



SOME LESSONS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

In this paper, I shall identify and examine some lessons of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)ⁱ in planning and development which he under the aegis of revelation has bequeathed to us. Since Muhammad was the last Messenger of God to mankind, such lessons Muslims regard as universal and timeless. They, by and large, are applicable to both the urban and rural contexts because during the Prophet's time and in the case of Madinah, the demarcation line between the urban and rural settlements was not clearly drawn. Central to the paper will be the following issues: (1) the philosophy of the settlement; (2) the necessity of providing adequate social amenities for all; (3) peaceful and accountable co-existence with the natural environment; (4) housing; and (5) the market. The paper does not intend to produce a concrete formula for the revival of the phenomenon of Islamic planning and development today. Nor does it aim to present the concrete solutions for the existing urban and rural planning and development problems in the Muslim world. Rather, the paper seeks, primarily, to enhance the awareness, both of the Muslim professionals and general readership, as to the importance of correctly conceptualizing and practicing Islamic planning and development. Moreover, the paper presents some of the general lessons of Prophet Muhammad in planning and development in the form of general principles and values around which a comprehensive theory on Islamic sustainable planning and development, in line with the requirements of the Islamic worldview while fully conforming to the dictates of different circumstances, environments and cultures, can be developed today. The nature of the paper, along with its content, methodology and conclusions, it follows, is conceptual and philosophical, rather than empirical.

Keywords: Prophet Muhammad, Islam, Muslims, the city of Madinah, Planning and Development,



1. INTRODUCTION

In 610 A.C., Muhammad (pbuh) was appointed the last messenger of God to humankind. He was then forty years old. Makkah, Muhammad's hometown, was the first focus of his prophetic mission. However, the city proved infertile for the establishment of a base where the seeds of a new culture and civilization with a global agenda could be sown. Other alternatives were thus considered.

In Islamic vocabulary, the term *Hijrah* denotes the migration of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers from Makkah to Madinah in 622 A.C. in search of a better setting for the propagation and realization of the Islamic message. At the time of the *Hijrah*, the ongoing revelation of Islam was already about thirteen years old and the Muslims were yet to set up a free and autonomous state of their own. Once the city of Madinah with most of its inhabitants wholeheartedly welcomed the new religion, so fiercely disapproved of by many where it had originated, i.e., in Makkah, the wait finally came to an end and the stage was set for broadening the focus of the young community's undertakings. As a result, the focus of revelation was likewise widened. The religion of Islam thus began to assert itself as a universal code of life overlooking no segment of human existence, a momentous development indeed after it had been portrayed essentially as an inclusive belief system during the precarious episode in Makkah. From the point of general planning and urbanization, the whole duration of the Islamic city-state of Madinah headed by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) -- a period of approximately 10 years -- was exceptionally eventful too.

2. THE ISLAMIC IDEA OF THE CITY

Prior to the *Hijrah* (migration), Madinah was called *Yathrib* consisting of several loosely interrelated settlements. Its population was mainly made up of Arabs and Jews, the former being divided into the *Aws* and *Khazraj* tribes and the latter into *Banu Qaynuqa'*, *Banu al-Nadir* and *Banu Qurayzah* tribes. But after Prophet Muhammad's arrival and the arrival of his companions from Makkah (they are referred to as *Muhajirs* or Migrants) -- in addition to the conversion of many Madinah citizens (they are referred to as *Ansar* or Helpers) to Islam -- the city morphology, as well as its population structure, were set to change forever. The city's name was expectedly altered in the process. The new name adopted was Madinah, which simply means "the City". The word Madinah is derived from the Arabic words *maddana* and *tamaddun* which mean to civilize (urbanize) and



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civilization respectively. From the same words, the concepts *madaniyy* and *mutamaddin*, both of which denote civilized, civil and cultured, are derived too. (Ibn Manzur, 1990)

The new name of the new home of Islam was not given at the dictates of a chance, as the advent of the new worldview and those who had already exemplified it in their thoughts, words and deeds implied the advent of a whole bunch of new concepts and philosophies. Of them was the idea of the urban settlement or the city.

The city in Islam stands for the ground for the people's interaction with Almighty God (their Creator, Lord and Sustainer), with space, with environment, and, of course, with themselves at various levels, given that the city is a scene where they live, work, play, learn, worship, rise and fall. The outcome of these and other activities which the people engage themselves in in cities – and other settlements of theirs - is what we call cultures and civilizations but which vary by reason of the principles and values on which they rest, as well as by reason of the objectives which are intended to be thereby achieved. Hence, it should not be surprising that the word Madinah comes from the word *tamaddun*, which denotes civilization.

One of the derivations of the word Madinah is the Arabic verb *dana* as well, ('Abd al-'Aziz, 1992) which means to obey, to submit (to), to owe allegiance (to), whence the word *din* which means religion, faith. Thus, the city of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was dubbed Madinah in order to signify the Islamic pivotal precept that man is a vicegerent on earth and has been created only to abide by and totally submit to the Will of the Lord of the universe. Since Prophet Muhammad's role was to receive the revelation from God, convey it to humankind, and by educating them and applying the guidance divinely given, lead them forth from the depths of darkness into light, he is to be as unquestionably respected, followed and obeyed. Obeying him means obeying God; rejecting and disobeying him means rejecting and disobeying God. (Qur'an, 3:132; 4:13,59,80)

Thus, Madinah, the city of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) – and every other Islamic city and, indeed, any form of Islamic settlement in any time and place – was a hub of worship (serving). Worship (*'ibadah*) in Islam is a wide concept encompassing each and every action of man, irrespective of its nature and the level where it might be undertaken, on sole condition that God is intended to be thereby pleased and the divine norms pertinently conformed to. In such cities, God is the only absolute authority and His words of guidance a source from which everything as to managing this terrestrial life originates. Accordingly, the job of those who are entrusted to administer such cities and settlements and rule over their populace



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would not exceed the perimeter of the right and most efficient implementation in the existing context of what has been already prescribed. In other words, their task would be but ensuring the masses their general well-being by finding a feasible and effective *modus operandi* of putting into operation the sets of infinite standards and values whose purpose of existence is precisely that – nothing more and nothing less. For that reason is the ruler in Islam – regardless of the amount of authority that may be vested in him - called *al-ra'i*, guardian, and the subjects *al-ra'iyyah*, those who are cared for.

Furthermore, of the meanings of the Arabic verb *dana* - which is one of the derivations of the word Madinah - is 'to be indebted to someone'. Having named the first capital of the Islamic state Madinah, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) indicated that by ceaselessly worshipping God, generating in the process civilizational components from which not only the followers of Islam but also the whole of mankind shall benefit, the people as a matter of fact embarked on returning the debt of creation and existence to their Creator and Sustainer. (Al-Attas, 1978)

3. PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S MOSQUE AS A COMMUNITY CENTER

The first urban element, which Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) introduced to the city of Madinah, was the mosque as a community center, something that he and his first followers had been denied during the entire duration of their stay in Makkah, although they were in dire need of it. On the way to Madinah, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) rested four days in *Quba'* - a suburb of Madinah about three miles to the south-east – whence he next proceeded to his final destination, the city proper. Even though his stay accounted for a short interlude under some totally new circumstances, yet Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) succeeded in establishing a mosque, "Mosque of Piety". He is said to have positioned first a stone on the Mosque's side which the Muslims face in their prayers. (Ibn Hisham, 1936) This clearly shows how much the first Muslims needed the institution of the mosque in order to facilitate their progress as an ambitious and visionary organization.

On his arrival in Madinah, of the first concrete things that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did was the marking out and then the building of his Mosque - the principle Mosque of the city. However, some celestial elements presided over determining the location of the Mosque. Upon entering Madinah, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) decided to disembark and build his Mosque, as well as his



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own residence, at the place where the camel he was riding stops and lies down. So delighted have the residents of Madinah been on seeing Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) finally arriving to their realm that everyone ardently wished to have him as a guest until the Mosque and his house were ready. Some of them could not contain their joy and excitement, so they wanted to intercept Prophet Muhammad's camel as she was passing by their houses. At this, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would only smile to everyone, remarking: "Let go her reins, for she has been instructed (by God). I shall disembark where God causes me to disembark." (Ibn Kathir, 1985)

Thus, the mosque institution was set to be introduced at once as a nucleus of believers' existence and as an epitome of the inexhaustible struggle between good and evil on earth. Its physical existence was to be advanced as a symbol, orientation and a guidepost, and its message and philosophy as an inspiration and guidance in all the development, building and planning undertakings in the making.

Prophet Muhammad's Mosque was a community center with a variety of activities taking place under its very roof and the roof of some of its abutting edifices, thus catering to the spiritual, social and political needs of the ever growing community. Apart from being a place for congregational prayers and other collective worship ('*ibadah*) practices, the Mosque likewise furnished the first Muslims with other most vital social amenities: it served as the seat of Prophet Muhammad's government, a learning center, a place for occasional medical treatments and nursing, a rehabilitation center, a welfare center, and a place for some legitimate recreational activities. The impact of the Mosque Complex on the development of Madinah was such that the core of the city eventually grew to be just about ring-shaped centering round the Complex. Thus, the standard was set for every future city of the Muslims in terms of both the role of its principal mosque and the mosque's position vis-à-vis the rest of the city's spatial components.

By reason of the civilizational stature of the Mosque, it was but appropriate for Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to erect his houses in closest proximity to it. Hence, against the outer side of the eastern wall of the Mosque the houses for him and his household were built. (Al-Samhudi, 1997) Thus, yet another precedent, namely positioning the ruler's official residence attached or next to the city's principal mosque, has been inaugurated. From then on, the tradition was to be followed by virtually all Muslim rulers. The rationale behind this arrangement was above all



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the provision of convenience, accessibility, transparency and responsibility toward the people.

Since it was a multifunctional community center positioned most strategically in the city, Prophet Muhammad's Mosque provided everyone with easy access to its social services and facilities. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was always easily accessible too because of his constant presence if not inside the Mosque proper then in his residence adjoining the Mosque. This quality, however, had a few bothersome implications for the peace and privacy of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his household, which, nonetheless, was judiciously handled by revelation. (Qur'an, 49:1-7; 5:101)

4. SUSTAINABLE USE OF ENVIRONMENT

The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root "SLM", which means, among other things, peace, purity, submission and obedience. (Abdalati, 1975) Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) under the aegis of revelation propagated that man is the vicegerent on earth entrusted with the honorable task of inhabiting it in accordance with the divine guidance given to him. This terrestrial life serves to man as a platform for either elevating his status over that of angels, should he abide by the divinely prescribed rules and regulations, or for debasing his self lower than the rank of animals, should he turn away from Truth and dazed and lost wander aimlessly amid the innumerable and awesome wonders of creation.

Man is created as a social being endowed with free will, passion and emotions, which could either lead him to the highest or drug him to the lowest ebb of creation. Humanity is but a big family with the same origin, mission and purpose. People have been divided into nations and tribes only to know each other, learn from each other, and cooperate at various scales in righteousness and piety, not that they may loathe each other and conspire against each other. They are to explore the universe and within the framework rendered by revelation try to make their existence as convenient, comfortable and meaningful as possible, hence create virtuous cultures and civilizations. However, no sooner does this universal equilibrium become impaired and vitiated than man's relationship with God, his peers and the whole of environment starts to degenerate.

This Islamic unique perception of man and his position on earth necessitated the construction of a compelling and comprehensive view of the natural environment as well. This is so because man totally depends on nature for his survival. Also, nature is a ground for man's realization of his spiritual purpose on earth. Simply put, man is an integral part of the total natural setting. Man is nature himself,



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sustaining nature means sustaining his self, damaging nature means damaging his self and his prospects of a civilizational triumph. Owing to all this, Islam attaches so much importance to the subject of environment clearly expounding man's rights over it and his responsibilities towards it.

Environment holds enormous potential and diversified resources meant only for the vicegerent of earth. They are to be seen as facilities which if rightly used facilitate each and every facet of man's fleeting stay on earth. Environment is further to be seen by man as an "ally" or a "partner", so to speak, in the execution of his earthly mission. After all, in order to create any piece of his built environment, which serves as a framework for his activities, man borrows diverse natural ingredients, such as space, water, clay, timber, stone and other substances, placing the newly created or built elements back into the existing natural contexts. In reality, built environment is in so many ways the natural environment which has been processed and manipulated.

According to a number of divine instructions, natural diversity and the forces of nature are to be the focus of man's exhaustive scientific and contemplative attention. Diversity in humans: skin colors, languages, attitudes and cultures, are to preoccupy the cognitive faculties of men as well, thus trying to find a link between it and nature's power and diversity. In all the natural phenomena a great deal of wisdom lies and waits to be unearthed.

The natural environment is part of God's creation too. Its role is two-fold: to worship its Creator (in ways suitable to it) and to be of service to man, so that man can smoothly and undeterred carry out his honorable task of managing earth. (Qur'an, 22:18; 61:1; 45:13) Man's rights over environment are rights of sustainable use based on moderation, balance and conservation. The rights of environment over man, on the other hand, are that it be safe from every misuse, mistreatment and destruction. Greed, extravagance and waste are considered a tyranny against nature and a transgression of those rights. (Abd al-Hamid, 1997)

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught that nature's resources and forces are gifts granted by God to man. The gift, however, is not the transfer of title. Man is permitted to use the gift for the given purpose, but the owner is and always remains Almighty God. The gift must be returned to the Creator at our death or retirement, improved and increased through our production. At the very least, it must be returned intact, as it was when received. (Al-Faruqi, 1995)

Islam also teaches that all things have been created with purpose and in proportion and measure, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Nature's resources and forces are gifts given to man. At the same time, however, the natural environment is a



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field for man's vicegerency mission. It is right there, while interacting with different aspects of environment, that people clearly demonstrate how strong, or how deficient, their relationship with God is. So significant is man's relationship with environment in Islam that in some instances such a relationship is able to take precedence over other deeds of man. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, for example, that whosoever cuts for no valid reason a Lote-tree (*sidrah*) in a desert, under which previously both travelers and animals used to shade themselves, God shall direct him to Hellfire. (Abu Dawud, tradition No. 4561) The same is to be said of any unnecessary and ill-intended disturbance of people, crops, flora and fauna by an individual or a group, which in the short or long term can cause some detrimental repercussions for the global natural setting. This is so because one of the fundamental Islamic principles that govern one's relations with men and nature is the one highlighted in an emphatic declaration of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): "There is no inflicting or reciprocating harm or injury". (Ibn Majah, tradition No. 2331)

Furthermore, environment stands for a source of man's spiritual enlightenment, provided his treatment of it is apt and derived from divine teachings, in that environment in its totality is an expression of God's presence, oneness, mercy and supremacy. By the power of reason and insight that has been accorded to him to subdue the forces of nature, man at the same time will be able to penetrate through and grasp properly nature's countless mysteries and phenomena. Consequently, this will lead to a considerable enhancement of his physical well-being, as well as to expediting the process of his spiritual advancement.

Environment, in a sense, participates in revealing Truth to man. It is in fact a revelation itself. Therefore, in addition to having the composed or written Qur'an (*al-Qur'an al-tadwini*) there is a cosmic or ontological "Qur'an" (*al-Qur'an al-takwini*) as well. Both revelations complement each other, as it were, in furnishing man with the necessary substance so as not to let him betray the trust of productively inhabiting the earth which he had wittingly accepted. It follows that those who fully submit to Divine Will and read, understand and apply the written Qur'an, they easily see upon the face of every creature "letters" and "words", or messages, from the "pages" of the cosmic Qur'an. For this reason are the phenomena of nature referred to in the Qur'an as signs or symbols (*ayat*), a term that is also used for the verses of the Qur'an. (Nasr, 1997)

Prophet Muhammad's lessons in sustainable use of environment reached a climax when he declared that the city of Madinah is a holy one, that is, it is a sanctuary (*Haram*). According to the declaration, the city flora and fauna must be protected



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not only by the general Islamic commandments encompassing the whole of earth but also by such as are meant for it alone - something like what the Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) did to the holy city of Makkah many centuries earlier. (Qur'an, 2:126) Except for some truly pressing legitimate necessities, such as security and medication, the Madinah ecosystem is not to be perturbed or exploited even to the slightest degree by any means and by anybody. The penalty for contravening this precept is that the perpetrator be dispossessed of both his clothes and what he has appropriated of the city's ecosystem. The spoils will thereupon be handed over either to the poor of the city or to the city's treasury. (Al-Samhudi, 1997) Thus, one of the permanent names later given to Madinah was *al-Haram* (Sanctuary) or *Haram Rasul Allah* (The Sanctuary of God's Messenger). (Al-Samhudi, 1997)

Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is reported to have designated *al-Naqi'* – an area about sixty miles from Madinah - as a conservation site for the horses of the Muslims to graze in. The size of the area was one mile with eight miles. (Al-Bukhari, tradition No. 1436) Some time later, the second Muslim caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattab designated as protected another two areas: *al-Sharaf* and *al-Rabadhah*, which lie between Makkah and Madinah, for livestock and camels to graze in them. (Al-Bukhari, tradition No. 2197)

To this all can we add that Islam shores up its stance on the subject of environment by viewing cleanliness - be it the cleanliness of the body, dwelling places, courtyards, streets, markets, rivers and the whole surroundings - as a branch of Faith (*iman*). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is reported to have said so on many occasions. (Muslim, tradition No. 328) A branch of Faith is also removing what is injurious from the path. (Al-Bukhari, tradition No. 56) In order not to cause any damage to environment or inconvenience to anybody, Muslims are furthermore cautioned against defecating or urinating in water springs, on paths and in shaded places. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) abhorred very much such acts regarding them as serious transgressions. (Abu Dawud, tradition No. 24)

5. Housing

We have seen above that the first urban element set up by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in Madinah following the *Hijrah* (migration from Makkah) was the Mosque Complex, which with its wide spectrum of activities catered – in keeping with the standards of those days - for the basic social needs of the young and fast expanding community. As it was expected, the Complex served as a center of gravity where all the forthcoming development undertakings were planned and



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whence they were fanning out towards every direction. In the wake of the Mosque completion, demarcating, planning and building houses for the Migrants from Makkah was the next pressing task.

5.1. The house in Islam

In Islam, the house is a place to rest, relax the body and mind, and enjoy legitimate worldly delights. In the house we are surrounded with privacy, protection and security. Within the house realm we also worship, teach, learn and propagate the message of Islam. (Qur'an, 16:80) The house is one of the fundamental rights that must be enjoyed by every Muslim.

The house is a microcosm of Islamic culture and civilization, in that individuals and families bred and nurtured therein constitute the fundamental units of the Muslim community. The house, it goes without saying, has a potential to take up the role of an educational and training center able to produce, in concert with other societal establishments, responsible, caring and productive individuals. By the same token, if misconstrued and its role perverted, the house has a potential to become a breeding ground for many a social disease, which if left unchecked could one day paralyze entire communities and drag them to the bottommost. In the latter case, the only remedy for the predicament will be the restoration of the position and role of the house and with it the role of individuals as well as the family institution. On the word of Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi (1995) the family is indispensable for the fulfillment of the divine purpose. "Regardless of which is cause and which effect, civilization and the family seem to be destined for rising together and falling together."

5.2. Planning policies

Due to a possible long-term impact of housing on society, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself was involved in allotting and marking out many dwellings. He may have been involved in some way in planning and building some houses as well. (Al-Samhudi 1997)

Strengthening fraternity among the Migrants (*Muhajirs*) from Makkah and Helpers (*Ansar*, the natives of Madinah) was at all times one of the major aims targeted at by Prophet Muhammad's actions. His planning and development pursuits, therefore, were no exception. His insistence on building the Mosque before anything else has also had some significant bearing on the adapting and acclimatization of both the Migrants and Helpers to what was transpiring in



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Madinah: the former with regard to the new environment, climate, and their painful economic and psychological conditions, and the latter as to the new socio-political landscape in their homeland, as well as to the new code of life which most of them had freshly embraced.

While building the Mosque, building houses for the Migrants was consequentially for a time deferred. During that period – approximately six or seven months – the Migrants stayed together and shared almost everything with the Helpers, who not only had no objection to the prospects of being of service to their brethren from Makkah but also felt quite honored about the same. Indeed, the longer they stayed together, the stronger and warmer relationship between them could have been fostered. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself stayed in the house of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari – a man whose house was positioned near the place designated for the Mosque - till the Mosque and with it Prophet Muhammad's houses were completed.

No sooner had the Mosque been completed than the private houses started clustering round it under Prophet Muhammad's supervision. Erecting houses around Prophet Muhammad's Mosque and residence by many a companion - albeit mostly by the Migrants - contributed a lot towards the projected promotion of social justice, equality and integration among the first Muslims.

Geographically, the chosen site for the Mosque and city's core was the most fitting one for the future of Madinah and its overall development, since there were no natural hindrances, such as big and steep hills or infertile land, in its immediate vicinity. As such, development activities could be for quite a long time freely planned and evenly dispersed, thus avoiding a disproportionate exploitation of the limited natural resources and the concentration of growth on one area at the expense of the other. This also meant that most people would live at an equal distance from that which they now treasured most: Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his Mosque. As it meant that access to the social amenities which were available under the Mosque Complex's roof will become easily accessible to all, more or less at approximate distance from any extremity of the city proper. This way, evenly balanced population distribution could be attained too, and any emerging trend toward violating it on time forestalled, because there would barely be such a thing as highly appealing and highly unappealing quarters.

By positioning the new midpoint of Madinah between the old settlements – in the middle of them - rather than either too far away from them or within the ambit of any of them, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) offered numerous new development opportunities, in that some new portions of uncultivated land now became



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cultivated while the others which had been previously owned but neglected were now revived. Communication network between the old settlements were set to improve and further extend to the new ones.

Expectedly, to the novel and encouraging developments in Madinah the Migrants contributed their own share. Having been established on a relatively uninhibited but productive land and next to the Mosque, justice has been done to them for all the services they had rendered earlier to the Islamic cause while in Makkah. As this also meant that they at the same time were encouraged to work hard and become self-reliant and start a life on their own as soon as they could, thus becoming an asset to the modest and juvenile community rather than a liability. Had the Mosque been constructed somewhere within the ambit of any of the existing settlements and the Migrants had to settle elsewhere, there would have existed a real possibility of marginalizing – albeit inadvertently - some of them in certain aspects, making their plight all the more difficult and with it the solicited integration and adaptation a difficult task to achieve. In this case, their initial stay with the Helpers would have been undeniably prolonged as well and both their self-sufficiency and contribution to satisfying the socio-political and economic needs of the city would have been somewhat forestalled for sometime.

Some of the land which stood on the way of Prophet Muhammad's housing scheme was neither public nor uncultivated nor vacant. It belonged to the Helpers some of whom lived right there or close by, such as Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, in whose house Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had resided until the completion of the Mosque Complex, and several other households. Nonetheless, no sooner had the Helpers become acquainted with Prophet Muhammad's development plans than they hastened to donate the needed land to him and their brethren from Makkah. There were instances, however, where close at hand the Helpers too embarked on building activities for themselves - even though such cases might have taken place after some time - wishing very much to become an integral part of the new phenomenon and everlastingly blend themselves with the emerging exemplary pattern of the urban settlement. Such was the ensuing development of the city of Madinah that most of its suburbs, having been inspired by the Islamic concepts of brotherhood and integration, before long started expanding freely and toward each other, recognizing no boundaries rooted in socio-economic and cultural differences.



5.3. The case of the homeless Migrants

In the process of solving the housing problem, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not neglect those Migrants who have been so poor that they could not afford even their daily sustenance, let alone the shelter. They were called the 'People of the *suffah*' (*suffah*, meaning a 'raised platform or bench'). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) set up for them a shaded structure in a corner of the northern side of his Mosque. (Jassem, 1998) The *suffah* could house between seventy and one hundred individuals, and the actual number of tenants was subject to how fast their overall condition was improving. The 'People of the *suffah*' would frequently go out to perform whatever work they could find in order to procure as much of their sustenance as they could. They actively participated in wars against polytheists and some of them died as martyrs on different battlefields. There were actually two *suffahs*: one for men and the other for women, the former seemingly outnumbering the latter.

Although the 'People of the *suffah*' tried really hard to live on their own, yet they found it impossible to make ends meet. So the community had to help them in the short term by providing necessities almost on a daily basis (inviting the *suffah* dwellers for a meal or bringing food into the Mosque and eating in a group was a typical occurrence), and in the long term by providing some permanent work opportunities, thus encouraging them to stand on their own feet as soon as it was possible. Hence, the number of the *suffah*'s occupants was always erratic and unstable. There were always those who were leaving it and those who were coming in. Seldom, however, were the alterations in a commensurate mode, resulting in the place to be sometimes overcrowded and at other times to a degree vacant.

Although the Islamic state was not so affluent financially, in particular for the duration of the first few years after the *Hijrah*, the poor and needy of the state were not to worry at all. Not only to housing did this apply but also to all the other exigencies needed for living a respectable and normal life. It was for this reason, therefore, that the prescription of *Zakah* (the alms) and *Sadaqah al-fitr* (charity of fast-breaking) came about during the earliest Madinah period, aiming at creating the ethical and caring individuals who will constitute a sound, principled and caring society. So critical in Islam is the injunction of caring for less fortunate and those tried with destitution that a trait of real believers is to wish to their fellow Muslims – whoever and wherever they may be - only that which they wish to themselves. In Islam, charity and kindness to others, as a noble form of virtue, are to be preached, acted upon, encouraged and even commanded if the need arises.



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One of the reasons for which the inhabitants of the Hellfire shall undergo such a painful and agonizing chastisement will be their deliberate refusal to feed the indigent. (Qur'an, 64:30-34; 74:44)

6. The Market

In the wake of the arrival of Islam and the Muslims from Makkah to Madinah, a major change in the economic life of the latter occurred. The phenomenon was but part of the total change that was sweeping across the land of Madinah. It appears as though such a phenomenon was pretty spontaneous, after such concepts of Islam as work as a form of worship (*'ibadah*), honest and just wealth acquisition and distribution, equality and equity, financial prudence, humility, charity, etc., had been institutionalized and imbibed by the people.

One of the first things that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) might have emphasized upon his arrival in Madinah to both the Migrants and Helpers, was the idea of work as a form of worship, as well as an avenue to realizing some of the finest goals of the new and fragile community. The people were fervently encouraged to seek work opportunities and labor vigorously so that everyone in line with his/her ability may be turned quickly into a community asset rather than to stay its liability. The people were to satisfy their innate craving for food, shelter and comfort, and to realize balance and harmony in their relations with men and nature. The earth was to be thus transformed into a producing orchard, a fertile farm and a beautiful garden. (Al-Faruqi, 1995) In so doing, however, the spiritual was never to be bartered for the trivial delights of this world. The net result of this strategy in the end could only be procuring benefits and warding off injuries for the perfection of welfare in this world and in the next.

Due to the fact that production and trade are two of the city's key elements, on the one hand, and due to the transformations that the city-state of Madinah was subjected to, on the other, the existing markets of Madinah, as both concepts and spatial phenomena, have been affected too following the *Hijrah* (migration). At first, the Muslims used to avail themselves of the existing markets, most of which, however, were controlled by the Jews. Because in these markets a number of errant practices were perpetrated, the Muslims gradually developed a strong aversion to doing business there. And so a new market controlled by the Muslim community was shortly set up. On selecting the market site Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is reported to have said: "This is your market, it is not to be narrowed (by acquiring and building, for instance) and no tax is to be collected from it." (Ibn Majah, tradition No. 2224) The system of occupying the market space followed



the pattern of occupying the mosque space: he who came first to a space occupied it, and it remained his until he wanted to leave. ('Uthman, 1988)

6.1. The significance of the market's location

The market was positioned roughly on the northwest side of Prophet Muhammad's Mosque, not too far from it. A number of houses stood between the market and the Mosque Complex. The market was approximately five hundred meters long and more than one hundred meters wide. It was large enough to comfortably accommodate everything expected from a city market. It was in fact bigger than what was needed at that juncture. It was yet another manifestation of Prophet Muhammad's visionary disposition, as Madinah was expanding at a fast pace in almost every regard, and the surrounding tribes and communities were increasingly spawning their interest to be on familiar terms with what was then considered as a rising wonder.

Thanks to the Madinah's topography, the market was situated in close proximity to what can be dubbed as the 'main entrance' to the city. ('Abd al-'Aziz, 1992) Irrespective of the direction from which individuals or caravans approached the city, they would customarily use that entrance. Its strategic location, rich and diverse commodities supply, and its reputation as a 'clean', conducive and fair place for doing business, made the market alluring to whosoever entered Madinah and for whatever motive, even if such people were not interested in trade and business.

The market was neither too close to nor too far from the Mosque Complex. Its location was but ideal under the circumstances and was pregnant with a few crucial implications for the spatial organization of future Islamic cities.

Since Madinah was yet to become purely Islamic in terms of its citizenry, it was inappropriate to position the market too distant from the Mosque Complex, because the latter had been established to radiate by means of its form and function the rays of the Islamic struggle, thus serving as an inexhaustible and effective means of *da'wah islamiyyah* (propagation of Islam). Since it offered access to everybody, including the Jews, hypocrites and polytheists, the market was bound to be affected somehow by the general ambiance generated by the Mosque and its wide-ranging activities. Of course, the nearer was one to the Complex the more and the stronger impact could one be exposed to. Nonetheless, although it was separated from the Mosque by some houses, yet the market in



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reality was not too far to be influenced by the extraordinary Mosque Complex's dynamism.

Furthermore, being separated from the Mosque by some houses proved no less strategic for the market, given that those houses – chiefly those built by the Migrants – in a way accounted for an extension of the Mosque Complex. In fact, they accounted for a sector of another larger complex, i.e., the genuine Islamic neighborhood, which encompassed the Mosque Complex. In an Islamic settlement - it could be safely asserted - the houses which surround the principal mosque not only draw benefits from its facilities but also complement it in fulfilling the divine purpose, in that the house institution, owing to its outstanding role in society, also stands in its own way as an epitome of Islamic culture and civilization – as stated earlier. Therefore, those non-Muslims who would come to the Madinah market were enabled to enjoy a great deal of contact with the religion of Islam as embodied in the daily practices of its followers, and as the sole driving force behind their cultural and civilizational accomplishments, even though it as a set of beliefs and rituals failed initially to appeal to them.

In determining the market's location, both traders and buyers - additionally - were given a chance to every so often visit the Mosque, a moment or two, not only for their daily prayers but also for any other looked-for aims. Along these lines, their working culture could be enhanced and buttressed by the pervading aura so effortlessly experienced in the Mosque, as well as in the attitudes and manners of those who were patronizing it.

By the same token, it was apt then for the market to be at a short distance from the Mosque, rather than adjacent to it, since the market was receptive to virtually all lawful goods to be traded, irrespective of their character, quantity, origin and odor. Even camels and livestock were traded there. Besides, there still existed many Arab ancient traditions in the market, some of which were quite objectionable but Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was yet to openly disallow them. The Prophet (pbuh) adopted this strategy in view of the fact that the revelation of Islam itself was a gradual and painstaking process which lasted about 23 years (13 in Makkah and 10 in Madinah), providing instructions, responses and answers to various dilemmas and developments that the community was going through, so that the heart of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the hearts of his followers may be tranquilized and strengthened. The matter was as gradual and prudent a course of action as the imposition of a majority of the precepts of Islam. The misdemeanors committed in the market for the most part were related to noise, communication, cleanliness and neatness. Hence, the market with its multifarious



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bustling life was rather unfit to abut the Mosque Complex. Had it been so, it would have appeared something of an oddity whenever juxtaposed with the character of the on-going pursuits within the Complex's domain.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) explicitly prohibited conducting trade within his Mosque (Abu Dawud, tradition No. 1074), but did not prohibit doing the same outside the Mosque (Al-Bukhari, tradition No. 782). Several instances of trading activities on a very limited scale outside the Mosque during Prophet Muhammad's era have been reported. On account of this, certain markets and even industries abutting mosques - specifically such as were with tolerable visual, auditory and aromatic effects for every day city's life - were before long introduced to the morphology of the Islamic city, i.e. they constituted part of the cities' midpoints. Other markets and industries, some of which were bound to cause a kind of serious disruption or nuisance to either individuals or institutions, remained customarily situated on the cities' peripheries. The extent of their remoteness from the cities' principal mosques and their residential areas varied depending on a number of issues, such as the geography of an area, the compactness of residential areas and the availability of space, the vitality and function of the mosque complex, the dynamism and richness of markets' activities, the overall socio-political and economic condition of an area, etc.

7. CONCLUSION

In the wake of the *Hijrah* (migration) the city of Madinah commenced to undergo many a drastic change in virtually all its departments. Perhaps the best illustration of such a complete revolution was changing the very name of the place from *Yathrib* to Madinah. The significations of the latter encompassed the novel character and features of the rising city-state.

The first urban element introduced by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to the city of Madinah was the Mosque institution. Since its inception, the Mosque was a community center with activities of different types being conducted under its roof. In addition to serving as a place for congregational prayers, as well as for other collective worship (*'ibadah*) practices, the Mosque likewise furnished the Muslims with other crucial social amenities: it was the seat of Prophet Muhammad's government, a learning center, a place for occasional medical treatments and nursing, a rehabilitation center, a welfare center, and the place for some legitimate recreational activities. Such was the location of the Mosque Complex that it provided everyone with easy access to its services and facilities.



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The Complex furthermore promoted social integration as well as the concepts of transparency and accountability on the part of the Prophet's government.

In the wake of the Mosque's completion, demarcating, planning and building the houses of the Migrants from Makkah was the next pressing task. Due to a possible long-term impact of housing on the community, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself was involved in allotting and marking out many dwellings. By means of housing, strengthening fraternity among the Muslims was intended to be achieved. Some Islamic principles pertaining to the philosophy of the dwelling and man, the latter's position and role on earth, and what kind of relationship between humans ought to exist, have been thereby strikingly put into practice. Those who were poor and deprived were aptly and with maximum sympathy taken care of in the process.

Given that production and trade are two of the city's key elements, the idea of market as both a concept and spatial phenomenon was given its due consideration too. However, due to the deep-seated transformations that the city-state of Madinah was subjected to, the existing markets proved inadequate to meet the demands of the new Islamic perceptions of work, of commerce, of production, of distribution, of consumption, etc. A new market was thus established. In it, work was looked upon as a form of worship. Material wealth was looked upon as a means, an instrument, a carrier of the spiritual. Islamic message disapproves of material wealth to be transformed into a goal of one's existence. To do so is to renounce the spiritual.

In all his urbanization and development schemes Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was exceptionally mindful of environment, our life support system. Earth, he taught, stands for the field of the vicegerency pursuits entrusted to man. Man is destined to interact with the natural world, giving away and receiving in return proportionally to what he offered. From this partnership, man is bound to attain either peace, happiness and prosperity in this world, plus salvation in the Hereafter, or frustration, humiliation and suffering in both worlds. So significant is man's relationship with environment in Islam that in some instances such a relationship can take precedence over other deeds of man, placing him then on the highest or dragging him to the lowest ebb of existence. This is so because he who loves God and cares about Him and His laws will as a rule love and care about the rest of His creation which he coexists with. Similarly, he who turns away from God and rebels against His words of guidance will surely - intentionally or otherwise - end up looking upon his natural surroundings as a subject of his



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unlimited exploitation, receiving thereby everything possible but giving away only little or nothing.

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ⁱ "pbuh" stands for "peace be upon him" which Muslims are required to utter whenever Prophet Muhammad's name is mentioned.