

Muslim Housing as Built Environment for Promoting Muslim Societal Behaviour

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Preface

The first "Muslim Housing" was shaped by Muhammad (p.b.u.h). It was the turning of an existing settlement "Yathrab" into the new built environment of the "Madina". Taking the Madina as a model, Muslims converted many existing settlements and created many new kinds of "Muslim Housing". They blended the basic spatial/policy parameters with existing local conditions, crafts and technology. This blending is notable particularly in the first century of Al-Hegra¹.

After 100 A.H. the development of Muslim Housing took another turn in which the policy parameters of the Madina of Muhammad (p.b.u.h) became secondary to crafts and technology. It resulted in the fascinating architecture of the Muslim settlements of Baghdad, Cordoba, Granada and many other places. At that time there was nothing wrong with creating marvellous Muslim architecture.

Today, there is no Muslim settlement which incorporates those policy parameters conveyed or practised by Muhammad (p.b.u.h). Neither is there any Muslim settlement where Muslims have successfully blended modern technology with the Muslim Housing parameters of the Madina of Muhammad.

This presentation focusses on the policy parameters of Muslim Housing. It shows how the parameters are derived from Islam i.e. from Al-Quran and Muhammad (p.b.u.h). For simplicity, this presentation picks up only a few parameters and relates those specifically selected parameters with Al-Quran and Muhammad (p.b.u.h); it then discusses application of these parameters to the Muslim settlements of today and to future Muslim Housing.

After discussing the building of Muslim Housing, this presentation relates the architecture of Muslim housing to the basic rights, obligations and roles as given in Islam for the development of Muslim social behaviour .

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¹ Besim Selin Hakim noted in his book (1986) the point that Muslims kept applying basic parameters which were either practised or told by Muhammad (p.b.u.h) up to 100 A.H. Later, Muslims loosened grip on application of these parameters.

Introduction

Muhammad (p.b.u.h) established the first Muslim Housing by turning "Yathrab"¹ into the "Madina". In establishing the Madina, Muhammad (p.b.u.h) simply gave an optimum and ideal model of Muslim Housing to be followed in future times.

In doing so, Muhammad (p.b.u.h) related Muslim Housing principles to Al-Quran. He adjusted and made additions to the practice of previous prophets. Ultimately He (p.b.u.h) produced a practical model to be followed by Muslims of future generations.

Research studies on the policy parameters of Muslim Housing from Al-Quran and Hadith XXXX have received little attention in the past. However, Muslim scholars have discussed them indirectly. There is, therefore, a reasonable amount of literature from which these parameters could be derived.

Scope of Study

This presentation reviews explicit and implicit guidelines as found in Al-Quran and Muhammad (p.b.u.h) but does not trace all policy parameters of Muslim Housing. It seeks to emphasize the need for separate research studies on each of these sources.

Al-Quran

Divine books, like the Psalms of David, the Tora, Bible and Al-Quran provide between them considerable guidance on settlements, and developing congeniality between and among societies. Here we refer only to Al-Quran. This Book has 114 chapters, some of which have in their title the words settlement or society. The seventeenth chapter, for example, bears the title "Children of Israel" and the title of chapter forty eight is "Apartments".

Al-Quran has a total of 6666 verses in 114 chapters. In these verses settlements and societies are discussed extensively. For example, settlements of the societies of Aad, Thamud, Saba and others are discussed.

By narrowing the research to Al-Quran, it's possible to make a limited but thorough study. A glossary referring to elements of settlements, with more than a hundred references has already been compiled (Gelani, 1990).

Muhammad (p.b.u.h)

'Sunnah' is what Muhammad (p.b.u.h) *did* while Hadith is what Muhammad (p.b.u.h) *said* and others compiled. Al-Quran, Hadith and Sunna (Hadith and Sunna are

¹ Muhammad (p.b.u.h) left Makkah and moved to Yathrab. He (p.b.u.h) renamed it Madina. Madina literally means a human settlement where society prospers. Though Muhammad (p.b.u.h) created a particular settlement, He (p.b.u.h) generalised it by naming it Madina, so that Muslims should mould their settlements according to this model so providing a model for all future settlements and Muslim societal structure. He pointed out that one should first make base upon which one can make a built settlement and then establish the society based on the structure.

usually referred to in a combined way in the literature using the word Hadith only) form a basic conceptual triad which can be referred to by Muslims at any time. The books in which Hadith and Sunna have been recorded comprise in all, almost 20 volumes with 500 pages in each volume.

The six books studied with settlements and societies in view are (1) Sahih Bukhari, (2) Sahih Muslim, (3) Sunan Abu Daud, (4) Sunan Ibn Maja, (5) Sunan Tirmidhi, and (6) Sunan Nisai. Relevant Hadith and Sunna were underlined and there were hundreds of references. The potential scope of studies, tracing policy parameters for Muslim Housing from Muhammad (p.b.u.h) is clearly considerable!

Policy Parameters

The three policy matters¹ considered to be most important are listed below:

1. Spatial extent of Muslim Housing.
2. Main focal point in a Muslim Housing.
3. Population in a Muslim Housing.

First Parameter

Al-Quran as well as Muhammad (p.b.u.h) emphasize the importance of spatial boundary in housing and refer to that housing as "Harem". Housing which is confined within space boundaries can be a "Harem".

Allah Almighty notes in Al-Quran, "Makkah" as an "Harem".

"Have we not set up a Harem for them" (28:57) Al-Quran

The above verse refers to the Harem of Makkah for which Abraham marked boundaries and then Muhammad (p.b.u.h) also again marked boundaries (which are in religious terms called Muwaqit²).

Muhammad (p.b.u.h) marked not simply the boundaries of Makkah but he also defined the boundaries of Madina and declared it an Harem³.

¹ "The problem of how to determine priorities" is a subject known to every manager. The subject is vast. For this presentation, an attempt was made at identifying three prime policy parameters for Muslim Housing. This was a complicated piece of work, not reproduced here to keep the presentation short. The point to be made here is that the study was not made by trial and error or randomly, but rather three parameters were identified in a logical way.

² Allah's Messenger has fixed as MUAQIT: Qarn for the people of Naja Dhul, Hulaifa for the people of Madina and Al-Juhfa for the people of Sham. (Bukhari Vol.2, page 348, Hadith 597).

³ The Prophet said, I have made Madina a sanctuary between its two (Harrat) mountains. (Bukhari Vol.3, page 54, Hadith 93). "Sahih Bukhari" is a book famous for its authenticity and well known among Muslims. Here it is noted merely by the word "Bukhari". For all references to this book, the original text is noted from the translation work noted : The Translation of the Meanings of SAHIH AL BUKHARI Arabic-English by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, (Islamic University, Al Madina Al Munawwara) (Pub Kazi Publications, Lahore) 6th Revised Ed., 1986.

The above references for Harem, that is the first parameter of Muslim Housing, are just a few examples. There is an extensive literature on the topic of Harem and many writers have contributed material on the topic.

Most of the writers on Harem were and are religious scholars. Like many other topics in divine ideologies, the topic of Harem reflects the diversified opinions of religious scholars. To a human settlement planner and developer these diversifications can be viewed as various possibilities for designing Harems.

Second Parameter

A Harem has only one main focal point which is the space for Friday gathering, i.e. the Friday mosque. This gathering is used for settling of all - individual as well communal - problems and for noting and sorting out matters in the Harem, along with a sermon and a short prayer.

Allah Almighty asked Abraham to mark the main focal point for making a Muslim Housing (Makkah) around it.

"When We chose the site of the House for Abraham" (22:26) Al-Quran

Muhammad (p.b.u.h) marked a site for the main focal point¹ just after arriving in Yathrab.

In Muslim Housing, there should be only one main focal point as the Friday mosque. However, there can be other sub-focal points and there is evidence from the Madina of Muhammad that it had 30 mosques. Associated with each mosque was a green patch. In almost every green patch, there was a water source. In addition there were date and palm gardens and wells in the Harem. These wells and gardens were sub-centres of the main centre of the Friday mosque.

Third Parameter

Almighty Allah tells a prophet that a population is to be viewed as a society, and to that population the prophet has to provide his prophetic talents.

"We sent him to a hundred thousand or more" (37:147) Al-Quran

Muhammad (p.b.u.h) asked his companions to conduct a census (Gelani, 1988, 29) for the Muslim Housing of Madina. An exact number has not been found in the literature. An indirect calculation indicates that there could have been 20,000² inha-

¹ The Prophet came to Madina and ordered a mosque to be built and said "O Bani Najjar, suggest me the price (of your land)" (Bukhari Vol.3, page 53 & 54 Hadith 92).

² 10th of Al-Hegra was the last year of the life on earth for Muhammad (p.b.u.h). In 10th A.H., the Friday mosque of the Madina was 150x150 sq. ft. after two times previous extensions, as noted in "Abbas Karara", *Tarikh al-Hermain* (Arabic) translated in Urdu, by Al Falah BA, (Maktaba Rehmania, Lahore) 1977, Chapter Harem Madni p. 27.

The area accommodates 4000 men approximately. Taking a normal population pyramid as base and adding females children to men, one can estimate that Madina might have 20,000 persons in 10th A.H.

bitants in the Madina of Muhammad in 10 A.H.

Parameters changing with the passage of time

The three parameters have their roots in times long before Muhammad (p.b.u.h) and the verses previously quoted from Al-Quran substantiate that Muhammad (p.b.u.h) simply synchronised these in the Madina. After Muhammad (p.b.u.h) Muslims held fast to these three parameters, which a study of history confirms.

After 100 A.H, crafts and technology became more important than these policy parameters. Muslim architecture flourished which was then, and is today, the glory of Muslims. Its results are still visible in various locations on this planet, but with the downfall of Muslims it never again reached the same tremendous creative inspiration of these times. In a nutshell, the start of the Muslim era began on a sound footing, which for a very long period was also architecturally a glorious one. After the downfall there was a need for a new start on a new but also sound basis, which never in fact happened.

The Muslim era was given an architecturally and socially sound footing by Muhammad (p.b.u.h) who provided a visible example of Muslim Housing with the settlement of Yathrab, converting something which had matured through time based on principles applied by earlier prophets into a model for future Muslim societies.

An aside

Synchronising of the Three Parameters

Before moving on to the making of Muslim Housing for today and tomorrow and to Muslim societal behaviour it seems pertinent to develop a point here. Muhammad (p.b.u.h) synchronised the parameters according to divine guidance and previous prophetic practices, with the idea that Muslims follow the example of the Madina of Muhammad.

To repeat, Muhammad (p.b.u.h) made Madina into an Harem. He established one main focal point as Abraham did. Therefore he applied two parameters from AlQuran and from the prophets.

The Madina had 20,000 inhabitants Muhammad (p.b.u.h) allowed them to build 30 mosques and the Madina population was almost divided into 30 tribes. For each tribe there was a mosque. With the mosque there was a green area and in the green area there was normally a water source.

The point to be made here is that Muhammad (p.b.u.h) allowed 30 mosques to facilitate a water supply system for the Madina and to establish the basic right of everyone to water, according to Islam. A verse from Al-Quran invites attention:

"We divided them in twelve tribes. When his people asked for water. We said to Moses, "Strike the rock with your staff and behold twelve springs of water gushed forth so that each of the tribes has a place of its own to drink" Al-Quran (7:160)

This is an example of the synchronisation of built environment with societal behaviour via a water supply system as developed under divine guidance in the Madina.

Muslim Housing Today and Tomorrow

Keeping the information about Harem, that is about the Muslim Housing, in mind, below is a proposal for development of the Muslim Housing units in a Muslim state (Gelani, 1992, 19-24).

Divide an existing metropolis in a Muslim state with either busy roads or by other major structures in coordination with railway tracks or rivers etc. Each division is made by taking care that it contains a population of about a hundred thousand. Then place one Friday mosque in the area.

Cluster rural settlements in such a way that villages and towns in a cluster have the specified population for Muslim Housing. Place the Friday mosque in a major town within a cluster. In selecting a cluster, care should be taken that any major block in a link flow does not come within the cluster but functions as the boundary of a cluster.

New settlements should not be the result of a growth and of expansion of existing settlements. There should be new harems, that is new Muslim Housing.

Islam provides guidance on how to create new Muslim Housing. A study has already been done on planning for new Muslim Neighbourhoods units, with Muslim Housing built on the basis of an Hadith (Gelani,1981).

From Muslim Housing to Muslim Societal Behaviour

After creating Muslim Housing - in a Muslim state - it is relatively simple to erect a Muslim societal structure that significantly determines communal behaviour. A Muslim state provides for the basic needs of everyone through Muslim Housing as its main focal point. Muslim Housing defines the role of everyone in that Muslim Housing is the main focal point of life for the population. Basic needs for everyone according to Islam are water, food, clothing, primary schooling, first aid and justice while the expectation of the citizens is that everyone says prayers five times each day and pays a wealth tax each year.

Social security, as noted above, is on one hand supplied and supervised by the Muslim state and on other hand by people's participation. This is structurally exemplified in the Friday mosque provides a structure where supervision is easily possible, because the people's participation is expected as a weekly obligation. Elaboration on the topic of supervision is beyond scope of this presentation, but it provides the link

between Muslim Housing and Muslim Management¹ for which there is already an extensive literature available.

The economic structure which evolves from Muslim Housing in a Muslim state has been discussed elsewhere. But the point here is that Muslim Housing is a good building base for promoting societies based on solid divine guidance.

Inferences

The following inferences have been drawn:

1. Settlements and societies is a subject which scholars in the past have only noted in passing.
2. Not only Islam but other divine ideologies also refer to the subject of housing structures in their most important books.
3. Al-Quran, in particular, is rich in references to the subject.
4. The life of Muhammad (p.b.u.h) substantiates the richness of the subject in Al-Quran.
5. From Al-Quran and Muhammad (p.b.u.h) (i.e. from Islam) it is possible to derive parameters which could constitute a housing policy for a Muslim state.
6. Housing policy ideas for Muslim Housing could then take a physical form.
7. Muslim Housing can be a built environment in which Muslim societal structure nourishes the population according to people's roles and rights in Islam.
8. Muslim Housing significantly shapes the form of Muslim social structures: it determines the sequence of steps to be taken for the practical implementation of Islamic ideas in the form of buildings and societal structures.
9. Application of these principles are possible in any Muslim state or in the entire Muslim world at any time.

This presentation is a contribution to the idea that when man turns to Allah, Allah can guide man even as to the form of his settlements and the structure of his societies.

Organisations really interested in reviving Muslim societal behaviour need to put resources directly into Muslim Housing, and these organisations should clearly be aware that the establishment of Muslim Housing significantly influences the social structures established in Muslim societies. This is something that Muhammad (p.b.u.h) himself did.

¹ Many writers have thrown light upon various aspects of Muslim Management (see a.o. Mazhar Siddiqui, 1986).

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