

THE MOSQUE

Within a Muslim Community

Dr Khalid Alavi



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New revised edition

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Preface

3rd Edition

This is an excellent source for those who have a desire to understand the purpose and importance of a Mosque. Written in simple, but effective, manner, Dr Khalid Alavi succeeds in identifying the various dimensions to the way a Mosque comes into significance for the Muslim Community in general and for the British Muslims in particular. The book also identifies the key components making-up a Mosque, as well listing some principal references on the Mosque.

This, 3rd edition, has made minor adjustments to the previous version and has a new layout. However, the flow of the discussion is intentionally left in its original form. The book, no doubt, is a valuable manuscript for Muslims and non-Muslims alike who need to understand the role of a Mosque within a Muslim Community.

Dr Fiaz Hussain

Director
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Preface

2nd Edition

The Mosque has an important place in a Muslim's life. It is not only a symbol of his identity but also a refuge to protect him from evil. The Muslim community has always been attached to the Mosque throughout history in some way or the other. Wherever a Muslim goes, he searches for a Mosque to offer his prayers; if he fails to find one in the area he lives, he makes an effort to build such an institution. This is an in-born tendency of the faithful, which finds expression whenever there is an opportunity.

During my stay at Birmingham Central Mosque, I used to attend gatherings of non-Muslims and Muslims comprising of students, teachers, religious and social workers, civil servants, and community workers. Among other things, I found they all had an interest in the role the Mosque has in the life of the Muslim Community. Having realised their interest in the Mosque and its importance in the present time, I decided to compile a booklet providing basic information about this important Muslim institution.

I hope it will help the students in their projects, the teachers to understand the development and importance of this institution, the young Muslims to recognise its significance, and the non-Muslims to understand its role as a symbol of Muslim identity.

While compiling this booklet, I have not adopted modern methods of presenting material. I, rather, chose the Muslim method of quoting verses of the Qur'ān followed by texts of ahādith in their Arabic form. It may look strange to a western reader, however, it will be useful to Muslims; because, not only will they get acquainted with the Arabic script and sacred texts

they will also develop a taste for them in due course. Almost all the verses of the Qur'ān and ahādith throwing light on various aspects of the Mosque have been meticulously compiled for the benefit of readers.

It is sincerely hoped that the book will prove to be useful for all who are interested in knowing about the role of the Mosque as an institution. May Allah show us His light to follow the right path and the strength to live up to his commandments. We are weak and make mistakes and therefore, need His mercy and compassion.

Khalid Alavi
Birmingham

June 1990



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

WHAT IS A MOSQUE?

The word 'Mosque' is an English translation of the Arabic term 'Masjid,' which translated literally means 'a place of prostration. *Lisān al 'Arab*, one of the most authentic sources of Arabic language, contains various meanings of the term. It is reported that 'Masjid' with an 'a' has been used for the corners of houses, '*Mihrāb al-Buyūt.*' According to one lexicographer 'Masjid' [1] is the name of a place and a noun. Zajjaj, referring to a tradition of the Prophet, defines 'masjid' as a place where God is worshipped. Since worship of God has always been the cornerstone of every religion, places of worship occupy an important position in the daily life of a religious community.

There is evidence that any place of worship could be called a Masjid since Bukhārī [2] referred to a Church in Abyssinia as a Masjid and ibn Khaldūn has used the term for any place of worship. John Pederson thinks that this term has been taken from the People of the Book and says: "There is, therefore, no question of this word, especially being a Muslim term. This is in entire agreement with Muhammad's original attitude to earlier religions, just as Abraham was a Muslim, so David had a Masjid." [2a]

Orientalist try to prove that Islām has taken its structure from Judea-Christian tradition, indeed, many of them have spent much of their lives tracing the origin of certain Islāmic practices to earlier religions. For Muslims, however, it is a simple issue; Islām is not a new religion, its principles were revealed from the same Divine source which guided earlier Hebrew Prophets, including Jesus. Therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to Muslims

if the term 'Masjid' was used previously by the People of the Book for their places of worship. It does seem clear, however, that different religious groups developed special terminologies for different systems of worship and prayer with the passage of time. Al-Qur'ān, while mentioning various places of worship, refers to different systems of worship and prayer. When mentioning various places of worship it also uses different names for them. For example, Al-Qur'ān says:

وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهْذَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ
وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا وَلِيُنصِرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ
عَزِيزٌ.

For had it not been for God's repelling some men by means of others, monasteries, Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques wherein the name of God is remembered abundantly would have been pulled down. [3]

Al-Qur'ān uses the term 'Masjid' for the Ka'bah and Al-Quddus in particular, and for all places of Muslim worship in general. The term has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in various places:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى
الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ.

Glory be to God, who took His servant for a journey by night from the sacred Mosque to the further Mosque, whose precincts we blessed, so that we might show him some of our signs, for He is the one who heareth, and sees all things. [4]

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ، فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا، فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ
شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ.

We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) to the heavens; now shall we turn thee to a Qiblah that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in the direction of the sacred Mosque. [5]

وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ.

But fight them not at the sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there. [6]

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ.

But what plea have they that God should not punish them when they debar people from the sacred Mosque; they are not its guardians. No one can be its guardian except the righteous; but most of them do not understand. [7]

وَمَا لَهُمْ آلًا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا كَانُوا
أَوْلِيَاءَهُ. إِنْ أَوْلِيَاؤُهُ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقُونَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Do you make the giving of drink to pilgrims or maintenance of the sacred Mosque equal to (the pious service of) those who believe in God and the Last day, and strive with might and main in the cause of God. And God guideth not those who do wrong. [8]

MOSQUES IN GENERAL

In general, the term Masjid has been used for any place of worship built by Muslims. Usage of the term in this sense can be found in both the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (S.A.W.S):

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا

And the places of worship are for God (alone); so invoke not anyone there (together) with God. [9]

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذَكَّرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهَا
أُولَئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي
الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ.

And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places for the worship of God, God's name should be celebrated? – whose zeal is (in fact) to ruin them? It was not fitting that such should themselves enter except in fear. For there is nothing but disgrace in this world and in the world to come an exceeding torment.
[10]

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِم بِالْكَفْرِ
أُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ وَفِي النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ . إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ
آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَى
أُولَئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ.

It is not for such as join gods with God, to visit or maintain the Mosques of God while they are witness against their own souls'. The works of such bear no fruit; in fire shall they dwell. The Mosques of God shall be visited and maintained by such as believe in God and the Last Day, who establish regular prayer, practice regular charity, and fear none (at all) except God. It is they who are expected to follow true guidance. [11]

When the Prophet of Islām migrated to Madīnah, the first step he took was to build a Mosque. Masjid Qubā [12] was the name of the very first Mosque to be built in Madīnah. After settling down in Madīnah, another Mosque was also built by the Prophet known as the Prophet's Mosque: Masjid al Nabī. [13]

The significance of the Mosque as a place of worship and the importance it should hold in the life of a Muslim was clearly demonstrated by the Prophet's own example. Muhaddithūn [14] have thus, recorded ahadīth [15] of the Prophet explaining the importance of the Mosque in Muslim society. Building a Mosque, coming to the Mosque, and sitting in it, are all

considered to be acts of worship according to tradition. The following are some of the ahadīth which give a Prophetic view of the Mosque:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَحَبُّ الْبِلَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَسَاجِدُهَا وَأَبْغَضُ الْبِلَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَسْوَاقُهَا.

Abū Hurayrah (R.A) reported Allāh's Messenger as saying: "The portions of land dearest to Allāh are its Mosques, and the parts most hateful to Allāh are its markets." [16]

عَنْ عَثْمَانَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ بَنَى اللَّهُ مَسْجِدًا بَنَى اللَّهُ لَهُ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ.

It is narrated by 'Uthmān (R.A), that the Prophet (S.A.W.S) said: "Allāh will build a similar place in Paradise for whoever builds a Mosque." [17]

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ غَدَا إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ أَوْ رَاحَ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُزُلَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ كُلَّمَا غَدَا أَوْ رَاحَ.

Abū Hurayrah (R.A) narrated that the Prophet (S.A.W.S) said: "Allāh will prepare an honourable place in Paradise with good hospitality for him who goes to the Mosque (every) morning and evening (for congregational prayer) (in return) for what he had done." [18]

عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى الْأَشْعَرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَكْبَرُ النَّاسِ أَجْرًا فِي الصَّلَاةِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَأْتُونَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ فَأَبْعَدُهُمْ مِمَّنْ سَبَقَهُمْ، وَالَّذِي يَنْتَظِرُ الصَّلَاةَ حَتَّى يُصَلِّيَهَا مَعَ الْإِمَامِ أَكْبَرُ أَجْرًا مِنَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي ثُمَّ يَنَامُ.

Abū Mūsā (R.A) narrated that the Prophet (S.A.W.S) said: "The people who receive tremendous reward for prayer are those who are furthest away (from the Mosque), then those who are next (i.e. nearer to the Mosque) and so on. Similarly, one who waits to pray with the Imām has greater reward than those who pray and go to bed." [19]

عَنْ كَعْبِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: كَانَ لَا يَفْدُمُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ سَفَرٍ إِلَّا نَهَاراً فِي الضُّحَى فَإِذَا قَدِمَ بَدَأَ بِالْمَسْجِدِ فَصَلَّى فِيهِ رَكَعَيْنِ ثُمَّ جَلَسَ فِيهِ.

Ka'ab ibn Malik (R.A) said that the Prophet always came back from a journey by day in the forenoon, upon arrival he (always) went firstly to the Mosque and sat in it after having prayed two Rak'āhs. [20]

The Prophet (S.A.W.S) is on record to have said that the Prophet's Mosque, the Al Aqsā Mosque, and the Ka'bah were important Mosques for which people should undertake journeys to visit.

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدِ الْخُدْرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا تَشُدُّ الرَّحَالَ إِلَّا إِلَى ثَلَاثَةِ مَسَاجِدَ: الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى وَمَسْجِدِي هَذَا.

Abū Sa'id al Khudri (R.A) reported that the Messenger of Allāh said: "Do not prepare for journeys except to three Mosques; Al Masjid al Harām (Makkah), Al-Masjid al Aqsā (Jerusalem), and to my Mosque (in Madīnah)." [21]

With regards to the status of the Prophet's Mosque in Madīnah the following is reported:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا بَيْنَ بَيْتِي وَمِنْبَرِي رَوْضَةٌ مِنْ رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ وَمِنْبَرِي عَلَى حَوْضِي.

Abū Hurayrah (R.A) narrated that the Prophet (S.A.W.S) said "there is a garden from amongst the gardens of Paradise, 'Between my house and my pulpit and my pulpit is over my fountain (al Kauther)'." [22] [23]

The above-mentioned verses of Al-Qur'ān and ahadīth of the Prophet amply indicate the significance and importance of the Mosque in Muslim society. The Prophet's attachment to the Mosque can be seen through his preference in coming to the

Mosque before going home after returning from a journey. He is also said to have commanded his residential rooms to be built adjacent to the Mosque so he should avail himself of maximum presence in it. Selecting three Mosques especially for the purpose of pilgrimage signifies the spiritual impact these Mosques have on the souls of believers.

RULES OF CONDUCT WITHIN THE MOSQUE

The Mosque as a place of worship is considered an esteemed and holy place. Though Muslims are permitted to offer their prayers anywhere on earth provided the place is clean, yet the centre proposed for collective consciousness of Muslims was the Mosque. The Prophet emphasised simplicity and cleanliness in the Mosque; thus, there are whole chapters in ahadīth books outlining rules and manners of maintaining and using the Mosque. A cursory glance over these chapters will convince the reader of the honoured position the Mosque was held in during the Prophet's time.

عَنْ أَبِي أُسَيْدٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
إِذَا دَخَلَ أَحَدُكُمْ الْمَسْجِدَ فَلْيَقُلِ اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ لِي أَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ وَإِذَا خَرَجَ
فَلْيَقُلِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْئَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ.

Abū Usayd (R.A) reported Allāh's Messenger as saying: "When any of you enters the Mosque he should say: 'Oh Allāh, open to me the gates of your mercy,' and when he goes out he should say: 'Oh Allāh, I ask you out of your abundance.'" [24]

عَنْ جَابِرِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ
أَكَلَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ الْمُتَنَّةِ فَلَا يَقْرُبَنَّ مَسْجِدَنَا فَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَتَأَدَّى مِنْهُ
مِمَّا يَتَأَدَّى مِنْهُ الْإِنْسُ.

Jābir (R.A) reported Allāh's Messenger as saying: "If anyone eats of this offensive tree [25], he must not approach our Mosque, for the angels are irritated by the same things as human beings are." [26]

Abū Dharr (R.A) reported Allāh's Messenger as saying: "The deeds of my people both good and bad were presented before me and I found the removal of something harmful from the road among their good deeds and mucus left unburied in the Mosque among their evil deeds." [27] (This refers to the situation when the floor of the Mosque was bare earth with pebbles scattered over it – Author's note.)

عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ شُعَيْبٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: نَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ تَنَاشُدِ الْأَشْعَارِ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ وَعَنِ الْبَيْعِ وَالشِّرَاءِ.

'Amr ibn Shu'ayb (R.A) reported on his father's authority that his grandfather said Allāh's Messenger prohibited the recitation of poems in a Mosque, and buying and selling in its premises. [28]

عَنْ حَكِيمِ بْنِ حِزَامٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: نَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنْ يُسْتَقَادَ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ وَأَنْ يُنْشَدَ فِيهِ الْأَشْعَارُ وَأَنْ تُقَامَ فِيهِ الْحُدُودُ.

Hakīm ibn Hizām (R.A) said: "The Messenger of Allāh forbade (people) to take retaliation in the Mosque, to recite poetic verses in it, and to inflict any prescribed punishment in it." [29]

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنْ سَمِعَ رَجُلًا يُنْشَدُ ضَالَّةً فِي الْمَسْجِدِ فَلْيَقُلْ لَا رَدَّهَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ فَإِنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لَمْ تُبْنَ لِهَذَا.

Abū Hurayrah reported Allāh's Messenger as saying: "If anyone hears a man crying about something he has lost (in the Mosque) he should say: 'May Allāh not restore it to you, for the Mosque was not built for such things'." [30]

عَنْ الْحَسَنِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ يَكُونُ حَدِيثُهُمْ فِي مَسَاجِدِهِمْ فِي أَمْرِ دُنْيَاهُمْ فَلَا تُجَالِسُوهُمْ فَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ فِيهِمْ حَاجَةٌ.

Al Hassan (R.A) reported (in mursal form) that Allāh's Messenger said: "A time will come when people will talk in their Mosques about worldly affairs, so do not sit with them, for Allāh has nothing to do with them." Bayhaqī has reported it in Shu'b al Īmān. [31]

Earlier religious communities were lost in formalities. They decorated and beautified their places of worship and paid less attention to the purification of their souls. The development of a balanced human personality through worship and prayer was, therefore, seldom found in them.

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا أَمَرْتُ بِتَشْيِيدِ الْمَسَاجِدِ. قَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ: لَتَزُخْرُقَنَّهَا كَمَا زَحْرَقَتْ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى.

Ibn 'Abbās (R.A) reported the Messenger of Allāh as saying: "I was not commanded to build high Mosques." In another version by Ibn 'Abbās it is said: "You will certainly adorn them as the Jews and Christians did." [32]

The need for sanctity of the Mosque is an accepted fact among the Muslim community. The Prophet (S.A.W.S) asked people not to bring small children to the Mosque. Similarly, women should not to come to the Mosque during their menstrual cycles [34]. Some jurists do not allow funeral prayers in the Mosque because bringing a dead body into the Mosque might affect its sanctity. Under special circumstances people can sleep in the prayer hall, but normally it is something disliked. As we have already mentioned, the three most important Mosques are the Masjid al Harām (Makkah), Masjid al Aqsā (Jerusalem) and the Masjid al Nabī (the Prophet's Mosque in Madīnah).

With the spread of Islām the Muslim community in various parts of the world developed different types of purpose-built Mosques. For example:

- 1) Open Mosques (for 'Eid prayers, prayers for rain, and for funeral prayers)
- 2) Jām'ia Mosques (Grand Mosques for Friday congregational prayers)

- 3) Area Mosques (Mosques for a particular locality)
- 4) Tribal Mosques (Mosques of a particular tribe)
- 5) Memorial Mosques (Mosques built in the name or memory of someone)
- 6) Saint's Mosques (Mosques built adjacent to the tomb of a saintly person)

Saint's Mosques sprung up when the practice of saint veneration spread in the Muslim community. One can find large and beautiful Mosques of this type near the tombs of saints in both South East and Central Asia, as well as in North Africa.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOSQUE AS AN INSTITUTION

The importance of the Mosque is evident when one studies texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It is useful, also, to examine the importance the Mosque had in Muslim society through its long history. Throughout Muslim history, the Mosque played a central role in the cultural and social life of Muslims as an institution. Although its role has undergone changes from the position it held during the Prophet's time, it still has a great impact on the life of Muslims, even today. The Mosque, in certain respects, is different from the places of worship of other communities due, mainly, to its influence on each and every aspect of Muslim society. The most obvious roles are as:

- 1) A place of worship
- 2) A centre of education
- 3) A judicial court, and as
- 4) A government centre for making political and administrative decisions.

The Mosque was the centre of all such activities in the past for two reasons:

- Firstly, because the Prophet of Islām himself gave it a pivotal role in his life. This naturally led to his companions and followers to give it the same recognition. It may be mentioned here that Muslims are commanded to follow the Prophet (S.A.W.S) in every sphere of their lives as to them he is an ideal example of religious and spiritual practice.
- Secondly, the Mosque gained a special place due to a distinctive character of the Islāmic faith: Islām requires that its followers shape their lives on the principle of obedience to Allāh and, since worship in Islām, is not an isolated act, rather it is an integral part of one's whole life; the entire life of a Muslim, must thus, be based on a moral foundation, and an ethical and moral standard which must be evident in every aspect of the daily existence of both the community and the individual.

It was, therefore, natural for the Mosque, as a symbol of morality and piety, to become the centre of all activities, colouring the social and material life of the community. The decline of that consciousness led eventually to the loss by Islām of its initial power; the power which enabled it to spread Islām from southern Spain to the sub-continent of India in the first century of the Islāmic calendar.

THE MOSQUE AS A SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS CENTRE

The Mosque as a religious centre provides an environment for spiritual purification and inner strength. For an individual it provides an opportunity and a means for communication with Allāh; whilst for the community, a place for collective submission to Allāh. It also provides a place for sharing spiritual experiences and cementing brotherhood among people of the same faith.

As well as being a place to offer individual and congregational prayer it can also be used for performing voluntary prayers at any time of the day or night. The five daily prayers can aptly be

described as a regular spiritual festival, while the Friday congregational prayer is akin to a spiritual and social festival. The Qur'ān stresses on collective prayer because of its superior spiritual benefit for the human soul when compared to prayer in isolation.

Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَدَرُّوا الْبَيْعَ

Oh you who believe; when the call is proclaimed for Friday Prayer (the day of assembly) hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allāh, and leave off business (and traffic). That is best for you if you but knew. [36]

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ.

Guard your prayers strictly, especially the middle prayer; and stand before Allāh in a devout frame of mind. [37]

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ. رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ

In houses which Allāh has allowed to be raised and in which His name is remembered; Therein do they glorify Him in the morning and evening. Men whom neither merchandise, nor sale can distract from the remembrance of Allāh, nor from regular prayer, nor from (giving) regular charity; who fear the day when hearts and eyes will be overturned. [38]

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاللَّهُ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ.

(They are) those who when we establish (give power) in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, (who) enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

With Allāh rests the end and (the decision of) all affairs. [39]

فَلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ. وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ. كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ

And that you set your whole selves (to Him) at every time and place of prayer, and call upon Him, making your devotion sincere in His sight. [40]

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

Oh Children of Ādam, wear beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer; eat and drink, but waste not by excess, for Allāh loveth not the waster. [41]

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهَا

And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places of worship of Allāh, Allāh's name be celebrated. (He is the one) Whose zeal is (in fact) to ruin them. [42]

A true believer is, thus, attached to the Mosque for spiritual purification and strength. The organization and establishment of prayer is the duty of Muslims hence, Mosques are an essential part of Muslim society. The Prophet of Islām has also outlined in various ways, the significance the Mosque has in the spiritual life of believers. The following are some of the a ahadīth which shed light on the subject:

عَنْ بُرَيْدَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَشِّرِ الْمَشَّائِينَ فِي الظُّلَمِ إِلَى الْمَسَاجِدِ بِالنُّورِ النَّامِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

Burayda (R.A) reported Allāh's Messenger as saying: "Announce the good news to those who make a practice of walking to the Mosque during the time of darkness that they will have complete light on the day of resurrection." [43]

عَنْ عُثْمَانَ بْنِ مَطْعُونٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أُنْذِنَ لَنَا فِي الْإِحْتِصَاءِ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ خَصِيَ وَلَا اخْتَصَى، إِنَّ خِصَاءَ أُمَّتِي الصِّيَامُ، فَقَالَ: إِنْ دُنَّ لَنَا فِي السِّيَاحَةِ قَالَ: إِنَّ سِيَاحَةَ أُمَّتِي الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ- فَقَالَ: إِنْ دُنَّ لَنَا فِي التَّرَهُّبِ. قَالَ: إِنْ تَرَهَّبَ أُمَّتِي الْجُلُوسُ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ إِنْتِظَارَ الصَّلَاةِ

'Uthmān ibn Maz'ūn (R.A) said: "Messenger of Allāh, grant us permission to be eunuchs." Allāh's Messenger answered: "He who makes another a eunuch or becomes one himself does not belong to us; fasting serves that purpose among my people." He then said; "grant us permission to lead the wandering life of the devotee." He replied: "The wandering life among my people is Jihād in Allāh's path." He then asked: "Grant us permission to adopt monasticism." (To this) He replied: "Monasticism among my people consists of sitting in Mosques waiting for the time of prayer." Bayhaqi reported this in Sharh as Sunnah. [44]

عَنْ أَبِي أَمَامَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنْ خَرَجَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُتَطَهِّرًا إِلَى صَلَاةٍ مَكْتُوبَةٍ فَأَجْرُهُ كَأَجْرِ الْحَاجِّ الْمُحْرَمِ وَمَنْ خَرَجَ إِلَى تَسْبِيحِ الضُّحَى لَا يَنْصِبُهُ إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ فَأَجْرُهُ كَأَجْرِ الْمُعْتَمِرِ وَصَلَاةٌ عَلَى آثِرِ صَلَاةٍ لَا لَعْوَةَ بَيْنَهُمَا كِتَابٌ فِي عِلْيَيْنِ.

Abū Umāmah (R.A) reported Allāh's Messenger as saying: "If one goes out from his house to join an obligatory prayer after performing ablution, his reward will be like the pilgrim (going to Hajj) after wearing the Ihrām [45]; if one goes out to offer a mid-morning prayer with nothing else causing him to go out (of his home), his reward will be like that of an 'Umra and a prayer following another with no idle talk between them. It will be a deed recorded in 'Illiyyūn. [48]

The above-mentioned verses of Al-Qur'ān and a ahadīth of the Prophet clearly point to the importance of the Mosque as a religious and spiritual centre. The following points can be deduced from these texts:

- 1) The Mosque is a place of congregational prayer. This includes the daily, Friday, and *'Īdayn* (the two festivals of Islām) prayers. Such occasions strengthen the sense of equality and solidarity among Muslims. They also provide an opportunity for mutual understanding and recognition.
- 2) The Mosque is a place of peace and tranquillity.
- 3) The Mosque is a place of spiritual purification, meditation, and remembrance of God.
- 4) The Mosque is a symbol of the Islāmic faith.
- 5) The Mosque provides a basis for understanding and solving each others problems through mutual trust.
- 6) The Mosque is a place where sermons are delivered, propagation of Islām done, and where the community is reminded of its spiritual and religious obligations.

These are the most important roles which the Mosque still offers in today's difficult circumstances. There is no doubt that in today's society Muslims are still attracted to the Mosque which they hold to be a source of spiritual inspiration and religious identity.

THE MOSQUE AS AN EDUCATIONAL CENTRE

The second most important role the Mosque has is that it serves as a centre for educational activities. In fact, it was an educational institution from the beginning. All the Prophets were, in reality, teachers and educators, their foremost duty being to teach people the art of living a balanced, spiritual life; starting from performing ablution to deeper devotional and meditational practices. Scholars of Hadīth have recorded a hadīth wherein the Prophet called himself a teacher. Dārimī has reported this tradition in the following words:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَرَّ بِمَجْلِسَيْنِ فِي مَسْجِدِهِ فَقَالَ: كِلَاهُمَا عَلَى خَيْرٍ، وَأَحَدُهُمَا أَفْضَلُ مِنْ صَاحِبِهِ. أَمَّا هَؤُلَاءِ (عِبَاد). فَيَدْعُونَ اللهَ وَيَرْتَعِبُونَ إِلَيْهِ فَإِنْ شَاءَ أَعْطَاهُمْ

وَأِنْ شَاءَ مَنْعَهُمْ. وَأَمَّا هَؤُلَاءِ (عُلَمَاءُ) فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ الْفِقْهَ وَيُعَلِّمُونَ الْجَاهِلَ
قَهُمْ أَفْضَلُ. وَإِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ مُعَلِّمًا (يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ) ثُمَّ جَلَسَ فِيهِمْ

'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr (R.A) told of Allāh's Messenger coming across two groups in the Prophet's Mosque and exclaiming: "They are both engaged in what is good, but one of them is superior to the other. These are praying and supplicating Allāh who, if He wills, will answer their prayers, but if (He wills not) He may refuse them. Those who are acquiring knowledge [50] and teaching the ignorant are superior. I (too) was sent only as a teacher." He then sat amongst them. [51]

In the early centuries of Islām the Mosque was an educational centre where all forms of educational activities took place. Al-Qur'ān was taught there and Qur'ānic verses explained by the Prophet. The companions used to memorize and record the sayings of the Prophet within the Mosque. In one of the corners of the Prophet's Mosque there was a raised platform (suffa) which served as a central place of student activity for those interested to know about faith, worship, and other matters. It was mostly an informal method of teaching, but later on it was organized in a systematic way.

'Umar ibn al Khattāb (R.A) organized educational activities in the Mosque as a state duty. A Muslim historian recorded the Mosques as being full of students when he sent teachers throughout the Islāmic state in 17AH. The third and fourth century AH presents a picture of glorious academic activities within and around Mosques. Mosques served as educational institutions for a long time; right up to the time when Madāris (Islāmic schools) were established separately. Mosques still retained their central importance as institutions for education however, and Grand Mosques in Damascus, Baghdād, Cairo, and Nishapur, remained famous as centres of learning. Their success in spreading knowledge is evident from the following tradition:

عَنْ كَثِيرِ بْنِ قَيْسٍ قَالَ كُنْتُ جَالِسًا مَعَ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي
مَسْجِدِ دِمَشْقٍ فَجَاءَهُ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ: يَا أَبَا الدَّرْدَاءِ إِنِّي جِئْتُكَ مِنْ مَدِينَةِ

الرَّسُولَ لِحَدِيثٍ بَلَغَنِي أَنَّكَ تُحَدِّثُ عَن رَّسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا جِئْتُ لِحَاجَةٍ. قَالَ: فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَطْلُبُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَلَكَ اللَّهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا مِنْ طُرُقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَتَضَعُ أجنَحَهَا رِضًا لِطَالِبِ الْعِلْمِ وَإِنَّ الْعَالِمَ لَيَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَ الْحَيَاتَانِ فِي جَوْفِ الْمَاءِ وَإِنَّ فَضْلَ الْعَالِمِ عَلَى الْعَابِدِ كَفَضْلِ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ الْبَدْرِ عَلَى سَائِرِ الْكَوَاكِبِ وَإِنَّ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَإِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ لَمْ يُورَثُوا دِينَارًا وَلَا دِرْهَمًا وَإِنَّمَا وَرَثُوا الْعِلْمَ فَمَنْ أَخَذَهُ أَخَذَ بِحِطِّ وَافِرٍ.

Kathīr ibn Qays told how, when he was sitting with Abū Darda' in the Mosque of Damascus, a man came to him and said: "Oh Abū Darda', I have come to you from the town of the Messenger for a tradition. I heard that you relate from Allāh's Messenger. I have come for no other purpose." He replied that he had heard Allāh's Messenger say: "If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allāh will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise, the angels will lower their wings from pleasure with one who seeks knowledge, and the inhabitants of the heavens and earth and the fish in the depth of water will ask forgiveness for him. The superiority of the learned man over the devout man is like that of a full moon in the night over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of Prophets who leave neither dinār nor dirham, leaving knowledge only, he who accepts it accepts an abundant portion." [52]

This hadīth indicates that the companion of the Prophet who transmitted it was sitting in the Mosque and people were receiving knowledge from him when it was recorded. Hence, the Mosque was an academic centre.

With the development of schools of jurisprudence and theology, teachers of each school would select a corner of the Mosque to lecture students. All types of subjects were taught in the Mosque and all academic interests served; even circles of poetry recital were organized there. The Muslim educational system was separated from the Mosque only when the colonial powers introduced their system of education to the Muslim world. The madrasah system ran parallel to the modern educational system, however, despite this, the Mosque still

retained its pivotal position in Muslim society even in the colonial period.

Today, the Mosque is playing its fullest educational role especially where Muslims are living as a minority. Whatever facilities are available here in Britain are channelled through the Mosque. To quote John Pederson: "We can, therefore, say definitely that Mosques were, from the beginning, and through the centuries, educational institutions. The learned men occasionally used to live in Mosques." [53]

THE MOSQUE AS A SOCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE

"It was inherent in the character of Islām that religion and politics could not be separated. The same individual served as a ruler and chief administrator in both fields, and in the same building. The Mosque was, thus, the centre of harmony for both politics and religion. This relationship found expression in the fact that the Mosque was placed in the centre of a coup." [54]

The Mosque, being the centre of the Muslim community, was the place where all political, judicial, and social decisions were taken during the time of the Prophet (S.A.W.S). Collections for emergency needs were made there [55], and important matters discussed with the companions and tribal delegations. The Prophet (S.A.W.S) also made appeals for donations for military expeditions within the Mosque. He used to also decide judicial cases in the Mosque [56]. For example, the case of a woman thief from Banū Makhzūm was decided by the Prophet in the Mosque [57]. The Prophet conducted political negotiations and made decisions and contracts in the Mosque. Whenever he wanted to draw attention to a special issue he would call people to the Mosque and deliver a speech explaining the matter in a proper perspective.

Ibn Hishām [58] and al-Tabarī reported that during the time of the Prophet and the rightly guided caliphs, even military expeditions were sent from the Mosque and matters of defence discussed therein.

It was Prophetic practice that established the authority of the Mosque in all spheres of Muslim life. This tradition was carried on by the pious Khulfā' and Muslim rulers of the early centuries. Abū Bakr (R.A), the first Khalīfah, after the oath of allegiance was given to him, delivered his first address in the Mosque. After this it remained an accepted practice that the new Khalīfah would address people in the Mosque before attending to administrative affairs of the state. Normally his first address was considered to be his official policy, while, leading the prayer and addressing from the Minbar was considered to be a symbol of authority.

Almost all the Umayyad and 'Abbasid Khulfā' and governors used to give policy speeches in the Mosque. Even the rulers about whom stories of transgression and injustice are reported, respected the importance of the Mosque. 'Abdul Malik ibn Marwān, during his preparation for war against 'Abdallāh ibn Zubayr, came to the Mosque to convince Muslims on this issue, and to seek their help and participation in war. The famous addresses of Hajjāj and Ziyād were delivered in the Mosque. "In general the Mosque, and particularly the *minbar*, were the site where official proclamations were made, of course, as early as the time of the Prophet". [59] Ibn Qutayba reports that Ibn Mas'ūd (R.A), a judge and the one responsible for all types of financial affairs during the time of 'Uthmān (R.A), used to sit in the Mosque of Kūfa to decide judicial cases and financial matters. Tabarī reported that in 123 AH the judges of Madīnah used to hold courts in the vicinity of Mosques. Ibn Batūta, the famous traveller, records his attendance at a court of Shirāz located within the Mosque. [60] "Although the Mosque lost its old political importance in later history, it has never quite lost its character as the place of assembly for occasions of public importance." [61]

The Mosque is playing its full social role, in situations where Muslims find themselves in a minority, serving as a centre for public meetings, marriage ceremonies, and funerals. In such places it serves as an institution that protects the identity of the Muslim community even today.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE MOSQUE

The Mosque, from the earliest days, was never considered to be anyone's property. It has always remained God's property and an endowment to the public. Its management and maintenance has always been held to be the duty of the ruler or the society of the area. Some Mosques used to be maintained by the ruler who also bore its expenses from the Bayt al Maal. Some modern Muslim states today, have ministries of Awqāf and religious affairs for their maintenance. These ministries look after Mosques and pay the salaries of staff employed within them. As far as general Mosques are concerned, they are maintained by the community through donations and general financial assistance.

Since there is no organised clergy in Islām, each Mosque is an independent administrative unit and the Imām or Khateeb it's central figure. He leads the five daily prayers and the Friday congregational prayer. Besides, the Imām, can also be a Mu'adhdhin, caretaker, and cleaner, depending on the size of the Mosque. There is usually an administrative committee also, selected from amongst the community to look after affairs of the Mosque and to arrange funds for it. However, it is the Imām who has to play a key role in the Mosque. Some qualities in an Imām have been accepted as a necessary requirement for his appointment. For example:

- 1) He should be highly learned. Learning here refers to religious knowledge.
- 2) He should be sturdy and of sound character.
- 3) He should be socially accepted. Ibn Mas'ūd has reported a hadīth of the Prophet regarding Imāmah which provides a basis for required qualities:

Abū Mas'ūd reported Allāh's Messenger as saying: "The one most versed in Allāh's Book should act as an Imām for the people; but if they are equally versed in reciting it, then one who has the most knowledge regarding the sunnah; if they are equal regarding the Sunnah, then the earliest of them to emigrate; if

they emigrated at the same time, then the oldest amongst them. No person should lead another in prayer if the latter has authority over him or to sit at a place of honour in his house without his permission. [62]

KNOWING A MOSQUE

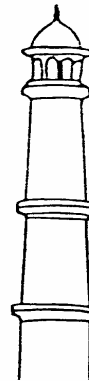
All the Mosques in the Muslim world are purpose-built. Although Britain does have some beautiful purpose-built Mosques, the majority are house-Mosques. The community, according to its resources in such settings, purchased small terraced houses, dis-used churches or warehouses, and converted them into Mosques. Such purpose-built Mosques can be seen in almost every big city in the UK. A purpose-built Mosque has its own characteristics and offers certain facilities. A very good example of purpose-built Mosques in Britain is the Birmingham Central Mosque, the Regent Park Mosque in London, the Central Mosque in Glasgow and the Edinburgh Central Mosque.

A visitor can find the following distinctive features in any purpose-built Mosque. These features do not depend on the size, shape, or style of a Mosque but owe their existence to the tradition and practice of the local Muslim community.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The Minaret

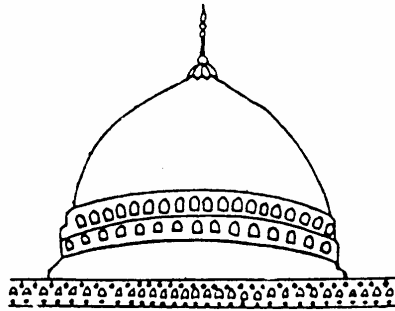
A minaret is a tower, often capped with a miniature dome, attached to a Mosque. Although there are Mosques with four minarets, the common practice is to build one or two minarets only. It is a distinctive feature of a mosque, and one can identify a Mosque by its minaret. Minarets are of different heights, some are two storied and some three or more. Most minarets have a balcony just under the top. In some Mosques the 'mu'adhhdhin' used to make the call to prayer from the balcony.



Nowadays, in the Muslim world, loud speakers are installed at this site to amplify the voice of the ‘mua’dhdhin.’ The minarets of British Mosques are usually for decoration and only a few have been given permission to make ‘ādhān’ through a loud speaker for certain prayers. The ādhān’ is thus, normally proclaimed inside the Mosque.

The Dome

The round structure on top of a Mosque is called a dome. This form, in particular, indicates that the building might be a Mosque. Though it has become a distinctive feature of a Mosque in certain regions, it is not an essential part of it.



There are, nevertheless, Mosques without domes, and one finds domes also at the mausoleums of Muslim saints. Domes are very useful in hot countries. They keep the inside of the building cool and airy. Perhaps architects thought it useful for transmitting clearer communication to the congregation also because when the ‘Khateeb’ speaks his voice gets amplified through the dome enabling the congregation to hear him clearly. It used to serve, to some extent, as a loudspeaker in this sense.

The Main Prayer Hall

The most important room in a Mosque is its main prayer hall. Since bowing and prostration are essential parts of Muslim worship and prayer, seats are not placed in it. In hot countries mats made from palm leaves are usually used to cover the

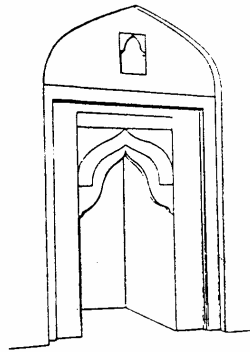
floor, but in cold countries and in the rich states of the Middle East, it's halls are fully carpeted. The pattern on the carpet usually has lines running through it to mark the 'Suff' or rows in which worshippers stand. Keeping the hall clean and pure is an essential requirement. Entering the prayer hall with shoes on is therefore not permitted.

No picture or statue is allowed in the hall because this goes against the Islāmic concept of God. According to Islām, God does not incarnate and the attribution of any physical shape to Him is a sin. He, alone, is the object of worship. Associating anything with Him is the gravest sin.

The Muslim congregation not only shows submission to Allāh but also indicates complete equality among fellow human beings. People belonging to different classes and races stand side by side in a row during prayer. No decoration is made on the walls of the hall. However, there are beautifully written verses from the Qur'ān in some Mosques. In some Mosques there are additional prayer rooms to accommodate more people also. Courtyards of Mosques are used as prayer rooms in hot countries.

The Mihrāb

When entering the prayer hall of a Mosque, one faces a wall called the qiblah wall. This shows the direction of Makkah. Just in the middle of this wall is an alcove or niche called the 'Mihrāb'. Originally this referred to a special place in the house for a respectable person to sit in.

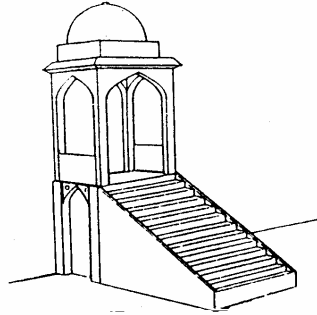


Within the Mosque it is the site where the Imām stands to lead the congregational prayer. 'Mihrābs' indicate the exact direction for prayer. They are usually decorated beautifully with patterns and calligraphy. This, however, is not essential. In some small

house-Mosques it may assume the form of a special mark on the wall to indicate direction.

The Minber

The stepped platform to one side of the 'mihrāb' is called 'minber'. This refers to a raised platform used for addressing people. It is similar to the pulpit in a church.



The Khateeb stands on one of the steps of the minber to address the congregation on Fridays and on other special occasions.

FACILITIES IN THE MOSQUE

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Mosque plays an important role in the life of the Muslim Community. We can see this role in living examples. Muslims living in Europe have organized their activities in such a way that the Mosque has maintained its position in the Community as an institution. Facilities provided by Mosques include the following:

Main Prayer Hall

The prayer hall of a Mosque serves as a centre of spiritual activities. The five daily prayers, the Friday congregational prayers and 'Eid Festival prayers are conducted there. It also accommodates Qur'ānic study circles and special religious meetings. The hall is a peaceful place for individual prayer and supplication also.

SPECIAL FACILITIES IN BRITISH MOSQUE

Madrasah (Islāmic Evening School)

The evening school is an important institution which caters for the younger generation. Muslim children going through the British system of education tend to lose their sense of identity. It is, therefore, essential to provide them with basic information about their own religion and culture. Children at a Mosque evening school learn how to read the Qur'ān, and receive basic information about their religion and culture. Arrangements are also made for Arabic and Urdu language teaching. Religious education is an essential activity of the Mosque in most Muslim countries that in turn enables the youngsters to become good citizens.

Day Centre for the Elderly

Although the family institution of the Muslim community is strong and caring for others, the Muslim elderly, nevertheless, need special care. Due to language problems and cultural habits such persons face difficulties when placed together with other people. For this reason some Mosques, with the help of the Social Services Department, organize day centres for the elderly. A room with a kitchen is usually also offered to provide services to them. Tea and light refreshments are served daily, while newspapers, magazines, video and television are also available for entertainment. Other special serves are provided on request. This is a special feature of British Mosques. Muslim countries might consider it useful practice.

Library and reading Room

A library and reading room are normally established in Mosques where materials on Islām and Muslim culture are available. Daily newspapers and magazines in Urdu, English, and Arabic are also usually available. Such libraries are developing all the time.

Funeral Facilities

A mortuary is established in some Mosques to provide facilities for keeping dead bodies, and a place for handling and washing the dead. A large hall for funeral prayer adjacent to the

mortuary is some times available; otherwise the main prayer hall can be used for this purpose. In Muslim countries special Mosques are built for funeral prayers. These are normally established adjacent to the graveyards.

Social Meetings and Conferences

Some Mosques have a hall other than the main prayer hall which serves as a site for social gatherings and conferences organized by different organizations. Large furnaces for cooking are also provided in some Mosques.

Youth Activities

Some Mosques provide facilities for youth activities, such as indoor games apart from the reading room and library. Youth are encouraged to organize activities there.

The mosque as an institution maintains its partial role. Religious education and spiritual activities like prayer, recitation of the Qur'an and meditation are flourishing. Religious gathering are also taking place, but no social or political activity is related to the Mosque nowadays. In Muslim countries Mosques are mostly used for prayers only. In spite of all the limitations, the Mosque has a special place in the lives of the Muslim country and continues to play a vital role in producing citizens possessing good moral, caring and God-loving character.

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25. This refers to onions and garlic.
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30. Mishkāt, 1:146 (Prayer, Ch. 8).
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44. Mishkāt, 1:146 (Prayer, Ch. 8).
45. Special dress worn by those who go to ḥajj.
46. The little pilgrimage, consisting of the rites at Ka'abah and the running between the hills al-Saffa and al-Marwa. One can perform this rite at any time of the year.
47. 'Illiyūn literally means high places. This word occurs in the Qur'ān in Ch. 83:10,14. It is said to be a place where the register of the righteous is kept which contains every detail of the righteous. We do not know it's exact nature. It may,

as Yūsuf ‘Alī suggests, be understood in a metaphorical sense.

48. Ahmad, 5:263,268; Abū Dawūd, 1:146 (Prayer, Ch. 199).
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GLOSSARY

- Allāh: This is the proper name for the Supreme Being, the Ever-present, Everlasting, the Sustainer, and the Lord of the universe. It has no comparable word in English. The nearest is God which again does not convey the same connotation.
- Ādhān: A call to prayer pronounced to indicate that the time of praying is due.
- Awqāf: Plural of 'waqf': meaning public endowment.
- Dirham: A silver coin used at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ .A.W.S)
- Dome: A curved roof which is often featured on purpose-built Mosques.
- Hadīth: A recorded saying of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.S) or a recorded description of his actions. These were strictly memorised by his companions and eventually recorded in writing.
- Hajj: The pilgrimage to Makkah, normally to be performed by every Muslim at least once in his or her lifetime.
- Ihrām: Special dress worn by those who go to Hajj.
- Ka'bah: The cubicle building first built by the Prophet Abraham in Makkah, which remained a place of pilgrimage right up to the advent of Islām. After this, it became a centre of worship and pilgrimage for the Muslim community which carried on the monotheistic message of the Abrahamic faith. The Ka'bah is situated within the Great Mosque in Makkah known as Masjid al Harām.
- Khalīfah: Literally meaning: one who is made responsible by God. This is a term not only used for Muslim rulers after the Prophet, but also by God in the Qur'ān to describe Adam and man in general; thus indicating the nature of his role in the universe.

- Khateeb:** One who delivers sermons (Khutāb) on Friday and leads the prayer.
- Madrasāh:** The Arabic term for school.
- Mihrāb:** A niche in the front wall of Mosque in which the Imām prays when leading congregational prayer.
- Minaret:** A tower near or attached to a Mosque used for the ādhān (call to prayer).
- Minber:** The stepped platform near the mihrāb of every Mosque from where the Khateeb delivers sermons.
- Mu'adhdhin:** One who pronounces the call for prayer.
- Qiblah:** Qiblah literally means the direction or point towards which one turns his face. In its religious usage it refers to the direction towards which one turns his face when offering prayers. It is, thus, the spiritual centre of a religious community.
- Al-Qur'ān:** Literally, "what was read" or "The recitation"; the scripture which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.S) from God by the angel of revelation, Jibreel (Gabriel). This same angel brought revelation to all the Major Prophets including Jesus and Moses.
- S.A.W.S:** Sallalaho-'alayhi-Wasallam i.e. peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him.
- Suffa:** The suffa was situated in the northern part of the Mosque, covered with a roof, but with open sides, It was a place where students of Qur'ān and Islām were lodged. Even well-to-do persons, like Sa'd b. Abi Waqqās have been mentioned to live there.
- 'Umrah:** The little pilgrimage, consisting of rites at the Ka'bah and the running between the hills of al-Safa and al-Marwa. One can perform 'Umrah at any time of the year.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This booklet was compiled for the benefit of the Muslims and non-Muslims of Britain and was originally published by the Institute of Islamic Studies and Dawah Birmingham, U.K. Since Dawah Academy is catering for English speaking Muslims and non-Muslims, therefore, it will prove to be a useful source material for them. No major changes have been made in the text; only a few minor alterations have been made here and there. It is hoped that it will be useful for the readers in general and for the Dawah workers in particular. Our thanks are due to the Institute which gave us permission for its publication.

Incharge Publication