

IDEAL MOSQUE IN ISLAM: ITS ROLE, POSITION AND RELEVANCE TO THE LIFE OF A MUSLIM.

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ABSTRACT

Mosque is one of the most important institutions in Islam. It serves many purposes in Islam. Its objectives, functions and position are clearly enshrined in the authorities of the Quran and Sunnah, as comprehensively explained by scholars. In addition to being a place of performing the prescribed prayers, the mosque provides educational, political, and even social services to groups or individual muslims. This paper, through a review of available literatures, expounds the major role of the mosque, its position and functions. From the literatures reviewed, it reveals that a mosque is a place to perform the prescribed rituals (eg prayers), for the acquisition of knowledge, and other lawful and beneficial issues of the Muslim community. It suggests that muslims should expand their knowledge about the institution of mosque and the vital role it plays in the life of a muslim spiritually,

Introduction:

Masjid is generally referred to in English as mosque (Ba'albaky 2004), which the dictionary defines as a building in which Muslims worship (Hornsby 2010). But the word building in the above definition is inappropriate because *Masjid* does not necessarily have to be a building. According to Salih, *Masjid* literally means a name of a place of *sujud* (prostration) (Salih 1998). As the root word is *sujud*, meaning prostration, *Masjid* is therefore, the place where one prostrates or a specific place meant for the performance of prostration.

educationally, and even socially with a view to proper utilization of the functions of this institution.

Keywords: *Ideal Mosque, Mosque as an institution, Role, Functions, Relevance.*

According to Salih, *Masjid* is everywhere on the earth. He based his argument on the *hadith* of the prophet (s.a.w) which says `the earth has been provided for me as *Masjid*`. He adds that this is part of what is peculiar to the *Ummah* of the prophet (s.a.w) and quotes Qadhi Iyyadh sayings `the people before us can only pray in a place which they are fully certain about its purity. But we are exempted with the permission to pray everywhere on earth except where we are fully certain of its impurity` (Salih 1998). He also observes that the choice of the name from the place of *sujud* even when *sujud* is not the only act of prayer is because *sujud* is the most important aspect of all the other parts of prayer because of the closeness of the worshiper at that time with his lord. As such, it took the name of that place ` *Masjid* ` and not *marka`a* even though *ruku`u* (bowing) is also part of prayer. He concludes that custom or usage has later specified *Masjid* as a place designed for five daily prayers.

According to Ismail, mosques are the (presumed) houses of Allah on earth. He (Allah) directs that it should be raised or elevated. That His name should be glorified in it and that none beside Him should be call in it. It should also be safeguarded from anything that is impure, dirt or repulsive (Ismail 1999). He based his definition on the verse of the Qur`an that reads; `In houses [mosques] which Allah has ordered to be raised, [to be Cleaned and to be honored], in them His name is remembered [i.e. adhan, iqamah, prayers, invocations, recitation of the Qur`an etc]. Therein glorify Him [Allah] in the morning and in the evenings. ` Q24:36. Commenting on the above verse in relation to mosque, al Hilali & Khan cited a hadith from Bukhari where the prophet (s.a.w) said:

'the reward of prayer offered by a person in congregation is multiplied twenty five times as much than that of the prayer offered in one`s house or in the market [alone]. And this is because if he performs ablution and does it perfectly, and then proceeds to the mosque, with the sole intention of praying, then for every step takes towards the mosque, he is upgraded one degree in reward and one of his sins is taken off from his account. When he offered his prayer, the angels keep on asking Allah`s blessing and forgiveness for him as long as he is at his place of prayer` [al Hilali & khan 2009].

EARLY MOSQUES IN ISLAM

The mosque is the best place on earth compared to other parts of the world. The first and the best among them is *Haram* al Makah, followed by the prophet`s mosque in madinah and al Aqsa mosque. This is according to Shafi`i and Abu Hanifah. In the view of Maliki, the best [but not the first], is the prophet`s mosque then the Makah`s [salih 1998]. The issue of *haram* Makah being the first has not been disputed. Ismail also states that 'the first mosque to be built in the whole world is *Masjid haram* that is in Makkah. This he adds has been agreed upon [Ismail 350]. An authority for this as pointed out by the writer is the Qur'an: 'verily, the first house [of worship] appointed for mankind was that of Bakkah [Makkah] full of blessing and a guidance for the mankind and jinn` Q3:96. The mosque was built by Ibrahim [a.s], and after forty years, the second mosque, Masjid al Aqsa was built [ismail1999].

After the coming of the prophet and his subsequent migration to Madinah, Masjid Quba is the first mosque to be built in the history of Islam. The prophet [s.a.w] himself has participated in its building. The mosque was later renovated and extended by Uthman bin Affan the third caliph. The mosque was again renewed and restored by Umar bin Abdul-Aziz the then emir of Madinah. It later witnessed a great extension by the custodian of the two holy mosques king Fahd [ministry of information1985].

POSITION OF MOSQUE IN ISLAM

Many *ahadith* of the prophet [s.a.w] signifies to the elevated position of mosque. It is reported from Bin Abbas [r.a] that 'mosques are houses of Allah on earth. It lights to the creatures of the heaven as the stars of the sky lights to the creatures of the earth.' it is also reported from Salman [r.a] that the prophet [s.a.w] said 'who ever performed ablution in his house and perfects his ablution and comes to mosque, he is Allah's visitor. And it is incumbent on the one visited to honor his guest [salih 1998].

Abdullah observes that even the Qur'an in Surah Baqarah 114, has linked mosque with the Almighty Allah even though all the other places and what is on them belong to Him. This is because the mosque has a special position and it is known to be attached to many acts of worship and closeness [to Allah] [salih 5]. With regards to building mosque and its virtue, he cites a hadith agreed upon from Uthman [r.a], that the Prophet [s.a.w] said 'whoever builds a mosque seeking with it the pleasure of Allah, He will build a house for him in the paradise.' In another hadith of Tirmidhi from Anas[r.a], the prophet[s.a.w] said 'whoever build a mosque, small or big, Allah will build a house for him in the paradise'. So many ahadith from Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban, Imam Ahmad and Thabarany with the same meaning were equally reported. [Abdullah 6] He adds that the house to be build in paradise should not be measured with the one built here in this world as there is no comparison between the two. In the reward also, it include the one that helps in the building either with his money, materials, or physically work in it.

Al-khudhairy states that the place of prayer for a Muslim is everywhere on earth, but he laments that as the people have need in building their houses, as a shelter from sun heat, rainfall, wind and cold, they indeed need to build mosques also because of these reasons [al-khudhairy 5]. Going by this rational explanation, it means that as people need to preserve their houses to keep it in good condition; they also need to preserve their mosques to keep it the same.

MULTIPLICITY OF MOSQUES IN A TOWN OR VILLAGE

The issue of multiple mosques in a town or village has been extensively discussed by scholars. In his book *Ahkam al-Masjid*, khudhairy observes that towns differ from time to time and from place to place. Many towns that were small villages yesterday are today big cities. By this he means the single mosque that served a town yesterday may not serve it today [al-khudhairy 1998]. The writer adds that scholars have stipulated that it is prohibited to build a mosque in the vicinity or neighborhood of another because of its harm and subsequent competition that will follow. It is also *haram* to divide one mosque into two. But in cases of necessity, it is allowed to build a mosque near another or on its side but not to divide one into two as there is no such need that will warrant it. He concludes that what is more recommended, [even in necessity] is to enlarge an existing mosque and not to build another in its vicinity. The authority of the Qur`an in support of this is Q9:107-108. [Al-khudhairy 1998]

Writing on the same line, the author of *fiqhu al-wadhih*, states that it is detested to build many mosques in one town or village without necessity. But where some people build a mosque close to an already existing one, and with the sole intention of causing division between believers, then the new mosque should be demolish [by the authority] as it was done by the prophet [s.a.w] when part of the hypocrites build a mosque with intention of blocking people from going to congregational mosque [Ismail 1999].

Summarizing the whole, al-khudhairy concludes that scholars have agreed upon that it is illegal to have multiple mosques without necessity. But where there is need, then Islam is a simple religion and contains no hard ship. He is also of the opinion that where three mosques for instance are sufficient in a town, then the forth one is not allowed. Not to talk of the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh [al-khudhairy 1998].

FRIDAY MOSQUE [AL-JAMI`]

There are certain conditions (*shurut*) for every Friday prayer which the scholars divide into conditions which make the prayer compulsory (*shurut*

wujub), and conditions for the validity of the prayer (*shurut sihat*). Under the latter falls the issue of *jami'i* (congregational mosque). (al-Jaziyriy 2003).

According to Maliki and Shafi'i, Friday prayer cannot hold except in a regular mosque. But Hanafi, Hambali and the *jamhur of fuqaha* maintain that Friday prayer can hold everywhere in which Muslims could gather be it a mosque or not. The second opinion is based on what is reported that Umar (r.a) wrote to the people of Bahrain that they should offer congregational prayer wherever they are (Ismail 1999). The view of the Maliki School in relation to *jami'* is further elaborated by al-khurashy who maintains that the mosque has to be a building and in the presences of many of its kind, the jumu'a should be in the oldest (al-khurashy 1990). According to this school, jumu'a cannot hold in a mosque merely rounded or demarcated with rocks or bricks (al-jaziyriy 2003).

Summarizing the whole arguments, Sabiq maintains that some scholars have propounded many conditions e.g. that the people in attendance most be up to a certain number, the place has to be a town, or that it has to be in a regular mosque. All these he concludes, has no reason or clear basis from either the Qur'an or the *sunnah* of the prophet (s.a.w) (Sabiq 1977). It can therefore be concluded that scholars have divergent opinions with regards to Friday mosque. The view of the majority as observed earlier is that Friday prayer can hold everywhere, in the mosque or not.

FORM AND FUNCTIONS OF THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE.

After the migration (hijra) of the holy prophet from Mekka to Medinah upon the oppression he and his followers suffered at Mekka, the prophet built a mosque at Medinah. The mosque was meant not only for performing prayers at formally appointed times, but also for educational, political, and other social services that are beneficial to the Muslim community. The mosque has been an avenue where the holy prophet impacted religious knowledge to his followers and up to today, the prophet's mosque has being a center of learning where lessons are given by different and

prominent scholars. Other social issues like settlement of dispute between the companions by the prophet inside the holy mosque were also reported. (Ismail 1999)

Conclusion

Mosque is one of the most important institutions in Islam. It serves many purposes in Islam. Its objectives, functions and position are clearly enshrined in the authorities of the Quran and Sunnah, as comprehensively explained by scholars. As such, this institution should serve the purpose for which it is originally intended. This paper, through a review of available literatures, expounds the major role of the mosque, its position, functions and relevance to the life of Muslims. This is with a view to bring closer the proper utilization of the institution. The paper suggests that Muslims should expand their knowledge about this institution and the role it plays in the life of Muslims spiritually, educational, politically and even socially. It is a common knowledge that in some places, mosques are misused. There are instances where the mosque only serves the wish and desires of its managers. A careful review from the writings of scholars as presented in this paper reveals that a mosque is not intended to serve as an avenue to settle personal grudges between individuals using the mosque's pulpit, or to stir up controversies or disharmony among Muslims. Its main objectives and functions are to accommodate the people during rituals, serve as schools for the Muslim ummah, and remain as centers of developmental issues that have direct bearings on the life of the Muslims.

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