

**THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTURE IN TRADITIONAL HOUSING OF IRAN**

**Esmail Eskandari**

Department of Architecture, High Education Center of Firozabad, Firozabad, Iran.

E-mail: esmael.2020@yahoo.com

**ABSTRACT**

“Culture” is the main factor of formation of house and it plays important role in social sustainability. Thus, the study of religious life plays important role in human culture. This phenomenon is consistent with the generality of social system on human culture in any nature. After the advent of Islam, Muslim architects attempted to manifest the cultural and belief principles in artistic and architecture works and emerge the God unity soul in their works. Islamic art establishes a mutual link between two worlds: It links this world and what is in it to the other world. Religious art by tradition has hidden force affecting the entire civilization and it determines the art and professions without any special religious goal without any like. Not traditional effect means that is not dependent to fixed principles as its appearance doesn't show soul creative happiness. In terms of tradition, in traditional communities or the civilization dominant on a major part of history, any aspect of life, not human artifacts (art) are linked with divine principles of tradition. Muslim architects attempt to use fundamental slogan of Islam (لا اله الا الله) and make all the building components focusing on the main aspect and forget all except Him. By creating a center in building and link between external and internal spaces as an inviting space and by writing including divine verses, they try to put the created architecture as a tool for sublime soul and spiritual trend to God. This study is descriptive-analytic and based on documents, Iranian architecture based on modeling from spatial system structure as its result is considering a structure as direction, centrality, respect and inhibition, balance, aesthetics and beauty. The analysis of above factors determines the achievement of religious beliefs in traditional housing.

**KEYWORDS:** God centrality, Islamic architecture, Islamic culture, spatial system, Traditional architecture.

**INTRODUCTION**

After Islam, Muslim artists applied architecture to give order to their spaces and attempted to create the places in which God speech is reflected and by being in holy spaces promotes from materialistic spaces to supernatural. By liking to religious art, the artists can manifest an endless source of what he can see in his works. This mutual link is seen in divine religions. This is way drawn by God for human being guidance. Thus, on one hand, the world light, creator of world and eternal power can be seen. This doesn't mean human being is opposite God as human being is his creature and dependent on him. Thus, God is at the center of world and what belongs to Him can be imagined on circular bow. Muslim architects by using existing architecture formed architecture foundations of Muslims in a combination of architecture and formed Islamic culture. The works formed by the time and place conditions and requirements and belonging of Muslim architect artists were called Muslims architecture and these works are not equal to Islamic architecture. The applied indices by Muslims are the stable principles and Muslim architects have used it based on Islamic culture and their perception of Islamic attitude in their works. Muslims architecture works should not be raised as Muslims created it, as it is based on knowledge, Muslim architects in Islamic period attempt to consider all the components of their works as a manifestation of the God signs.

This study considers the centrality of God as one of the basic indices in the architecture works of Muslims and then spatial system structure in Iran traditional architecture can be explained.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Some factors as emphasis on quantitative factors and less consideration of architecture and mental and materialistic needs of human being besides the evaluation of the changes of living tradition and local and regional cultures can transfer some models of building and development and they don't have organized consistency with these cultures. Such points are necessary to consider the interdisciplinary issues of humanistic and architecture design to formulate design theories based on balance between the views of users and creativity of designers. As the studies of this research in environment psychology (giving importance to ecology) and considering the effect of cultural and religious beliefs and tradition on residential environment, most of the architecture studies are interdisciplinary and need combined methods and combined studies method can be applied.

Such method doesn't mean the sum of votes and in a unit goal can combine various votes based on the multiplicity of study method by dynamic method. For data collection from the study area, library method and field method are used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### God Centrality from the View of Holy Quran

The initial slogan of Islam raised by our Prophet is "قولوا لا اله الا الله تفعلوا" (There is no God except our only God to be saved). According to Quran, There are two types of ownership in the world: Real and actual ownership belonging to only God and there is no partner and appearance ownership as human ownership and etc. This part belongs to God and by divine ownership is apparently belonging to human being. Thus, when human being remembers real ownership of God to everything and himself and his ownership is absolute property of God and reminds this apparent ownership is destroyed early and no ownership as apparently remains and all belong to God. [1]. According to many verses of Quran, God-centrality is emphasized and an example is the following: الله لا اله الا هو له الاسماء الحسنى (Al-Taha, 8): There is no God but Allah, the one, and to him belong the names of outstanding excellence... محيطة (Al-Foselat, 54): Know that Allah is the one whose knowledge encompasses all things. وان الى ربك المنتهى (Al-Najm, 42): Has not man learned that to your creator and Nurturer is the final return. According to Quran learning, Muslim knows that everything in the world is a manifestation of unique inherence of God and «هو الاول والاخر والظاهر والباطن وهو بكل شيء عليم» (Al-Hadid, 3): He is the first and the Last and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is the knower of all things. Thus, Muslim person defines his goal and direction in the life of this world and considers God-centrality on priority. «انا لله وانا اليه راجعون» (Al-Baghare, 156): To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.

«و انا الى ربنا لمنقلبون» (Al-Zokhrif, 14): We return to Allah. God created all things in earth for human being.

As the world is against afterlife, according to Quran, using materialistic world is a tool to achieve salvation and evolution of human being and the main attitude to invite human being to healthy life is using divine graces of earth and the world is used for testing and human being shouldn't be tempted by the beautiful signs of the world and consider them as aim but the world is a tool to pass. (وما الحياه الدنيا الا لعب و لهو و للدار الاخره خير للذين يتقون افلا تعلقون) and the world life is only a game and afterlife is better for those pious people, don't you think?

### Centrality of God from the View of Theorists

Regarding using geometry plans and math models, Mohammad Soheil Omar stated: "Using geometry plans and math models is not for decoration. These plans and models remind us of God or center, divine center as present always. Wherever you face, it is directed to God. You cannot keep away from it"<sup>[2]</sup>. Samri Sayegh considered inviting to monotheism as the most important issue in artistic field and stated that "The concept of monotheism directs us to an image of art, different from the recognized images and based on pre-Islamic art, is not based on the artistic methods and techniques, it is based on its art and role in its goals".

Mohammad Madadpour in the spiritual wisdom and artistic aspect, state the view of Muslim architect as: Architecture of Muslims with inspiration from Islamic thoughts and basics considering any role and image as the sign of a name of God names with such thought deals with the form of reality and materials beyond the appearance and he is the artist considering the world as a sign of tangibles and any beauty and perfection belong to God. Thus, he tries to move in this direction and he applies geometry and geometry plans to refer to God centrality. Everything is gathered to create divine space. The Muslim architects attempted to innovate all building components as manifestation of God signs. This is manifested in building maps and brick arrangement and images as tiles and plaster and mirror and etc. and they attempted to display their religion beliefs in their works. Regarding the architecture mission of Muslims, Rajabali Mazlumi stated as If a mosque is shown, inscriptions, divine nature of Mihrab, bowing of Muslim before God should be manifested and this is what is performed by art and if Mazene (A place to say Azan) is shown, by its height, the world "Allah Akbar" (God is great) with the unique magnificence and unique attributes of God can be presented to the world and people.

### Culture, the Main Factor of Formation of House

Researchers believe that house besides being a physical structure is an institution with multi-dimensional performance based on society, culture, religious rituals, economy and environmental conditions and as construction of "house" is a cultural issue, its form and organization is based on the culture as house is its product. Thus, houses based on culture and their spatial arrangement show the social relations of the residents. Regarding house form, based on 73 cultures, the division of interior space of house depends upon the social-political complexity in the culture.

According to culture-based researchers, culture is the main factor of house formation and the factor of climate; site, economy and etc. are second degree factors as climate is the second degree factor in formation of house. Why in a climate such as Kerman, there is not only one type of house use and there are various forms of houses regarding various religions? Thus, it can be said, local or cultural tradition has direct relation with physical forms of each culture and they are interacting factors. One of the important components of house use is yard and besides organizing the rooms and surrounding space under the influence of various cultures has various performance. Except Iran and other Islamic countries as yard has climatic, functional, cultural and religious functions, in ancient Greece (the land of various gods), the yard has metaphysical meaning and enclosing of house is used as enclosing the Mihrab of gods of family as no stranger can enter it.

Based on this view, it has considerable difference with Islam view as house is used for comfort, security and border of family, not a holy place for gods. The aristocrats houses in ancient Rome besides living place were important symbolic hall called ancestors hall in which the statue of the ancestors of family were kept. In Eastern countries like Japan, the houses architecture was influenced by cultural features as two attributes of corpse and inclination to artistic works regarding Shinto tradition based on Animism and nature worshipping were the foundations of their architecture. The combination of house with nature in this culture has religious root and its extrovert architecture considered its internal and external space equal as the paper separating walls created the least border in space.

### **Islam and Privacy**

“Iranian houses consider privacy besides respecting guests and consider the border overlapping model in the united space and separate models are also used. Thus, definite types of the form of buildings and their interior design are repeated widely. These models are seen in some of Islamic countries encountered with border and reception issue. In Iran, after admitting Islam, we can say the relationship between man and woman is the most important principle defining the borders in house and outside it” (Memarian, 1998). In Islam, comfort and assurance start from the people and are developed with correct relation with other Muslims. This starting point in family is of great importance. Thus, according to the orders of Islam, “Sexual instinct to continue family and marriage stability and reduction of social stresses should be managed controlled and be in legal marriage and the social activity and work should not be interfered with sexual issues (Motahari, 2008).

Islam learning describes the suitable behavior of Muslims and relation system of houses should be a sign of behavioral models of Sharia and facilitator of religious obligations of each Muslim. The culture promoting respecting guest and observing privacy in society has major influence on Iranian architecture namely house architecture.

House space including yard and rooms is the privacy of people and we should get permission to enter it. This privacy is a specific limit of time and place and a person ignoring the definite rules and forms of specific behavior of society can be in his privacy and give suitable response to his individual feelings and fulfill his mental needs as suitable and Islam considers this right as respectable and assumes respecting it as obligatory for each Muslim. “Privacy is considered as the fundamental interest of human being in all cultures. This privacy has limits and we shouldn’t violate it without any reason (Hanson, 2008). Getting permission in Islam besides ethical aspect is an obligatory issue and is not only dedicated to the entrance of neighbor and stranger to house and family border, it also includes the entrance of children to parents’ room or even each other room. They are obliged to get permission before maturity in three periods and after maturity in each time entering the parents’ room. Thus, in each Muslim house, the rooms of children and parents are separated and the house can have various rooms. Also, Islam emphasizes on defining the rest privacy at night as physically like the wall around the house or putting wooden or stone wall separating the Iranian house uses. This place should not be violated by others even any visual transgression is not permitted.

### **Islamic Culture in a City with Various Religions**

The public culture of traditional cities in Iran is used to prove a space to achieve comfort and it is based on the current life soul. Based on the Islamic learning, other religions under the support of Islamic government can perform their religious actions in full freedom and there is a peaceful relation between them and Muslims. In other words, the religion is the same and the followers of other religions that follow specific religion in their personal affairs can follow unified religion in public issues. Islam orders Muslims to behavior fairly with each other and followers of other religions and other schools (Javadiamoli, 2009). The first Imam, Imam Ali (pbuh) referred to be kind to all people to Malik Ashtar ,

the appointed ruler on Egypt with various religions as: “Be kinds to people and be friend with them People are two types, one group is your religious brother and another group are as equal you in creation (Nahjolbalaghe, Translated by Dashti, 567). A city like Kerman is famous for accepting guests and accepted the followers of various religions in the specific townships. “The culture as consistent with the beliefs gives freedom to all people and followers of religions in this land can live”(Vaziri, 1979). This culture is dependent upon the manner of desert residents and is rooted in Islamic learning and it is as in the neighbouring townships, followers of various religion worship God in their specific places as mosque, temple and church.

### **Traditional House**

In the past, house was more than a shelter and its spiritual and religious aspects in all stages of house construction to its establishment and using it are mostly obvious (Barati, 2003). Culture and perception of people from world and life including the religious beliefs, social structure of tribe and family, living method and social relations method of people play important role in housing and its spatial division organization (Rapaport, 1987). A person gets comfort when he is assured and achieves divine perfection. The ultimate goal of perfect person is achieving divine perfection. Thus, the ultimate goal of house should be definite. Thus, house is a place to worship God, a place in which he can achieve his final goal and it is transition place from this world to the afterlife. According to Islam, human being is mutual, one direction is to God and divine soul and the other side is to earth and physical needs. In other words, housing as human being as a physical and inner form as defined as similarity. Thus, housing besides considering climate and nature can consider the beliefs and considers the main comfort in religion.

### **Formation of Spatial System in Traditional Architecture of Iran**

House is one of the most important architecture spaces with direct relation with human being. Thus, physical aspect of house can fulfill the required performances of human being and human dimensions and its spiritual trend can respond to the beliefs of residents. This aspect of house should be consistent with the divine aspect of its residents as formed based on God centralization. Religious human being has human requirements reaching divine perfection (Motahari, 2001). Natural requirements of human being are in mental issues with direct influence on human behaviors and achieving perfection. Thus, his house should be coordinated as designed with human requirements and helps him to achieve perfection. This house is coordinated with the essential nature of human being and humanity of a person and comfort and security in this house can be fulfilled. In the following, the analysis of traditional house based on internal and natural features of human being in 5 sections in the table with images are presented.

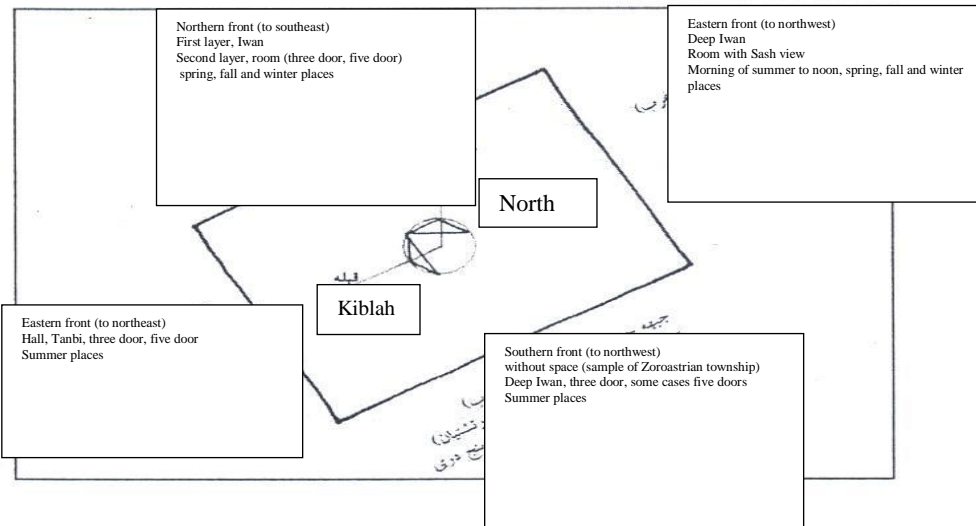
### **Orientation**

From metaphysic aspects, space can indicate the divine presence in actualization of hidden potentials in the world (Naser, 2000). Muslims always attempted to find their way in inseparable field of worldly descension (Hider, 1998). To face with the eternal God, human being should use the secrets and guidance presented by God. An Iranian architect by these secrets can fulfill direction and measurement in the space as notifying its presence. Considering four main directions without considering its metaphoric expression in mystical literature should be investigated. If we search for the words and meaning and be directed to the world manifesting not only the beauty of thoughts but also the depth of mystical attitude of Iranians, we can consider the meaning and content load of directions distinction in spatial system based on the existing qualities in Iranian culture and nature. Thus, we can search for the light with the life from east and sunset with darkness and death from west and the contrast of light and darkness among the ancient Iranians (Falamaki, 1992). Traditional architecture is based on the accurate knowledge of human and mental and physical beliefs to various measurements with innovation for family life. Traditional architects attempt to take a good climatic direction (comfort of physical aspects) and good religious orientation (comfort of soul or body) make the life as comfortable form physical and mental aspects. Traditional architect can consider good climatic direction based on the difficult weather condition, environmental and natural elements. In a traditional house, climatic zoning is applied based on the seasons of year and various hours of day and night and a type of internal movement is considered and it is designed as in each season or hour of day, a part of house is turned into a place to escape from the difficult condition of outside.

House as the container of human life is directed to assurance to find goal, ultimate direction and identity in house. The goal is considered God "انا لله" and with the ultimate goal of reaching God "انا اليه راجعون" and his identity is based on him. Thus, in any place, he considers himself before God and he can achieve comfort and assurance. Thus, traditional



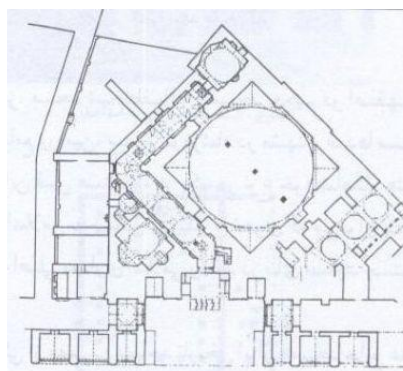
house can consider climate and nature and it also can consider the beliefs and considers the main comfort in religion (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Direction of house based on climate (comfort of physical aspects) and religion (comfort of mental aspects)

### Centrality

In Islam, Kabe as the worship center of Muslims introduced Islam as the “central religion”. As God is in the unperceiving center of world. As he is in the most internal center of human being (Borkhart, 1997). All buildings and structures of Iranian-Islamic cities have centrality. For example, in most of Iranian-Islamic cities, market is the center of city and urban townships are around it. Each township has a center of township and this center is linked to city market with an important area. There is Jame mosque in market as the political-worship and social center of city and mosques of townships play this role in townships and the centrality of building belongs to the dome of house in mosque and indeed all spaces, components and elements of mosque building are manifested in this space as mosque can be likened to private pray house (Figure 2).



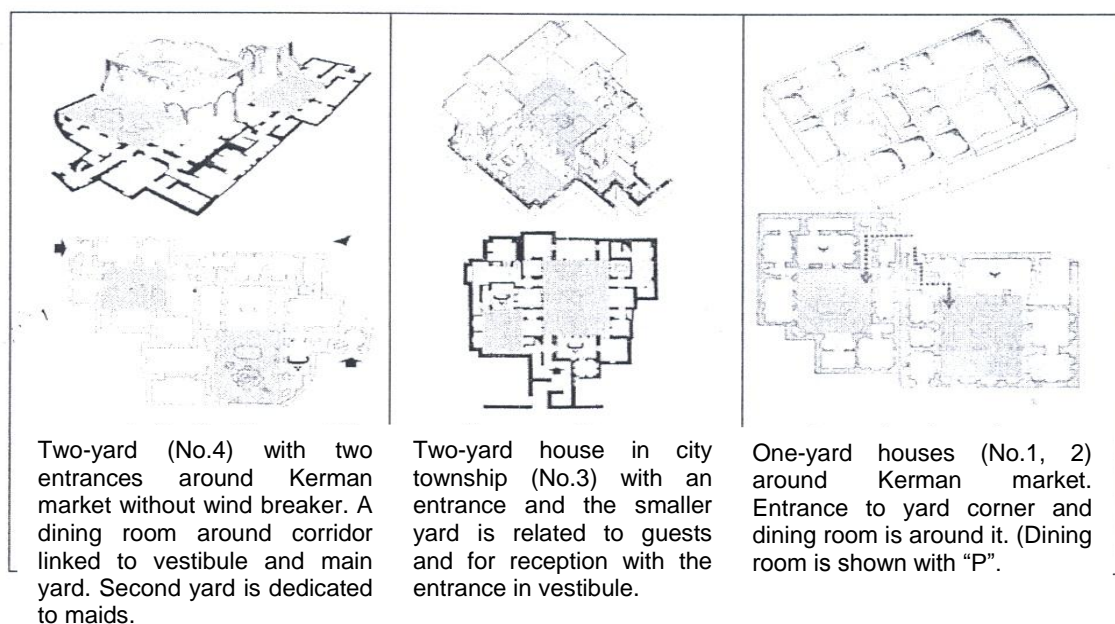
**Figure 2.** Horizontal map of Sheikh Lotfollah mosque and all spaces focus on house dome

In this building, all the stages in which a person is faced with mosque, it has specific focus on house dome. Center in a traditional house is of great importance. According to Islam, center is Kabe, house of God, center of reality. The divine reality that is achieved by resorting to Sharia. Thus, a traditional architect attempts to express the example model as holy. The yard is selected as center formed by a square or rectangle-square form (symbol of earth) and its above is opening to sky or its ceiling is sky (the symbol of achieving divine kingdom). The tone of this architecture is

the objective manifestation of divine tone and is a natural indication of relationship between beliefs and the life. In Islam the center with wisdom and light is introduced as a point not turning into matter not being measured (Karbon, 1978). Thus, architects attempt to manifest light in center and show anti-materialistic aspects to show the global and eternal aspect of space.

### Respect and Privacy

Respecting family and people and considering privacy are one of the most obvious cases of religious, cultural issues in architecture and Iranian-Islamic urbanization. In the design of residential buildings, neighbors cannot see the residents. There are different knocking devices based on the gender on the doors. Traditional architect designs the traditional entrance as it is in accordance to “covering verse in Quran”. By designing a vestibule at the beginning of entrance, the public domain is separated from private field of house by observing the privacy. By creating some platforms in the body of vestibule, strange guests are accepted and in case can be invited to the external section via the corridor by observing the privacy of house. In this space, the traditional architect can innovate space with new concept based on the religious requirements of residents. Beside each entrance door, there are two living platforms for tired pedestrians in the street. Some Sabats in some places can protect people from sun ray and raining. People-based form of Iran architecture and observing the consistency between building organs with human organs are other examples of inhibition (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** The house entrance system with the aim of blocking the view to the inside and pursuing the privacy

### Unity in Multiplicity

The most fundamental principle of Islamic tradition is unity. Iranian architecture in Islamic period searched its goal in combination of all aspects to achieve this unity. In Iranian-Islamic architecture, various components of space with its complete nature and having personality and meaning in greater set form a unit and unique form. In this case, the whole ignoring the single features of elements can present specific personality (Figure 4.).



Figure 4. The entrance space of Sheikh Lotfollah mosque

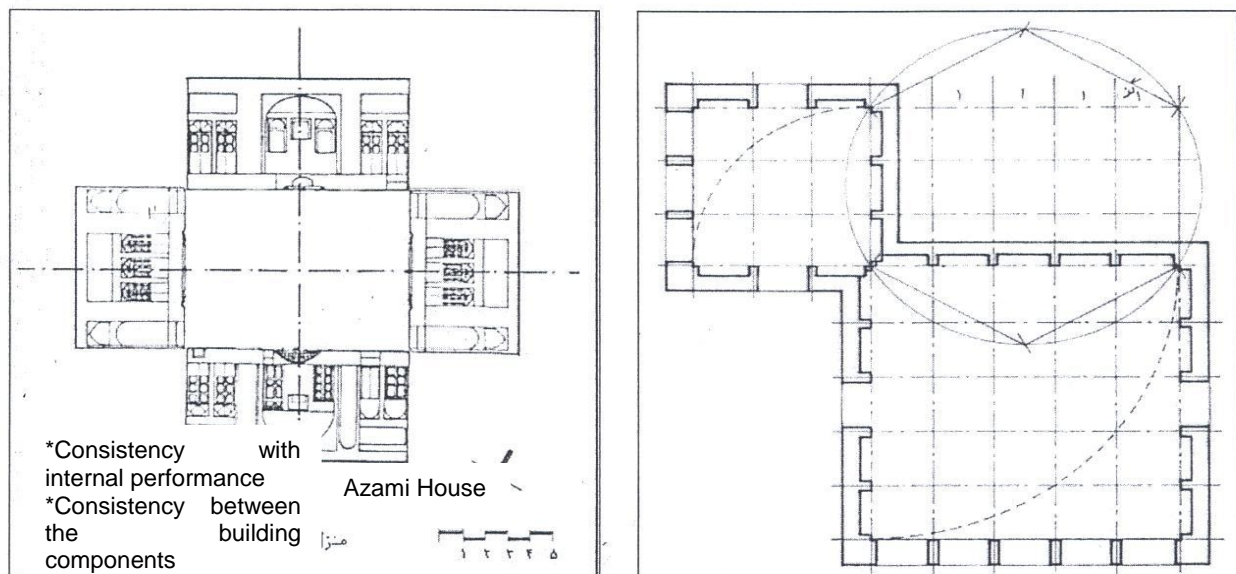
### Balance

The Iranian-Islamic urbanization and architecture is balanced as by recognizing the designers and creators, from its natural ground, the city population is regulated based on the ability in nature. Second, the physical development of buildings and city with emphasis on natural materials in region can be performed. Third, dividing the buildings, required components of city and services is done as coordinated. For example, all townships of city can fulfill the routine demands of the residents of township. All townships have mosque, bathroom, Abanbar (water store) and etc. and other needs of citizens at urban scale in city center (market of city) can be fulfilled. In this city, poor and rich people live in townships and economic problems don't lead to class difference and different townships as residents of a city can be superior to each other in terms of financial aspects, the main principle in Islamic society is the superiority of people based on piety. In architecture, balance among the constituent components of architecture spaces namely in facades and perceived volume can be understood. The balance indicates justice principle in religion principles.

### Beauty and Aesthetics

Artificial beauty of human being is created based on the construction of objects based on their nature as it is the nature of objects as potential or evolutionary beauty. Thus, traditional architect is revealing the hidden real beauty in the matter and giving divine nature to the matter. "Essence of art is beauty and beauty is mostly dedicated to the essence of beauty in (internal aspect or internal consistency) of a beautiful object than objective and physical conditions of a beautiful object or its external aspect and in religious term, it is having divine quality (Motahari Elhami, 2005). Traditional house is based on the life of a Muslim person and it doesn't have merely aesthetic beauty and beauty is its essence. Beauty is hidden in the essence of traditional architecture and is revealed only on those touching and thinking about it. Traditional person lives in his house and is along with its beauties. In other words, human being sees the beauty in the mirror of his soul and thinks and this observation leads to self-perfection (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Manifestation of beauty through the stance of building around the central yard



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Any form indicates a specific quality and state. It is possible the religious issue of an artistic work is added to the work and is not related to its appearance language. Christianity art proves this issue since renaissance. Thus, there are non-religious artistic works with religious issues but there is no artistic art with non-religious form as the meaning and form are fully similar. An inner issue is expressed by a physical language. If there is not such language and art with religious terms borrows its form from a non-religious art, there is not spiritual attitude of things. Religious art separates its borders with internal features from other arts. In addition to the relationship between form and meaning in any religious art, its transfer between artists, divine source of this art, feature of religious art soul, its essence and its eternal constitution and other cases have crucial role in this division. This study showed that cultural and spiritual aspect of house is not comparable with the physical factors of architecture and quantitative and qualitative scales and its analysis scale is based on spiritual soul arising from religion and it is based on perfection of human being. Reaching perfection of human being is hidden in the mental and natural inclinations of a person and they should be considered in architecture. Thus, Muslim architects based on their capabilities can affirm that God is the main architect and the relationship between architect and architectural space is based on worship and regulation in God centrality.

## REFERENCES

- Barati N. (2003).** Review of the concept of house in Persian and Iranian culture. *Khial J.* 8: 25.
- Borkhat T. (1997).** Holy art. Satary translated: Jalal, Tehran. Radio and TV of Islamic republic of Iran.
- Felamaki M. M. (1992).** Formation of architecture in Iran commerce in west. Tehran. Space publications.
- Javadi A. A. (2009).** Islam and environment. Qom. Asra.
- Khanvaziri A. (2006).** Kerman history. Introduction of Bastani Parizi in the book. Tehran: Scientific.
- Madadpour M. (1992).** Spiritual wisdom and art aspects. Review of art trend in historical periods, Art field of Islamic advertisement organization. Ava edition. Winter. :194.
- Mazlumi R. (1992).** What is the margin of art (Tolstoy). Afagh edition. 1 :58.
- Motahari M. (2001).** Nature. Tehran. Sadra publications. 1(13).
- Motahari E.M. (2005).** Religious art in Borkhart views. *Khial J.* 16: 23-26. Tehran. Memarian, Q. Iran architecture. Tehran. Soroush Danesh.
- Nasr S. H. (2000).** The need to holy science. Translated by Miandari, Hassan, Viraste Ahmadreza Jalili, Tehran. Cultural institution publications. Taha.
- Rapaourt A. (1987).** Cultural origin of living complexes. Translated by Rezazade, Razhie. Teharn. Jihad Daneshgahi publication. Science and industry University. Iran.
- Sayegh S. (2001)** Religious art: Message, religious secret, the articles in the first international conference of religious art. Tehran. Edited by Mehdi Firoozan. Soroush publication. Second edition. 180.
- Soheil Omar M.** Islamic art, Religious secret. The articles in the first international conference of religious art. Tehran. Aban.
- Tabatabayi S. M. H. (1988).** Almizan interpretation. Vol. 1. Translation: Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi. Fourth edition. Scientific and intellectual foundation publications of Allame Tabatabayi with the collaboration of cultural edition center of Raja. 2: 397- 398.