



The Extent of Women's Enjoyment of Sacred Space

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Abstract

Religious feeling and experience is one of the components of religiosity, which in sociological theories is sometimes placed in the axis of religion and sometimes around the components of religiosity, and is expressed through sacred symbols and semantic system. Religious feelings are interrelated with religious rituals and community, which cause production, reproduction and mutual reinforcement. As a holy place and space, the mosque is expected to create a holy experience in the community instead of the ritual bringers, and by creating a common experience, it strengthens empathy and a sense of unity in this community. But the way that the policy makers of our country have taken in separating men and women in this place has caused the destruction of the meaning system of sacred space and architecture for women. This article aims to state the existence of such a problem in the hope that political and social planners will act in order to solve this problem.

Keywords: *Religious Experience; Sacred Space; Women; Mosque*

Introduction

Clifford Geertz analyzes religion as a culture system with a meaningful approach. What he means by culture is a pattern of meanings that is transmitted along history and embodied through symbols. Therefore, religion as a part of culture as a symbolic collection deals with sacred symbols and their functions. Sacred symbols play an important role in creating people's image of the world and connecting it with their souls. A symbol can represent something or stand in for something or act as a kind of diagram or guide to what needs to be done. Religious symbols also both express our position in the world and shape this position, and shape the social world by inducing tendencies in humans to behave in certain ways and inducing certain states in them (Hamilton, 2010: 295-7).

McGuire defines and sociologically examines religion in four dimensions of religious belief, ritual, experience and religious community. According to McGuire, religious experience refers to all mental engagements of a person with "sacred matter". Although such an experience is essentially personal, people try to communicate with it through performances and participation in religious ceremonies with the occurrence of specific religious actions. Rituals have symbolic actions that create religious meanings. Ceremony can be a context for the emergence of religious experience. Accordingly,

some religious experiences may be strong intersubjective reflections. The valuable qualities of "intimacy" and "compassion" can be truly experienced. Religious experience can also be the awareness of belonging to a group of believers, which McGuire calls a "religious community". Researchers have shown that collective religious scenes can provide a deeper sense of spiritual communion while re-reading and enhancing individual experience. Such a religious experience in the community creates a clear common sense, a sense of empathy, in the context of the community. Therefore, religious places such as churches, mosques, etc. are not merely an organizational aspect of religion. Rather, they are the focus for connecting and connecting the fundamental link between the meaning and social system that includes them. In other words, they are good examples of the link between the "group meaning system" and the communication networks of believers of the same religion. McGuire believes that the decline of a religious ritual should be sought in the weakness and disconnection of this symbolism and the group's shared meanings. The same events or beliefs that have symbolized certain religious ceremonies at one time may become less important or even be forgotten at another time, the lack of attention or the weakness of the new power in the day-to-day of rituals, makes it empty of content and its expected effects lead to ritualism, and empty and meaningless rituals indicate the weakness of intra-group ties and the lack of basic unity among the followers (Mir Sandosi 2004: 49-50 quoted by: Mc Guier, 1997: 15-18).

Holy space is a growing and exalting space in which unity is considered as an identity-giving quality, the standard and basis of the personality and spirit of the space; A unity that is formed despite the proliferation and diversity of elements so that the audience returns to such a space to its own nature and regains a manifestation of its inner perfection in it (Abbaszadeh and Zamani, 2019). The mosque, as the most important symbol of Islamic architecture, represents the holy space in the Muslim community, which is the center of religious rituals and ceremonies. Therefore, the architectural space of the mosque carries systems related to the sacred matter that when a person is placed in this space, basically, the inner space of his feelings becomes sacred.

In this way, the emergence of a sense of holiness in the sacred space of the mosque by attending religious rituals and religious gatherings in each person, leads to the softening of the soul and spirit, the feeling of unity, the feeling of oneness with the religious community, the emergence of the spirit of self-sacrifice, sacrifice, kindness, and strengthening social capital. By increasing the quality of relationships, feelings and goals are shared, which is one of the most important individual and collective functions of a sacred symbolic place. In the theories of social capital, where social participation is considered as traditional social capital, religion is an important part of the normative factor, and by inviting followers to fulfill obligations, sacrifice, and self-sacrifice, and such attributes that are necessary for expressive and warm bonds. is the factor of strengthening social capital (Jabreian, 2006).

But the problem that exists in most mosques in Iran and East Azarbaijan is that "the sacred space does not create a sacred space for a woman participating in this space due to the architecture of the mosque, or this sense is created with a very minimal amount." Because the determining factors of the architecture of the mosque in creating a sense of holiness, such as the threshold, the dome, the shrine, the central column or pillar, the light, the altar, the pulpit, etc. And its semantic system has become evident. Sometimes, the mosque for women is an unbalanced quadrangular place with a short roof in a basement or porch of a mosque, or it is a corner of the mosque's nave, where there is no trace of holy architecture.

Abbaszadeh and Zamani (2020) in a research to evaluate the environmental factors that are effective in creating a sense of sacred space in mosques, deals with the objective and mental implications associated with the sense of sacred space, which objective implications include two aspects of physical elements and spatial qualities that are in the quality Two-dimensional space 1. Axis and orientation 2. Spatial hierarchy has been considered in the organs of mosques and in physical elements: 1- Mosque courtyard, 2. Geometric system of nave, 3. Dome of the house, 4. Minaret, 5. Mihrab, 6. Minbar, 7. Materials and materials. Referring to the mental implications of the holy space to 1. Unity 2. Symmetry

points. It has also emphasized the role of the manifestation of natural symbols such as sky, water, light and the role of arrangements such as geometric patterns, slime patterns, color and calligraphy.

Chitgiri, which is an important dimension of the spatial quality of the holy place and shows the path of human connection from the material world to the transcendental world, is determined by the house of the Kaaba as the center of the earth for the Muslim worshiper, which is determined by the indicative element of the mihrab or pulpit, "the shape of the mihrab with arches The diagram of the sky and its floor on the earth is a niche or depression like the "cave of the world" which is the manifestation of divinity" (as quoted by: Mohammadhejazi, 2001) none of which is visible to women.

In the words of Dante, "the sun first illuminates itself with visible life, and then illuminates all earthly and heavenly bodies." In total darkness, we may be able to determine our place and position on the earth, but in order to be able to move in a direction in this situation, we must be able to imagine the bright world in our minds. The Greek verb "to see the light" has the same meaning as the verb "to live". The light of the sky reveals the interrelationship and establishment of things. The hemispherical space of the sky with its borders (horizon) offers us a world in which we find ourselves (Martin, 2010: 208).

"The symbolic shape of the pulpit and its steps are the concept of the ladder of the world, which passes through the worldly and spiritual stages and leads to the absolute soul. Due to its symbolic meanings, the dome of the house contains the concepts of center, circle and sphere. The chain of great meanings that exists in the dome is the concept of the soul, which in that unit surrounds all beings and finds its way into them. Just as the dome encompasses its enclosed space and the vault of the sky, all creations, the passage of this soul from the highest point of the vault, which is a symbol of unity, is seen either downward and expansively, or contractedly. and ascending, that is, towards unity (Ardalan et al. 2011). Gunon (2000) said about the dome that the whole building from top to bottom represents the passage of the principle of unity, where the central point or the top of the dome coincides with the principle of unity, and the whole dome shape is only its development rather than the manifestation of the four components and On the contrary, from the bottom to the top, it is a regression from manifestation to unity. It is important that the center of the earth occupied by the space of the building, i.e. the point directly below the top of the dome, should potentially correspond to the center of the world... and this central point is sanctified, due to the necessity of religious customs which makes the structure of a building a true imitation of the arrangement of the world (Abbaszadeh and Zamani: 109)". Mircea Eliadeh mentions this centrality of the holy place as "Holy Dirk" which is the cosmic axis and around this holy axis the border can be settled and in fact it organizes a place that is a repetition of the exemplary work of the gods. Meanwhile, while living in the material world, this pole is a means by which they can communicate with the realm of the sky (Iliad: 1996, 29), the bare trunk of a tree without foliage, which is at the tip, from the center to the hole above the yurt which is a symbol of the cosmic tree and is a ladder that leads to the sky. Magicians climb it on their celestial journeys. (Ibid.: 41) Eliade describes the architecture of Jerusalem and points out that the roof is a symbol of the dome of the sky, the floor of the earth, the four walls represent the four directions of the cosmic space. From a center, four horizons are designed in four main directions. Four rows, four windows and four colors on the four main directions (ibid.: 37) in the mosque's naves, in general, the proportions are reasonable, the proportions are close to the square. If there is another shape that is close to the rectangle, the architect tries to bring these proportions closer to the square shape by means of the balancing beams in the direction of the length of the rectangle and the appropriate spatial geometry in the ceilings. Because the square is physically calm and balanced (Abbaszadeh and Zamani 2020, quoted by Zargar, 2007).

According to Martin, space is not only a set of existing objects or an imaginary framework that is added to the set of objects, but space is the power of the established mutual relations of objects (Martin, 2010: 201). Using its dominant dynamism, space attracts our attention and body. The concentrated space plays a vital role and pushes for intervention, and the concentrated space in architecture is considered as a force that is both external and imposed. The space exerts its power by drawing us inside (ibid.: 202).

Every sacred place is characterized by holiness and sacred grace that creates a boundary separation from the surrounding cosmic realm and makes it quantitatively different. In the sanctification of a holy place, threshold and door play a decisive role. Countless rituals are associated with the transition from the home threshold. Bowing, lowering the head, touching the hand, etc... The great religious importance of threshold and door is because they are symbols and at the same time means of passage from one space to another. And the solution shows the continuity directly and truly in place, the threshold that is the size of the limit that separates the two worlds and puts the two worlds facing each other, and at the same time the contradictory place where the two worlds They connect with each other where it becomes possible to pass from the blasphemous (unholy) world to the holy world (Eliadeh, 1996: 24). This architectural construction also does not exist for women in general. Because the women's entrance to the mosque is usually from a small side door at the back of the building or one of the other sides, which leads to a disproportionate space that does not evoke any impression of glory in the eyes of the beholder. According to Martin, a building that is not designed architecturally, although it fills an empty space, it encourages us to ignore this space (Martin, 206: 2006).

From the point of view of some comprehensive scholars of religion, who are known as sentimentalists, religious beliefs are not the product of wisdom and rational arguments, but originate from mental emotional states. One of the most prominent of these emotional theorists is Mart, who considers emotions as the source of ritualistic behavior and considers the root of these emotions in the feeling of the presence of a wonderful and mysterious power or force among primitive peoples, which Mart calls polynesia bi ma na. . He considers the feeling of primitive peoples towards things that have meaning, a mixture of fear, wonder and attraction, which he expresses with the term "magnificence". The types of things that may have mana include ritual objects, powerful or important people, special words, corpses, symbols, places and positions, rocks, stones, trees, plants and special animals. Hamilton, 2011: 84)

The noteworthy point is that the emergence of religious feeling and experience, due to the emergence of sacred space, includes individual and collective consequences and functions. Its individual results are related to the strengthening of religious values, beliefs and behaviors. A look at the theories of psychologists in the field of attitude refers to the Rocage theory. He believes that experience and feeling are at the center of human beliefs, values and attitudes. Experiences and feelings form the deepest layer of human beliefs and attitudes, and it shows itself in the outermost layer, that is, behavioral tendencies.

In the dimension of collective consequences, we can rely on the approach of social capital theories. According to these theories, shared goals, experiences, feelings and attitudes are among the factors that strengthen relationships and strengthen intra-group bonds. Especially, religious groups are among the groups that are based on shared goals, common feelings and attitudes. According to Durkheim, "religion is a differentiated collective feeling, and a religious society is a society that creates a sense of solidarity and respect in its members" (Willem, 2003: 30). He defines the sacred as something that can connect people within the community. Therefore, religion is considered a moral concept (Beckford, 1992: 25). Explaining the function of religion, Durkheim believes that in totemism, the totem is a constant reminder of the unity of the whole to its people, as well as a reminder of the belonging and membership of the individual in the whole, which strengthens the rituals of this process and makes the person feel defeated in front of the unfavorable conditions of life. , protects and makes it stronger (Cripe 2005: 136).

Discussion and Conclusion

According to some psychological and sociological theories, feelings and experiences are the center of human beliefs, values and attitudes, and common feelings and experiences and the sharing of people in these commonalities are the reason for connecting people and groups. The spiritual and sacred feeling and experience can be the focus of individual beliefs, values and behaviors, and the sharing of intersubjective religious feelings that generally occurs in collective rituals can be the focus of the

formation of religious groups and communities. Therefore, the sacred matter is the essence of a religious community, and the sacred space, place and time are factors that influence the emergence of the sense and experience of the sacred. In the architecture of a holy place, the sacred semantic system should be able to manifest itself and impress the audience with its inherent meanings.

As an important factor in creating a feeling and experience of holiness, the mosque has the function of strengthening the bonds of the religious community by creating common experiences and common goals and values of holiness. But as it was said in the text of the article, this action does not happen for women participating in collective rituals, because the space that has been prepared for the presence of women in mosques lacks holy architecture and its semantic system, including the cases mentioned, the rectangular nave. It is either a trapezoid or an unbalanced and shapeless square, a short roof, no dome and centrality, orientation axis, pulpit, calligraphy, proper light, threshold and entrance door.

It is hoped that the issues raised as a social issue in the religious community will be taken into consideration by the officials and social and political planners.

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