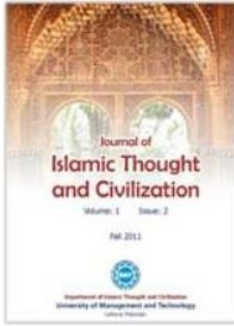


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Author(s):

Dr. Spahic Omer

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ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE AND THE PROSPECT OF ITS REVIVAL TODAY

Dr. Spahic Omer

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the meaning of Islamic architecture and some of its salient characteristics. The discussion is divided into the following sections: (1) The meaning of Islamic architecture; (2) Islamic architecture as a means, not an end; (3) Two examples: the Islamic house and the mosque; (4) Pragmatism and Islamic architecture today; (5) Towards the revival of Islamic architecture. The paper seeks to enhance the awareness, both of the professionals and general readership, as to the importance of correctly conceptualizing and practicing Islamic architecture. The nature of the paper, along with its content, methodology and conclusions, is conceptual and philosophical, rather than empirical. The paper concludes that Islamic architecture is an architecture that embodies the message of Islam. It both facilitates the Muslims' realization of the Islamic purpose and its divine principles on earth, and promotes a lifestyle generated by such a philosophy and principles. At the core of Islamic architecture lies function with all of its dimensions: corporeal, cerebral and spiritual. The role of the form is an important one too, but only inasmuch as it supplements and enhances function.

Keywords: Islamic Architecture, Islam, Muslims, Islamic House, Mosque, Form and function

1. THE MEANING OF ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

Much has been written and said about the meaning of Islamic architecture. Nonetheless, scholars considerably differed -- and they still do -- in their verdicts as to whether there is an architecture that can be called "Islamic", and if there is, what is the meaning, as well as main characteristics, of such an architectural tradition. To many such people, Islam as a religion is seen irrelevant to architecture, and the latter as one of life's biggest necessities is seen too sophisticated and actual to need a religion as a point of reference.

The answer to the above quandary is that Islamic architecture, as both a concept and sensory reality, exists. Saying otherwise would do a great deal of injustice to both the religion of Islam and its peoples who strove hard for centuries to realize it in their thought, deeds and words. Islam is a comprehensive worldview and a complete way of life. No segment of existence that Islam has neglected. Practicing Islam inevitably means the creation of a comprehensive culture and civilization that carry the imprints of Islamic values, teachings and principles, in some aspects more and in other aspects less. Islam signifies not only prescribed rituals at appointed times, but also comprehensive articles of faith, philosophy, ideology, culture, civilization and all life's systems: personal, family and societal. The subject of architecture is no exception to this tenet. Islamic beliefs shape the ways the Muslims build.

However, it must be borne in mind that it is the nature of Islam that provides humanity with basic rules of morality and guidelines of proper conduct in those spheres of life which are not related to prescribed ritual worship, such as the spheres of art and architecture, for example. Upon such general principles and guidelines people can establish systems, regulations, views and attitudes in

order to comprehend and regulate their worldly life in accordance with their time, region and needs. Since every age has its own problems and challenges, the solutions and perceptions deduced from the fundamental principles and permanent values of life have got to be to some extent different. Their substance, however, due to the uniformity and consistency of the divinely given foundation and sources from which they stem, will always be the same. Islam is based on essential human nature, which is constant and not subject to change according to time and space. It is the outward forms which change while the fundamental principles, the basic values and the essential human nature together with men's basic needs remain unchanged.

So what would be the most proper understanding of Islamic architecture?

Islamic architecture is an architecture whose functions and, to a lesser extent, form, are inspired primarily by Islam. Islamic architecture is a framework for the implementation of Islam. It facilitates, fosters and stimulates the Muslims' *'ibadah* (worship) activities, which, in turn, account for every moment of their earthly lives. Islamic architecture only can come into existence under the aegis of the Islamic perceptions of God, man, nature, life, death and the Hereafter. Thus, Islamic architecture would be the facilities and, at the same time, a physical locus of the actualization of the Islamic message. Practically, Islamic architecture represents the religion of Islam that has been translated into reality at the hands of the Muslims. It also represents the identity of Islamic culture and civilization.

Ibn Abdun, an Andalusian judge from the 12th century, is reported to have said, as quoted by Stefano Bianca: "As far as architecture is concerned, it is the haven where man's spirit, soul and body find refuge and shelter."¹ In other words, architecture is a container of people's lives.

Also, Ibn Qutayba, a Muslim scholar of the 9th century, compared the house, as quoted by Afif Bahnassi, to a shirt, saying that just as the shirt should fit its owner, the house too should suit its dwellers.² That is to say, the aesthetic and utilitarian ends of the house must correspond to the needs and capabilities of its users. The two must perfectly suit each other.

Central to Islamic architecture is function with all of its dimensions: corporeal, cerebral and spiritual. The form divorced from function is inconsequential. This, however, by no means implies that the form plays no role in Islamic architecture. It does play a prominent role, but its relevance is a supportive one supplementing and enhancing function. The form is important, but in terms of value and substance it always comes second to function and its wide scope. There must be the closest relationship between the ideals that underpin the form of buildings and the ideals that underpin their function, with which the users of buildings must be at ease. A rift or conflict between the two is bound to lead to a conflict of some far-reaching psychological proportions in buildings users.

We emphasize the word "function" simply because Islam is a religion not only of a faith and abstract philosophy but also of deeds, action and concrete life strategies. The term "*islam*" means "*submission*", which in itself implies a continuous and comprehensive action. Islam is not a

¹ Stefano Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World* (London; New York: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 22.

² Afif Bahnassi, *The Islamic Architecture and its Specificities in Teaching Curricula*, <http://www.isesco.org.ma/pub/Eng/Islarch/P2.htm>

religion of symbols, slogans and rhetoric. It strikes a fine balance between the exigencies of the material and spiritual aspects of existence, between the conditions of this world and the Hereafter, and between the requirements of personal, family as well as societal development.³ Islam means having a strong and complete faith in God and the other required realities from the spiritual and corporeal worlds plus performing good deeds under all circumstances. Possessing either aspect of Islam without the other is insufficient for attaining salvation. The two must be integrated in a whole that is called “Islam”, which, in turn, must be interwoven with the life-force of the notion of comprehensive excellence or *ihsan*. Normally, what a believing person does first is securing the belief aspect, which then causes him to do good deeds. The relationship between the two is a causal one the former always being the cause and the latter the effect. There is no person who has faith but does not perform good deeds. Likewise, there is no person who does deeds sanctioned by Islam and in the name of Islam but has no Islamic faith. A strong relationship between faith and good deeds are the only way towards comprehensive excellence.

Certainly, herein lies the actual importance of Islamic architecture, in the sense that it not only meets the requirements of living the Islamic lifestyle by just enveloping or framing it, but also by facilitating it, as well as promoting its worth and encouraging Islamic architecture users and observers to give such a lifestyle its due consideration and respect. Islamic architecture is both a field for the implementation of Islam and a vehicle for its promotion and advancement.⁴ This is done at all planes of architecture: its perception, visualization, planning, execution and utilization. This is done, furthermore, through inspired and innovative practical plans, designs and structural solutions, which, as a matter of fact, can never be exhausted due to the countless opportunities presented by the integration of the Islamic religion into all life’s segments, or by the unison between the material and spiritual domains, and between the heavens and the earth. Islamic architecture is a style that glorifies God and His revelation. Likewise, it humbles man in his capacity as a worldly creature. At the same time, however, it celebrates man’s honorable position as God’s vicegerent on earth and his most respectable mission.

The total image of Islamic architecture is thus like everything else that validly bears the title “Islamic”, such as the notions of “Islamic city”, “Islamic arts”, “Islamic dwelling”, “Islamic state”, “Islamic university”, and so on. The projected functions of all these phenomena epitomize, either completely or mainly, the ethos of Islam. In other words, they are microcosms of the Islamic doctrine. The multifaceted roles that such phenomena play in society, though ingenious, modern, dynamic and applicable, always remain in full accordance with the divine inspiration and guidance. Their holistic outlook on countless life’s challenges stems from a symbiosis between the Islamic faith and an unprejudiced, pragmatic and brave approach to life.

Having said this, it follows that it is grossly inappropriate to use the adjective “Islamic” before such entities or phenomena as they only partly and superficially represent the Islamic doctrine and its value system. Such usage may lead to confusion and the creations of misconceptions about

³ Oleg Grabar, *Art and Culture in the Islamic World*, in “*Islam: Art and Architecture*”, edited by Markus Hattstein & Peter Delius, (Cologne: Konemann, 2000), 35-43.

⁴ Ernst J. Grube, “What is Islamic Architecture?”, in *Architecture of the Muslim World*, edited by George Michell, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 11-14.

Islam and its peoples. It is inappropriate, for example, to advance such concepts as “Islamic tiles”, “Islamic patterns”, “Islamic costume”, “Islamic door”, “Islamic window”, and so on.

2. ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE AS A MEANS, NOT AN END

Islamic architecture exists because of the existence of Islam. Moreover, in so many ways it serves the noble goals of Islam. Islamic architecture serves Muslims too, in that it aids them to carry out successfully their vicegerency (*khilafah*) mission on earth. Islamic architecture aims to help rather than obstruct Muslims in fulfilling that which they have been created for. Islamic architecture is Islam manifested. Islamic architecture, Islam and Muslims are inseparable. Islamic architecture originated with the advent of Islam on the world scene. It never existed before, even though the peoples that became instrumental in molding and perpetuating its conspicuous identity lived where they were for centuries before embracing Islam and possessed the cultures and civilizations of their own. Indeed, studying Islamic architecture by no means can be separated from the total framework of Islam: its genesis, history, ethos, worldview, doctrines, laws and practices. Any approach by anybody and at any point of time to disconnect Islamic architecture from that which held sway over its conception and formation would result in failure and, worse yet, may lead to a distortion of the real picture of the entire subject matter and with it the picture of Islam.

While exemplifying Islamic beliefs and teachings through the hierarchy of its diverse roles and functions, Islamic architecture evolved a unique soul. Such a soul is best recognized and appreciated only by those whose own lives are inspired and guided by the same sources as is Islamic architecture. Furthermore, it stands to reason that if one wanted to genuinely understand and value Islamic architecture, one, first and foremost, must possess an intimate knowledge of Islam whose precepts and values it exemplifies. Next, one should disengage himself for a moment and as much as he could from whatever he has formerly perused or has been told about Islamic architecture, exerting himself an effort to experience it in its totality and as if he is one of its users. One is to try hard via one's hands-on experiences if one wanted to feel the spiritual and sensory aura that Islamic architecture exudes within its realm. Not to one or a few of its aspects, and not to a single and static moment of time, should one's comprehension and appreciation of Islamic architecture be restricted. Rather, one's thoughts and interest are to encompass all its aspects and dimensions, honoring in the process its remarkable spiritedness and dynamism which were conditioned by neither the time nor space factors. Finally, whatever one's approach in studying Islamic architecture might be, one should never try to extricate it from the contexts which governed its commencement, rise, dominance and survival. Islamic architecture ought to be viewed as a revolutionary world phenomenon as universal, omnipresent, perpetual and revealing as the standards and values that gave rise to it. It was as responsive to the climatic, geographical and cultural requirements as any other architectural tradition, nevertheless, it never treated them apart from the exigencies of a higher order. By means of skills, creativity and imagination, on the one hand, and by its distinctive combination of aesthetic and utilitarian ends, on the other, Islamic architecture never, even by a whisker, separated man's physical, psychological and spiritual needs, treating some sets of needs at the expense of the others.

Due to all this, Alfred Frazer, as reported by M. A. J. Beg, said about the fundamental nature of Islamic architecture: “The architecture of Islam is the expression of a religion and its view of the world rather than that of a particular people or political or economic system.”⁵

In the same vein, Titus Burckhardt also wrote that it is not surprising, nor strange, that the most outward manifestation of Islam as a religion and civilization reflects in its own fashion what is most inward in it.⁶ The same author further remarked: “If one were to reply to the question ‘what is Islam?’ by simply pointing to one of the masterpieces of Islamic art such as, for example, the Mosque of Cordova, or that of Ibn Tulun in Cairo, or one of the *madrasahs* in Samarqand...that reply, summary as it is, would be nonetheless valid, for the art of Islam expresses what its name indicates, and it does so without ambiguity.”⁷

Afif Bahnassi wrote on the relationship between Islam and Islamic architecture and to what extent the former influences the latter: “Islamic faith shaped Islamic architecture both on the artistic and technical planes, and gave it that uniform personality that has characterised it all through the ages. However, the diverse traditions, languages, and cultures of the peoples who converted to Islam throughout the world, from China in the east to the Atlantic, in the west, gave variety to the architectural enterprise, while sticking all to the principle of functionality. Greeks and Romans, for instance, had a standard style for all kinds of buildings, while Islamic architecture always strove to make the shape of the building fit its function. The architecture of the mosque is different from that of the school, the cemetery, the hospital, or the house, and it is very unlikely that the function of a building be mistaken from its architectural form. Rather, the value of a building is proportional to its capacity to fulfil the function set for it. A house is perfect when it carries out its mission; that of ensuring protection and peace.”⁸

It would also be appropriate to quote Le Corbusier who was very eloquent about the extent architecture can hold sway over our senses, experiences and thoughts: “The Architect, by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is a pure creation of his spirit; by forms and shapes he affects our senses to an acute degree and provokes plastic emotions; by the relationships which he creates he wakes profound echoes in us, he gives us the measure of an order which we feel to be in accordance with that of our world, he determines the various movements of our heart and of our understanding; it is then that we experience the sense of beauty.”⁹

Although Le Corbusier meant no particular style or school of architectural thought, it is clear he meant that every architectural representation is pervaded with an ideology which through its physical expressions connects with the users and greatly influences their feelings. It is thus expected that there always exists an intimate relationship between people and their architecture.

⁵ *Fine Arts in Islamic Civilization*, edited by M.A.J. Beg, (Introduction), (Kuala Lumpur: The University of Malaya Press, 1981), 16.

⁶ Titus Burckhardt, *Art of Islam* (London: World of Islam Festival Publishing Company Ltd., 1976), 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸ Afif Bahnassi, “The Islamic Architecture and its Specificities in Teaching Curricula,” <http://www.isesco.org.ma/pub/Eng/Islarch/P2.htm>.

⁹ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, translated from the thirteenth French edition with an introduction by Frederick Etchells (Oxford: Reed Educational and Professional Publishing Ltd, 1989), 1.

Consequently, it is said and rightly so, as reported by John S. Reynolds, that “when people lose their emotional connection to the buildings they occupy, all architecture ends”.¹⁰

Based on the contents of his autobiographical memoirs,¹¹ Sinan, the chief architect of the Ottoman golden age and for many one of the greatest architects in Islamic civilization, is believed to have had an exuberant emotional connection with the buildings he had designed and built hoping that the people will do the same. He said, for example, about his masterpiece, the Suleymaniye Mosque, which still proudly stands and captivates its worshippers and tourists alike in Istanbul, Turkey: “Upon examination, its pleasing arches, like the vault of heaven and the eyebrows of beauties, amazed the eyes of perfect experts. Each of its variegated marbles was renowned to the horizon and came as a token from a (different) land...And each of its artistically fashioned doors and wood-carved fittings filled with ornament and decoration of mother-of-pearl is like a leaf of the *Erjeng* (a famous Persian book containing paintings described as having been unequalled in the subtlety of their art), such that they are admired by the grandees of the time and esteemed by the people of all lands. And that canopy-shaded pulpit and pillared throne is a keepsake of a skillful master that stands as a model to the world. Among the revolving spheres its like has not been seen nor shall it be seen. And the domes of that noble Friday mosque are ornaments like the bubbles of the sea of elegance, and its highest dome is like the revolving heavens. And the golden finial shining upon it is like the brilliant, gleaming sun. And the minarets and dome are like the Chosen Beloved (Prophet Muhammad SAW), the canopy of Islam, and of the Four Friends (the four rightly-guided caliphs). And the ornamented windows, which are without like or equal, resemble the winds of Gabriel. When they are illuminated with the sun’s radiance, they are like an embellished rose garden of the springtime, and the rays of the azure vault reveal their chameleon-like iridescent designs. Ruby, cinnabar, lapis, and verdigris were lavished on this transcendent exemplar of ornament and design, and beautiful, heart-attracting designs were fashioned, the elegance of which confounds the eyes of those endowed with sight.”¹²

Islamic architecture means a process that starts from making an intention, continues with the planning, designing and building stages and ends with achieving the net results and how people make use of and benefit from them. Islamic architecture is a fine blend of all these stages which are interlaced with the tread of the same Islamic worldview and Islamic value system. It is almost impossible to single out a tier in the process and regard it more important than the rest. It is because of this conspicuous spiritual character of Islamic architecture, coupled with both educational and societal roles, that the scholars of Islam never shied away from keenly addressing a number of issues pertaining to various dimensions of residential, mosque and communal architecture within the scope of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh islami*). The relevant issues are discussed under different headings such as: legal rulings in connection with neighbours and neighbourhoods (*ahkam al-jihar*), reconciliation (*al-sulh*) between immediate neighbours and all the people in a neighbourhood, people’s individual and collective rights, prohibition of inflicting harm (*darar*), legal rulings pertaining to building (*ahkam al-bina*), and public services and facilities (*al-marafiq*). All these issues undoubtedly play a significant role in shaping the identity

¹⁰ John S. Reynolds, *Courtyards: Aesthetic, Social, and Thermal Delight* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, INC, 2002), 41.

¹¹ *Sinan’s Autobiographies, Five Sixteenth-Century Texts*, introductory notes, critical editions and translations by Howard Crane and Esra Akin, edited by Gulru Necipoglu, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2006), 53-158.

¹² *Ibid.*, 123, 124.

of Islamic architecture. They are either directly or indirectly related to conceiving, designing, forming and using Islamic architecture. Since architecture is people's art greatly influencing their moods and the day-to-day life engagements, the same issues concerning architecture are studied as part of exhaustive encyclopaedic works on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh islami*).

In addition, there are more than a few works also on Islamic jurisprudence written by some famous jurists but which are dedicated solely to the issues pertinent, one way or another, to building. The two among most famous titles of this type of works are: "*Explaining the Rules of Building*" by Abu Abdullah Ibn al-Rami (d. 1334), and "*The Book of Walls*" by Husamuddin 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Bukhari (d. 1141). Both books are on Islamic jurisprudence exclusively focusing on legal rulings which are directly or indirectly related to building and public services and facilities.

The referred to encyclopaedic works on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh islami*) discuss virtually everything that Muslims might do, including matters about building, thus giving them a clear life orientation and guidance. This way a powerful message is given, that is, neither from the Islamic spirituality nor from the people's actual life challenges and problems can Islamic architecture be separated, one side existing in a world and the other side existing in another completely different world. What's more, Islamic architecture is to be alive, real and dynamic, playing an active role in overcoming people's challenges and solving their problems. Architecture is not to be for society's elite only, serving a limited spectrum of interests. It must belong to all the strata of society attending to their vast and diverse interests and needs. Architects and structural engineers, it goes without saying, are the humble servants of society. They must be completely and exclusively answerable to their people. The people, in turn, are to function as the best judges on whether their architecture is good or bad, effective and conducive to their life activities or not, functional and friendly or otherwise. And architects must listen if they are to hang on to their professional credibility and social standing. Doing otherwise will be tantamount to betraying the profession of architecture as well as people's trust placed on architects. It follows that a very close and responsible relationship is to exist between architects and the people due to the close relationship between them. This entitles people to play an active and participative, rather than a passive or indifferent or acquiescent role when it comes to their architecture for they are its immediate customers and clients.

For all these reasons, surely, some vital issues concerning several dimensions of Islamic architecture are often discussed within the compass of the *hisbah* institution as well.¹³ This institution is both religious and social in nature aiming to protect the interests of the members of society regardless of whether such interests are connected to pure religious matters or to some other worldly concerns. The *hisbah* is an institution "under the authority of the state that appoints people to carry out the responsibility of enjoining what is right, whenever people start to neglect it, and forbidding what is wrong, whenever people start to engage in it. The purpose of this is to safeguard society from deviance, protect the faith, and ensure the welfare of the people in both religious and worldly manners according to the Law of Allah. Allah has made it obligatory upon

¹³ Walid Abdullah al-Munis, *Al-Hisbah 'ala al-Mudun wa al-'Umran* (Kuwait University, Kuwait: 1995), 65-108.

all Muslims to enjoin good and forbid wrongdoing to the extent of their knowledge and abilities.”¹⁴

Islamic architecture accepts no rigidity, formalism and literal symbolism, especially in relation to its structural domains. If the religion of Islam presents Muslims with a conceptual framework for architecture, which encompasses the Islamic worldview and Islamic fundamental teachings and principles, this in no way implies that the creativity and design freedom of Muslims are thus killed off, at worst, or stifled, at best. On the contrary, they are very much stirred and encouraged to thrive through the same means, with the only difference that certain divine precepts now preside over their development and use, lest some people’s imagination and enthusiasm, at some point, become disoriented and misleading, hence perilous to man’s well-being.

What makes an architecture Islamic are some invisible aspects of buildings, which may or may not completely translate themselves onto the physical plane of built environment. The substance of Islamic architecture is always the same, due to the permanence of the philosophy and cosmic values that gave rise to it. What changes are the ways and means with which people internalize and put into operation such philosophy and values to their own natural and man-generated circumstances. Such changes or developments could simply be regarded as most practical “solutions” to the challenges people face. For example, the mosques that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) built carried the same meaning and essence as the mosques that were built in history and that we build today, despite the major differences in form. The spirit of the housing schemes that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) carried out was likewise the spirit of any other Islamic housing scheme that was implemented at any point of history and in any part of the world, despite their vast differences in terms of sophistication and building technology and engineering. The same can be said about any other aspect of Islamic built environment.

Stefano Bianca remarked on the extent to which Islamic spirituality influences Islamic architecture: “Compared with other religious traditions, the distinctive feature of Islam is that it has given birth to a comprehensive and integrated cultural system by totally embedding the religious practice in the daily life of the individual and the society. While Islam did not prescribe formal architectural concepts, it molded the whole way of life by providing a matrix of behavioral archetypes which, by necessity, generated correlated physical patterns. Therefore, the religious and social universe of Islam must be addressed before engaging in the analysis of architectural structures.”¹⁵

Islamic architecture thus promotes unity in diversity, that is, the unity of message and purpose, and the diversity of styles, methods and solutions. Certainly, this renders Islamic architecture so relevant and dynamic, and so consistent and adaptable. It is such a fascinating subject to study, for doing so is not about sheer art and architecture. It is more than that: it is about beholding the Islamic ideology and creed at work. It is about witnessing a microcosm of Islamic society, civilization and culture. Islamic architecture is about Islam taking up a manifest form.

¹⁴ *Hisbah Institution*, <http://islamic-world.net/economics/hisbah.htm>.

¹⁵ Stefano Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World*, 22-23.

The identity and vocabulary of Islamic architecture evolved as a means for the fulfilment of the concerns of Muslim societies. Islamic architecture was never an end in itself. It was the container of Islamic culture and civilization reflecting the cultural identity and the level of the creative and aesthetic consciousness of Muslims. Architecture, in general, should always be in service to people. It is never to be the other way round, that is to say that architecture should evolve into a hobby or an adventure in the process, imposing itself on society while forsaking, or taking lightly, people's identities, cultures and the demands of their daily struggles. Architecture, first and foremost, should remain associated with functionality. It should not deviate from its authentic character and stray into the world of excessive invention and abstraction.¹⁶

Finally, when asked what architecture is, Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the most famous American architects during the first half of the 20th century, while replying, echoed somewhat the Islamic notion of architecture, i.e., to be relevant, pragmatic, and both people and environment friendly. Architecture is life; it is life taking up a form. Frank Lloyd Wright's perception of architecture was epitomized in his words: "What is architecture anyway? Is it the vast collection of the various buildings which have been built to please the varying taste of the various lords of mankind? I think not. No, I know that architecture is life; or at least it is life itself taking form and therefore it is the truest record of life as it was lived in the world yesterday, as it is lived today or ever will be lived. So architecture I know to be a Great Spirit.... Architecture is that great living creative spirit which from generation to generation, from age to age, proceeds, persists, creates, according to the nature of man, and his circumstances as they change. That is really architecture."¹⁷

3. TWO EXAMPLES: THE ISLAMIC HOUSE AND THE MOSQUE

To clarify further the previous points, we shall briefly discuss the examples of the Islamic house and the mosque.

3.1. THE HOUSE

Islam did not instruct Muslims how to build houses, but it did instruct them how to carry out a number of tasks directly or indirectly associated with the house and housing phenomena. Some of such tasks are: privacy protection against the outside world, among the family members, and between the family members and visitors, respect for the rights of guests and visitors, respect for the rights of neighbours, the relationship between men and women, the implications of carrying out religious obligations, cleanliness, peaceful coexistence with the natural environment, safety, security, recreation and modesty. Islam's aim is to preserve the life, religion, mental and psychological strength, descendants and wealth of its people.

The net result of this strategy is that there are many types of the Islamic house, such as those in the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, Turkey, Iran, the Islamic West (*al-maghrib al-Islami*), etc., but the soul and fundamental nature of all these housing types are always the same, and are easily recognizable by those familiar with the character of Islam and the character of its civilization. What those different-yet-same, or same-yet-different, houses represent are, in fact, people's solutions to the challenges of living their family lives in line with their religious guidelines while,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *What is Architecture?*, <http://architecture.about.com/library/blarchitecture.htm>.

at the same time, complying with the requirements of the climate, geography, traditions, economy and building technology of the places where they live. While creating Islamic architecture, Muslims betray neither their religion nor their living conditions. This challenge Muslims see as a source of motivation, ingenuity and strength. They do not see it as a problem, hindrance or an impediment. They see it as a service to Islam, society and mankind as a whole.

Eventually, what came to be known as the language of Islamic residential architecture, such as the courtyard, partly or fully screened windows, raising windows above the eye level, bent entrances, double circulations inside houses, inward looking designs, guest rooms near main entrances and away from houses' core, certain decorative systems, etc., such must be seen as sets of best solutions that people have evolved over centuries for themselves. They are to be seen as no more than that. Such structural solutions must not be seen as the prescribed language of Islamic residential architecture that cannot be revised, enriched, improved, altered and even abandoned, to a certain extent or completely, if necessary and in favour of some other equally or more viable solutions presented by advances made by science and technology, and generally by the implications of the time and space factors. Likewise, such structural solutions are not to be held as religious symbols with some ontological significance.

However, there is only one thing that must be honoured at all times and that cannot be compromised under any circumstances in housing, that is, the sanctified functions of the house which render it a place to rest, relax the body and mind, enjoy legitimate worldly delights, worship, teach, learn and propagate the message of Islam, and which makes the house a restricted sanctuary where privacy, protection, safety and security are ensured. In other words, the house is to function as an institution with a potential to take up the role of an educational and training center able to produce, in concert with other societal establishments, individuals capable of transforming the whole communities they belong to. If the family is the basic and most important societal unit, then the same can be said about the house which is the physical locus of the former. Indeed, without the two, the total realization of the divine purpose on earth becomes impossible.

3.2. THE MOSQUE

Another example is concerning the mosque institution, by far the most easily identifiable element of Islamic architecture. Islam did not instruct the Muslims how to build mosques, but it did instruct them to build mosques and to make them function as places of collective worship and community development centres. The Prophet (pbuh) built quite a number of mosques in Madinah, which was the prototype Islamic city and played the role firstly as the city-state and later as the capital of the ever-expanding Muslim state. The functions performed by mosques built by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), particularly his mosque in Madinah, were so powerful that they epitomized the multifaceted societal dimensions of Islam. The primary aim of all the mosques built afterwards was to emulate the Prophet's example in this regard.

Nevertheless, the form of the mosques built during the Prophet's era was very simple. His mosque in Madinah, for example, when firstly built consisted of an enclosure with walls made of mud bricks and an arcade on the *qiblah* side (towards Makkah) made of palm-trunks used as columns to support a roof of palm-leaves and mud. There were initially three entrances in the east, west and southern walls. The fourth, i.e., the northern wall, was the *qiblah* side facing the al-Masjid al-Aqsa, the first *qiblah* which lasted about one year and a few months. However, as the *qiblah* was

changed to face south towards Makkah, the southern entrance was subsequently bricked up and a new one on the northern side constructed. Before the *qiblah* changed, there was, in all likelihood, no roofed area in the mosque, but after it, an arcade on the southern side facing Makkah was created.

The Prophet's *SAW* mosque had a few rudimentary facilities. However, before the Prophet's *SAW* death and as the Madinah community and its needs considerably grew, the shape of the mosque underwent more than a few notable structural modifications, such as its enlargement, the introduction of the pulpit (*minbar*) and illuminating the mosque by oil lamps. Thus, the impact that changes in human living conditions can have on the form of architecture has duly been recognized. This causal relationship between the evolution of the language of mosque architecture and Islamic architecture, in general, and the improvement of the living standards of Muslims went on till Islamic civilization attained its apogee and with it the language of Islamic architecture achieved its conspicuous sophistication and excellence.

However, when the rich and versatile language of mosque architecture evolved, the new developments signified people's answers and solutions to the challenge of maintaining mosques to function as the centres of Islamic collective worship and as the centres for community development, while, at the same time, conforming to the requirements of the climate, geography, traditions, economy and building technology of the places where they lived. The net result of this approach is that there are many ways of building mosques, such as those in the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, Turkey, Iran, Morocco, Malaysia, China, etc. but the soul and fundamental nature of all those mosque types are always the same and are easily recognizable by those familiar with the character of Islamic worship and the character of Islamic cultures and civilization.

Eventually, what came to be known as the language of mosque architecture, such as the minaret, courtyards, the *minbar* (pulpit), the *mihrab* (praying niche), domes, arches, *iwans*, certain decorative styles, etc., must be seen as the best solutions and facilities that people have evolved over centuries for themselves so that the projected roles of mosques are ensured. Such solutions and facilities must not be seen as religious symbols containing some ontological bearing. Nor are they to be held as the prescribed language of mosque architecture that cannot be revised, enriched, improved and adjusted, thus accommodating the provisions presented by the advances made by science and technology, and generally by the implications of the time and space factors. After all, what matters most is making the mosque institution with its demanding civilizational mission as effective, dynamic, relevant and attractive as possible through various means and methods. This is exactly what Muslims were up to while evolving the rich and colourful language of mosque architecture, in particular, and Islamic art and architecture, in general.

4. PRAGMATISM AND ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE TODAY

Islam is a complete way of life. Its values and teachings, together with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad *SAW*, whose primary task was to explain to mankind and put into practice the precepts of Islam, are universal and timeless. The significance of Islamic architecture is universal and permanent too, in that the philosophy that it embodies is the Islamic one. However, such is the nature of Islamic architecture that it is receptive to both advances in science and technology and the dictates of people's living conditions.

It is an imperative that Muslim architects always remember this verity while trying to revive and sustain the concept of Islamic architecture. In so doing, Muslim architects are bidden to; firstly, identify the general Islamic guidelines and principles pertaining to the enterprise of building. Next, they must be fully aware of the implications of the dilemmas and challenges their time and the diverse regions in which they live. They cannot be trapped in a historical episode, overly romanticizing it and attempting to emulate the architectural solutions the Muslims of that particular period successfully evolved. If something was the norm during a period and in a particular ecological setting, such by no means can be the same in every subsequent period and in different ecological settings. Technological advancements rapidly change; demands of different eras fluctuate, even under the same ecological conditions; climate exigencies must be painstakingly heeded; and, lastly, human psychology also changes with the change of time and space, posing a number of exigencies of its own. No architectural plan and design which served as a solution for an age and place can be simply “parachuted” to another age and place without properly modulating it to its rigorous environmental and socio-cultural requirements. To do that is to betray the dynamic spirit of both the common sense and the perpetual message of Islam. Blind and ignorant imitations and following, even in sheer religious matters, are categorically rebuked by Islam.

While taking hold of the general Islamic guidelines and principles with reference to creating an Islamic architecture, on the one hand, and while studying the needs of different times and situations so that the former can be accurately understood and applied, on the other, Muslim architects in reality perform a degree of *ijtihad*, i.e., forming an independent opinion or judgment within the framework of an available text. In doing so, if one excels, one receives two rewards from God, but if one for whatever reason fails to deliver, after he had tried his best, one is bound to receive one reward from God, as propounded by the Prophet SAW in one of his traditions.¹⁸ Based on this tradition, in no way can a serious, enlightened, accountable and willing person be a loser as far as the execution of matters ordained by God is concerned. Verily, this divine assurance should serve to the Muslim architects and designers as a starting point to look carefully and critically at the state of architecture and how buildings in the Muslim world are planned and designed, as well as to start contemplating the prospects of finding much better solutions which will be inspired by and infused with the values of Islam, and will be responsive to the exigencies of different times and regions.

At the start, Muslim architects ought not to be bound by a single historical structural model, device or solution. The past is to be viewed all the time as such, i.e., the past. It is to be neither excessively venerated or idealized nor completely disregarded. The past must be put in its true perspective with such notions as wisdom, pragmatism and practicality leading the way. In their daunting search for contemporary Islamic architecture, Muslim architects and designers must be driven by a clear principled vision, a free spirit and an insatiable thirst for ingenuity, which must be shrouded in strong determination, self-belief and quest for excellence. However, should some modern structural devices or solutions appear to bear a resemblance, partly or totally, to the ones used in the past, one is not to shy away from reviving them within the existing contexts. The history of Islamic architecture is not to be looked down at as entirely outmoded and worthless. As we are against blind and ignorant imitation of the past, we are likewise against disengaging

¹⁸ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-I'tisam bi al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah, Hadith No. 6805.

ourselves from it and completely ignoring the numerous lessons that we can learn therefrom. Indeed, much can be learned from history because the protagonists of any historical episode while solving their problems possessed the same vision and objectives as we do today while solving the problems on our own. On the other hand, however, we have to be extremely mindful and selective as to how exactly to benefit from history, in which areas and how far we are to emulate our predecessors, because most of their problems were the product of the circumstances under which they operated, whereas our problems are the product of the circumstances under which we operate. Hence, seldom can their solutions be utterly ours.

There is no such thing as a standardized Islamic architecture which can be reproduced anytime and anywhere. If truth be told, there is nothing as such in the whole body of the Islamic built environment. Therefore, Muslim architects and designers should not hesitate to unleash their burning Islamic spirit, desire, imagination and creativity in order to conceive and create such an architectural tradition that will be compatible with the requirements of both the religious message and modernity. Undoubtedly, the given solutions will have to vary from one region to another, somewhere more and somewhere less. But the essence of all the possible designs, including those adopted as the best solutions in history, will remain one, because of the same worldview and the same religious spirit and foundation that underpin the presence of Muslims and bind all the Muslim peoples regardless of their different geographical locations, cultures and historical appearances. Whatever conception and form are eventually given to such an architecture, the same is absolutely qualified to be branded as “Islamic”. On account of its location, sheer exterior, or association with a historical moment, no building can be more Islamic than others. What matters, imperatively, is the total function and utility, that a building is imbued with the soul and purity of Islam, and that it stands for an embodiment of the Islamic values and principles insofar as the fulfilling of a building’s functions and roles is concerned.

The authors of the website www.islamicart.com wrote, relying on an essay “*Building in the Middle East Today – in Search of a Direction*” written by Garry Martin, that “Islamic architecture was in harmony with the people, their environment and their Creator. Yet no strict rules were applied to govern Islamic architecture. The great mosques of Cordoba, Edirne and Shah Jahan each used local geometry, local materials, local building methods to express in their own ways the order, harmony and unity of Islamic architecture...But in the 20th century, the Islamic concepts of unity, harmony and continuity often are forgotten in the rush for industrial development. Martin lists three directions contemporary Islamic architecture has taken:

1. One approach is to completely ignore the past and produce Western-oriented architecture that ignores the Islamic spirit and undermines traditional culture.
2. The opposite approach involves a retreat, at least superficially, to the Islamic architectural past. This can result in hybrid buildings where traditional facades of arches and domes are grafted onto modern high-rises.
3. A third approach, Martin notes, is to understand the essence of Islamic architecture and to allow modern building technology to be a tool in the expression of this essence. Writes Martin, ‘Architects working today can take advantage of opportunities that new materials and mass production techniques offer. They have an opportunity to explore and transform the possibilities of the machine age for the enrichment of architecture in the same way that craftsmen explored the nature of geometrical and arabesque patterns...’

The forms that would evolve from this approach, adds Martin, “would have a regional identity, a stylistic evolution and a relevance to the eternal principles of Islam.”¹⁹

In an extremely frank manner, Mahbub ul Haq wrote about pragmatism in Islamic architecture and how it must serve its people. He rightly argues that Islamic architecture must not be seen as an elitist enterprise. It is a pursuit that aims to ensure the welfare of all Muslims, in the process reflecting the essential spirit and universal value system of Islam. Islamic architecture must be practical in the sense that it is affordable, accessible, functional and tackles the issues and problems concerning all Muslims, many of whom are unfortunately poor today. Thus, a form of Islamic architecture that we aim to revive today must not be discriminatory, elitist, impractical, fanciful and utopian. Mahbub ul Haq reflects: “If Islamic architecture is to become a living reality in modern times, it must respond to the needs of the poor people who are the overwhelming reality in the Muslim world. It cannot afford to become an elitist concept. Islamic architecture must be unlinked from the popular image of kings’ palaces and old castles and overflowing gardens and ornamental monuments. It can certainly borrow its essential designs, concepts, indigenous technology, functional features of drainage and cooling systems, etc., from the past, but it must translate them into a wholly new architecture which reflects the essential spirit and value system of Islam: equality, accessibility, mass participation and cost-effectiveness.

In other words, there are two fairly clear choices. We can proceed from a study of architecture to the needs of the people; or we can reverse the relationship, and proceed from the needs of the people to the relevance of Islamic architecture to those needs. . .”I do not believe in art for the sake of art; I believe that art must be for the sake of life. And I certainly do not believe in Islamic architecture merely for the sake of Islamic architecture; I believe that a revival of Islamic architecture must correspond to the needs of the poor people of Islam. . .It should be possible to engineer a happy blend, a proper fusion between the functional needs of our poor people and the aesthetic needs of an architecture which truly reflects our Islamic culture, traditions and history.”²⁰

Thus, perceiving and creating Islamic architecture is a very serious task. It is about giving people some of their fundamental rights, executing a religious obligation, and contributing to an appropriate or an otherwise implementation of the message of Islam. The corollary of all this is that Muslim architects, and all the other professionals in the field of built environment at large, must enhance considerably their knowledge of Islam: its *Sharia’h* and worldview. This may appear as a daunting task to many, however, needless to say that it is incumbent upon every Muslim, male and female, to know the rulings of Islam pertaining to the obligations and teachings they have to adhere to in their life.

While Islamizing the notion of architecture in both theory and practice, Muslim architects and engineers can draw on their own familiarity with the rulings of Islam, provided the same is adequate. Otherwise, trustworthy religious scholars, who are both qualified and broad-minded, should be consulted and engaged as many times as needed. It goes without saying that unremitting inter and cross-professional studies and research activities appear to be inevitable. This is bound to lead gradually to narrowing down the glaring gap separating the religious scholars and their fields

¹⁹ *The Future of Islamic Architecture*, <http://www.islamicart.com/main/architecture/future.html>

²⁰ Mahbub ul Haq, “Islamic Architecture and the Poor People of Islam,” in *Places of Public Gathering in Islam*, edited by Linda Safran, (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980), 126-127.

of interest from the secular ones and their own fields of interest. This way, every scholar will become aware as to his/her role in society and his/her obligations toward society, nature and God. Certainly, the religious scholars will have to widen their interests and concerns, becoming what they are actually always meant to be: the guardians of societies. But to secure that accolade they ought to reevaluate themselves and their undertakings, striving to be a more practical, approachable, people-friendly, and less dogmatic and idealistic. Whereas the secular scholars will have to think of Islamizing their knowledge, wherever there is a conflict of interests and as much as possible, realigning their scientific goals and aspirations with the goals and aspirations of the Muslim community to which they belong.

Certainly, it is a high time that a serious and scientific initiative of integrating the Islamic worldview and value system into architecture takes off in the Muslim world. However, such a scheme ought to constitute but a segment of a broad Islamization project aimed at bringing about a total harmonization between the education systems of Muslims and the teachings of Islam. It is not only that architecture should be targeted by the scheme, but also the whole of built environment professions. The process of integration will yield best results if it were embarked on gradually, after people have become convinced of its relevance and urgency.

In universities and colleges where students undertake architecture programs, some in-depth and deemed most needed programs on Islamic studies can be taught. Lecturers and tutors must be well-educated, well-trained and must lead by example. Their role is critical. The mission of Islamization is a massive and complex one so students will always look up at their teachers for inspiration and guidance. The programs can be taught independently or they can be integrated into the syllabus of other courses. The latter option is an excellent one, as it is spontaneous and natural, hence more effective. Due to the obvious relevance and applicability of the integrated subject matter, the students will have little or no reasons to develop any aversion to what they are subjected to. The former option, however, if applied alone is not really a helpful one, as it is suggestive, nominally though, of perpetuating the existing rift between the religious and architectural sciences. At best, the same can be seen as just an addendum to the existing curriculum, to which the students are bound to develop much indifference. Definitely, the best and most workable solution would be a feasible combination of both options. In the process, either option can be given more emphasis at the expense of the other, subject to the dictates of different situations. However, no matter what model is eventually developed, this aspect of Islamization process can become effective only if students are constantly urged to incorporate what they have learned in the classroom into their practical work in studios and laboratories. Above all this, furthermore, intensive workshops, seminars and trainings can be periodically organized for those who have already graduated and are actively involved in construction sector professions, so that continuity is ensured and if considered necessary for some professionals, enthusiasm for the mission renewed.

It would be even better if education systems of Muslims are such that all students come to colleges and universities with a reasonable amount of knowledge about Islam and its culture and history, which they have obtained beforehand at the lower levels of their study. What would then transpire in colleges and universities is that no time will be wasted on clarifying basic concepts and on dealing with introductory issues. Rather, straight from the beginning the core issues could be seriously approached from perspectives that suit the level of students' study, aptitude and interest. It could be then hoped that within the prescribed timeframe which students spend in colleges and universities, a significant set of objectives with respect to Islamization and

integration of knowledge can be successfully achieved. Then, the whole enterprise will in due time become a serious, sought-after and productive scientific project, rather than a superficial, superfluous and decorative diversion.

At any rate, however, it all boils down to the systems of education that a community adopts, and to what extent the same community is ready and willing to embrace that which is best for preserving its identity and reinvigorating its cultural and civilization prospects. Indeed, it is essential that people start realizing that by creating buildings a framework for the lives of people is created. To a large extent, people's lives are thus directed and influenced. Hence, the two, i.e., the framework with its character and services and the exigencies of people's lives, must be compatible. It is only then that people's welfare will be ensured, and that architecture will become more than just a process of designing and erecting buildings. Such indicates, within the context of Islam and Islamic architecture, that it is very difficult to live delightfully applying the values of Islam in an architectural world which is alien to the same values and its divine philosophy.

5. TOWARDS THE REVIVAL OF ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

Islamic architecture is a fine blend of loads of conceptual and practical factors which are interwoven with the threads of the belief system, teachings and values of Islam. In order to expedite and give more sense to the process of reviving, revitalizing and Islamizing the architecture of Muslims today, the following observations and suggestions could be taken into account:

- Reviving Islamic architecture is an extremely serious and demanding task. It requires major contributions and high-spirited concerted efforts of many parties from across the wide spectrum of society: government, educators, practitioners, professional bodies, NGOs, members of the business community, students and the general public. Certainly, relevant governmental departments, colleges and universities, private architectural firms and institutions are identified as the most relevant agencies and their people as the most important protagonists in spearheading and managing the Islamization of the architecture project. The responsibilities of these parties are the biggest on account of their roles in society. It follows that in case of failure, especially if such happens due to deliberate mediocrity, lack of interest and apathy, their share of blame will be the biggest one as well.
- Defining and clarifying the necessary concepts and terminology such as "Islamic and Muslim architecture", "Muslim architect", "Islamic aesthetics", "Islamic built environment", "Islam and building", "the Qur'an and the Prophet's *sunnah* as the sources of Islamic architecture", "Islam and the environment", "*ihsan, itqan* or excellence", "man as *khalifah* or the vicegerent on earth", "Islam as a comprehensive way of life", "Islam as the final and universal revelation", "Islam and culture", "Islam and civilization", "Islam and society", "Islam and history", etc. A great many problems in the Muslim world today stem from a lack of understanding of some fundamental religious and civilizational concepts and ideas and how they are related to each other.
- Developing a comprehensive code of conduct for Muslim architects based on general Islamic ethics and teachings. It can be called "Islamic architectural ethics".
- Expounding and invalidating the popular errors and misconceptions about all the aspects of Islamic architecture. The causes of such errors and misconceptions are to be carefully

investigated so that the conditions conducive to breeding confusion and misunderstanding towards Islamic architecture are forever done away with.

- History of Islamic architecture, commencing with the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW till the present, to be critically surveyed and examined. This is so because in order to properly diagnose the present predicaments plaguing Islamic architecture and to be able to chart a better future course with regard to the same, the Muslims must be acquainted with the history of their Islamic societies in general, and the history of Islamic architecture, in particular. History of Islamic architecture is to be neither excessively venerated nor totally discarded. A middle path is thus to be pursued and adopted. History is to serve as a source for shaping a better present and for forecasting a better future. Indeed, ignorance about history presages ignorance about the present and doubting and insecurity about the future. Moreover, ignoring one's history portends compromising one's identity which in turn sets in motion forfeiting one's chances of having an impact on what happens around and to one's self. It's no wonder then that the colonizers of the Muslim lands sought out most to discredit much of Islamic history and to keep its peoples either ignorant or completely indifferent towards it. Finally, people alienated from their history, stripped of their intrinsic identity, are not in a position to think independently. They likewise lack a disposition or penchant to lead with poise. Following and imitating others, due to the inferiority complex deeply embedded in their minds and souls, is everything they know. Genuine inventiveness, creativity and courage have long since been removed from their phrase book.
- Developing and advancing an Islamic architectural theory based on the most authentic sources of Islam: the Qur'an and *sunnah*, i.e., revelation.
- Studying and paying due respect and appreciation to all the Muslims who excelled in architecture from the dawn of Islam till the present. The roles, reputations and contributions of those persons to society, in their respective local, regional and international contexts, are to represent the crux of this type of studies.
- Comparative studies between Islamic architecture and other architectural systems and theories to be undertaken. Unifying and diverging points to be clearly spelled out and scrutinized.
- Since the religion of Islam is the foundation and moral fiber of Islamic culture and civilization—including architecture—Islam likewise is to be the foundation and moral fiber of Muslim educational systems. It is only with a genuine Islamic mindset, passion and purpose that Islamic culture and civilization— including architecture—can be revitalized and restored. Thus, Muslim educational systems must aim to produce generations whose members will be acquainted with, feel affection for, practice, care and live for Islam: its ideology, peoples, history, culture and civilization. Only in such a dynamic, conducive and engaging intellectual environment, genuine Islamic architecture can be taught and learned. Islamic education must produce honorable, moral and visionary men and women, rather than materialistic, disoriented and superficially cultured professionals and citizens.
- Encouraging, facilitating and supervising a quality research culture on various issues in relation to the theme of Islamic architecture. This is in order to significantly enrich libraries and bookshops with genuine references on the subject in question so that propagating, teaching and practicing Islamic architecture becomes a viable proposition. The problems of Muslims today, primarily, rest at the epistemological plane. The problems are related to the mind and ideas. They are about the lack of quality, not quantity.

- Promoting architecture as a multidisciplinary branch of learning and a profession much wider than routinely believed.
- Encouraging and promoting creative, critical, global, unbiased, unprejudiced and tolerant thinking.
- Advocating strict following in religion, in matters where unreserved following is due, and unbound inventing in architecture, where inventing and concocting are due. Parallel with this, reviving the notion of *ijtihad* in architecture and with it the science of the *fiqh al-'umran*, ought to take off.
- Promoting the concept of unity in diversity in Islamic architecture, i.e., the unity of spiritual message, civilizational soul, identity and purpose, and the diversity of artistic and scientific styles, methods and solutions.
- Muslim colleges and universities, the Islamic worldview, the belief system, ethics and other relevant teachings and values of Islam, to be felicitously integrated into the architecture curriculum at both the theoretical and practical levels. The relevant religious and architectural technical components are to be viewed as the equivalent parts of a whole with no clear demarcation lines separating them. This way, students will have little or no reasons to develop any aversion to the notion of integration between the religion of Islam and architecture. Relevant religious components if properly integrated will not be deemed as an addendum to the existing curriculum, or as an extra burden imposed on students. Both religion and architecture will thus be seen in their true light. Islamic architecture must be presented and taught as a revolutionary world phenomenon, as universal, abiding and revealing as the standards and values that gave rise to it. True, Islamic architecture is as responsive to the climatic, geographical, cultural, economic and technological requirements as any other architectural tradition. Nevertheless, it never treats them away from exigencies of a higher order. By means of skills, creativity and imagination on the one hand, and by its distinctive combination of aesthetic and utilitarian ends, on the other, Islamic architecture never draws a wedge between man's physical, psychological and spiritual needs. Certainly, it is for this spiritual dimension that Islamic architecture entails that Mimar Sinan (d. 1588 CE), the chief architect of the Ottoman golden age, called architecture an "estimable calling" and then said that whosoever is engaged in it must be, first of all, pious.
- As regards the implementation of the Islamization of architecture project, policy-makers in particular should prepare measures and mechanisms for the implementation and to develop indicators of performance.

CONCLUSION

Islamic architecture is not concerned about the form of buildings only. Islamic architecture signifies a process in which all the phases and aspects are equally important. It is almost impossible to identify a phase or an aspect in that process and consider it more important than the others. The Islamic architecture process starts with having a proper understanding and vision which leads to making the right intention. It continues with the planning, designing and building stages, and ends with attaining the net results and how people make use of and benefit from them. Islamic architecture is a subtle balance of all these factors which are interwoven with the threads of the belief system, principles, teachings and values of Islam.

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