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# Mix of light and color in sacred places by manifestation of Islamic identity in Jame Mosques in northern area (Case studies: Jame Mosques of Amol, Babol, Sari, Gorgan)

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### **ABSTRACT**

Light is the main agent for transfer of feelings and different perceptions of the environment and the area around the man. Light is the most non-material natural element which has been constantly witnessed in Islamic architecture. The present research addresses how the Islamic thinkers look into light, position of light in Islamic architecture, and how to deal with light in Islamic architecture of mosques to induce sense of unity. However, position of light in Iranian community's cultural roots has been followed by special sanctity pre Islam and manifestation of light has been recognized in the altars at that age, the light has manifested the spiritual Identity derived from sacred spaces of worship. Mix of light and color on seven-color tile, Muqarnas on chambers and concave façade and use of multifaceted pigment in openings enclosed to porch represent identity-based element in the internal space within the mosques, manifesting a sense of purity and modesty in Muslim in their worship and granting a special position to the mosques. Hence, the present research aims to describe multiple and unique theories associated to the mosques and sacred spaces, represeniting an analysis with reference to library sources, scientific and resreach articles and aversion to Islamic sources, so as to analyze the Jame Mosques which manifest the unity and integration of Islamic identity among Muslims.

KEY WORDS-light, space, unity, Islamic architecture, mystical abstraction

### INTRODUCTION

Light is one of the elements in the Islamic architecture which is proposed besides other concepts and elements such as structure, spatial order, materials, color and so forth, so that it plays a major role in determination of sanctity and spirituality in space especially mosques, so far as the man ascends to the metaphysics under being in the scared spaces (Bemanian, 2007, p. 7). In Islamic architecture, architects have widely used the light to express the purest impossible concepts in metaphysics representing them in the sacred places. For this, light is attributed as the manifestation and symbol of existence in spaces undergoing Islamic architecture representing multiplication, in which stone manifests the light and shine arises from the stone (Madadpoor, 1996, p. 271). Under such architecture, the architect assumes his conscience instead of considering the addressee's demand, and as the architecture work adjusts with the divine nature of man, it influences the heart of any thinker and conducts him to submit himself to God (Mahdavi nejad, 2004, p. 62).

Table 1. Role of roots of relief in this study

How to describe spatial hierarchy at the mosques by means of light

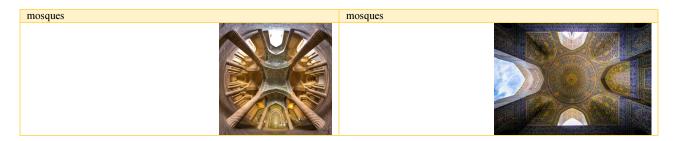
How to use light to create a sense of spirituality at the spaces of mosque





Study the role of light as an agent for manifestation of sense of unity at Study the role of light in change of looking from the land to sky at

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### Landscape of light concerning different attitudes

Light has been regarded as the most non-material element in nature which enjoys different concepts at any age and culture to which a variety of perceptions have been proposed. In general, light represents the symbol for global order analyzed to seven symbolic colors which propose distinctive aspects of light. In Dehkhoda Dictionary, light implies blaze, brightness and quality which is perceived by means of eyesight(Dehkhoda, 1967, p. 857). In Amid dictionary, light has been elaborated as sunshine, a combination of bright light and radiant heat, unlike darkness.

### Light in pre-islamic religions

Without doubt, light is the first agent without any mediation to perceive the universe. According to all divine books and old religions, light represents the universe and spirituality, and it represents the symbol for purity and the mediator for understanding and recognizing, so that light is the symbol for Ahoora Mazda and darkness is the symbol for demon in Zoroastrian religion. In the Torah of Moses, Jehovah (God of the Jews) turns to a prophet in flames on Mount Sinai. In the gospel of Jesus, it can assume god as the absolute light (Khorshidian, 2005, p. 381). Light in the pre-Islamic culture has enjoyed a special place among the Iranian people, so that Ahura Mazda assumed as the God in the wisdom of ancient Persia has been regarded as the everlasting light and color has been regarded as the first light girl (Khosh Nazar, Rajabi, 2009, p. 70).

### Concept of light in Islamic culture

Quran is the first source which has presented a definition for light concerning Islamic insight. Light has been regarded as the main character in Torah, Gospel, and Quran. For this, it can refer to Maede Surah , Verse 44, saying, Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to Allah ] judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah , and they were witnesses thereto. So do not fear the people but fear Me, and do not exchange My verses for a small price. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers(Maede Surah , Verse 44)(Bolkhari Ghahi, 2005, p. 454).

In other words, light represents existence; on the other hand, as the creatures' origin turns back to God, thus God is the most perfect charcter for light through which any creature manifests(Tafsir al-Mizan, vol.15, p. 172). According to Sura An-Nur, verse 35, Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things.

Image 1. Source of divine light concerning the intrepretation by Islamic school in Quran



# Nature of light in view of Islamic thinkers

Light enjoys the metaphysics and divine nature in philosophy and Islamic mysticism. The mystics called the light as the wisdom and knew the love and creature as the light and called it Noor al-Anvar (Bemanian, Ali nasab,

2011, p. 540). In this section, a summary of the views and attitudes of Islamic elites has been represented in the table below.

Table 2, view of islamic and religious thinkers on light(source: Bemanian, Ali nasab, 2011, p. 540)

Light in point of view of thinkers	Views on light	The highest degree of light	Understanding light	Summary
Shahab al-Din Yahya ibn Habash Suhrawardi	Division of light to 1- abstract light,2- transverse light,3- qasaq,4-darkness, 5- limbo. Object-like identity that conceals and reveals Noor al- Anvar	Noor al-Anvar	Hierarchical	God is the absolute light and closeness to Noor al-Anvar causes increasing power for involvement
Ibn Arabi	He knows light as a mystry in existence that passes through colorful glasses and reflects various colors.	Noor al-Anvar	Hierarchical	All the lights are represented with pluarity called with Noor al-Anvar
Mohammed al-Ghazali	He believes that light is firstly recognized by typical people and then by elites	Noor al-Anvar	Hierarchical	The origin of light turns back to God
Najmuddin Kubra	Light is weaker in the material world than that of in excellent orders, that is, the more you get close to the origin of light for Noor al-Anvar, purer light will come to realize.	Black light	Hierarchical	Movement towards Noor al-Anvar

### Litreature review for the use of light in Iranian architecture

Use of light in Iranian architecture dates back to third century of the fourth millennium BC at which making difference in external walls were being used to acquire light and shadow. In Middle Elamite, about 1400-1300 BC, a sample of windows made of glass has been acquired, including tubes made of powder glass & glass paste embedded in a frame and used in the building to light the space. The oldest evidences for the windows in Iranian architecture can be found in the permanent castles at architecture works of sharokin. Concerning the Assyrian reliefs, it can detect openings built at towers. There have existed openings at the top of doors and roofs in Persepolis at the Achaemenid period. Indeed, embedding canopy in the buildings has been regarded as the Persian style properties. Skylight at Parthian buildings has been possible through ceiling.

The openings were embeded on the domes at Sasanian period that glasses were being used to cover them, and the openings were being used at the middle of dome for the purpose of skylight where load bearing walls were being used to bear the load of dome. Yet, after the load at the domical ceiling was transferred to the pier via the arches, the skylights in form of curves were embeded on some parts of the body of domes(Shokoei zade, Ibrahimi yousefi, 2010, p. 9).

### Light in Islamic-Iranian architecture

Islamic architecture especially in iran puts a special emphasis on light. The space inside the mosque manifests a light that reminds the beleivers of light verse in Quran which says: origin of light arises from God and radiates the sky and ground

In Iran, due to severe radiation of sunlight which is experienced in most regions of the country and highlands, experiencing light and needing life at the spaces repelte with light during history remind us the inseparable part of the life in Iran.

Light is the most effective element in Iranian architecture, and this is not just due to assuming it as a physical component but also as a symbol of divine wisdom and existence(Ardalan, B. 2011, p. 17). The Islamic architecture in Iran puts a special emphasis on light. This architecture constantly reflects the scared place, life and light and affects the spirit of man. For instance, the space inside the mosque has been built in a way that it induces the God

presence at the space and encloses the beleiver at this space, saying, But Allah doth encompass them from behind (Foroghi, Kamali, 2012, p. 3).

### Light in the architecture of mosques

Iranian-Islamuc art has been firstly manifested in architecture of mosques in which the space and place are assumed to connect the light. Indeed, the actual meaning of architecture reveals as the art of organizing the space(Bemanian, Ali nasab, 2011, p. 533). Top of all these meanings, a Hadith Qudsi has been represented which manifests the superior position of mosques on the earth. Architects of the mosques have constantly strived to manifest the God origin which is the best beauty as the most scared place and the light which manifests the truth, mercy and divine spirituality as the best element to manifest the beauties(Sattari Sarbangholi, 2003, p. 439).

Table 3. aims of applying light in architecture of mosques

# Strong and weak light shades to illustrate the nature of the material in different spaces Create the charm and beauty in the building of the mosque with different colors

### Spiritual aims under employing the light in architecture of mosques

Any symbolic figure and form manifests unity and reflects the quality in that unity encompassing all the distinctions and qualities and maintaining them via fundemental method(Ardalan, B. 2011, p. 17).

### Light as the symbol and manifestation of existence

Accordingly, universe has come to realize with the light. Color and all its contitutents rely on light. By arrival of darkness, death also arrives. To sum up, everything relies on light(Keshmiri, Noshadi, Abbasi, 2013, p. 3). Light is attributed as the symbol and manifestation of existence in Islamic architecture(ibid, p.6). in Islamic culture, light has been regarded as the symbol for God(Surat al Noor, verse 35). Light is the most substantial feature in Iranian architecture, not just as a material element, but as a symbol for divine wisdom and existence(Ardalan, B. 2003).

### Light, the cause of conductance, movement and sequence of space

Reducing the mass of the material and increasing the content are mentioned as the reasons for use of light by the muslim architects in the mosques.

Najmuddin Kubra, the first sufi master, believes that use of light in the materials and objects is likely weaker than use of it in superior world, i.e. the more a person gets close to the origin of light(God), a purer and clearer light will come to realize. Therefore, material abstraction implies moving towards existence and light of universe and sustaining a way from the lowest degree of light and shadow(Khosh nazar, Rajabi, 2009, p. 72). By changing light, the static building funishes, mentioned that the natural light has the property of movement and transformation at the moments within itself, causing movment and change of the state at different hours. Light movement and shade of the manifestations emerge a beautiful space on the surfaces, putting an emphasis on this point that movement is a means to understand the space. Light in the architecture is required to create space and also understand the space, that light raises the sense of movement by rise of dynamism and fluidity(Bemanian, Ali nasab, 2011, p. 546). Here, light in additon to following a sequence enjoys the turning point and raises a stretch and conducts the seekers of the truth and the light to the point which represents Noor al-Anvar.

### Light, the cause for manifestation of sense of unity in the mosques

All the constituents at mosque find their special content by means of shading out the natural lights, that any constituent hits the light. The entrance door by creation of a space stylized clouds on the light paves the way for arrival to the spiritual world from the material world; semi dark corridor together with a semi- transparent image of the space of the central courtyard and central pool manifests the limbo between the world and afterlife; by arrival to the central courtyard, we will witness opening, glory, purity, and sense of focus; there is a central courtyard in an Iranian mosque in which there are four iwans and several porches next to iwans. Four iwans which are around four sides of the courtyard are along two vertical axes. There is a pond full of water at the conjunction point of two axes and at the center of courtyard (Memarian, 2006, p. 537). It can assume this pond to which the geometrical center of building has been allotted, is a mirror which reflects the reality.

### Light, the cause of creation of sense of spirituality at the space of mosques

In general, light as been recognized as God in mystical aspects of Quran or in view of mystics. God will be where there is light, thus a person must get into light. In other words, God has put wisdom in the heart of a person under which the heart will be lighted by the God's light and dignity. The eyes will be able to see the truth via this light which comes to the hearth, thus God said in this way that light is a metaphor for a niche in which a light exists and this light which enjoys the divine light is at the heat of those ones who believe in unity of God (Arjomandi, 2011, p. 28). Under such circumstances, the spirituality induced in the space of mosques refers to the order and truth in the content.

### Light, cause of changing the look from the earth to the sky at the mosques

Role of light in Islamic architecture has been widely lied in the principle of manifestation; if the light is manifested in embodiment in church in Christian and Buddhist architecture, it manifests in the notion of application of designs and materials which reflect the light due to absolute presence of manifestation principle in Islam, because function of idea and material represents the function of reflection rather than originality. Hence, the building must manifest an absolute light in the skies and earths and manifest God, as mentioned the origin of light rises from God and reflects in the skies and earth. Manifestation of light in the architecture influences the materials as a symbol of existence and divine wisdom and spiritual essence and trasforms it to a competent form which is suitable for human's living area(Bolkhari Ghahi, 2005, pp. 6-8).

# Light, the cause for expression of spatial hierarcy in mosques

The principle for spatial hierarcy can be classified into three levels including middle, interior and exterior spatial hierarcy which puts an emphasis on the boundaries spatial privacies. Physical classification is witnessed in all constitutents and the whole structure in the architecture. Through this explanation, the hierarchy reflected from the light in a rhythm from the reflection of sunlight engages the prayres by integration of the light in the queues.

# Recognition of jame mosques through a conceptual meaning in Northern region of country

Mosque has been the most important building in history of our architecture that a high priority is given to Jame mosque among the mosques. In our history, no city will be accounted as a city without a Jame mosque, i.e. Jame mosque in a city represents the civilization. Mosque has been both temple and tryst for people, yet jame mosque can be found at the center of city. Jame mosque has been regarded as a place for people's worship and share of knowledge, resolution of conflicts, a settlement for the passengers and a place for creation of art by artists and architects. Jame mosques which have been built for performing Friday prayer in such a way that all appropriate conditions are fulfilled, have a long longevity to which it can bring about numerous changes and dye them. For this,

it can found jame mosques dating back to different periods of time. In general, there are huge comments on the history and development of jame mosques. jame mosques likewise organisms have deformed over the time and developed as much as the city has developed. Regarding what mentioned above, a view on mystical content of the interior space inside jame mosques in northern region which is derived from principles of Iranian architecture results in potential effects on lighting and sense of a worshiper such that the effects will be both on his body and mind.

### jame mosque of Sari

This mosque has been regarded as the single-iwan mosque in the northern area of country, developed at the middle of central courtyard with introspective direction. The generalities of this mosque have been followed by the form of bilateral roofs in physical perspective with reference to the type of clime, that this mosque has been built in four sides at the top of the major iwan.

Table 4. Overview of form and content of jame mosque of Sari Plan and perspective of the mosque jame mosque of Sari Content This sense might imply the sunlight during the day till the Building sense of sunset at three periods in worshiping so as to manifest the spirituality the at sense of spirituality. mosques This intrepretation might raise from changing the views Changing the look from on the interior space in the major iwan under which the the earth to sky at person reaches to the ultimate aim through light moving mosque towards the origin. Image of the mosque When the light is witnessed from the wooden windows Spatial hierarchy inside the Shabestan covered with carpet, a flexible mosques rhythm in the interior space will be witnessed which requires a favorable sense. agent This manifestation might adapt with the lighting in the manifestation of sesne space at the bottom of the dome in central mosques, yet of unity the manifestation absorbs sense of cohesion under the major iwan from the transparent walls to the interior space of mosque. This expression manifests from the transparent gate of the Light as the walls around the courtyward to the inside of the manifestation shabestans existence This trajectory from a sequential rhythm in different Conductance, movement frontlines of the mosque is in the pure space in the and sequence of space Shabestan

### Masjed Jame' Mahaleh of Amol

Masjed Jame' Amol is located in the neighborhood around Amol, that its primary structure dates to the first century A.H. there is a square courtyard with constructions on the four sides in this mosque. The nocturnal areas to

the north and south with six huge pillars exactly similar to elephant feet, and the areas to the east and west with nine such pillars have been witnessed in this mosque. This structure has been reconstructed during the Qajar age. There is a stone tablet with a decree of Sultan Hossein Safavid dated 1106 A.H in the corridor of the mosque.

Table 5.overview of form and content of Masjed Jame' Mahaleh of Amol

Plan and section of mosque	Masjed Jame' Mahaleh of Amol	Expression of content
	This sense might be in the leading courtyard of the mosque that there are the skylight at each side of it, such that an exsessive light via light material can be witnessed inside the moaque.	Building sense of spirituality at the mosques
13 de marco	This meaning will not manifest in this mosque without a Shabestan and iwan and chamber, yet it induces the person to the spirituality by his presence at the courtyard for performign the praying.	Changing the look from the earth to sky at mosque
Cit start dy		
Photo of mosque	This hierarchy seems with crystalizaiton of light during the day and its reflection from the walls in three sides of the space with a cohesive rythem.	Spatial hierarchy at mosques
	This expression with a unique rythem at the space of mosque might reflect sense of unity in addressee's mind, yet a specific order in worshiping at the mosque represents the unity, and this unity intensifies reflection of artificial and natural light, representing the lights in a a unique rythem which implies unity.	An agent for manifestation of sesne of unity
	Wood lattice openings have been raised at the walls in front of this mosque with a crescent rhythm developed from rectangular and squares.	Light as the manifestation of existence
	Conductance of light through Shabestan under anticline in a day has had a static sequence.	Conductance, movement and sequence of space

# Jame Mosque (Gorgan)

This mosque has been firstly built in Seljukid period, and the remaining part of this mosque dating back to this age is its brick minaret which bears a Kufic inscription. The wooden pulpit of the mosque bears the date 859 A.H while the mihrab (altar) is dated 1108 A.H.

Within the lecture-hall of the mosque, a number of historic firmans (decrees) have been carved on stone; the latest date included in these firmans is A.H.1219 and the earliest, A.H. 908.

In a frame fixed above the pulpit, there is an inscription in Thulth style which bears the name of Abul Qasim Babar Bahadur, a Timurid general. The mosque has been repaired several times; for instance during the reigns of Shah Abbas I and Shah Abbas II.

Table 6.overview of form and content of Jame Mosque (Gorgan)

Table 6.overview of form and content of Jame Mosque (Gorgan)			
Plan and section of mosque	Jame Mosque (Gorgan)	Expression of content	
	By trajectory from the leadign entrance of the mosque that is developed extending from Gorgan bazaar, a semantic sense at the sacred space of the mosque is penetrated.	Building sense of spirituality at the mosques	
	By entering to the original courtyard of the mosque, the looking to the earht changes to looking to the sky, and manifestation of old minaret at the mosque enhances this sense from the darkness to the brightness.	Changing the look from the earth to sky at mosque	
Photo of mosque	Rethinking at the hierarchy from the middle of openings around the courtyard has a rythem with continuous angle change due to equal openings.	Spatial hierarchy at mosques	
OB CUL	Tiling at the leading iwan at the mosque and radiation of light in a day induce sense of unity to the prayer, and this order has been necessiated inside the mosque.	An agent for manifestation of sesne of unity	
© arkdyj	This symbol might be represented from the interior space in the mosque and the radiations reflected in the ceiling in a day.	Light as the manifestation of existence	
	A radiation of conducting artificial and natural light at the moving space can be seen under the same levels at vairous openings in front of the mosque.	Conductance, movement and sequence of space	

# **Babol Jame Mosque**

The original structure of Babol Jame Mosque dates to the year 160 AH, that it was constructed by Maziyar Ebne Qaran. This mosque has been repeatedly repaired during the Safavid reign. The current structure remains from

the Qajar era and has been repaired since then. The mosque has two portals, one to the east and the other to the west. Each give way to an eight-sided vestibule. On top of the western doorway are holy verses embossed on tiles, and the year 1230 AH has been written on it. The main nocturnal area has large and small domes, in addition to columns. There is an ancient altar in the western area, and two other newly constructed altars of tile work can be noted to the south. In the porch are verses inscribed from the works of the great poet of the times, Fath Ali Khan Saba, the poet laureate, written in the year 1227 AH.

Table 7. overview of form and content of Babol Jame Mosque

Plan and section of mosque	Babol Jame Mosque	Expression of content
mil manual manua		Building sense of spirituality at the mosques
	By entering to the original courtyard of the mosque that has been in ivan form, today it induces the person to the sense of unity through a glass wall which radiates the natural light inside the building.	Changing the look from the earth to sky at mosque
Photo of measure	Without doubt, this mosque due to its symmetry with	Spatial hierarchy at mosques
Photo of mosque	the plan and correspondance of the porches with a series of equal openings provides a sense of visual rythem at the space from the interior to the exterior space for a prayer.	spanai meraichy at mosques
	Sense of unity can be witnessed due to the dome on the mihrab with gable roof that radiates the light.	An agent for manifestation of sesne of unity
		Light as the manifestation of existence
	The interior space at Shabestan at this mosque is similar to the interior space in the mosques around the central regions in Iran and this is due to the material used at these mosques, yet radiation of light is felt with a uniform meaning and the reason for it lies on lack of openings in the southern courtyard.	Conductance, movement and sequence of space

To sum up, it must state that Jame mosques reflect the heart of cities and the shelter for people who have heard about all kinds of pain and happiness and disaster and influenced of everything. Notably, Jame mosques are regarded as the old buildings which date back to the long lost past with numerous unsaid words for the people, under which it must state that the true history lies on history of Jame mosques(Haji Ghasemi, 1998).

### Conclusion

Light is the most non-material natural element which has been constantly witnessed in Islamic architecture. At architecture age in Iran, how to look into the light has been influenced of different thinking about the most excellent form of light, recognized as the manifestation of spirituality and holiness. Iranian architecture seeks the reality in the architecture, so that the reality represents evolution derived from God, and what engages in this architecture implies

an inseparable part in the architecture moving towards reality. Light implies movement towards reality without physical and material state, and this together with further factors such as climate and how the position of a building is and how to use light are proposed. Yet this is in another form in western architecture. The principles governing contemporary and modern architecture move towards simplicity and purity and reach to the evolution with physical elements, and this falls far from spiritual purity. Under such an attitude, it can say that light engages in the architecture, yet light has been received in a balanced form, and this has been met through elements which develop the architecture including skylights, colorful glasses and openings.

Effects of light regarding the summary on concepts	jame mosque of Sari	Masjed Jame' Mahaleh of Amol	Jame Mosque (Gorgan)	Babol Jame Mosque
Changing extension of enviornment	Low	High	Average	Low
Changing trajectory to the outlook	Average- Shabestan	Average	A different aspect	High in the leadign ivan
Effect of light on enviornment color	Average-reflective	Moderate	At the space of ivan	Moderate-materials
Separator of the space	In porches with uniform rhythm	-	From corridor to the courtyard	-
Light controllers	Porch- radiation	marquee	Curtain	Porch-radiation
Skylights	Opening	Lattice door and window	Sash window	Porch-door and window

Light in Islamic architecture especially at mosques represents a symbol for the kingdom of heaven and induces the sense of closeness to the source of universe, under which the designer has managed to manifest the spiritual and divine concepts at any close space to the Islamic architecture and raise a favorable interaction between the form of the architecture and the lights used in it. In the architecture of mosques, Muslim architect seeks to acquire an accurate recognition from the reality of phenomena and objects by employing the light, that is, awareness from the meaning latent in the form of architecture, mentioned that form, content and message represent the aspects that result in unity in pluarism. what exists in this architecture implies an inseparable part in the architecture which moves towards reality, mentioned that Islamic architecture implies unity of meaning and material, aiming at gathering around in kingdom of heaven which goes superior to anything. With regard to what mentioned above and a deep understanding of these concepts and proper use of them in contemporary architecture, it can link evolutionary trajectory of this architecture to the past and future. After reaching to a deep understanding from the reality in all the components of architecture including light, contemporary architects must seek to represent the patterns in which sense of unity and integration to conduct the man to the origin of universe has embeded.

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