AN ANTHOLOGY OF ESSAYS ON INTEGRATING ISLAMIC VALUES IN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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HOME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Asiah Abdul Rahim

6.1 THE HOME IN ISLAM

"It is God who make your habitations home of rest and quiet for you; and made for you, out of the skin of animal, (tents for) dwellings, which ye find so light (and handy) when ye travel; and out their wool, and their soft fibres (between wool and hair), and their hair, rich stuff and articles of convenience (to serve you) for a time" (Qur'an 16: 80)

Yusuf al-Qardawi defines a house as a place in which an individual protects himself 'physically' from external impact – such as climate - and 'spiritually' in which he finds peace and freedom from the pressures of outside life. Basically it is a place of rest – for both the body and mind.

A house is also a place of individual expression and strengthening familial relationships. Amongst others, the Prophet (S.A.W) once said that 'a house is the best place on earth'. The Prophet (S.A.W) considered that owning a house is a factor that contributes to personal happiness (Akeel Noori 2000). The Prophet (S.A.W) once said,

"For happiness, a good thing to ride and a good house." (Ibn Hibban)

Kamaruddin Mohd Noor (2000) claimed that typically, for a house, Islamic values should be designed based on function, nature of the family, and its social role. The house is expected to respond to the lifestyle of its occupants, their cultural and comfort requirements, aspects of economics, geographical conditions, availability of building material, as well as techniques. However there are opinions that, buildings that serve no Islamic purpose like mausoleums and statues, no matter how beautiful they may be constructed or decorated; they cannot be in any way called 'Islamic arts and crafts'. Islamic architecture is determined primarily by 'function or use' and not 'by form'. According to Abdul Wahid (1989), the ideal home for the Muslim should be:

- 1. A place where the basic necessities of food and clothing are provided as referred to Quran (2:223-236), where meals are eaten together and where there is hospitality and generosity,
- 2. A place where the greeting of peace (salam) is heard at dawn and at night and at times of going and coming,

There has been much interest in the concept of Islamic architecture since the conception of the study of Orientalism. Initially these were done by the Western researchers who were interested in interpreting the works of Muslims as a way to explain their theories on lives of so-called oriental communities. These initial interpretations which still persists now, have something in common: they have put Islamic architecture in the same basket as others e.g. so-called Eastern cultures. This is where the problems start to come in; at the very best, architecture is seen from purely functional – aesthetic point of view and at the worst every mystical meaning are attached and appendages to it, resulting in the many myths being invented and propagated over a sustained period of time.

The following collections of essays represent the University's attempts to demystify the so-called Islamic values in architecture. The intention is that architecture should express the ideals of the Muslim society and at the same time meant for all societies. As such it is an architecture that not only captures the spirit and exuberance of the society but also encapsulates its hope for the future. The dynamics of such architecture takes in positively the changes that happen around it: the changes and development in technology and time. It could therefore be clearly seen that the word 'Islamic Architecture' cannot cover the whole idea of architecture in Islam. The word 'Al-imarah' describes a process of prospering the land. From an Islamic point of view, the aim of architecture and all professions related to it is to bring about a better and more responsible relationship between man and environment i.e. an Umran which translates as the sustainability of civilization.

