**The Mosque and its role in Sri Lankan Society**

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Abstract

Masjid Nabavy in Madinah has defined a series of functions and carried out by the Prophet as a place of worship, an education and dissemination hub, a place of justice, a centre of empowerment, a residence where the Prophet welcomed delegates of the states and other religious leaders and also as a place of conducting cultural events. Yet, the Mosques in Sri Lanka currently have shifted from historical characters in its context of social change towards a place for conducting only religious event as performing prayers. But, few of them are operating as institutions for empowering people. Some of them have initiated the efforts to build interactions with local community to empower local potentials. This study aims to find the root causes challenging Mosques to be a central place in assembling the community on difficulties interrelated to the development of the nation. In order to identify the reality and to gain a clear understanding on prevailing practical social issues, a number of meetings and discussions were conducted with focus group; Muslim clergies, intellectuals and the members of board of trusties in Udunuwara Divisional Secretariat. It was clearly understood that there is a drive for "separation” of the functions, either from community towards Mosques or from Mosques towards community. It was difficult to change the attitude of people as a midpoint for community empowerment. In the meantime, three key challenges are identified to regenerate the role and task of the Mosques as follows: development of the Mosque has been determined on the physical development as an artistic expression of religious culture or to expand building capacity. Consequently, efforts of the management have devoted to construction, not to consumers’ mandates. The attitude of Mosque activists in common is still traditional approaches. Hence, generated funds are commonly used only for consumptive support, not for empowering the poor. The resources of sermon or oration are generally focused the religious policies, not empowerment principles. Therefore, the improvement of the value of religious messages should be highlighted.

Keywords: Community, Empowerment, Mosque, Sri Lanka