hindu Temple*

*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Hinduism

Afterlife in the Rig Veda

1. The Law of Karma
2. A single earthly life
3. A single heaven
 - Eternal abode
 - Light, milk, honey, Soma
 - Flute, wish-cows
 - In the company of the forefathers, and Yama
4. A single hell
 - Deep, dark bottomless place
 - Soma and Indra
 - Eternal abode



The Realm of Indra*

*Traditional Thai Buddhist Art

Hinduism

Hinduism & the NDE

- Rig Veda & NDE**
 - Realm of light

"The kingdom of inexhaustible light, ...
To this kingdom transport me,
Eternal, undying." (IX. 113:7)


 - Listening to singing & flutes
 - Seeing the forefathers and Yama

"Meet Yama, meet the Fathers [dead
ancestors],..." (X. 14: 7_8)

Hinduism

Hinduism & the NDE

- A comparison of features of Hindu & American NDE**
 - The tunnel experience
 - Susan Blackmore's research of Hindu NDEs
 - Pasricha & Stevenson's research of Hindu NDEs
 - Yamdoots ("messengers")
 - Angels ("messengers")




The Realm of Indra

*Traditional Thai Buddhist Art

Hinduism

Hinduism & the NDE

- A comparison of features of Hindu & American NDE**
 - The case of mistaken identity
 - Life review
 - Meeting the deceased
 - Meeting religious figures




Hindu Temple

*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Hinduism

Hinduism & the NDE

- How does Hindu belief system accommodate NDEs?**
 - Respect for life
 - Atman-Brahman doctrine
 - Pantheism
 - Nemaste
 - Selfless service (karma yoga)
 - The Bhagavad-Gita (Songs of the Lord)
 - Krishna
 - Arjuna



Hindu Temple

*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Hinduism

Hinduism & the NDE

3. How does Hindu belief system accommodate NDEs?

- Ahimsa (non-violence)
a. Mahatma Gandhi:

"Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind."

Buddhism

Afterlife in Buddhism

1. Buddha's answer to metaphysical issues

- "Noble Silence"

2. Nirvana, the ultimate goal



The Great Enlightenment*

*Picture of Bas-Relief provided by William Ferrero

Buddhism

Afterlife in Buddhism

- Numerous heavens & Hells
-Temporary places



*Traditional Thai Buddhist Art

Buddhism

Buddhism & the NDE

1. Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Thodol)

-A manual to guide the dead

-An account of the experiences of the soul in bardo

-Parallels between NDE & Bardo Thodol

a. Out of Body Experience

b. Being of Light (Amida)

Buddhism

Buddhism & the NDE

2. Delogs (Returned from Death)
 - Out of body experience
 - Spiritual guides
 - Meeting others
 - Appearance before a religious Figure
 - a. Yama
 - b. Judgment
- People's reaction to delog and NDE experience



Judgment in the Hall of Yama, Lord of the Dead*

*Traditional Thai Buddhist Art

Buddhism

Buddhism & the NDE

3. Pure Land Holy Scriptures
 - Being of Light
 - a. Buddha Amida
 - b. "the Buddha of Infinite Light"
- The realm beyond
- a. Amida's "Pure Land" paradise
 - b. no craving and no suffering



Judgment in the Hall of Yama, Lord of the Dead*

*Traditional Thai Buddhist Art

Buddhism

Buddhism & the NDE

4. NDEs in Thailand
 - Phra Malaya (a medieval monk)
- Thai NDE Traits
- a. Yamatoots



Yama sends a Yamatoot to collect a soul whose time has come.*



Phra Malaya*

*Traditional Thai Buddhist Art

Buddhism

Buddhism & the NDE

4. NDEs in Thailand
 - Thai NDE Traits
 - b. Making Merit
 - c. Mistaken Identity
 - d. Review of important karmas
 - e. Tour of heaven & hell



Yama's accountant & the scales of karma with signs reading 'sin' & 'merit'*



Making Merit*

*Traditional Thai Buddhist Art

Buddhism

Buddhism & the NDE

5. How does Buddhist belief system accommodate NDEs

- Detachment
- Compassion
 - Bodhisattvas
 - Kuan Yin
- Non-Violence (Ahimsa)



The Great Enlightenment

*Picture of Bas-Relief provided by William Ferrero

Zoroastrianism

Afterlife in Zoroastrianism

- Zoroaster's Gathas
 - Judgment at Chinvat Bridge
 - Zoroaster, the Judge
 - The balance
 - Crossing the Chinvat Bridge
 - Heaven or Hell



Zoroaster

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrian Holy Texts and the NDE

1. The Being of Light
 - Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord)
2. Life Review
 - Datastan_i_Denik (The Religious Norm)
3. Meeting others
 - Datastan_i_Denik



Zoroaster

Judaism

Afterlife in The Hebrew Bible (Torah)

- Sheol (Pit)
 - An underground hollow
 - The eternal abode of all the dead
 - A state of permanent sleep



*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Judaism

The Hebrew Bible & the NDE

1. Tunnel experience

"But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth."
(Psalms 63:9)



Jewish Synagogue

2. The Being of Light

"The LORD is my light and my salvation."
(Psalms 27:1)

*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Judaism

The Hebrew Bible & the NDE

3. Importance of Love

"I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me."
(Proverbs 8:17)

4. Character transformation

"He who pursues righteousness and kindness, will find life and honor."
(Proverbs 21:21)

Judaism

NDE in Rabbinic Literature

1. Auditory sensations

"...the noise of the soul departing from the body reverberates throughout the entire world."
(Shapiro, 1979, p. 91)

2. The tunnel experience

-Bodies of the Jews buried in the Diaspora

Judaism

NDE in Rabbinic Literature

3. The out-of-body experience

"...Deliver a warm eulogy in my behalf, because I will be standing there."
(Shapiro, 1979, pp. 91-92)

4. Meeting others

"I will explain the Mishnah in accordance with the opinion of R Oshaya, so that when I die, R Oshaya will come forward to meet me."
(Shapiro, 1979, p. 92)

Judaism

NDE in Rabbinic Literature


5. The Being of Light

"while man cannot see the glory of God during his lifetime, he can see it at the time of death."
(Shapiro, 1979, p. 93)

Judaism

Judaism and the NDE

- How does Judaism accommodate NDEs?
 - Belief in God
 - Appreciation for life
 - Sanctity of the human nature
 - Justice, love and forgiveness
 - a. "Love thy neighbor as thyself"
 - b. Yom Kippur




Jewish Synagogue

*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Christianity

Afterlife in Christianity

1. The two realities of humans
2. Heaven, Hell



Church


*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Christianity

The New Testament & the NDE

1. Out of body experience
 - "Man in Christ"
 - OBE, visions of heaven, and ineffability

"I know of a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven-whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise-whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-and he heard things, that can not be told, which man may not utter." (2 Corinthians 2-4)



*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Christianity

The New Testament & the NDE

2. Spiritual body (soul)

"...If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body..." (1 Corinthians 15:44)
3. The Being of Light

"...and his [God's] servants...shall see his face, ...And... they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light..." (Revelation 22:4-5)

Christianity

The New Testament & the NDE

4. Life Review
 - Parousia

"And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done." (Revelation 20:12)
5. Importance of love


"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12)
6. Spiritual transformation

"Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor." (1 Corinthians 10:24)

Christianity

How does Christianity accommodate NDEs?

1. NDE a "demonic deception!"
 - "angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14)
 - "too much weight on a single biblical verse"
 - God or Jesus as the Light
 - Being of Light
 - a. manifestation of true love
 - b. source of positive transformation
 - c. Evil cannot generate goodness in others
 - "the bad tree bears evil fruit." (Mat. 7:18)



*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Christianity

How does Christianity accommodate NDEs?


2. Commonalities between Christian and NDEs' values
 - love, compassion, service
 - Jesus

"...whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20: 27-28)
3. Distinct preference for inner attitudes

Islam

Afterlife in Islam

1. Immortality of the soul
2. The angel of death (Izrail)
3. Barzakh (grave)




Dome of the Rock

*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Islam

Afterlife in Islam

1. Signs of the Day of Resurrection
 - The appearance of Al-Dajjal ("the deceiver")
 - The return of Christ
 - rules for 40 years
 - The coming of Al-Mahdi ("The Rightly Guided One")




Dome of the Rock

*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Islam

Afterlife in Islam

2. The first & the second trumpet blast by the angel Israfil
3. The Resurrection (Ma'ad)



Dome of the Rock


*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Islam

Afterlife in Islam

4. The Day of Judgment
 - God as the Judge
 - "book of actions"
 - Kiramun-i-Katibun ("honorable recorders")
 - The Balances (Mizan)
 - The Sirat
5. Paradise (al-jannah)
 - Lovely damsels (huris)
 - Kawthar & Salsabil

"Upon that day faces shall be radiant, gazing upon their Lord". (Qur'an 75: 22)



*Artwork by Inonge Stevens


Islam

Afterlife in Islam

6. Hell (Al-Gehennam)

-Eternal punishment for two groups:

- a. the Idolater (Mushrik)
- b. the Infidel (Kafir)



Dome of the Rock

*Artwork by Inonge Stevens

Islam

The Qur'an, Hadith (Tradition) and The NDE

1. Soul (spiritual body)

"And they will ask thee of the spirit. Say: The spirit proceedeth at my Lord's command; but of [that] knowledge, only a little is given to you." (Qur'an 17:87)
2. Life Review

"On that day shall every soul find present before it whatever it hath done of good. As to what it hath done of evil, it will wish that wide were the space between itself and it!" (Qur'an 3:28)

Islam

The Qur'an, Hadith (Tradition) and The NDE

3. The Being of Light

"God is the light of the heavens and of the earth." (Qur'an 24:35)

"...But truly most men believe not that they shall meet their Lord." (Qur'an 30:6-7)
4. Importance of Love

"I was a hidden treasure, and I loved that I be known, so I created the world." (Quoted in Novak, 1994, p. 314)

Islam

The Qur'an, Hadith (Tradition) and The NDE

5. Significance of Knowledge

"The acquisition of knowledge is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim, male and female." (Quoted in Novak, 1994, p. 320)
6. Spiritual transformation

"The best of men are those who are useful to others." (Hadith of Bukhari quoted in Wilson, 1995, p. 688)

Islam

How does Islam accommodate NDEs?

1. Belief in God
2. Humility, honesty, service and charity



"...he is pious... who for the love of God disburseth his wealth to his kindred, and to the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer..."
(Qur'an 2:171-173)

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The Bahá'í Faith

Afterlife in the Bahá'í Faith

1. Essentially spiritual beings
2. God's purpose for existence
-True happiness



Shrine of the Báb

The Bahá'í Faith

Afterlife in the Bahá'í Faith

3. Immortality of the soul
4. Progress of the soul in the afterlife
-The means to the progress of the soul in the afterlife
-Infinite progress through the countless worlds of God



Shrine of the Báb at night

The Bahá'í Faith

Afterlife in the Bahá'í Faith

5. Heaven and Hell as "Spiritual Conditions"
-Soul, a non-material entity
-Heaven:
"natural consequence of spiritual growth"
-Hell:
"the results of failure to grow spiritually"
-Conventional descriptions are symbolic



Shrine of the Báb at night

The Bahá'í Faith

Afterlife in the Bahá'í Faith

6. The Nature of the Spiritual Life in the Next Worlds

-The soul retains its consciousness and individuality

-The soul will recognize other souls

7. The Realm of Souls is within our World -"degrees of existence" prevent us from "seeing" the higher spiritual realm



Reinee Pasarow

The Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Scriptures and the NDE

1. Ineffability

"The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eye of men ... The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, pp. 156_57)

2. Heavenly (spiritual) body

"It is manifest that beyond this material body, man is endowed with another reality...This other and inner reality is called the heavenly body." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 1982)

The Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Scriptures and the NDE

3. Realm of Light

"That divine world is manifestly a world of lights." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p.226)

4. Meeting others

"As to the question whether the souls will recognize each other in the spiritual world: This fact is certain; for the Kingdom is the world of vision where all the concealed realities will become disclosed. How much more the well-known souls will become manifest ... how much more will he recognize or discover persons with whom he hath been associated." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, p.367)

The Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Scriptures and the NDE

5. Life Review

"It is clear and evident that all men shall, after their physical death, estimate the worth of their deeds, and realize all that their hands have wrought." (*Gleanings from the Writing of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 171)

6. The Being of Light

"I have turned my face unto Thee, O my Lord! Illumine it with the light of Thy countenance. Protect it, then, from turning to any one but thee." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p.5)

The Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Scriptures and the NDE

7. Knowledge

"Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom." (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, P. 260)

8. Importance of love

"In the world of existence there is indeed no greater power than the power of love." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 179)

The Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Scriptures and the NDE

9. No fear of death

"How does one look forward to the goal of any journey? With hope and with expectation. It is even so with the end of this earthly journey. In the next world, man will find himself freed from many of the disabilities under which he now suffers." ('Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 96)

10. De-emphasizing sectarianism, dogma, and doctrinal disputes


"... It is the outward practices of religion that are so different, and it is they that cause disputes and enmity- while the reality is always the same, and one. ..." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, pp. 120-1)

The Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Scriptures and the NDE

11. Belief in the essential unity of all religions

- "Heading Toward Omega"
- "religious & spiritual orientation"



Bahá'í Temple in India

"Religions are many, but the reality of religion is one... The branches are many, but the tree is one..." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p.126)

12. Desire for a universal religion that embraces all humanity


The Bahá'í Faith

How does Bahá'í Faith accommodate NDEs?

1. Significance of life on earth
- "Embryonic Preparation"

2. Sanctity of human nature
- "Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee..."

3. Love, Justice, service, unity and, peace
- Work as worship



Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh

"The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established ." (Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, p. 286)

Spirituality, World Religions, and NDEs

Conclusion

1. Afterlife in World Religions
2. Parallels between religious & NDE accounts
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