

Conclusion

Islam as a comprehensive way of life influenced the planning and designing of the houses of its adherents. Not only that, Islam also laid a solid foundation, in some instances in form of laws, for creating what became known as the phenomenon of Islamic housing.

The Holy Qur'an furnishes Muslims with a comprehensive conceptual framework for housing. This framework has been first applied, explained and further enriched by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). While developing the city of Madinah, upon his and his followers' migration (*hijrah*) from Makkah, the Prophet (pbuh), under the aegis of revelation, provided scores of lessons in Islamic housing to people. Since Muhammad (pbuh) was the last Messenger of Allah to mankind, such lessons are to be held by Muslims as both universal and everlasting. They stand for an important segment of the Prophet's *sunnah* (traditions) which is each and every Muslim's duty to try to follow as much as their live conditions permit.

In Islam, the house is a place to rest, relax the body and mind, and enjoy legitimate worldly delights. Within the realm of their houses, Muslims also worship, teach, learn and propagate the message of Islam. Central to the standards by which a house may be categorized as "Islamic" are the holiness and purity of its philosophy, vision, function and utility, accompanied by convenience, efficiency, safety, awareness of the physical surroundings, and anything else that Islam reckons as indispensable for living a decent and accountable family life. The sheer physical and artistic appearance is therefore inferior and matters only when it comes into complete conformity with the above mentioned criteria. Muslim architects, planners, structural engineers and final users alike, must perceive the house phenomenon as a sheer means, an instrument, a carrier of the spiritual, not a goal itself. Islamic housing is a blend of the belief system, teachings and values of Islam, on the one hand, and the prerequisites and influences of indigenous cultures, climates, topographies, building materials, talents, technologies and economies, on the other.

The house institution occupies an extraordinary place in Islam. It is a family development center. It is a microcosm of Islamic culture and civilization in that individuals and families bred and nurtured therein constitute the fundamental units of the Islamic *Ummah* (community). The places where people live are the first and arguably

most influential and critical educational and development centers. If functioning properly, such centers have a potential to produce, in concert with other societal establishments and centers, the individuals who will be capable of transforming and making better their immediate surroundings and the whole communities they belong to.

Conversely, if misconstrued and their roles distorted, the places where people live have a potential to become a breeding ground for nearly all social ills, which if left unchecked are able to paralyze entire communities and eventually stifle the civilizational undertakings of theirs. It follows that in Islamic society there must exist a high level of ideological compatibility between the house and other societal institutions. An ideological incompatibility, or dichotomy, between the two poles is unacceptable and can only hinder, if not thwart altogether, the progress of society.

Islamic housing is a mixture of the heavenly and terrestrial factors and elements. Both sides are extremely important, playing their respective roles. They finely complement and add to each other's strength and operation. Neglecting either of the two poles in Islamic housing inevitably leads to a serious damage in its fundamental nature, at a conceptual or a practical plane.

Creating, or reviving, Islamic housing today is anything but a simple task. Some of the most crucial requirements for that arduous mission -- as thoroughly explained in the book -- will be: an excellent Islamic built environment, as well as general, education; upholding the ideals of *tawhid* (Allah's Oneness) and the rest of Islamic teachings and values; the institution and implementation of comprehensive and sound housing policies at all levels; steering clear of major transgressions associated with housing; encouraging endless and total creativity in the spirit of the Islamic concept of *ijtihad*, i.e., unreserved following in religion, coupled with unreserved inventing in sheer worldly matters. These requirements are to be duly taken up by all the protagonists in the field of Islamic housing: professionals, patrons, policy makers and users (people), according to their respective jurisdictions. In other words, every member of society will have to play a role, due to the universal roles and appeal of housing. Truly, Islamic housing is a microcosm of life. It is a microcosm of Islam and its vibrant culture and civilization.