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## Reflection on Existential Levels of Environment and its Manifestation in Iranian-Islamic Cultural Context (Case Study: Yard)

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### Abstract

Environment is one of the most useful terms in various issues such as architecture. Since the ultimate goal of architecture is to design the environment, explaining the existential-semantic nature of environment (which has turned out to be discussed less, having become a problem) can play a significant role in making the path of design and criticism purposeful. Hence in its highest level, the present paper scans the nature of environment in Iranian Islamic architecture. Conducted with rational arguments and relying on existence rating of phenomena in Iranian Islamic wisdom, the present article intends to study the meaning of the term "environment" as well as its equivalents in Persian, Arabic, and English, and extract some aspects of its nature. In addition, referring to Iranian-Islamic wisdom (and above that Quranic teachings), the scanning of semantic implications of environment will continue. Afterwards, the paper extracts the meanings of yard in Persian language, Islamic view, and Iranian Islamic architecture. Results show that material confinement is the first level of environment, wherein environment is an object that surrounds an emptiness, keeping other objects in itself. In this level, environment appears as a material position. The second level of environment is awareness of it as an area, distinct from the surrounding areas, whose audience are human minds, and lifestyle, events, and distinct behaviors along with distinguishing natural elements are contributory factors in distinguishing this area from its surrounding ones. Since life and awareness are considered two semantic layers of this level, environment reveals as a behavioral perceptual foundation. The third and highest level of environment is realized through acquaintance with surrounding of a better existence. Realized through symbols' role, environment implies a spiritual settlement that consoles human soul. Obviously, these levels have been determined credibly and in reality, one can imagine a continuous spectrum of environment levels. In addition, results show that semantic implications of yard are closely related to those of environment. This confirms that the yard is like a synonym of environment, as a man-made space, being a sample or pattern of an Iranian-Islamic environment, in which all three levels have been epitomized.

### Keywords

Iranian architecture, Environment, Semantic levels, Yard.

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## Introduction

Fields of sciences, which are entangled with environment, such as environmental psychology and environmental design, are among newly-found topics in Iranian architecture literature. They are some concerns and criticisms on modernist thinking that have come to life from 1960s and 1970s. McAndrew attributes the formation of environmental psychology as a field of science to 1960s. All the same, he claims that this field relies on perceptive theories of past years such as Gestalt Theory, which developed by people such as Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Koffka in Germany. The most important concern of environmental psychology is the interactions and relationships between people and environment (McAndrew, 2008: 1-12). The entry of human-environment topic or behavior-environment studies into the field of architecture has a gradual process, beginning with initial criticisms by Group Ten during 1940s and 1950s. The criticisms grew in the following years through theories of people like Jane Jacobs, reaching its zenith in the third level by getting help from behavioral science theories (Lang, 2004: 6-7). Year 1968 can be called the date of official foundation of behavior-environment studies, in which an association of architects, planners, and socialists under the name of Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) started its activities (Moore, 1979: 19). Their actions, researches, and studies were about mutual influence of human and environment. Amos Rapoport was one of those who shared an interest in knowing the environment as well as its effectiveness and receptivity in various societies and conducted several researches on this subject. According to Rapoport, culture is the most important determining factor of construction's shape (especially the house) (2013: 83). In his view, not only does the culture shape an artificial environment but also it helps perceiving the hidden meanings inside the environment. The first point to begin the present research is to accept the key role of culture in explaining environment's nature. On the other hand, Rapoport offers four systems to explain the

nature of environment: 1) space, time, meaning, and relationship system, 2) settlements' system, 3) cultural landmarks, and 4) a system of constant, semi-constant, and inconstant elements (Rapoport, 2011: 44). Although culture can be marked within all four systems above, the nature or meaning of environment is not essentially consistent with a certain cultural basis. Hence, the second point in starting the present research is not to explain the nature of environment based on a certain culture. Therefore, with environmental designing topics entering Iranian Islamic architecture, the problem raised would be to know how environment is defined in this culture.

## Questions and Research Goals

As mentioned above, the present research intends to define the environment, a key concept in environmental design, based on Iranian-Islamic culture. On the other hand, since environment is a general concept and should manifest in extensions, the article tries to study its aspects in the yard as an extension of Iranian Islamic architecture. The present research, thus, asks the following questions:

- What aspects does the environment symbolize in Iranian Islamic cultural context?
- To what extent does the yard, as an Iranian architectural micro-space, possess these aspects?

To begin with, answering these questions will help understand the aspects of environment (and yard). On the other hand, as aforementioned, culture is a determining factor in planning and perception of artificial environment. Thus, definition of environment on the basis of cultural dimensions such as language, attitude, and Iranian-Islamic architecture causes the simultaneous nature of environment and culture attract much attention in the areas of design, evaluation, criticism, and perception of spaces.

## Research Background

As mentioned before, the present research tries to discover some levels of environment (and yard) limits based on Iranian Islamic wisdom. It should

be said that concerning the limits and aspects of environment, various researches have been carried out. On top of these attempts, one can point at Rapoport's book (2005) under the title of "The Meaning of the Constructed Environment", which tries to explain non-verbal communications of man-made spaces. In addition, within the literature of Iran's architecture and urbanization, Jalili (2010) in an article named "The Nature of Environment" reviews environment in environmental psychology literature, explaining models by experts like Kirk, Sonnefeld, etc. Although the above researches as well as the models presented in them sometimes depend on a hierarchical system like Sonnefeld's Model, they get distant from the present article's subject, as they are not determined based on Iranian Islamic wisdom. On the other hand, several researches in recent years have dealt with the belief in a hierarchical system in architecture, based on Islamic wisdom, and on attempts to discover these levels. Sameh (2013) based on epistemic system of Islam introduced three levels of architecture and human life in his research, which discusses the subject of architecture and human's life quality. Sameh and Sedaghat (2013) believed that architecture levels depend on human existential levels and are determined in relation with that. Accordingly, there is direct correspondence between architecture levels (i.e., building, environment, and place) with human's three existential levels (i.e., body, self, and soul) as well as its three areas (namely nature, instinct, and temperament). However, they insist that in close approximation with the body or soul, self can bring about two intermediary levels of the concupiscent soul and the peaceful soul. Since it is architecture's responsibility to respond to different human properties, they introduce two levels of shelter and space in correspondence with these properties. In line with this hierarchical system, Sameh (2014) believes that in each of its levels, architecture is linked with one of human life layers, namely material, sensual, and spiritual lives. Bakhtiari-Manesh (2014) introduced a longitudinal spectrum for architecture, based on the relation

between the architectural work's appearance and meaning and depending on a hierarchy, imagined in Islamic wisdom for universe (and whatever is in it). The upper extent of this spectrum is architecture that has the deepest link with meaning, while its lower one is a building with the least amount of meaning. Both of these are credential and it is quite useful to define their features when determining the quality-based position of architectural works which are often placed somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, close to either of the extends. Accordingly, being an "indicator" of human residence, "having positive influence" on the context to which the building is related, and ultimately "persistence" in the form of lifestyle pattern are some features of architecture in its highest quality level. On the contrary, merely "being seen", "dominance over the environment", and "merely bodily strength" can be signs of low quality and low level of the architectural work. Apart from the differences and similarities of the above researches, their ranking implications indicate the universality of architecture and none of them managed to discover these implications in a specific topic, namely Iranian Islamic environment (particularly yard). All things considered, the present research is distant from those works, having a special innovation in terms of its chosen subject.

### Methodology

In order to answer "What is environment and what features should it have?" either of the following things can be done: first, to go to various environment and try to induce their common features and second, to consider a basic intellectual apparatus and try to define environmental features by comparative means. The nature of this research is close to the latter. On the other hand, non-historical nature of environment (also considered in this research) has made logical reasoning to be used as a means. Accordingly, by adopting a comparative approach and by considering the power of reasoning, this article compares the meaning of environment and yard in Islamic Iranian language, attitude, and architecture.

## Theoretical Foundation

Since the works manifested in Islamic Iranian architecture are chiefly great samples of architecture, one can expect that the best constructed environment samples are found in this type of architecture. Dealing with the thought that supports this type of architecture, being Islamic wisdom, can obtain this research's purpose. On the other hand, in Islamic thought, the source of Islamic wisdom goes back to divine word, the most complete reference. Therefore, this research's theoretical foundation is to resort to divine word and as a result to Islamic wisdom<sup>1</sup>. In some places, Quranic verses will be referred to directly and in other places, the principles of Islamic wisdom will be the basis of action.

The most important principle in Islamic thought is the unity of the source<sup>2</sup> (and destination<sup>3</sup>) of the universe. This Unitarian principle, which has frequently come in Quranic verses in different ways<sup>4</sup>, is the common aspect of Muslim scholars' opinions<sup>5</sup>. The single source of the universe is revealed and manifested through emanation, expansion, radiation, or emergence. Due to its unity, since in the first manifest cannot be achieved except the self-existent, all the various objects of the universe cannot appear in the first manifestation, and it is necessary to have a hierarchy of manifestation and creation (Ibn Sina, 2004: 112). As a result, the series of emanations continues one after the other until the whole universe is created<sup>6</sup>. In each level of this manifestation, due to getting distance from the source, the intensity of being becomes less. As a result, the universe has to have a longitudinal hierarchy, expanded from the most intense level of existence to its weakest limits. In this hierarchy, creatures with existential precedence are closer to the One, enjoy a larger share of being, and, therefore, are more complete<sup>7</sup>. In other words, the coherent spectrum of universe will have some levels, based on the manifestation levels as well as the traits of the beings, created in each level. Frequent use of comparative adjectives in Quran to describe various phenomena or to compare them comes from these value levels<sup>8</sup>.

Credibly, the scholars have defined it in three main levels, corresponding with the three worlds: "the world of ideas, the imaginal world, and the tangible world" (Corbin, 1998: 483). The world of ideas is the world of distinctions, talents, and natures, necessarily general and constant (Ibn Arabi, 2006: 146). These creatures are the reality, and cause of the beings below them (Sharif, 1983: 579). The creatures of the imaginal world are manifestations of meanings and since they are free from time and space, they differ from bodily sensations, being fairer, more abstract, and more transcendental than them (Corbin, 2004). In the imaginal world, geometry, i.e., tangible relations, appear as things without time, space, and mass (Corbin, 2004: 166). And finally, creatures of the tangible world are utterly plural, and dependent on time and space (Guénon, 2010: 31). "Measurement" in the tangible world appears as "quantity" and "material". The three levels of the world exist between two boundaries of existence and non-existence. The coherence of the levels and its expansion from up to down, relates each part of this system necessarily with its superior level, because each being gets its nature and existence from a source, corresponding to it though in a more general and real sense. Therefore, whatever is observable is rooted in the world of ideas through a set of levels. As mentioned above, the presence of different levels is not unique to the universe, and other phenomena such as humankind have these dimensions or ranked worlds. As for humans, there are tripartite classifications too, such as the material, the sensual, and the spiritual worlds.

This is the second important principle of Islamic wisdom that considers the universe and all beings a product of ranked manifestations of a single source, thus considering all beings in relation with that source. In this case, each phenomenon has a deep, time-free, and space-free source, which can adopt various manifestations and different forms at the same time. This has been clearly stated in the following verse: "A good word is like a good tree-its root is firm, and its branches are in the

sky” (Abraham, 24). Accordingly, a longitudinal spectrum can be considered for each phenomenon, and in correspondence with three levels of the world, three aspects or levels can be counted for each phenomenon.

Based on this theoretical foundation, one can reach some rules concerning the essence of environment: Like any other phenomena, “environment” possesses constant nature, essence, principle, and meaning which does not vary at different points of time and in different spaces. This is the common ground of all constructed environments. At the same time, each environment possesses specific aspects too, dependent on time, space, etc. Variety of different types of environment comes from this aspect. Based on environments’ use of this constant principle, there is a longitudinal spectrum of them, with some of them being closer to their nature and are, consequently, more environment than the others. Credibly, in longitudinal spectrum of environments one can distinguish three levels or features, corresponding to three levels of the universe or human.

### **Semantic Study of Environment in Language**

A study of Moein, Amid, and Dehkhoda Farsi lexicons shows that the term mohit (environment) is an Arabic word with wide and multiple meanings, which is semantically an antonym of mohat (surrounded). What is more, comparing these sources show that the meanings, presented in Dehkhoda Farsi lexicon, are more complete than the others, capable of being categorized around some certain aspects. Pervasive, covering, or surrounding is the first series of meanings, offered for this term, showing one thing’s surrounding the other<sup>9</sup>. In its other sense, mohit is used for a line, drawn around a shape like a circle<sup>10</sup>. In this sense, mohit continues its former meaning, namely to cover. Yet, what is hidden in this sense, is the presence of a tangible and physical agent to show covering. The third meaning of mohit indicates the living place of humans and other creatures. In this sense, it is used for the realm of life or creatures’ living, which can correspond to the world, the

universe, etc.<sup>11</sup> Aware, informed, or understanding is the fourth series of mohit’s meanings, which indicates to be aware of a phenomenon’s secrets<sup>12</sup>. Another semantic usage of mohit in Persian language is its indication of the ocean or the sea that encircles the earth<sup>13</sup>. In this sense, to surround appears through tangible agents. The last meaning one can find for mohiti in Persian language is its indication of one of the divine names, used many times in Quran. It should be said to surround, to encircle, to environ, area, yard, to circumscribe, and domain are synonyms of mohit, showing the meanings this word carries.

Looking up the word in Arabic lexicons, such as Al-Monjed (Ma’touf, 2008, vol. 1: 346) and Al-Wasit (Anis, et al., 2010, vol. 1: 436) show that the term mohit is a subject noun from the verb ahata, whose meanings are quite similar to the ones, presented in Persian language. The difference is that in Arabic it has less been used for sea. Studying synonyms of mohit in Arabic, apart from being another reason for closeness of this word’s meanings in both languages, contains an interesting point, i.e., in Arabic language to surround somewhat depends on tangible and physical factors. For instance, in words like al-heta’et (meaning confined garden), al-howatah (meaning an enclosure), hawwat (meaning to wall), and haetan (meaning wall’s construction), the influence of physical factors, particularly the wall, to realize the verb of surrounding is crystal clear.

In English, the most common equivalent of mohit is environment, which is derived from the French environer, meaning “to surround, to be surrounded, to encircle, to involve, to enclose”. The first two components of this word, namely en+viron, correspond with in (inside, within) a circle or an orbit. Accordingly, in English, environment means “to be surrounded” and “to be inside something”. Additionally, a study of Longman and Oxford dictionaries show that the word environment can be divided into two groups. In the first sense, this word is used to the sum of three elements of water, earth, and air, in (or on) which humans and animals live. In the second sense, it includes the conditions and

positions in which humans live, work, or act (OALD, 2007: 511; LDCE, 2007: 523).

The above studies show a semantic similarity of environment in both Persian and Arabic, which can be due to two factors. First, the word mohit (environment) is Arabic and has come to Persian without any change. Second, the common Persian and Arabic worldview has helped closeness and similarity of environment. On the other hand, comparing the meanings of mohit and environment shows that in Arabic and Persian, this word has more dimensions or aspects.

Some of the exclusive meanings of environment is to indicate the omnipotent and his exclusive power in addition to implied emphasis on awareness

and understanding of surrounding circumstances. These dimensions are value-based or spiritual and help distinguish environment in Persian, Arabic, and English. It should be added that apart from the abovementioned difference, certain aspects of mohit are similar to the meanings of environment. Their first common ground can be stated as the fact that both words in their meaning indicate a totality, constructed from numerous elements such as human, etc. Their second common ground is the presence of physical and tangible elements that surround the mentioned totality and have dominance over it (Table 1).

Semantic Study of Environment in Islamic Attitude Quran frequently repeats the word “environment” as well as its synonyms<sup>14</sup>. Thinking about the mentioned

Table 1. Common grounds and differences in the meaning of mohit and environment. Source: authors.

|                              | <b>Common Grounds</b>   | <b>Differences</b>   |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Mohit and Environment</b> | <b>Universality of mohit and environment through:</b><br>- emphasis on words like total, sum, totality, combination<br><br>- emphasis on components and relations | <b>Spirituality of mohit to environment through:</b><br>- mohit has a spiritual aspect                                 |
|                              | - emphasis on human, animals, natural, physical, etc. elements, together  | <b>Conceptual inclusion, hidden in mohit, compared to environment through:</b><br>- awareness of phenomena’s mysteries |
|                              | <b>Surrounding nature of mohit and environment through:</b><br><br>- presence of physical and tangible elements   |  |

verses shows that encircling or confinement are the most primary aspects of environment that can originate from tangible factors such as sea waves<sup>15</sup>, fire<sup>16</sup>, etc. Additionally, in some holy verses the sense of encircling in the word mohit has been used for drowning in sins or befalling punishment, etc. In its other Quranic meanings, mohit corresponds to knowing, understanding, or having knowledge over something, which can be to have knowledge of Quran<sup>17</sup> or have knowledge of other phenomena<sup>18</sup>. Apart from the aspects, explained above, the most important aspect of environment in Islamic attitude is the spirituality or the divinity which comes with it. God’s awareness of all truths, the confinement of the universe within God’s power, as well as

His encircling nature give a valuable status to environment, referring to holy verses like “God comprehends what they do” (Al-Omran, 120), “Surely He comprehends everything” (Fosselat, 54), and “God surrounds the disbelievers” (Al-Baqareh, 19). Islamic thought believes in a coherent relationship between mohit (God) and mohat (other than Him) in the entire universe. In this Unitarian system, God is called the absolute encircling, who both encircles human and covers him (Jahangir, 2011: 68). Human’s being surrounded in divine environment results in experiencing the environment itself, along with spirituality. The coherence of mohit and mohati in Islamic mysticism is called unity of existence or intuition, giving a Unitarian reading of environment.

This unifying view of environment expands to natural environment. In this way, nature and whatever is in it are a manifestation of God's presence (Bolkhari Qahi, 2005: 371). These natural manifestations praise God and on the other hand is a symbol of His presence<sup>19</sup>. Thus Islam's Unitarian thought regards nature a divine and spiritual essence, like environment. Following this view, the relationship between human and nature becomes a spiritual connection, in which both are considered God's creations that are surrounded by Creator's power and are bound to relations, determined by Him (Zurvani and Khodajooyan, 2005: 253-263). To put it briefly, Islamic attitude believes that environment, natural environment, and its manifestations are a totality, gathered within the boundary of spirituality and God's power and knowledge.

It should be said that the mentioned aspects of mohit in Quran, including encircling (or confinement), awareness of matters, and spirituality of environment has been manifested in Islamic reasoning, too. For example, awareness or God's knowledge over phenomena has been repeatedly mentioned in Du'a Jawshan Kabir (O He, whose knowledge encompasses everything), Du'a Kumayl (And by Your knowledge, which encompasses all things), Du'a Arafah (and we have no sustainer but You, your decree is prevalent on us, your knowledge is encompassing us), etc.

### **Semantic Study of Yard in Iranian-Islamic Language, Attitude, and Architecture**

Unlike the term "environment", frequently used by Iranian poets, whether the classic or modern ones, the term "yard" is rarely seen in classic poets' writings. The term hayat (yard) is the plural form of haet or hayet, which has been used several times in poems of Rumi, Attar, Nasir Khosrow, etc. Comparing the couple of lines below, we can see that hayet (yard) in Persian poetry refers to both the wall and the space within its confinement.

He broke up with that fellow completely / And turned to the hayet<sup>20</sup>, not to say hello to him (Rumi)

There was some hayet<sup>21</sup> with a tree in its middle / A bird nested on its tree (Attar)

Moreover, Dehkhoda has hinted at wall (or garden's wall) or walled garden beneath the entry hayet. In addition, hayat (as the plural of hayet) in his lexicon was defined as an enclosed space, limited to physical elements<sup>22</sup>. The above definitions, which have been done in Persian, explicitly indicate the dependence of yard's nature on physical elements. On the other hand, referring to Iranian architecture that the essence of yard in its introverted pattern is subject to the presence of a surrounding mass<sup>23</sup>. The outside mass makes a continuous and unbreakable connection with the middle space in order to create two types of active (influential) and passive (influenced) spaces. In this interactive procedure, the yard's space by resorting to the body and by limiting the infinite space in the horizon, finds a separate and human-made existence, which is a continuation of its former and divine existence<sup>24</sup>. In this level, the existential nature of the yard is its material boundaries. Soil (and its derivatives) is the most important element to act in the level of material (or object), contributing to the dominance of matter over space or enclosure of the space within four walls. In this level, yard is an essence which has gained a physical identity, thanks to its features such as size<sup>25</sup>, shape, limits, direction, place, dimension, color, tissue, form, stability, geometry, order, ratio, scale, capacity, balance, structure, etc. Owing to material walls, the yard appears as a paled nowhere and space as a position (Fig. 1). In these circumstance, the space will get separated from other aspects and in order to be present in it, a component such as entrance is required<sup>26</sup>.

In modern Persian literature, yard has been chiefly described with phenomena such as fountain, garden, flower, etc.<sup>27</sup> In Iranian architecture, the yard incorporates these natural manifestations and by resorting to them, gains a lively essence. The life<sup>28</sup>, motion and movement<sup>29</sup>, lushness<sup>30</sup>, etc. of the yard can be primarily attributed to water, which is a phenomenon that along with revelation, book,

peacefulness, Torah, angels, Quran, grace, verses, recitation, bounty, knowledge, etc. has a celestial earthly explanation in Quran and is emphasized for this respect<sup>31</sup>. The yard environment like other man-made environments gains life due to descending of water and gets distance from the physical body<sup>32</sup>. By resorting to these very conditions, the yard's environment leaves its previous aspect and becomes another<sup>33</sup>. The entanglement of life and death is the most important characteristic of soul's level which dominates all phenomena<sup>34</sup>, demonstrated in yard's space (along with its elements). In this level, not only is the yard's environment alive but it also generates a capacity for life, acting as a behavioral setting (Fig. 2); (Rapoport, 2007: 58-64). Depending on human behaviors dominating it, such as living, etc., Iranian Islamic culture considers invisible boundaries for this setting<sup>35</sup> to complement material boundaries of the previous level.

Based on Quranic teachings, the first and last dwelling of human is heaven<sup>36</sup>. Against this real dwelling, life on earth was temporary, only a settlement or a residence<sup>37</sup>. Not to get carried away with the settlement and readiness to reach the original and immortal dwelling requires symbolic hints which are manifested beautifully in the yard. The four-part system of the gardens in the yard demonstrates a corner of its heavenliness. The reflection of bodily sights in water emphasizes the mysteries and secrets of extraterrestrial world. The poetic presence of the wind in the yard's space and its collision with natural and earthly elements reveals another symbolism. In God's words, wind has a proclaiming and informing status<sup>38</sup>. In Iranian literature, some situations of notification have been illustrated by means of Saba wind<sup>39</sup>. In God's words, ascension from the level of soil towards unity was by means of blowing the divine breath, which emphasizes themes like granting the soul<sup>40</sup> and summoning<sup>41</sup>. Only by resorting to the connection to this divine spirit, earthly artifices can enter a higher level<sup>42</sup>. Direct connection of earth and sky in the yard's space has confirmed these themes, demonstrating it in a symbolic way. The play of light

and shadow, attempt to symbolize darkness, and guidance are among other things, manifested in the space of a yard more than other man-made spaces. The mentioned symbolisms confirm that the highest aspect or level of yard is to achieve spirituality and divinity in the space (Fig. 1, 2, 3).

## Discussion

From previous discussions, it seems that environment



Fig. 1. Yard (Maranjab Caravanserai) as a material setting. Source: <http://www.mustseepersia.com>



Fig. 2. Yard (Boroujerdi's House) as an alive setting. Source: [www.namnak.com](http://www.namnak.com)



Fig. 3. Yard (Finn Garden) in the light of multiple symbolisms as a divine and spiritual settlement. Source: <http://home.peymansaz.org>



in Islamic language and attitude has been defined as follows: environment (mohit) means a phenomenon's encirclement by another phenomenon which implies its limitedness or confinement. Chiefly and primarily, this confinement happens through tangible and physical factors (including periphery of shapes, water borders, waves, walls, fences, etc.). However, non-physical factors (like principles, etc.) may emphasize the confinement. Within the formed confines, a biological and non-biological area will be created which is the enclosure or living place of different phenomena, including humans, etc. The environmental factor commands the mysteries and secrets of the encircled phenomenon (phenomena), declaring a semi-circumstance of awareness. The mentioned dominance is one-way and surrounding factors cannot gain full knowledge of the enviroing ones. Since God in any case is absolute encirclement of the existence, the area, as environment, is busy praising the God, manifesting all divine evidence and signs. Therefore, environment is manifestation of God, having meaning, spirituality, or divinity. On the other hand, careful observation of environment properties, whether in language or architecture confirms that fence, wall, or other

physical elements by limiting infinite areas, help create a confinement or material setting, which apart from physical boundaries, is reinforced through certain invisible boundaries such as privacy, etc., derived from Islamic attitude. The created spatial confinement engulfs in itself multiple elements such as fountain, tiles, gardens, flowers, trees, humans, etc. By staying in this yard, human becomes aware of its current events. In other words, awareness of yard affairs requires sensual (i.e., visual, tactile, etc.) dominance over them. Additionally, the same natural elements contribute to the yard's life. Many natural and material aspects of yard exhibit spiritual symbols or signs, in way that they remind humans an icon of the immortal heavenly dwelling. The comparison of the definitions, presented for environment and yard, achieved via Islamic language, attitude, and architecture, has some points in itself: first, semantic indications of environment in Persian language and Islamic attitude are very close to one another. On the other hand, semantic indications of yard in Persian language, Islamic attitude, and Iranian Islamic architecture are very similar. What is more, the comparison of above definitions confirms the closeness of environment and yard.

## Conclusion

Previous findings confirm that environment and its derivatives emphasize a physical enclosure (prior to non-physical enclosures). In other words, the confinement of environment is primarily achieved with physical elements. Since this material or physical boundary of environment can be regarded physical identity, the first feature of environment is based on physical elements. Therefore, environment in its first aspect appears as physical encirclement. Like environment, yard necessarily needs possessing this enclosure and is manifested with it. In this regard, both environment and yard (as a derivative of the former) are an object and confine other objects (living and non-living). By possessing these material physical enclosures, environment and yard refer to a place or a setting. All told, environment and yard in this level introduce physic, body, or object, through which its features like limitation, geometry, etc. appear.

On the other hand, the presence of human (along with natural elements, plants, or other living beings) gives motion, dynamism, life, or –to put it otherwise-- soul to the environment. Humans and other natural elements' life in the environment bring different qualities for it. Since perception of the environment depends on human's presence as well as understanding its qualities, there will be a two-way relation between environment and human. As such, one part of environment's meaning depends on human's (and other biological elements') life in this confinement, while the other part depends on understanding or perception of environmental qualities,

realized by the senses and –eventually—human’s mind. Therefore, environment in its other aspect manifests as an awareness of the difference of one area from another. One of the most important differences between the yard and the areas around it is the presence of these natural and biological elements, like fountain, garden, plants, birds, wind and its collision with trees, direct connection of the yard with the sky, human, and his behavioral patterns, etc. All told, both environment and yard gain life on one hand and bring a different perception for human, on the other. By making distance from the abovementioned perceptual behavioral setting, both environment and yard find themselves before God. In this aspect, environment (and yard) proclaims a better being. By having multiple symbolisms, the yard’s environment will be an allegory of the dwelling which is the initial and eventual home of the humans. In this way, by blowing spiritual soul into the yard’s environment, which happens through these symbols, human soul will be consoled and he will perceive the presence of the better being. In this aspect, in continuation of previous aspects of yard’s environment such as body, soul, and perception, the space will incline towards perfection.

A close look at the features of environment and yard, determined by means of the body, the mind, and the soul, this fact is confirmed that the aspects of environment begin from lower layers or tiers and go towards upper ones. In this hierarchical system, the existence of yard’s environment starts from a material setting and by passing a perceptual behavioral setting, which welcomes the earthly life of humans, etc., it will remind him of his real and immortal dwelling. The realization of these levels is subject to the roles, played by those elements that have a direct relation with the existence of each level. In this way, in order to achieve a material setting, derived from physical confinements, the yard’s environment requires the acting of earthly (or material) elements. In the next setting, which is specified to behavior and perception, the yard’s environment depends on the presence of nature, events, etc. Moreover, in the high level of the dwelling, wherein the yard’s environment gains a spiritual or divine status, it is necessary for the pieces of signs, symbols, indications, pieces of evidence, allegories, and symbols to play their roles. In addition, findings confirm that the yard as a man-made space, possesses the same aspects that form the environment’s existence. All told, yard in Iranian Islamic architecture is a sample, pattern, or instance of environment (Table 2).

Table 2. Aspects of yard and their manifestation in it. Source: authors.

| Semantic levels of environment   | Environment and human's features, specific for each level   | Manifestation of each level's features  | Each level's indications      | Key elements of each level         |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Environment as a physical boundary that engulfs human body   | With regard to the environment's body and human's body, it is necessary to have physical boundaries as well as a level of confinement.  | Material, color, geometry, etc. of the environment is influential in this level. With layered and convex walls, the environment reinforces the sense of being engulfed. | Material setting              | Role-playing of earthly elements   |
| Environment as a boundary from which human mind perceives a distinct meaning, rendering it not distinctive | With regard to the flow of life in the environment as well as human's mind, it is necessary to have different qualities inside that confinement, which are not limited outside, e.g. presence of nature with a specific way of living | A specific flow of life (special behaviors) or the presence of different qualities like the presence of nature reinforces this distinction.                             | Behavioral/perceptual setting | Role-playing of natures and events |
| Environment as container of the better being, whose dominance and presence is perceived by human           | With regard to the presence of a better meaning in the environment and human's soul, it is necessary for the environment to have an orientation, inwards and upwards  | Emphasis on upward direction, watching the sky, etc.  | Spiritual dwelling            | Role-playing of symbols            |

## Endnotes

1. Moslem scholars' opinions vary a lot, though they have some common aspects too, which are the principles of Islamic worldview, chosen as theoretical foundation of this research. In this case, there is no need to deal with these opinions' differences, here.
2. This can be clearly understood from verses such as "And it is He who produced you from a single person" (Al-An'am [Livestock], 98).
3. This can be clearly understood from verses such as "All things are returned to God" (Al-Baqareh [The Heifer], 210; Al-Omran [Family of Omran], 109; Al-Haj [The Pilgrimage], 76, etc.)
4. For example, "your God is One God" (Al-Anbia [The Prophets], 108; Al-Kahf [The Cave], 110; Fosselat [Detailed], 6)
5. Peripatetic scholars believe that the source of universe is a single source and "self-existent" which is real "Agent" of objects (Sharif, 1983: 603). According to Suhrewardi, "light" is the source of universe because not only is it apparent but reveals other beings (Amin Razavi, 2008, 130). Ibn Arabi believes that all universe is from a "single", "hidden", and "absolute" reality (Parsa, 1987, 22). Mulla Sadra believes the source of universe is a "single truth" and "essence-dependent" which is "free from [any] observance, limitation, and combination". This single being is equal to "light and life" (Mulla Sadra, 1987).
6. According to the peripatetic, the source of the self-existent, essentially far from any plurality, is a "mentality, competent by its awareness". By thinking about itself, it dismisses its position of the unseen and appears for the first time as a person (Sharif, 1983, 658). Based on Suhrewardi's viewpoint, the "light of the lights" is a single being on the highest place, and creates different levels of the universe by radiation and illumination (Amin Razavi, 2008, 63). Therefore, all levels of existence are generated by means of light, whose intensity lessens in the lower levels to gradually turn into darkness. According to Ibn Arabi the "absolute existence" is unveiled in two successive manifestations. These two manifestations from which the entire possible universe has been produced, form the universe in a longitudinal hierarchy below the "One God" (Parsa, 1987, 5 and 22). According to Mulla Sadra, the single existence has created the entire universe via "expansion and emergence" (Mulla Sadra, 1987). The creatures of the world are one in essence and truth, all characterized by life. All the same, variation in intensity and weakness of the existence along with priority and posteriority of their existence has led to their separation and difference, creating various types of beings (ibid., 9).
7. And now our lamp is from this low icicle / Light has an order in its degrees  
 The light of truth has seven hundred curtains / Consider the curtains of light as many tiers  
 The members of the end of the line from their weakness / Their eyes cannot tolerate much light  
 The expectations decline gradually / Once he passes the seven hundredth, he becomes the primeval darkness  
 (Rumi)
8. For example, "The punishment of the Hereafter is more severe, and more lasting" (Ta-Ha, 127); "We have given some prophets advantage over others" (Al-Asra [The Night Journey], 55); or "Is he equal to him who commands justice" (Al-Nahl [The Bee], 76)
9. Sometimes it goes north and sometimes runs right / Sometimes surrounding the world and sometimes around the entire mortal world (Rumi)  
 With intellect's step, it measures the universe's vicinity / The alive one makes imaginations with the light of opinion (Anvari)
10. Whether steed or equipment in this space / Are to be perished as such as the realm of life (Sheikh Bahaei)
11. Those who went in pursuit of knowledge/ Soared up so high, stretched the edge (Khayyam)
12. There is a king who sometimes acts with generosity / One like the encircling ocean and another like the rainy cloud (Masoud Sa'd)
13. The term environment in such forms as "لَمُحِيطًا، مُحِيطًا، مُحِيطًا و مُحِيطًا" has been used 11 times in sum (Al-Baqareh [The Heifer], 19; Al-Omran [The Family of Omran], 120; Al-Nessa [Women], 108 and 126; Al-Anfal [The Spoils], 47; Al-Tobah [Repentance], 49; Hud, 84 and 92; Al-Ankabut [Spider], 54; Fosselat [Detailed], 54; and Al-Borouj [The Constellations], 20). Among the meanings of this word in above verses, 4 point at God's awareness of human actions, 14. indicate God's awareness of everything, 2 stand for hell's covering the infidels, one is about God's surrounding the infidels, one indicates God's surrounding from every direction, and one stands for the encircling of Judgment's Day. Derivatives of environment is the term يحيطون which has been used twice in Al-Baqareh [The Heifer] verse 255 and Ta-Ha, verse 110. In both verses, this word indicates the non-awareness of human over science as well as God's knowledge. Moreover, as other derivatives of mohit, the words يحيطوا (yuhitu) is used once (Jonah, 39); يحاط (yuhat), once (Yusef, 66); احاط (ehat), 4 times (Al-Asra [The Night Journey], 60; Al-Kahf [The Cave], 29; Al-Fath [Victory], 21; Al-Talaq [Divorce], 12); واحاط (Vahat), once (Jinn, 28); واحاطت (wahatet) (Al-Baqareh [The Heifer], 81); and احيط (ahit), twice (Jonah, 22 and Al-Kahf [The Cave], 42) have been used in Quran.
15. It refers to this verse: "The waves surge over them from every side, and they realize that they are besieged" (Jonah, 22)
16. It refers to this verse: "We have prepared for the unjust a Fire, whose curtains will hem them in" (Al-Kahf [The Cave], 29).
17. It refers to the following verse: "In fact, they deny what is beyond the limits of their knowledge" (Jonah, 39).
18. It refers to the following verse: "and that God encompasses everything in knowledge" (Al-Talaq [Divorce], 12).
19. This refers to "In the heavens and the earth are proofs for the believers" (Al-Jathie [Kneeling], 3).

20. Here hayet means wall and fence.
21. Here hayet means the space inside the walls.
22. "An enclosure and wherever there are some walls as well as the mansion, the house, the house terrace, and the house's open space. In Persian usage, a vast and unroofed space, where the rooms are constructed on one side or some sides of it."
23. Referring the opinions of outstanding experts in the area of Islamic architecture, one can acknowledge the physical confinement of the yard in Iranian introverted buildings such as house (Memarian, 2008, 12; Haeri Mazandarani, 2009, 134), mosque (Hillen Brand, 1998, 142), school (Sultan Zadeh, 2000, 138), and caravanserai (Kiani & Clyse, 1994, 13).
24. Looking at such verses as "He who made the earth a habitat for you, and the sky a structure" (Al-Baqareh [The Heifer], 22), "He created the heavens without pillars that you can see" (Luqman, 10), and "God holds the heavens and the earth, lest they fall apart. And were they to fall apart, there is none to hold them together except He" (Fater [Originator], 41), it can be said that earth and sky have gained existence as two dimensions of six dimensions of yard in God's creation. By adding surrounding walls to these dimensions, which is human deeds, a new existence is formed for it.
25. These concepts can be explained by verses like "With Him, everything is by measure" (Al-Ra'd [Thunder], 8).
26. Referring to the following verse: "So approach homes from their doors" (Al-Baqareh [The Heifer], 189).
27. Our home's yard is alone; Our home's yard / Is yawning while it waits for a stranger cloud to rain / And our home's fountain is empty / Unexperienced tiny stars / Fall from the heights of trees upon the ground (Forough Farrokhzad)
28. It refers to "And We made from water every living thing" (Al-Anbia [The Prophets], 30)
29. It refers to "But when We send down water upon it, it stirs and grows" (Foselat [Detailed], 39).
30. It refers to "Do you not see that God sends down water from the sky, and the land becomes green?" (Al-Haj [The Pilgrimage], 63).
31. The mentioned phenomena are chiefly described with the verb "descend"
32. It refers to "He who sends down water from the sky in due proportion; and so, we revive thereby a dead land." (Al-Zokhrof [Decorations], 11)
33. It refers to "He brings the living from the dead" (Al-An'am [Livestock], 95).
34. It refers to "Every soul will taste death" (The Spider, 57).
35. It refers to "O you who believe! Do not enter homes other than your own, until you have asked permission and greeted their occupants. That is better for you, that you may be aware" (Noor [The Light], 27) and "There is no blame on you for entering uninhabited houses, in which are belongings of yours. God knows what you reveal and what you conceal" (Noor [The Light], 29).
36. It refers to "We said, "O Adam, inhabit the Garden, you and your spouse," (Al-Baqareh [The Heifer], 35).
37. It refers to "And you will have residence on earth, and enjoyment for a while" (Al-Baqareh [The Heifer], 36).
38. It refers to "And of His signs is that He sends the winds bearing good news" (The Romans, 46).
39. The scent of Ramin comes from Vis' soul / Also the scent of God comes from Uwais  
From Uwais and from Qaran, the astonishing smell / Has intoxicated the prophet with much mirth (Rumi)  
As if from the brazier of heart, the sigh of Uwais Qarani / Bring Muhammad the breath of God (Sanaei Ghaznavi)
40. It refers to "and breathed into him of My spirit" (Saad, 72).
41. It refers to "The Day when the Trumpet is blown, and you will come in droves" (Al-Naba' [The Event], 18).
42. It refers to the following verse: "When God will say, "O Jesus son of Mary, recall My favor upon you and upon your mother, how I supported you with the Holy Spirit. You spoke to the people from the crib, and in maturity. How I taught you the Scripture and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel. And recall that you molded from clay the shape of a bird, by My leave, and then you breathed into it, and it became a bird, by My leave: (Al-Maedeh, 110).

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