

The Role of the Masjid

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

(Friday speeches delivered by Imam Mohamed Baianonie at the Islamic Center of Raleigh NC on October 8, &15, 1999)

All the praise and thanks be long to Allah (S.W.T.). We thank Him, for He helped us finish the Islamic Center expansion project.

All the praise is due to Him (S.W.T.) because with His blessing all good and righteous deeds happen.

And may prayer and peace be upon our dear prophet Muhammad and upon his family and his companions.

“Oh Allah! Accept this good deed from us. Verily! You are the All-Hearer and the All-knowing, and accept our repentance. Truly, You are the one who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful.” “Ameen”

To complete our thanks to Allah (S.W.T.) for His blessings, we must thank all those who contributed to this project, whether their contribution was throw an idea, with a decision, with an effort, or with money. To all those brothers and sisters who donated, we say May Allah (S.W.T.) accept your effort and reward all generously in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

We especially thank all those who closely followed this project from start to finish for long months, “The Construction Committee of I.A.R.”, especially its chairman. For all of them I say “Jazakumullahu khaira” for a job well done. We ask Allah (S.W.T.) to accept their deeds and best rewards in this world and in the Hereafter.

I remind you all that this great accomplishment is one of the Sadaqah Jariyah (on-going charity) which is rewarded even after death as the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) promised.

We ask Allah (S.W.T.) that He blesses us all with the sincerity in our saying and deeds.

Now “Al-Hamdulelah” that the building is finished with the help of Allah (S.W.T.), but our task is not done. It is a must that we all allow the Masjid to play proper role as Allah (S.W.T.) and His prophet (S.A.W.) desired. We can’t fulfil our duties toward the Masjid unless we learn what the role of Masjid is in Islam, according to the authentic evidence.

With the help of Allah (S.W.T.), I will clarify the role of the Masjid in Islam according to the authentic evidences in two Khutbahs (speeches) beginning today.

One of the many blessings which Allah (S.W.T.) Has bestowed upon the Muslim Ummah is the making of the earth pure and making it a Masjid, where Allah (S.W.T.) is worshipped in every single corner of it, whether it be in the Masajed, in the markets, in the streets, at schools and universities, in houses, or on the frontiers. Therefore, the whole earth is a Masjid, and this is indicated by the hadith reported by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, “I have been granted five things which were not granted to any other prophet before me: (one of them) The whole earth has been made a Masjid, and pure for me, so whenever the time of prayer comes for anyone of you, he should pray wherever he is.”

Since the earth is meant to be a Masjid, as mentioned in the hadith, the Muslim Ummah should work towards purifying the earth, and carry the Message of Islam all over it, in order to lead people away from the worshipping of idols and people. And bring them to the worship of Creator of the universe, Allah (S.W.T.) alone and follow His command.

Since Islam is a complete and comprehensive way of life, the Masjid, has to be at the heart of all life's positive and constructive activities. So that we rise righteous generations. Therefore, it is the duty of the Muslims to build Masajed, all over the world. These Masajed, should serve as branches for this Masjid, acting as a springboard to launch the spreading of the Message and the implementation of Islam. This is why we find that the Qur'an exhorts the building of Masajed, making it a sign of belief. Allah (S.W.T.) says in surat At-Tawbah, (verse 18), what can be translated as, "The Masajed, of Allah shall be visited and maintained by such as believe in Allah and the Last Day, and establish regular prayers, and pay zakat."

The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) also encouraged the building of Masajed, and made it very appealing, stressing the reward that such an act brings. Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim reported that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, "He who builds a Masjid for the sake of Allah, seeking the pleasure of Allah, Allah would reward him with a dwelling in Heaven." In another narration reported by Imam Ahmad, "Whosoever shares in building a Masjid for Allah, even if it is as small as a bird's nest, Allah (S.W.T.) will build for him a house in Paradise."

The building of a Masjid was the starting point to the expansion of Islam and the Islamic conquests, which engulfed most of the world. The Masjid plays a vital part in the life of the Muslim Ummah. This can be seen in the example of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.), who began to build a Masjid as soon as He (S.A.W.) established the first Islamic State in Madinah. To emphasize the great importance of the Masjid in the shaping of the Islamic society, he (S.A.W.) took part in the actual building himself.

This Masjid served as the launching point towards the practical implementation of Islam within both, the State and society.

The first Masjid was very modest and basic. Its pillars were palm trees, and its walls were made of clay, but this modest Masjid was the first school of the Islamic campaign. And it was the headquarters of the Islamic State. It was the school where the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) instructed his Sahabah (companion), in the dwellers of Heaven, the one who disciplined the tyrants. In that modest building, he (S.A.W.) cultured the Muslims with Islam, he (S.A.W.) purified the bodies and the souls, and defined for them the Truth.

Unfortunately, some people carry the notions nowadays that the Masjid only exists for the performance of salah, and no other activities must be permitted in the Masjid. But Islam has determined that the Masjid is expected to play important roles in the Muslim community, and the classical learned scholars have devoted considerable sections in the books of Islamic fiqh (jurisprudence) highlighting these roles, which will become clearer when the tasks which the Masjid is expected to be central to, are examined later in detail. Imam Ibn Taimyiah said about the role of the Masajed: "The mosques were the stations of the Muslim leaders and the centers for congregations. The prophet (S.A.W.) established the foundation his blessed mosque on piety. In it prayers and Qur'anic recitations were performed, the remembrance of Allah and teaching knowledge established, and speeches were given. And in it were matters of politics (running affairs of the Ummah), troops and platoons were deployed, and in it Muslims gathered for their religious and livelihood affairs, and so were his governing officer of Makkah, At-Ta'if, Yaman, and other similar regions and cities. And the same was the condition with his governing officers in the suburbs.

They had gatherings where they performed the prayers and political affair...” {See the book of Al-Fatawa, volume 35 page 39.}

The Masjid was the headquarters of the Islamic State’s supreme leadership. The Masjid was the headquarters of the Islamic State’s supreme leadership. It was also a center where the State’s affairs were run. The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) used to meet the envoys, sign agreements, judge between disputing parties and so on. The Khaleefah, i.e. the head of the Islamic State, would outline his policies and methods, address and debate with his subjects directly without any fear in the Masajid. The speech of Khaleefah Abu Bakr (R.A) delivered in the Masajid of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.), once he had been given the bay’ah, and all books of history reported it.

The Masjid is section of the Department of Information and Culture

The Masjid is regarded as an important Islamic information center, since it is the scene of the political, social, cultural and ritual life. All the important news related to vital issues are announced in the Masjid and it also ensures a direct contact between the carrier and the receptor of relevant info. It is considered to be one of the most effective and successful means of da’wah and information. The Adhaan, for instance, is information about the time of prayer Salah and at the same time it is a means of campaigning for Islam and its spread. The pulpit is also a place for information about the campaign and on it the principles of the campaign are explained and its rules are declared. Prayer Salah is also another tangible method of information especially Salat ul jama’ah (the group prayer), study circles of Qur’an, fiqh, meetings and conferences are considered to be successful methods of distributing information about Islam. The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) used the Masjid as a place of ebadah (worship), as an information center, as a meeting point for the Muslims where they would hold their prayers, for studies, for consultations and for training the mujahideen. Preparation of equipment and plans for Jihad, as well as strategies for the campaigns would also take place in the Masjid.

The Masjid was a judiciary court

The Masjid used to be a place where judges would convene to settle disputes and look into complaints. Imam Bukhari mentioned in his sahih (authentic collection of ahadith) chapter of “Asking a debtor to repay what he owes, and catching the debtor in the Masjid.” and there are many other evidences backing this and there are no differences of opinion among the various Islamic mathaheb concerning this.

The Masjid is center for learning and teaching

The Masjid the place where the learned teach the basics of Islamic Aqeedah (believe), ebadat (the acts of worship) and the Shari’ah rules in all their types, political, economic, social, judiciary and others. Its policy is based on Qura’n the Book of Allah (S.W.T.) and the Sunnah of the prophet (S.A.W.) with the aim of building and educating the Islamic personalities by way of halaqat (study circles), debates, and conferences. Such meetings are engulfed by compassion, the mercy of Allah (S.W.T.) descends on them, and the angels of Allah surround them.

The Masjid is a school and university that welcomes everyone, day or night, summer or winter, requiring no application form or permission, and it does not turn anyone away be they young or old, male or female, Muslim or non-Muslim, black or white Arab or Non-Arab. Entry into the Masjid does not require any fee, insurance, or any permission. There are no hindrances, no obstacles, nor does the Masjid differentiate between the laymen and a scholar, nor between a ruler and a subject, nor between a wealthy and a poor person.

The Masjid was a platform for oratory, eloquence and poetry

Imam At-Tirmidhi and Imam Al-Hakem related a hadith on the authority of A’isha, who said, “The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) used to provide Hassan with a pulpit in the Masjid from which he would lampoon the disbelievers.” Narrated Hassan ibn Thabit Al-Ansari, “I asked Abu Hurayrah: By Allah! Tell me the truth whether you heard the Prophet (S.A.W.) saying, “O Hassan! Reply on behalf of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.). O Allah! Help him with Al-Quds.” Abu Hurayrah said, “Yes”. Imam Ahmad reported on the authority of Jabir ibn Samra, who said, “I witnessed the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) more than once sitting in the Masjid while his Sahabah would recollect poetry and things from

the times of jahiliyyah, he (S.A.W.) would sometimes share a smile with them.” Imam At-Tirmidhi also reported on the authority of Jabir ibn Samra, who said, “I sat with the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) more than once, his Sahabah would recite poetry and recollect things from the times of jahiliyyah, he (S.A.W.) would keep silent, and sometimes he would share a smile with them.”

The Masjid was a detention center for the prisoner of war

Imam Bukhari reported that Abu Hurayrah said, “The Prophet (S.A.W.) sent some horsemen to Najd and they brought a man called Thumamah ibn Uthal from Banu Hanifah (as a prisoner of war). They fastened him to one of the pillars of the Masjid. The Prophet (S.A.W.) came and ordered them to release him. He (Thumamah) went to a (garden of) date- palms near the Masjid, took a bath and entered the Masjid again and said, “I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (i.e. he embraced Islam).”

The Masjid was a place where the war booties are divided

It has been confirmed in Sahih Imam Bukhari that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) spread out and divided in the Masjid monies which came from Bahrain.

The Masjid was a hospital where casualties of war are treated

Imam Bukhari reported on the authority of A’ishah that she said, “Sa’d ibn Mu’adh was injured in the battle of the Trench, being hit in the medial arm vein by a man from Quraysh called Habban ibn Arqa, and the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) pitched a tent in the Masjid for Mu’adh so he could be near him and visit him. His wound was bleeding profusely, he then died after spending a month in the tent.” In this hadith, there is an indication that it is permitted to sleep in the Masjid and for the sick to be nursed there even if the sick was badly wounded.

The Masjid was a home and refuge for the poor, the needy and the travelers

Imam Bukhari reported that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) reserved a corner of the Masjid as a shelter for the poor who were known as the people of As-Suffah. Imam Bukhari reported that “Abdullah Ibn-Umar used to sleep in the Masjid of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) when he was still young.

The Masjid was place of relaxation and siesta

Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim reported that Ubad ibn Tamim narrated on the authority of his uncle that he saw the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) lying down in the Masjid. Imam Ahmad, An-Nisa’i and Abu Dawud reported on the authority of Abdullah Ibn – Umar that he said, “During the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) we used to sleep in the Masjid and have siestas when we were young.” Imam Bukhari also related a hadith stating that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) came to the Masjid while Ali was asleep in there and his garment fell off his side and got covered in dust; the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) wiped the dust off and said to Ali, “Get up Abu Turab (father of dust).” We gather from these texts that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) and the Sahabah used to rest and sleep in the Masjid in deferent octagons. And Imam Bukhari also mentioned in his sahih chapter of “Sleeping of a woman in the Masjid.”

The Masjid is a place where the pleasure of Allah and good reputation are sought

Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim and Imam Ahmad reported that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, “He who frequently goes to the Masjid, Allah would prepare a quarter for him in Heaven each time he came and went.” Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim reported that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, “Seven categories of people will be in the shade of Allah on the day where there will be no shade except His: (One of them) A man his heart attached to the Masjid.” Imam Muslim reported that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, “He who purified himself at home then walked to one of Allah’s Houses to perform one of Allah’s commands, each one of his steps would wipe out a sin and the other would increase his rewards.”

The Masjid was an eating place for the hungry and the needy

Imam Ibn Majah reported that Abdullah Ibn Al-Harith said, “We used to eat bread and meat in the Masjid during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.)” Imam Bukhari also reported in his Sahih that if the people of As-Suffah lived in the Masjid, they therefore had to eat there as well.

The Masjid was a place for celebrations, socializing and amusement

Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim narrated that A'isha said, "The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) was once covering me while I was watching the Abyssinians playing with the spears in the Masjid." A'isha also reported, "A black girl who lived in a small room in the Masjid used to come to talk to me, and every time she sat she recited verse of poetry." The hadith carries an indication that it is permitted to sleep and rest in the Masjid. Imam Muslim reported that Jabir ibn Samra said, "The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) would not rise from the spot where he prayed the dawn prayer until the sun rise, when it did, he (S.A.W.) would rise." He also said, "They used to talk and mention the time of jahiliyyah, they would laugh and he (S.A.W.) would smile.

The Masjid was a place where people in need can ask for help

Imam Muslim and Imam An-Nisa'i extracted from the hadith of Abu Hazim Salman Al-Ashja'i that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) has permitted the needy person to seek help in the Masjid. Imam Abu Dawoud has also included in his works a special chapter entitled "The chapter of Mas'ala (request) in the Masjid. Reported that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, "Has any of you fed a needy person today?" Abu Bakr said, "I entered the Masjid and I saw a man in there begging, Abd Al-Rahman had a loaf of bread in his hand so I took it and gave it to him."

The Masjid was a place for consultation and exchanging views and ideas

Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim, among others, reported that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) consulted people in the Masjid about the Ifk event, when A'isha (R.A.) was slandered.

The Masjid is a place of worship and prayer

The prescribed prayers are held in the Masjid, and from it the call for Allah is initiated. It is a major cultural center where the learned scholars hold study circles, debates and talks on the sciences of Qur'an, hadith, fiqh and the Arabic language. The Masjid is not a limited company or a public limited company, nor an association or a charity organization, nor a land where the rituals are monopolized, for the whole earth is a Masjid. Therefore, we ought to work on this basis so that the deen of Allah (S.W.T.) spared over the whole earth, where His (S.W.T.) name is ever remembered, and His (S.W.T.) deen stands highest.

The Masjid is a jami'a

The Masjid is a jami'a holding the Jum'ah prayer, and also a popular council conferences are held daily in the Masjid. These are in fact the five prescribed prayers, which are held in congregation and this is a desirable action, and people meet there united by the love of Allah (S.W.T.) and His (S.W.T.) obedience. Allah (S.W.T.) says in surat At-Tawbah, (verse 112), what can be translated as, "Those that turn (to Allah) in repentance, those that serve Him, and parse Him, those that wander in devotion to the Cause of Allah, those that bow down and prostrate themselves in prayer, those that enjoin good and forbid the evil, and observe the limits set by Allah (these do rejoice)." There is also a weekly meeting, which is compulsory and designed to study the affairs of the Muslims, and to perform the obligation of Friday prayer. The Masjid is therefore a meeting place and a council, which never closes either on a public holiday or on any other day. The Masjid holds people of all walks of life together.

From the previous details, it is clear to us from the authentic evidence how the role of the Masjid was during the life of the prophet (S.A.W.) and how it was during the rules of the Muslims Khalifahs after the prophet (S.A.W.). The Masjid had a strong and effective role. With that, the Muslim society got stronger which led the Muslim Ummah to become the world leader. Then, a weakness occurred in the role of the Masjid. The Masjid activities went down and that was reflected badly upon the Muslim society. This weakened the Muslim Ummah and became the weakest Ummah on earth. This should be of no surprise to us because the Masjid has a great position in the Muslim society just like the position of the heart in the body; if the heart is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if the heart is sick, the whole body is sick.

So, when we work toward improving the situation of the Muslim Ummah, we should consider reforming and revitalizing the position of the Masjid first and to empower the Masjid with its original role. This

way, the Muslim Ummah gets better. And let's remember that the Masjid belongs to Allah (S.W.T.) and He is alone who has the authority to define the role for the Masjid to revive the whole humanity.

May Allah (S.W.T.) bless us to use this Masjid to its full capacity. "Ameen"