

Role of Symbolism in the Journey towards Spirituality: A Case Study of Mosque Architecture in Bahrain

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Abstract : The purpose of a mosque or a place of worship is to build a spiritual relation with God. If the sense of spirituality is not achieved, then sacred architecture appears to be lacking depth. Form and space play a significant role to enhance the architectural quality to impart a divine feel to a place. To achieve this divine feeling, form and space, and unity of opposites, either abstract or symbolic can be employed. It is challenging to imbue the emptiness of a space with qualitative experience. Mosque architecture mostly entails traditional forms and design typology. This approach for Muslim worship produces distinct landmarks in the urban neighborhoods of Muslim societies, while creating a great sense of spirituality. The universal symbolic characters in the mosque architecture had prototype geometrical forms for a long time in history. However, modern mosques have deviated from this approach to employ different built elements and symbolism, which are often hard to be identified as related to mosques or even as Islamic. This research aims to explore the sense of spirituality in modern mosques and questions whether the modification of geometrical features produce spirituality in the same manner. The research also seeks to investigate the role of 'geometry' in the modern mosque architecture. The research employs the analytical study of some modern mosque examples in the Kingdom of Bahrain, reflecting on the geometry and symbolism adopted in the new mosque architecture design. It buttresses the analysis by the engagement of people's perceptions derived using a survey of opinions. The research expects to see the significance of geometrical architectural elements in the mosque designs. It will find answers to the questions such as; what is the role of the form of the mosque, interior spaces and the effect of the modified symbolic features in the modern mosque design? How can the symbolic geometry, forms and spaces of a mosque invite a believer to leave the worldly environment behind and move towards spirituality?

Keywords : geometry, mosque architecture, spirituality, symbolism

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