

## **Preservation System of Environment in Islam: An Analysis**

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### **ARTICLE INFORMATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Human beings are the best creation of Allah and they are sent as His vicegerents on the Earth. On the other hand, for sustaining the Earth and its biodiversity is dependent on preserving environment. Because, Islam teaches that the Environment should be preserved, and that the intentional damage of the natural world is quite forbidden. So, human beings cannot avoid their duties to preserve the Environment and nature. It's an open declaration in Islam that Environment and nature protection are important duty to human beings. Nowadays it is a well discussed issue around the world. The Environment and nature can be polluted by various reasons. Only human beings can protect these reasons and take necessary initiatives for the purpose. It has been originated from Islam at the very beginning. Islam also mentioned some balanced system to preserve the environment and nature. This article tries to focus on the preserving system of the Environment and nature from Islamic viewpoint. It is also an attempt to find out some ways to environmental preservation

### **1. Introduction**

Environment can be defined as a sum total of all the living and non-living elements and their effects that influence human life. While all living or biotic elements are animals, plants, forests, fisheries, and birds, non-living or abiotic elements include water, land, sunlight, rocks, and air. According to the Islamic rules, human being has some duties and responsibilities to conserve the degradation of environment and nature for sustaining the present and future generations. Islam is the religion of mankind and humanity. So, it has shown an obvious significance on the issue of preservation of environment and nature, and provided some directions and preservation systems to apply in practical life. There are huge numbers of verses in the Qur'an and several sayings of the Prophet Muhammad SM. indicate to be balanced by conserving natural resources in environmental dimensions. From the Islamic point of view, the universe has been created by Allah with a specific purpose and for a limited time. The utilization of natural resources is a sacred trust invested for mankind; everybody of mankind is treated as a manager but not an owner, a beneficiary, not a disposer. The environment and nature are considered as the subject matter of enjoyment and also regarded as the gift of the Almighty for entire mankind. Since people are the vicegerent of Allah on the earth.<sup>1</sup> They should take every precaution to ensure the interests and rights of others, and regard their mastery over their allotted piece of land as a joint ownership with the next generation. Therefore they preserve and pass it on to future generations in an excellent condition in the light of Islamic system and it's their important duty and crying need only on account of them.

### **2. Elements of Environment**

The environment is composited by particular elements of whole around of the world. Those are created and gifted by Almighty for entire creations. Such as: air, water, soil, sea, ocean, rivers, sunlight, moonlight, heat, trees, plants, animal and insects etc.<sup>2</sup> There are more than 750 verses in the Holy Qur'an those are related to environment and nature. More than twenty chapters of the Qur'an are named after certain animals and natural incidents, such as: the Cow, the Cattle, the Mankind, the Women, the Thunder, the Bee, the Spider, the Ant, the Daybreak, the Sun, the Moon, the Iron, the City, the Dawn, the forenoon, the Time, the Night, the clot, the Fig and the Elephant.<sup>3</sup> Moreover there are many cases in which Allah takes an oath by some natural phenomena like: the

dawn<sup>4</sup>, the fig and olive<sup>5</sup> and the time<sup>6</sup> etc. In numerous verses, the Qur'an states that all the natural phenomena are created only for awareness and glorification of the creator. Allah says:

'And We made the mountains and the birds to celebrate our praise along with David.'<sup>7</sup> 'And there is not a thing but that it glorifies Him with His praise but you do not understand their glorification.'<sup>8</sup>

In many verses the natural phenomena are characterized as divine signs indicating the knowledge, the wisdom and the power of Allah, such as Allah says:

'Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds that are made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand.'<sup>9</sup>

These verses indicate that human being is obliged to perform such kinds of duties and responsibilities to the environment and nature, otherwise they will be asked in the day of Resurrection.

### 3. Preservation Systems of Environment

Islam is not a religion, but also a complete code of human life. It is well known that, human beings are part and parcel of the environment and they are the vicegerents from Allah on the earth. So, they have some important duties and responsibilities to the blessings of Allah, such as the environment and nature. They must protect them and prevent any harm to them, which in turn will preserve the rights of others. Human beings must not only help to preserve the environment, but also assist in developing the earth using appropriate environment-sustaining measures. This fact emphasized by the Quranic verses. Allah says,

'Do not do mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order.'<sup>10</sup>

He also says,

'His aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But Allah loveth not mischief.'<sup>11</sup>

The above verses indicate some systems to preserve our environment, nature and society. Demolition, destruction and pollution of the environment and nature are instances of corruption in the land. Thus, modifying the environment is a human duty but it must be consistent with environment development and based on Islamic values. Any policy, regulation, order or ruling that seeks to protect the environment will be subject to these verses and any behavior that leads to corruption and environmental degradation is inconsistent with the glorious teachings of Islam. Islam has taken some initiatives and described some systems to protect and preserve the environment and nature. Those are mentioned below:

#### 3.1 Preventing Extravagance

The word extravagance means squandering. It is defined as any violation of moderation and that tends towards excess or wastage. It is strongly prohibited in Islam and considered as a great sin.<sup>12</sup> Temperance in the use of the environment is derived from the concept of squandering. Hence, proper managing and control over the use of the environment and other resources is the duty of all Muslims. Some verses in the Qur'an discourage the squandering. Such as Allah says,

'Eat and drink, but waste not by squander, for Allah loveth not the wasters.'<sup>13</sup>

Also He says,

'For Allah loveth not the wasters.'<sup>14</sup> 'Verily, spendthrifts are brothers of the devils.'<sup>15</sup> 'And the transgressors will be companions of the fire.'<sup>16</sup> 'And do not follow the bidding of the excessive, who cause corruption in the earth and do not work good.'<sup>17</sup>

There is a Hadith on it,

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَرَّ بِسَعْدٍ، وَهُوَ يَتَوَضَّأُ، فَقَالَ: «مَا هَذَا السَّرَفُ؟» فَقَالَ: أَيْ الْوُضُوءِ إِسْرَافٌ، قَالَ: «نَعَمْ، وَإِنْ كُنْتَ عَلَى نَهْرٍ جَارٍ»

'Abdullah Ibn 'Amar R. narrated that, 'Once the Prophet SM. was crossing S'aad R., when he was performing ablution through using too much water. The Prophet said to him, What is this extravagance? S'aad R. responded, is there extravagance with water in ablution? The Prophet said, yes, even if you were on a flowing river.'<sup>18</sup>

At the time, the Companion was puzzled by the applied benefit of this rule. Today it is evident that conservation is an important part of protecting and preserving the environment. All above verses and Hadith mention that wastage and squander of anything are prohibited. The earth, water, air and soil are the creations of Allah and their utilization should be managed and controlled in a prudent manner. Islam believes that some jobs cause the utilization of excess natural resources that upsets the balance and this is a form of squander.

### 3.2 Preventing Earth Pollution

The earth is the place of prostrate to Allah of every Muslims in several times in a day. If water is not available or using of water is harmful to one's health, then earthly materials like soil or sands can be used to perform ritual ablution. According to Islam, the earth is introduced as an origin for the creation of human beings. So, they will try to keep it clean. Any harm to the earth will affect all living beings. Since humans and other creatures eat and drink from the sources created by the earth. Any pollution will result in non-healthy products and destroy the nutrition inherent in a healthy earth. Therefore, this cycle shows that any harm to the environment and specially the earth directly returns to humans. There are some Quranic verses in below on maintaining cleanliness of the earth. Allah says,

'From the land that is clean and good, by the will of its cherisher, springs up produce, (rich) after its kind: but from the land that is bad, springs up nothing.'<sup>19</sup> 'And make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction.'<sup>20</sup> 'And do well, even as God has done you good, and do not pursue corruption in the earth. Verily God does not love corrupters.'<sup>21</sup> 'He is the one who created you from the earth and settled you upon it, so that you might cultivate the land and construct towns and cities in which to live.'<sup>22</sup> The Prophet SM. said,

وَحَافِظُوا عَلَى الْوُضُوءِ، فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ عَمَلِكُمُ الصَّلَاةَ، وَتَحَفُّظُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ فَإِنَّهَا أُمُّكُمْ.

'Be careful about ritual ablution. Certainly, the prayer is your best act. Preserve the earth because it is your mother.'<sup>23</sup>

The above directions show the importance of protecting the earth and preventing its pollution. But, industrial and chemical activities cause significant harm to the earth. So, it is more important to mitigate these effects by utilizing and constructing the earth properly.

### 3.3 Preventing Water Pollution

Water is an important gift of Allah, which is a basic need of all living beings. Allah mentioned the word 'water' about 66 times in the Qur'an.<sup>24</sup> It is used for socio-religious function, such as cleaning of the body and clothes and other dirty things. Only after cleaning with pure water,<sup>25</sup> Muslims are allowed to pray and perform their other religious activities. One can only pray at a place that has been cleaned. Therefore, Islam stresses on preventing pollution of water resources. Urinating in water and washing or having a bath in stagnant water are forbidden acts in Islam. The Prophet said,

لَا يَبُولُ أَحَدُكُمْ فِي الْمَاءِ الدَّائِمِ الَّذِي لَا يَجْرِي، ثُمَّ يَغْتَسِلُ فِيهِ.

'Do not urinate in water. No one should bathe in still water, when he is unclean.'<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, water is the most important molecule in the life of an organism and every life originated from it. The Qur'an states,

'And We have made of water everything living.'<sup>27</sup>

The Qur'an also states that

'Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the sky and then the earth is covered in green.'<sup>28</sup> 'It is he who sendeth down rain from the skies, with it we produce vegetation of all kinds, from some we produce green (crops).'<sup>29</sup>

Nowadays, this valuable resource is being threatened and all countries are concerned about the ability to continue providing it in sufficient quantities. Therefore, protecting this source should be of top priority for the people and governments. In fact, the lack of water causes the environment cycle to face challenges. Thus, preventing water pollution is an effective way of protecting the environment.

### 3.4 Preventing Air Pollution

Air pollution is a common issue and great offense in our present society. Mixture of carbon dioxide, smoke and other harmful elements are main reason of air pollution. Islam always encourages protecting the air pollution and breathing of fresh air. Because Allah sends fresh air for every life and organism. So, He wants to save them from all kinds of air pollution. The Qur'an states,

'It is Allah who sends the winds which raise the clouds, which We then drive to a dead land and by them bring the earth to life after it was dead.'<sup>30</sup>

The Prophet SM. prohibited from some activities that result in offensive smells and odors, from taking place in certain public places. He said,

'whoever eats garlic or onion should keep away from us and from our mosque or should remain in his house.'<sup>31</sup>

The period that one should stay away is limited to the duration of the smell. By analogy, anything that pollutes the air and is detrimental to the health should be prohibited.

### 3.5 Preventing Voice Pollution

Voice pollution is a common issue, created by human beings. This kind of pollution is increasing more and more in our country. Specially, it's increasing gradually with the growing spread of technology, honking of vehicles loudly and industrialization. Voice pollution is the root of many diseases for human. According to Islam, most of the activities and professions should be adapted with the environment and do not make annoying sounds. Such as, we will operate our technology and industrial sectors with new methods and tools that would be more adaptable to new environmental conditions. Even voice pollution is mentioned in the Qur'an. Allah says,

'And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the voice of the ass.'<sup>32</sup>

This verse indicates that when we talk with another the voice will be in the normal scale. No option to be high voltage or loud scale, on account of harmful to another.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.6 Planting Trees and crops

Planting trees and crops is a great contribution towards environment and nature. It has originated from the very beginning in Islam. So, Islamic teachings highly encourage planting trees and crops and considered it as an important worship. There are many directions in Islam on the preservation of trees and plants.

The Prophet SM. said,

'Unless you are compelled, do not cut down a tree.'<sup>34</sup>

Before battles, the Prophet always gave instruction to his soldiers not to harm women, children, the elderly, and those who surrendered and not to destroy or burn farms and gardens.<sup>35</sup>

Even at the times of war, Muslim leaders such as Abu Baker and Omar R. also advised their troops not to chop down trees and destroy agriculture or kill any animals.

In addition to protection of plants, there are many hadiths that recommend Muslims to plant and farm. Such as narrated by Anas bin Malik R. that Allah's Messenger SM. said,

'There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him.'<sup>36</sup>

Also he said,

'Whoever waters a date or lote tree it is as if he has given a drink to a thirsty believer.'<sup>37</sup>

Prophet Muhammad SM. encouraged the planting of trees and the cultivation of agriculture which are considered as good acts. Islam is against the cutting or destruction of plants and trees unnecessarily as is evident in the Hadith: Abdullah Ibn Habashi reported that Prophet Muhammad SM. said,

'He who cuts a lote-tree, Allah will send him to Hellfire.'<sup>38</sup>

According to the scholars, the lote-tree grows in the desert and is very much needed in an area which has scarce vegetation. The devastation caused by deforestation in many countries causes soil erosion and kills many of the biodiversity of the earth.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.7 Attention to the animals

In Islam, animals have various rights, those are considered as important duties of human beings, and they will be asked for that in the day of Resurrection. The Qur'an included animals as communities like humans. Allah says,

'There is no creature on the earth or animal that flies with its wings except that they are communities like you. We have not neglected anything from the Book. Then they will be gathered unto their Lord.'<sup>40</sup>

A fundamental right for animals is the right to life. According to a well-known hadith, the Holy Prophet said:

'A woman will be put in the hell because she imprisoned a cat until the cat died.'<sup>41</sup>

The Prophet also said,

'Hunting birds or animals for fun is prohibited.'<sup>42</sup>

The Prophet SM. said,

'Do not take any living being as a target.'<sup>43</sup>

Narrated Abu Huraira R.: Allah's Messenger said,

'While a man was walking on a road, he became very thirsty. Then he came across a well, got down into it, drank and then came out. Meanwhile he saw a dog panting and licking mud because of excessive thirst. The man said to himself, the dog is suffering from the same state of thirst as I did. So he went down the well and filled his shoe with water and held it in his mouth and watered the dog. Allah thanked him for the deed and forgave him. The people asked, is there a reward for us in serving the animals? He said, 'yes, there is a reward for serving any animate.'<sup>44</sup>

It is also compulsory to provide food, water and place for animals. Animals must be loved and respected. An animal like a sheep or camel must not be slaughtered in front of another one. This is published by the speeches of Muhammad (SM). He said,

'Verily Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. So every one of you should sharpen his knife and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably.'<sup>45</sup>

The above Hadiths indicate that animals must not be killed unless there is a legal permission by Allah, like benefiting from them, slaughtering them. There are adequate reasons for prohibiting hunting animals for fun and one can argue from these reasons for prohibition of killing animals without having a permitting cause. Each animal species plays its role in maintaining a balance and equilibrium on earth. When an entire species becomes extinct, this equilibrium is interrupted and has a negative impact on the environment.

### 3.8 Preventing the Ozone layer

The Ozone layer<sup>46</sup> serves as the protective layer of the earth. Allah protects the earth with this layer and people's actions are tearing through this protective layer. Neutralizing toxic gases and radiation is required of us if we wish to protect this protective ceiling. Allah says,

'And We made the sky a protected ceiling, but they are, from its signs, turning away.'<sup>47</sup> Allah also states,

'It is Allah who made the earth a place of settlement and made the sky a ceiling and formed you and perfected your forms, and provided you with good things. That is Allah your Lord, then blessed is Allah Lord of the worlds.'<sup>48</sup>

On account of being the earth the source and place of our livelihood, we should protect the earth and environment. Otherwise it leads to corruption and destruction of that. Islam describes such a person as a source of corruption of the earth and environment. Allah says,

‘And when he turns away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allah does not like corruption.’<sup>49</sup>

Islam is a religion of balance, peace and security that commands all to obey Allah. Therefore, preserving the environment and nature is a great part of duties of human beings.

### 3.9 Land Reclamation

Islam has some directions to reclaim the fallow and uncultivable lands. Prophet Muhammad SM. said,

‘Whosoever brings dead land to life, for him is a reward in it, and whatever any creature seeking food eats of it shall be reckoned as charity from him.’<sup>50</sup>

This testifies the importance the Prophet in the early days of Islam has given to reclamation of land and the equal rights of all Allah’s creatures to benefit from the resources of earth.

## 4. Conclusion and Suggestion

From the above discussion, it can be said; analysis made in this article relating to the protecting environment and nature in the light of Islam. Islam evaluates nature with great importance, while it prefers to preserve the environment before it becomes polluted. Rather than cure of something Islam always takes the action of protection. Islam considered the environmental pollution as a failure of responsibility of human being, as he is the vicegerent of Allah on the Earth. Islam gives inspiration on ethical discussion and moral responsibilities in such case and a huge accountability to Allah in hereafter, which assures a remarkable punishment. Every Muslim believes in the doomsday, it is more logical that they must abide by these moral lessons. Islam describes a lot of principles and moral values to prevent environment crisis. For solving the crisis and raising people’s awareness we would like to suggest below:

1. To be responsible of everyone as a vicegerent of Allah on the earth.
2. To spread environmental awareness using social networking, such as Face book, Twitter, YouTube, Google etc.
3. To start a campaign in school, college, madrasah, university or workplace for environmental awareness.
4. To open a fund for plantation by students, faculty members and co-workers.
5. To implant around of home, school, madrasah and workplace.
6. To raise religious feelings among people.
7. To protect nature and the environment for present and future generations.

On the above suggestions, it’s said that the protection of the environment directly or indirectly assists in promoting quality of life. Environmental awareness and protection of natural resources is an integral part of Islamic beliefs. Harming others and environment is prohibited in Islam, the rights of others are infringed while the well-being of future generations is compromised. Conservation of nature and the environment is the duty of all people and is a religious duty of Muslims. Also mankind can be asked in the Day of Resurrection on account of their duties. In essence of all arguments, it can be said that this article has placed its discussion successfully in order to establish important systems of preservation of environment and nature. But it is also true that the basic preservation systems have been originated from very beginning of Islam.

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- <sup>3</sup> *Encyclopedia of Islam*, v 3 (New Delhi: Commonwealth publishers, 2005), P. 432.
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- <sup>5</sup> Allah says, By the fig and the olive. Cf: Surah at-Tin, 95: 01.
- <sup>6</sup> Allah says, By the time. Cf: Surah al-Asr, 103: 01.
- <sup>7</sup> Surah al-Ambiya, 21: 79.

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- <sup>8</sup> Surah al-Isra, 17:44.
- <sup>9</sup> Surah al-Baqarah: 2: 164.
- <sup>10</sup> Surah al-Araf, 7 : 56; 7: 85.
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- <sup>14</sup> Surah al-An'am, 6:141.
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- <sup>16</sup> Surah al-Mumin, 40:43.
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- <sup>36</sup> *As-Sahih Li Muslim*, Number of Hadith, 07, 08, 10.
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