

Masjid's Impact on Da'awah

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Abstract: This paper discusses the role of mosques and confirms its position as the corner stone of Da'awah and it highlights some aspects of mosques architecture. Then, the role of King Fahad Mosque in the city of Culver in the United States is presented. The paper clarifies how that mosque was built and discusses its importance to the community. The paper also exposes the interaction and the interest the mosque had created in its locality. The paper concludes with a discussion on the importance of mosques for the muslims and the social role in the non-muslim countries.

Introduction

The Masjid has always been the starting place for Da'awah. It is reported that Prophet Adam (peace be on him) descended to earth with the Black Stone to make the site of the House of Allah (Ka'abah) on earth. Allah (SWT0 stated: "Verily the first House (of worship) appointed for mankind was at Makkah (Bakkah), full of blessing, and a guidance for the mankind." (A-Qur'an, 2: 96)

In a hadith Abu Zarr Al Ghifari (raa) related. "I asked the Messenger of Allah what was the first house of worship on earth and he replied it was Al Masjid Al Haram (In Makkah). I asked "what then?" He said, "The Masjid Al Aqsa". I asked, "what was the time between the construction of two Houses". He said '40 years'. The Prophet (SAAS) continued 'than the entire earth is a place of worship, wherever a Muslim happens to be and when the prayer time is due, that place is his Masjid'.

In light of the verse above, it has been reported that Prophet Adam (peace be on him) was the first man to build The House of Allah in Makkah to be the direction for humanity. It is been reported that Ka'abah is at the sport vertical to the House of Allah in Heaven known as Baitul-Ma'amur.

As time passed, the children of Adam deviated far way from the straight path of Allah. As a remedy for this, Prophet Noah (peace be on him) spent nine hundred and fifty years in an effort to bring humanity back to the straight path, with little success. He finally pleaded with Allah to rid the world of the people who denied Him. "And Nuh (Noah) said: My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers on the earth." (Al-Qur'an, 72: 27). Allah answered Noah's plea and ordered him and the few believers to resource to the famous Ark. Allah sent the Flood to destroy the erring world, taking with it site of the House of Allah in Makkah.

When Allah decided to fulfill His divine promise to Prophet Ibrahim (peace be on him) in the story we all know well, He ordered him to settle part of his family in the barren land of Makkah (the City of Paran). Prophet Ibrahim, the Imam of Humanity and the champion of

Da'awah, would not have been able to do Da'awah and spread the Kalimah (declaration of faith, Tawhid) without the Masjid. Therefore, when the conditions were right to start the rebuilding of the House he did not hesitate to call on his son Prophet Ismail to join him in laying the foundations of the first House of worship of one and only Allah. The construction of the House marked the beginning of the rebuilding of humanity. The House of Allah has since attracted mankind like the most powerful of magnets and will continue to do so until the end of time. Every masjid has something of that pulling power.

We can deduce from this story that the single most important tool of Da'awah is the House of Allah (Masjid). It is from the Masjid's solemn pulpit that the message of Allah and Islam is spread to the world. When Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) arrived in Madinah after his torturous flight from the Quraish, the first act he embarked on was the establishment of his blessed Masjid, Masjid an Nabawi Ash Sharif. This action reveals the inviolable status of the Masjid as the nerve center of Islamic activity, the forum to gather the faithful and the first capital of an Islamic state without which Da'awah would have perished. This is the message we glean from the following verse:

"In houses (Masajid) which Allah has ordered to be raised, in them His Name is remembered. Therein glorify Him in the morning and in the afternoon or the evening." (Al-Qur'an, 24: 36).

This is the reason why Allah praised those who are keen on the maintenance of the Masjid. He said: "The Masjid of Allah shall be maintained only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day..." (Al-Qur'an, 9:18). The Prophet stated in the honor of the Masjid. "The best things in a country, in the sight of Allah, are its Mosques." (Reported by Muslim) "Whoever build for Allah a House, Allah, in return, will build for him a house in paradise." "Allah (SWT) will shade seven individuals on the day when there will be no shade except His: a just ruler, a teenager who is raised on the obedience to Allah, and a man whose heart is tied to the house of Allah."

Appearance of the Masjid

The appearance of Masjid was very simple during the time of the Prophet (SAAS) and during the period of the rightly guided vice-regents (khalifaa) after him. The simplicity in the architecture of the Masjid is meant to help the worshipper concentrate his mental and spiritual energy on the prayer and toward the ever-sought contact with Almighty Allah rather than mundane things. The Masjid is not supposed to distract the worshipper but rather it should help him. Beyond this simple guideline, the architecture of the Masjid has evolved over the years and has been effected by the environment and the technology of the place where the Masjid is built. This is what we see today all over the world in United States of America, Europe, Africa and Far East.

The Islamic architecture in Uthman Empire was effected by the Byzantine architecture that was around the territories it ruled. The exterior of the Masjid, especially in the country where Muslims are a minority, is a matter of serious concern. The architecture of the Masjid can serve as an invitation for people who are not familiar with Islam and wish to learn about it. There is no doubt that the magnificent and fabulous site of the Masjid Al Haram in Makkah – may Allah safeguard it – captivates the imaginations of people from all over the world.

We at King Fahad's Mosque in Soothern California have seen this phenomenon when the Masjid took its final shape. At the exposition we saw the grace and beauty of this Masjid attract people from all over the town. Indeed, the Masjid became the talk of the town. It was

not uncommon to hear phrases such as "it is like no other building that I have even seen". Alhamdulillah. People who would otherwise drive past this spot as if it were occupied by any building would stop to look and ask questions about Islam.

One interesting story concerns one of the many hearings we went through with the City Council of Culver City. The issue arose about the reflectivity of the Masjid's marble. As the debate went on, it became obvious that the issue would become a battle between us and the few people who objected and showed unreasonable opposition to the construction of the Masjid. One city council member said, when the issue persisted, "I decided to go and see the building for myself and see what is the fuss". He continued "I arrived at the Masjid and saw the building for the first time I was impressed, I got out of my car so that I would be able to appraise the building". He said "I would like to confess I have never see a building that moved me like this did". He could not believe the fuss about some marble on the building reflecting sunlight. The beauty of the Masjid changed his mind.

On July 10th, after a long day's work, Southern California Edison (our local electricity provider) turned on the main power switch and the King Fahad's Masjid came alive. This was something to behold. The Masjid's daytime beauty was doubled. It was a brilliant glowing monument as the lights were draped over the building. No passer-by could avoid noticing the Masjid. People stopped to marvel, motorists slammed on their breaks. The unanimous verdict on this Masjid was that it is awesomely beautiful. Mashaa'Allah.

This feeling in the people is a remarkable contribution to the state of Muslim in America, and a mighty tool for giving Dawah. For so long Muslims have been bashed by a media that makes Muslims and Islam a monstrosity in the eyes of the public in this country. To have the physical appearance of Masjid refute this lie is wonderful. The attractiveness of the Masjid is both an advantage and a challenge to Muslims every where in the country, and for administrators of the Masjid. It challenges us to use it as a tool for Dawah and to be a mercy to the world as Allah stated: "And We have send you (O Muhammad) not but as a mercy for the Worlds." (Al-Qur'an, 21:107)

Muslims must capitalize on that good will that the Masjid generates for us by putting forward efforts to inform people about Islam as a religion that stands for all that is positive to all existence. We must advocate the vision of Islam as embodying the highest human aspirations for meaning, purpose in life, alleviation of suffering, justice and peace for all. So far this message has been muffled by the bad press and by our own inactivity.

A School Visited the Masjid

King Fahad Masjid has attracted many visitors, visitors who came with a host of questions about Islam. The Masjid provokes questions concerning the nature and significance of many things in Islam. Among the visitors were 370 students from a Junior High School with their teachers, headmaster, councilors and aids. They came because they wanted to see the famous Masjid that the Los Angeles Time Newspaper featured during the inauguration of the Masjid. They asked such things as why we need an eating place in the house of worship? We answered that is because the eating place has to do with the fasting in Islam, namely the month of Ramadan. We added that Muslims observe the month in fasting for thirty days. We break fasting in the Masjid and share meals together as a community.

The visitors also why we separate between man and women prayer halls? We got the opportunity to explain this wisdom and how we were living up to the directives of Islam as ordered by the Prophet. We informed them that this simple act helps each worshipper keep his or her mind on prayer and Allah, unencumbered by thoughts of the opposite sex. Among

the questions they ask is who financed the Masjid, to which we answered that it is the generous donation of the King of Saudi Arabia, King Fahad Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud.

Questions Asked by People

Manarah

Concerning this aspect of the Masjid we informed our guests that the Manarah is a tower attached to the Masjid on which the Muezzin climbs and calls the faithful to the prayer by reciting these beautiful and meaningful words:

“Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar, Ash hadu allahilaha illa Allah Ash hadu allahilaha illa Allah, Ash Hadu anna Muhammadan Rasulullah Ash Hadu anna Muhammadan Rasulullah, Hayya ‘alas Salat Hayya ‘alas Salat, Hayya alal Falah Hayya alal Falah, Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar, laa ilaha illallah”.

The first man to climb on the Manarah and call people to the prayer was Bilal Ibn Rabah (RAA). There was no place designated in the Masjid to call the faithful to prayer so Bilal is reported to have climbed a pillar in the house of Abdullah Ibn Umar (RAA) which is across from the Prophet’s Masjid in Madinah. The first person to build an actual Manarah was Mu’awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan (RAA) in the Great Masjid (Al-Jami) in Damascus Syria. From that time Manarah was adopted as part of the Islamic architectural design and it attracted a considerable amount of forethought by the designers of the Masjid. Many Manarah were equipped with a staircase so the Muezzin could climb to the balcony and call the city to prayer, especially in the times when there were no loud speakers. One of the most ingenious designs of a Manarah is found in the Salimiyah Masjid in Turkey. This Masjid has a Manarah with three staircases. They are designed in such away that three Muezzins will climb the Manarah at the same and would not see one another.

Al-Qiblah

The visitors inquired about the significance of the Qiblah, whether or not it is like altar in their churches. We explained that the Qiblah is a worshippers’ compass directing to the venerated House of Allah in Makkah. That it is the directive of Al-Qur’an, “...Surely, We shall turn you to a Qiblah prayer direction that shall please you, so turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Haram in (Makkah). And wheresoever you people are turn your faces in (prayer) in that direction.” (Al-Qur’an, 2: 144) The Qiblah is the first thing that the builders of a Masjid start with. Indeed, Qiblah is the single most importance feature of the Masjid because it is directly tied to the prayer. The Prophet (SAAS) used a spear to mark the direction of the Qiblah during his prayer in the open field. The worshipper must make sure always to face the Qiblah in prayer otherwise the prayer will not be accepted. Besides, according to some reports, Qiblah reminds a believer about his ties to the person who epitomizes the monotheistic foundation of the religion of Allah, Prophet Ibrahim (May Allah be Pleased with Him).

Qubbah (Dome)

The Qubbah (dome) generated a lot of inquiries from many non-Muslims. We got the opportunity to discuss in form that the first Masjid to be donned with a Qubbah, was Masjid As-Sakharah in Quds (Jerusalem), that was build by the Khalifah Abdul Malik Bin Marwan in the year 72 after Hijrah. This dome is by far the most beautiful Qubbah in the world. The Qubbah is an important symbol that centered into the architecture of Masjid early in Islam. As for what the Qubbah symbolizes there are several Ijtihadat (explanations) because there is nothing in Al-Qur'an or the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAAS) that one may rely on. Some said Qubbah symbolizes the heaven coming in contact with the earth. In that heaven looks like a dome and the earth appears flat. In the Masjid the heaven and the earth come together. The Manarah, on the other hand, is a testament that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah. With its twian sister Al-Manarah, the qubbah has become one of the most important architectural aspects of a Masjid and received a great deal of attention.

Minbar

Muslims take many things for granted whereas for a non-Muslim every thing in Islam and the Masjid beg inquiry. The attractiveness of the Minbar in this Masjid brought about many questions. Again, we were given a wonderful chance to give Dawah by explaining that the Minbar is a pulpit built in the from of a staircase. During the time of the Prophet (SAAS) the Minbar was necessary to allow the Prophet to see the audience and for them to see him. Minbar was a simple three steps, the third used as chair for the Prophet and subsequently. It is the most important furniture in the Masjid. The Minbar is not a bully pulpit, instead it is a forum to disseminate information about Allah (SWT) and inspire the community and remind them about their responsibilities as Muslims. As a reminder to ourselves, the Minbar is a sacred responsibility that must not be turned into cheap political forum to be used to spew venom against fellow Muslims and divide the Ummah causing more harm than good.

Mihraab (Niche)

We were called upon to answer and explain the Mihraab. Muslim scholars have used the word Mihraab, which is mentioned in Al-Qur'an several times, to describe the wall that faces the direction of Qiblah. Mihraab is a niche made in the wall of Masjid that is toward the Qiblah and its evolution is directly tied to the spread of Islam in the world for there arose a need for Muslim in far way places to ascertain the direction in their prayer. Allah has commanded them to face the Qiblah in their prayers. "and wherever you are turn your faces towards it (when pray)." (Al-Qur'an, 2: 150)

Kalifah Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz (RAA) was the first person who ordered the Mihraab to be designed and placed in the Prophet's Masjid in Madinah during the renovation. He called on the scholars among the companions of the Prophet to advice him how to ascertain the direction of the Qiblah. Similarly, Umru Ibn Al'As (RAA) called 80 companions to advise him where to put the Mihraab when he was building his famous Masjid in Fustat (old Egypt), Masjid Al Fath. The Mihraab today has been marked with different things, some with a niche like our Masjid, while others use a different paint, marble or tile on the wall facing the Qiblah. It, like the Minbar has enjoyed a lot of attention from the builders of the Masjid.

The Role of the House of Allah in Ummah

The history reveals that in striking contrast to the temples of worship in other religions, the Masjid (the House of Worship) in Islam is not just a place of prayer. The Prophet (SAAW) did not restrict the role of the Masjid to offering prayers. He guided us to have this institution serve a multitude of goals. The first and foremost goal of the Masjid is advocacy of the monotheistic foundation of Allah's message to worlds (Tawheed). All the Prophets, from the first man on earth Adam to the last Prophet Muhammad (May and Blessings be Upon Them), called people to Tawheed.

So Tawheed, affirming correct belief in Allah, is the number one mission of the Masjid. Allah stated: "And the places of worship are only for Allah, pray not unto anyone along with Allah." (Al-Qur'an: 72: 18). Behind this single idea lies humanity's salvation and the health of the planet as it offers people the proper ways to relate to Allah which in turn guarantees the good relations throughout the world. Bearing in mind that the biggest lie on earth and a cause of much misery is the belief that Allah has begotten a son or children. Al-Qur'an says: "And they said The Beneficent has taken unto Himself a son. Assuredly you utter a monstrous thing. Whereby almost the heavens are torn and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins, that you ascribe unto the Beneficent a son." (Al-Qur'an, 19: 88-95) The declaration of Tawheed is propagated as a Muezzin after Muezzin all over the world calls the faithful to prayer with Azan from all the Masajid.

The Masjid is a learning institution (Jami'e) like a University based on Islam's belief that reading is the key to unlocking the treasure chest of Allah's creation. The first word revealed to the Mercy to worlds, Prophet Muhammad, was "Read!" (Iqra'). A famous Western writer – Napoleon Hill in his book, Think and Grow Rich – confessed that the institution of the Masjid in Islam gave rise to the concept of University in the world and the West copied the idea from Muslims. He added the very word University is literally translated from the word Jami'e in Arabic which means the grand Masjid.

Indeed, the learned scholars had used the spaces between the columns in the Masjid as different departments in the University specializing in various sciences: Tawheed, Fiqh, Philosophy, and Mathematics. Napoleon Hill's assertion is supported by the historical fact that the famous Masajid like Al-Masjid Haram in Makkah, Masjid An-Nabawi in Madinah, Jami'e Qurtobah in Spain, Jami'e Al-Azhar in Egypt, and Jami'e Amawi in Syria were the first beacons of enlightenment that illuminated the path for the succeeding generations of Muslim scholars who went on to pioneer mathematical and physical and social sciences hundreds of years before the Western Renaissance. The Masjid reveals also that knowledge is a public domain, a birthright of all not the monopoly for few.

The Masjid's role as the institution of learning is predicated on the idea that the correctness of deeds and the acceptance of believer's acts by the almighty Allah are major condition of faith. Al-Qur'an averred "Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah." (Al-Qur'an, 47: 19)

The Masjid is court of law from which the Prophet (SAAS) ruled on a multitude of cases that remain up to date as precedents that the courts of law all over the world would benefit from implementing. The Masjid is the main city hall in the Muslim community where believers deliberate on issues of concern to the whole community. In the Masjid, the Prophet (SAAW) received guests, foreign diplomats and dignitaries, planned for the defense of the state and other important activities. For the Muslims in foreign lands, living as minorities, the Masjid becomes everything.

Social Role for the Masjid in Non-Muslim Countries

As mentioned earlier, the House of Allah has played a vital role in social interaction among the various members of the Muslim communities, especially in the places where Muslim are minorities in Africa, Australia, Europe, Far East, the United States of America. The Masjid becomes a surrogate state where Muslims of divergent ethnic backgrounds feel at home. Pakistanis, Indians, Africans, Arabs and Europeans and Americans all come together to worship and interact. This affords the Masjid a golden opportunity to bring teachings of Islam to them. Many Muslims leave their countries carrying with them little knowledge of Islam except what they say their parents or community practice. The Masjid becomes the first stop of many immigrants, students, homeless and travelers.

The phenomenal impact of the Masjid in building and maintaining Muslim communities in foreign lands is great. A few Muslims may rent a two-bed room house for prayer and their humble effort will quickly evolve into a land, or church or commercial property purchase and that simple house is then converted into a Masjid. That is how many Islamic foundations started, including ours. Al Hamdulilaahi.

تأثير المسجد على الدعوة

تاج الدين شعيب

المؤسسة الإسلامية، مسجد الملك فهد
مدينة كولفر، كاليفورنيا، الولايات المتحدة

ملخص البحث: تناقش الورقة دور المسجد و تأكد دوره كحجر الاساس في عملية الدعوة، و تبرز بعض الجوانب المتعلقة بعمارة المساجد. ثم تستعرض الورقة دور مسجد الملك فهد في مدينة كولفر الاميركية. تبرز الورقة بعض الامور المتعلقة بانشاء المسجد و تناقش اهميته للمسلمين هناك. تبرز الورقة التفاعل و الاهتمام الذين برزا في المحيط بنتيجة بناء المسجد. تخلص الورقة الى مناقشة اهمية المسجد بالنسبة للمسلمين كما تناقش دور المسجد الاجتماعي في البلاد غير الاسلامية.