

UNUSUAL SHAPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *MIHRĀB* IN THE MODERN MOSQUE

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ABSTRACT

Mihrāb in arch shape has been constructed in all over the world. But in modern period (20th century) new forms and styles are introduced for the indication of *Ka'bah* which are not based on the traditional arch shape. In the present research an attempt has been made to explain the significance of unusual *mihrāb* of the Faisal Mosque, Islamabad completed in 1988. A stylized book shape *mihrāb* symbolizes Holy Qurān is constructed in the sanctuary of the mosque. The *mihrāb* in the form of an open book is a first in *mihrāb* construction.

It is one of the most unusual and dominating elements of the mosque. The study explains the structural design, stylization, symbolism and decorative techniques used for the surface decoration of the *mihrāb*. At first importance of the *mihrāb* and its historical consequence is mentioned. Secondly surface decoration such as metal engraving, marble carving and inlay work of the *mihrāb* is explained. Presence of *Kūfic* calligraphy, symbolism of *Sūra al-Raḥmān* is also a part of the study. Data is analyzed and collected through national libraries, websites, personal visit to the Faisal Mosque and interviews with experts. Fresh photographs and drawings all are by author.

KEYWORDS: Marble Carving, Metal Engraving, *Mihrāb*, Modern, Stylization, Unique Design