



It is autumn ...

No autumn correspond to those of Iranian deserts. Here, this season is like a miracle. No tree, but the lonely spirit of desert is manifested in such a miracle, since there are no trees.

It is a beautiful autumn day, today. We are in Hassan Abad. It is early morning and we are feeling cold. From the moment of entry, deeper footprints of poverty is felt everywhere. Irregular houses, pale and semi-open doors, partially constructed facades, exposed sewers, destroyed pathways; even dissonant noises of motorbikes breaking the silence are all signs of a painful story.



Two men are sweeping the street.

Dust is also added to cold and mysterious air of desert, behind which the pale and ill-conditioned of the blocks is apparent.

As if everyone has consumed anything in his power to build a shelter. Here, Architecture is in its infancy, which is the fulfillment of very primary needs: survival!

With such an outstanding background history of traditional architecture in Yazd, I am so surprised of these misfits of using local materials and spaces.

Architecture is easy and inexpensive in desert if it originates from desert.

Here, in traditional Yazd, simple decisions have been made about orientation of the buildings. The rooms face the sun, where the windows are designed to be southerly. Wind catchers should be constructed to catch breezes. We design a new virgin of wind

catcher with water sprays and an underlying basin; find an appearance like a water-based cooler suited for dry air of desert.

Here, soil is spread as far as eyes can see. A great amount of adobes can be made from this much soil freely given by God to his worshipers. The locals are mostly construction workers, highly experienced in adobe making process. Adobe and brick are two sacred elements of Iranian architecture. Raw adobe can be fortified by using some techniques. For example, if adobe-based walls are manually drilled, and filled by poly propylene fibers, they will become reinforced against earthquakes and cracking.

Architectural spaces are so simple and no bedroom, living room, kitchen, playing room or studying room is needed. In Iranian house, all rooms are used for all purposes including relaxing, feeding, sleeping, etc. Spatial flexibility is of high importance. Geometric forms are permanent here. Only arches and domes are required to be made bigger or smaller. These forms resist gravity and circulate the air in the room by refracting the light and solar temperature on arches. In addition, these forms are familiar to those emigrated from the land of sun, that is, Sistan.

We walked in the alleys and just looked. A child voice is heard, signifying that the morning had begun. Two kids are warmly running together, pushing a ring of tire. Today, same as yesterday, as forever.... .

Gradually, the doors are fully opened. Except few young boys leaving home by their bikes, there are only women and girls wearing spotted flower-bearing veils, some holding their children's hand, perhaps to school. I don't know why, but I think men are either asleep out of hangover or they are reluctant to go out due to unemployment suffering. This was guessed by sorrow and innocence faces of women. I wish I was wrong.

But, I wasn't....

Somayyeh Khanoom, a middle aged woman on that alley confirms my hypothesis. She is standing within the doorway talking to us while pointing to some neighboring houses and say 'they are addicts or drug dealers'. Somayyeh Khanoom is from Khash and moved here some years ago, with her 3 children. She bakes at home. She has twin girls, Monireh and Samira. She is wearing a pretty balooch dress, sown by her. It occurred to me a workshop can be a very good source of money-making for Zahedani artist women. She speaks with a pleasant dialect but bitter words, all about poverty, misery,

impecuniousness, water and electricity bills, and her husband who is still without job. They had not enough space. We ourselves saw that there was no carpet in their room. However, she was thankful to God...



It is about 10 a.m. but it is still cold, especially in shade. Of course, shades are really a gift on hot days. Adobe walls create nice shadows in desert. As Nader Khalili says 'not only the walls do not separate the neighbors, but in Iran, neighbors start loving each other by building walls between their houses, each enjoying the shades of their own. Originally, the word "neighbor" in Farsi implies sharing the shade of a wall. Somayyeh said the alley is not safe. We figure out that those from Zahedan are not frank with those from Yazd or Kerman. On the neighborhood that we are going to design, the families should be of the same culture. Then, the neighborhood becomes their shared house, a warm and friendly one. There has to be spaces where kids can play safely.

A neighborhood park could be taken into consideration. I remember that Khalili used sand bags for landscaping very beautifully. The sand bags are inexpensive and native giving soft and scenic forms to the landscapes.

.... A young girl comes out. We go to her and ask her to talk to us. Before we ask our questions, she starts speaking with a nice Zahedani accent. Again those old words: poverty, misery, insecurity, shortage of accommodation and facilities. She mentions these with a childish pride and reminds us that their condition is not as bad as others. She said she is thirteen and a student. She has 3 brothers and 1 sister, all living in a house. Her sister is married and her brother works in Zahedan. It seems that no door remain closed here. I envied to their free spirits. The door of their houses is open because they have nothing to lose.

We enter the yard. The younger brother is repairing his bicycle. There is a vegetated garden beside a place for doves and a little basin. This basin exists in all houses of Sunnis, which they use it for washing their feet during ablution (Wudu). Within this

80m² house 5 people, 4 doves and 1 tree are living. Notwithstanding the little space they are living in peace together.



Again we are walking in neighborhood. We see a pickup truck selling fruits surrounded by women in colorful veils. An old man is sitting on a platform near a small store. Agha Rahmat lives alone. He has divorced his wife many years ago and his only child is a student in Farsi literature in the University of Tehran. His doves, feeding and watering them, are his only interests.

Indeed how hard and at the same time how easy the life is here!

Children's laughter is heard again. I say to myself, thanks God; they haven't forgotten the laughter yet. Even when talking to the women, despite a pile of sorrow and misery, they are still smiling with innocent faces.

Kids are rolling in dusty and dirty clothes. I guess washing the clothing is a routine duty of women in Hassan Abad. I know in these small houses there is no washing machine. Perhaps, we would better think of a desirable space for washing the clothes.

Now, we are in front of Bahar (Samaneh's sister)'s house. As Samaneh says the house looks better. Of course, they are tenant. Up to now we have found out that if tenant a family in Hassan Abad needs a mortgage deposit between 120 to 150 Rials, on average. Since the land value is nearly 1200 million rials in this area, any average family should at least pay 80 to 100 million Rials for land. Therefore, the proposed land area should be between 60 to 80 m². Bahar has married 4 years ago and twin boys. The kids have recently started to walk, and taking care of them is more difficult now. She says 'I wish I could live closer to my mother'. Bahar knows tailoring and carpet-weaving. Her husband is seasonal worker and he is unemployed for some time in a year. A flexible environment in a house can provide the background for a working atmosphere and an economic activity.

Walking in the alleys, we see brick kilns in the horizon. The locals can easily make adobe and change it into brick in the kilns.

Soil odor is smelt. This is a familiar odor in desert, especially if has been wetted by rain. An old woman is standing opposite the door spraying water on the ground.

She is also from Zahedan and lives with her only daughter there. She shreds vegetables for the people as a source of income. Their present house is a rental composed of a small room and a little basin in the yard. She complains more about loneliness than poverty. This house is further than other houses of Zahedani's, that way she feels this lonely.

It is noon and it is not as cold anymore. We have to return. 'I wish something could be done for them'. I think everyone who visits this village feels the same, but



Less talk and more action



Hassan Abad

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