

An Investigation into Contemporary Interior Spaces considering the Concept of Space in Traditional Architecture

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ABSTRACT

In the present study, at first the concept of space is generally investigated, then some definitions for space values in interior architecture and human dependence on forgotten criteria are discussed. Following that, aiming to compare human relation with traditional and modern spaces, each of these architectures is compared according to a comparative category. Finally, comparing these concepts, quality differences of traditional and modern interior spaces are presented that indicates modern specialized architecture has put some of the concepts of space as a source and basis which are totally different from human conceptions (in forming its tradition and origin) and sometimes is a complete contradictory. The result of the test indicated that paying attention to repeated values in traditional architecture seems important, and the effect of these values can be investigated in environmental sustainability, cultural, social and economical fields.

Key words: Human, Quality, Interior space, Traditional architecture, Contemporary architecture.

INTRODUCTION

If we live in a traditional space for a long time, probably we may become tired of that and it does not please us that much. The reason is that, although cultural aspects and traditional heritage motivate us to visit an old architecture, according to new facilities and current lifestyles, they do not match with us thoroughly. It means, civilization and technology have made us be accustomed to a lifestyle in which lack of facilities in traditional spaces are felt easily. When traditional architecture is observed for its spiritual feelings and cultural heritages, there seems to be no inadequacy; but there is no doubt that if we want to live in that place, some physical needs may appear that remained traditional architectural environments can not fulfill those needs (Soltanzadeh,2012).

Due to having a cultural and spiritual support, traditional architecture enjoys philosophical patterns, and by fulfilling physical and practical needs

appeared in the society, it enjoyed other principles as well. Based on this fact, observation of a culture and belief in architecture looks necessary; and cultural identity surely depends on observation of these ethnical traditions and beliefs.

Since thinking has always preceded practice and material, we do not look at architectural values in technical and aesthetical aspects, but we speculate the mental and cultural contents hidden in its appearance.

Forming of architecture needs to be based on knowledge, responsibility and human traits. Such thoughtful and reflective architecture prevents wasting which is against culture of the architecture. There is no doubt that human's needs are not confined just in elements and appearance, mental and spiritual needs as well as physical needs need to be provided, even more. Such needs that human try to fulfill them subconsciously, may not be ignored by architects. Considering the fact that

lack of emotion can not be replaced by technique proves this claim; and this is the case we face in Iran contemporary architecture, also not being at the same level with the technology of development in the world should be added as well.

By investigation and analysis of elements and patterns in the history of Iran architecture, this may be concluded that although these elements and patterns had been created in a specific period in the history of architecture, but by continuing to be present in next periods, they refined and developed and took an independent identity in time and they convey a general concept of a pattern or material that has been isolated and taken a mental image and carry an emotional load. If we accept that this quality is not offered by time, we are allowed to use them in their isolated forms in today's architecture (Soltanzadeh,2012).

Importance of Space At Home

Home is an important topic in our architecture which is not discussed that much. Unfortunately, this topic is not investigated in architecture faculties. The need to discuss this topic is severely felt, and this need can be resolved by recognizing old architecture and comparing them with contemporary architecture (Ayvazian, 2009).

People who lived in traditional homes were completely relaxed. They provided everything indoor and made it a pleasant place to not to feel tired (Memarian,1992).

In the present study, at first it looks necessary to answer some questions, so that we can discuss the real values of architecture. Without having true information and recognition about architecture and its principles and bases, we may not be able to present any criteria for evaluating its values, or trying to categorize the principles and bases thereof. According to the answer of these questions we can achieve a subtle analysis, and considering historical trends and development in architecture in our country, we can investigate the course of this architecture and present the results as a hypothesis.

The first question that is a mixture of some questions refers to the circumstances of traditional

architecture valuation, thus it is raised in this way: what are the traditional architecture values in interior spaces and what kind of relation does it make with human? Following that, the relation of architecture with traditions, beliefs and culture of a society is raised, finally in the course of historical and global development, considering the present moment; transition of architectural features to the contemporary architecture in interior spaces is taken into consideration.

The answer to this question may lead to a final conclusion that can be discussed in two points of view: first theoretical and philosophical view and second scientific and practical view.

Theoretical and philosophical concepts of architecture and various spiritual and human aspects which are based on the theoretical bases are our main topics, in compare to scientific and practical aspects of architecture; they are in a high priority.

Theoretical Bases of Interior Spaces

The goal of architecture is to make an interior space, because it separates a section from a bigger one as a private space.

Looking at history provide us with the power of analysis and review the decisions. Historicity is an approach that takes care of old traditions and the application of historical forms (Groter,2011).

In order to prove that we believe the value of historical association of ideas in contemporary time and honour the position of identity, we should remember that creation of meaning needs the existence of codes and signs, and these codes are placed at the heart of elements and beautiful shapes which must be used in architecture. With this application, architecture is a cultural, ideal and meaningful process.

To clarify the topic, it looks necessary to realize architecture based on three primary principles:

- 1- "architecture must be based on truth and enjoy originality." To feel this principle, taking care of philosophical and aesthetical contents is essential?
- 2- Architecture must be useful. In the other

words, it must have an aim and lead into applications intended. In fact, this principle indicated the performance of architecture.

- 3- Architecture must be firm and constant. On the one hand, firmness in architecture refers to the total observation of technical principles and on the other hand, it refers to utilization of mathematical sciences and geometry that finally may lead to a lasting monument.

Therefore, traditional architecture means relying on the above mentioned principles; it can provide a material and spiritual space needed by human in the manner that it has peace, sincerity and balance.

If we note this key point that the relation between architecture and the land in which it appears is the same relation that a human has with his customs, traditions and in fact his culture, we may come to this conclusion that a wandering human can create just a rootless architecture without identity.

Style or identity, in general terms, is created out of factors such as physical, moral, and spiritual needs of a society that ultimately determine the cultural identity of a society. The combination of these factors, in architecture of a period, produces a method which is so-called traditional architecture.

“Since thinking has always preceded practice and material”, we put the architectural values in the mental and cultural contents hidden in its appearance (Ayvazian,2009). Forming of architecture needs to be based on knowledge, responsibility and human traits. Such thoughtful and reflective architecture prevents wasting which is against culture of the architecture. There is no doubt that human’s needs are not confined just in elements and appearance, mental and spiritual needs as well as physical needs need to be provided, even more. Such needs that human try to fulfill them subconsciously, may not be ignored by architects. Considering the fact that lack of emotion can not be replaced by technique proves this claim; and this is the case we face in Iran contemporary architecture.

Due to having a cultural and spiritual support, traditional architecture enjoys philosophical

patterns, and by fulfilling physical and practical needs appeared in the society, it enjoyed other principles as well. Based on this fact, observation of a culture and belief in architecture looks necessary; and cultural identity surely depends on observation of these ethnical traditions and beliefs.

Understanding of human expectations and essential needs, which is different in each individual, is not an easy task. To fulfill such different expectations and needs, we do not have any instrument to measure “shape” and “action” in architecture. Therefore, we helplessly switch to concepts such as being pleasant and favorable or acceptable. Being pleasant, favorable and acceptable depends on persons’ taste. But it does not permit an architect to make an ultimate abstract and inconspicuous design. Definitely, such an architect would not succeed. Before starting the topic of traditional architecture conformity with principles and bases of architecture, it looks necessary to mention some points about the relation between the environment and space which is important in introduction of architecture; therefore, nothing is ignored in the investigation of traditional architectural features (Soltanzadeh,2012).

Traditional Interior Architecture

Interior architecture in introverted houses in central and warm and dry areas in Iran or cold areas is important, because on one hand climate and environmental reasons and on the other hand cultural and social reasons. There was a great difference between indoor and outdoor design of a building, perhaps they were in two very contradictory aspects, so that it looked as if the building was behind the outdoor. In the past, being introverted was caused by climate phenomena, and interior architecture of these buildings can be mentioned in two levels, at first in yard scale or open indoor space that may be categorized according to their various applications, second the indoor space of rooms and halls in which the most private scales of life happened there.

Effective Factors Increasing The Quality Of Interior Space Light

Light and color are factors that give soul and position to the architectural space, and they

are effective in completing other principles. Light is the most fundamental element included in human environment, and its existence is the best definition for it; due to the fact that realization of light is done through senses and is considered as self-evident. Light is one essential factors in architectural design which should receive great attention. From giant architects in history, it can be inferred that they had used sun rays and light rules their constructions.

In interior architecture, rate and level of artificial light has a direct relation with the capacity of surfaces that absorb and reflect the light. When the light changes in interior space, color changes as well, and sometimes they disappear. Therefore, the rate of light in interior architecture should match with applications and surface colors and their reflection power in terms of quality, intensity and direction. Adjustment of natural and artificial lights in architecture can highlight or downplay some elements. Although artificial light does not have the variety of natural light, if it is mixed skillfully with natural light, it is able to display features of the place and architectural environment conditions (Damyar,2012).

Originality

When we talk about the character of a building, we mean the appearance of a building and a clear goal that it holds for being constructed. Of course, this essential point can not be ignored that mere creativity does not produce originality; on the other hand, just goal and meaning, insisting on belief, can not produce originality. But having a clear and appropriate goal which is matched with cultural conditions, determination in creativity, believing in truth and pondering upon it, looking at the case spiritually are a collection that definitely will lead to originality (Ardalan,2001).

Originality in work induces its hidden belief to the observer and make him praise it involuntary. A conscious observer can easily describe the qualities in the work of a creative architect and figure out the inspirations influenced architect's mind.

A statement by Louis Kahn About traditional architecture can give us more information about the transition of traditions to the contemporary period, and that is, past and present of a heritage may not be

separated from an individual, but the fact that human is not able to live in traditions can not be denied.

To answer the question of which traditional architecture feature encourage us to praise and visit it, it might be mentioned that at first we should refer to a cultural heritage that connect our spiritual emotions to that atmosphere by nature. Then, architecture itself is mentioned according to its physical aspects or attractions for an observer. In fact, what we know as theoretical bases have a great impact in attracting an observer and make the observer to praise the building.

Bases

Bases include unity, interconnection, symmetry, scale etc., and when it combines with honesty and originality, and an architect can harmonize his construction with the environment, it will lead to a cultural identity. In fact, what we know as theoretical bases has a great effect on attracting an observer and makes him admire a building.

Undoubtedly, matter of time would not let us to keep this feeling for a long time and stay in that place for a while. Spiritually or culturally, there seems to be no shortage, but surely if we want to live in that place, other physical needs may appear that old architectures can not fulfill them. Nowadays social communications of human done in the present residential places are specific for these places, whereas people of those periods did not have such communications.

Privacy

Iranian's culture and beliefs necessitates that we keep our privacy in traditional ways, even in new urban areas. In the other words, in spite of heterogeneous development of urban areas and existence of communications present in these areas, it seems necessary that privacy receives more attention in Iranian architecture. Observing of privacy in private spaces and partitioning of public places and private life of a family are among Iranian life necessities.

Investigating the architectural spaces in the past, we understand that the principle of interconnection in traditional architecture had separated private spaces from other spaces by

making fracture in the axes of motion. Multiplicity of these axes from entrance to internal spaces did not permit a stranger to see private spaces of the house directly(Damyar,2012).

Unity

Realization of nature, environment and action of a combination result in unity. To achieve this unity and getting a general result, architecture needs to have an appropriate recognition of elements and their correct combination. In this way, clarity of meaning and architect's goal plays an important role; because a general awareness on the meaning of the work and complete recognition of the goal are necessary to reach unity.

Environment and Architecture

In Iran's traditional architecture, it has always been important to have a suitable environment beside a natural environment. Not only architecture beside a dry desert, but also in wet and green areas of north of Iran, planting of trees or making green spaces near to private spaces have been customary. Private green spaces in some areas like desert edge produce a special and environmental contrast, and in northern areas it links surroundings to the private spaces. Having a small pond in the yard used to be a good and useful in Iranian's traditions. Now, as it was mentioned as reasons of development in nowadays urban areas, it is not possible, if at all, to build a green space traditionally for each residential unit(Soltanzadeh,2012).

Building Orientation

In traditional Iranian places, the orientation of a building, location and dimensions of a yard seemed so noticeable. For those architecture, although technology was not improved that much, to take advantage of fresh weather in a living place, environment was used instead. But in our age, although new and advanced technologies are available, this important case has been forgotten. Elders who have experienced living in both spaces regret those days. In addition, in the past it was possible to enjoy monsoons and environmental winds and also correct implementation of sun light and shadows by placing the building in correct orientation (Damyar,2012).

Decorations

Interior architecture of rooms and other closed and covered spaces were influenced by different phenomena, among which the most important ones are materials and structure of a building. Clay and brick were used to build bearing walls in urban areas beside desert areas in the past. Piers and important sections of a structure were made of bricks and other parts were built of clay. Normally, bearing sections, walls and piers were thicker than partitioning sections of walls; therefore, these thin areas were used to build niches. As a result, organization and combined volume of interior spaces of rooms were built and designed following the shape of the structure (Ardalan ,2001). According to common traditions in Iran, floor of the rooms were covered by a carpet. In most of them carpets were colorful. The color of the carpet beside the colors of colorful glasses of windows created a happy atmosphere that increased the quality of the space (Ardalan,2001).

Ceiling was also decorated as an important surface in average and large buildings. Different plaster mouldings were used to decorate the ceilings and in a few buildings painting was used as well.

Plaster moulding is a common method for decorating interior sections of a building holding several years of history. Flexibility of plaster made it a suitable material for moulding different and elegant designs inside the rooms and on ceilings. According to PirNia, Iranian architecture has always been an art depending on people's life, belief and needs. This has been the attitude about Iran architecture before and after Islam (Ardalan,2001).

Contemporary interior architecture

Interior design, which is known as a profession, art, and industry around the world, refers to optimization of interior spaces in order to perform daily jobs and life.

Most of our life time is spent in interior spaces of buildings. These spaces produce an environment which provides our basic needs such as requiring of a shelter and most of our actions are done in them. Also, the thing that gives spirit to

a building is its interior space. Therefore, it can be expressed that on one hand the quality of an interior space has a direct effect on how we perform an activity there and on the other hand it influences our attitudes, conditions and characteristics. Accordingly, the goal of interior design is to optimize physical and mental application of a space to make it convenient for living. Architectural spaces without any interior design are not usable, and if they are usable, they may not be effective and optimized. (Ardalan,2001)

Since interior design has a direct relation with psychological characteristics, human traits in interior spaces of living, both public and private, should be considered carefully to obtain a favorable design. Designing interior spaces, an architect should deal with two cases: application of the space and the effect it creates on persons who use it.

Interior design has a vast spectrum of elements and components such as form, light, color, texture, floor, ceiling, wall, functional and decorative elements and furniture. These elements are designers' tools that should be placed in a design appropriately and consistently.

CONCLUSION

Iran's architecture made use of previous generations' experiences to achieve remarkable new experiences. Therefore, traditional architecture could gain an outstanding relative evolution. At the present time, new cultural, scientific, economical communications have caused some changes in

people's life. If transition of traditional architecture was done step by step, due to being more reasonable, it may provide better facilities in the field of architecture in this country.

Unlike local spaces, modern spaces are not created by people. They are located in created space of professional modernists. Unlike modern spaces, traditional spaces are not specialized, but they are unique; it means they are specific for the person who lives in it and is specific for the area it is located in and includes the slightest elements because it does not know itself as an administrator for macro-structure. It may be inferred that modern era contains a forgotten and ignored content of a space that belonged to people with traditional roots; it can be understood from the conformity of expectations in housing and its users. This case needs to be considered individually in further studies (damyar,2012).

In our time and architecture, theoretical bases of architecture have received less attention and put in the last priority, in some cases it is ignored totally; whereas its importance to achieve the most favorable design put it at the top of the architectural principles and attitudes.

Two steps may be considered in architectural design: first step is conversance of architectural bases in which awareness about peoples' culture and belief is in the heart of that. Second one refers to physical and technological matters. For these reasons, to keep architectural values of the past, cultural and spiritual values should be considered; hence its identity can be maintained.

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