

ISLAM AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper looks into the Islamic viewpoint on the environment. In today's globalized world, most discussions of development strategies centered on the environment. This is why the deteriorating environment has a negative impact on human lives and endangers future generations. The current environmental crisis jeopardizes humans, other living organisms, and the natural world. Human behavior's significance in relation to the natural environment has not changed. Technological solution has not been resulting in satisfying outcome. When it comes to the role of the Islamic principles of unity, trusteeship, and responsibility in environmental awareness, Qur'anic and prophetic teachings can help people form friendly relationships with God, humanity, and nature. This paper is a modest attempt to comprehend the Islamic approach to the environment in order to investigate various conceptual dimensions of environmental security and Islam's potential role in environmental protection for the greater good of humanity. The paper also discusses how Islam enjoins Muslims toward managing as well preserving physical and natural environment. Empirical method of data Collection is employed in study. It Finally recommends that, there are several other aspects that can be followed by Muslims to achieve effective environmental management and preservation, including environmental education, Islamic mass media, and Islamic environmental law enforcement policies.

Keywords: Islam, Environment, Preservation, Sustainable, Development

1.0 Introduction

The Islamic perspective of the environment builds upon the belief that Allah is the sole Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The whole universe is created with perfect wisdom (hikmah) and perfect environmental balance in the natural ecosystem of Allah. Thus, the environment and natural ecosystem is considered as a fundamental part of faith in Islam (Aung 226). It is observed in the following Quranic verses:

It is He Who created all things, and ordered them in due Proportions
 (Al Furqan 25: 2)

In another verse, Allah (SWT) Mentioned:

Verily in the heavens and the earth, are Signs for those who believe.
 And in the creation of yourselves and the fact that animals are scattered (throughout the earth) are Signs for those of assured Faith.
 And the alteration of Night and Day, and the fact that God sends

down Sustenance from the sky, and revives therewith the earth after its death, and in the change of the winds are Signs for those that are wise. (Al-Furqan 45:3-5)

Every creation in the universe is a sign of God, and human beings have due responsibility to protect and sustain them (Aung 226). It is the duty of Muslims as Allah's stewards and trustees to respect nature and preserve it with the utmost care. Piety in Islam is associated with the appreciation of the natural surrounding environment which is an ultimate creation of Almighty Allah. Natural resources must be distributed fairly and justly, and humans must not disturb the prevailing value system of nature (Aung 227). Environmental consciousness, simplicity and mutual loving are vital aspects for the maintenance of environmental balance and are stemmed from three fundamental principles of Islam: *tawhīd* (unity), *khalīfah* (Vicegerent) and *al- akhirah* (Hereafter). The holistic Islamic environmental worldview is also based on five aims of the *sharī'ah* which are protecting religion, life, mind, offspring and prosperity. Moreover, a paramount guidance of Islam, *al-tawhīd* (unity of God) underlines and demands a moral and behavioral attitude of the human being toward God and God's creations (Aung 228). Thus, human beings are absolutely accountable for sustaining and protecting the environment and natural surroundings (Aung 228).

Although Islam as a religion is rooted with respect and appreciation for the natural environment and ecosystem, Muslim nations are witnessing enormous degradation of the natural ecosystem and environmental predicaments (Aung 228). The severity of catastrophes occurring in the Muslim world is noticeably high. Environmental degradation and atmospheric pollution are very visible and increasing dramatically in Muslim nations as a consequence of modernization and science and technology development (Aung 228). It was on this note however, the Paper examines the Islamic perceptions on nature, environmental preservation and Management as well as the relationship between man and his physical and natural environment as show case in various places of the glorious Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

1.1 Physical and Natural Environment

The Natural environment, is a term that comprises all living and non-living things that occur naturally on Earth or on some part of it. physical environment is defined as the *surrounding* conditions and elements through which a living thing interacts with (SHIM 25). However, apart from the physical, there are other types of elements that make up an environment. They are the chemical and biological attributes. Thus, an environment contains all biotic and abiotic factors that have a role in the survival, evolution, and development of the organism occupying it. A related term "*environ*" is defined as "*to surround*" or "*to enclose*". The scope of the environment varies from the tiniest, "*micro*" scale to the largest, *global* scale (SHIM 55).

The terms "*ecosystem*" and "*surroundings*" are the common synonyms for the word "environment". (JIRIK 3). However, they differ in such a way that the term "*ecosystem*" includes the interaction between the organism and its surroundings. The surroundings, in turn, refers to that which surrounds an organism or a population. In this regard, the environment is a rather vast concept whereas the term "*surrounding*" is relatively more specific (SHIM 55).

Another related term is nature Similarly, the definition of nature includes all living and nonliving things on Earth but what characterizes nature is that it is a *natural* entity as opposed to the artificial that implicates an attribute that is not occurring naturally, and by that it is *man-made* or *built* (SHIM 55).

1.2 Sustainable development

Sustainable development is the idea that human societies must live and meet their needs without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The “official” definition of sustainable development was developed for the first time in the Brundtland report in 1987 (Youmatters).

Specifically, sustainable development is a way of organizing society so that it can exist in the long term. This means taking into account both the imperatives present and those of the future, such as the preservation of the environment and natural resources or social and economic equity (Youmatters).

1.2.1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs, also known as the Global Goals) are 17 goals with 169 targets that all UN Member States have agreed to work towards achieving by the year 2030 (WHO).

The SDGs aim to be relevant to all countries poor, rich and middle-income to promote prosperity while protecting the environment and tackling climate change. They have a strong focus on improving equity to meet the needs of women, children and disadvantaged populations in particular so that “no one is left behind” (WHO). These goals are targeted to achieve the following:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for (WHO).

2.0. Islamic Views on Nature and Environment

The Islamic view of life is based on the absolute belief that man, life and the universe are created by a Creator, Allah (SWT), and that Islam is the message which the Almighty Creator has sent down to mankind to bring it forth from darkness into light. And when man is absolutely and intellectually convinced by this doctrine and enjoys peace of mind, then he will make this doctrine the basis for all of his ideas and the criterion for all of his actions. Consequently, the Muslim is convinced that the Creator, Allah (SWT), has sent down the last message that determines good and

evil, truth and falsehood. In all matters of life and regarding solutions to all problems the Muslim refers to the Islamic doctrine from which a comprehensive system for life originates. This system organizes man's needs, at anytime and anywhere and is not influenced by the surrounding environment, circumstances or individual interests (K.M.25) Additionally, the Islamic doctrine solves his problems in consideration of all spiritual, human, moral and material values. The Islamic doctrine organizes these values in a concordant manner that realizes all the values. Therefore, the material value is not prioritized over the other values, and no value is ignored in favour of another, rather they are all coordinated. The decisions for the society are carried out on the basis of the coordination between all four values, rather than on the basis of material prosperity alone, in which the Gross Domestic Product or other economic indicators are the criterion. The material progress and growth gained at the expense of the world's people, or at the expense of nature, can never be the correct criterions for the correct righteous society (K.M. 26).

The balance of these four values will never be achieved if legislation is left to man, based on the fact that man is incapable of being free from the influence of his own interests and inclinations whilst legislating. This is due to the fact that man's understanding of organizing is subject to variation, discrepancy, contradiction and influence from the environment in which he lives, which would result in an inconsistent and contradictory system and inevitably lead to man's misery. The state of the world today, which is ravaged by corruption, injustice and damage to man and nature, is the best proof of man's incapability of designing a suitable system that determines what is good and what is evil (K.M.27).

Islam does not forbid man to enjoy Allah's blessings, nor does it forbid him to work, nor gain earnings and wealth. On the contrary, Islam renders work necessary for the progress of the human life, and for man to carry out his duties. Allah (SWT), says:

Say: Who has forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He has produced for his servants, and the things clean and pure (which He has provided) for sustenance? Say: They are in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do We explain the signs in detail for those who understand. [Al-A'raf 7: 32]

However, Islam does not accept that some people overconsume while others are unable to satisfy their basic needs. Consequently, Islam regards the economic problem as being related to the distribution of the wealth and not its scarcity. Hence Islam's concern is not dedicated to the increase of production, rather it is dedicated to eradicate poverty, and to ensure the balance in looking after the interests and needs of the community and the individual. Thus, Islam does not disregard the needs of the individual in favour of the community, nor does it favour the needs of the individual at the expense of the community. Islam does not accept the inhumane conditions which the greater part of the world's population lives under the control of the capitalistic system, due to the insatiable desire and hunt for wealth by a few people (K.M.28).

With these views Islam forms an individual that remembers Allah's supervision in all his affairs, and an individual who voluntarily complies with Allah's commands and prohibitions, even if this leads to material losses. Such an individual will make sure to stay as far away as possible from greed and excessive consumption. With these views Islam ensures that the economic activities conform to *Shari'ah* and to the moral and spiritual values, and prevent the economic activities in becoming a mere material activity that doesn't pay regard to anything except profit. In doing so,

Islam eliminates the type of human behaviour which leads to an environmental imbalance (K.M. 28).

2.1 Islam and Environmental Preservation for Sustainable Development

Islam does not view man's relation to nature as one of conflict or contradiction. On the contrary, because the universe and life itself, just like man, are all Allah's creations, Islam treats their relations as being mutually complementary. Also, Allah has put the universe in man's service and He assigned man to cultivate the land. Allah (SWT), says:

It is Allah Who have created the heavens and the earth and sends down rain from the skies and with it brings out fruits wherewith to feed you; it is He Who has made the ships subject to you that they may sail through the sea by His command; and the rivers (also) He made subject to you. And He made subject to you the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses: and the Night and the Day He (also) made subject to you. (Ibrahim 14: 32-33)

In another verse He the exalted Says:

Behold thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said "Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not." [Al-Baqarah 2: 30]

Persevering and avoiding both the material and the immaterial mischief on the earth are all necessities to the cultivation of it. Allah (SWT), says:

Do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good!" [Al-A'raf 7: 56]

Islam considers deprivation on the earth a detestable crime. Allah (SWT), says:

There is the type of man whose speech about the wordly affairs may please you and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies. When he turns his back his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But Allah loves not mischief. (Al-Baqarah 2:204-205)

Also, Islam has clarified that in the universe and on the earth is a balance and a purposeful and exact measure for all kind of things. Allah (SWT), says:

And the earth We have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance. (Al-Hidjr 15: 19)

Furthermore, Allah (SWT), says:

Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure. (Al-Qamar 54: 49)

The above mentioned and other similar Quranic verses suffice to illustrate the Islamic view on nature and the environment, and indicate the necessity of a Muslim to preserve the environment and the prohibition of imbalance therein. Additionally, there are many *Shari'ah* texts in the Qur'an and Sunnah that are related to details concerned with the preservation of the environment, which indicate that Islam is not confined to a general and wide treatment of the matter. On the contrary, Islam goes beyond that and deals with the details, so man is prevented in damaging and contaminating the environment. Islam did not leave the relationship between the Muslim and nature according to his own individual desires and interest without regard for nature or human lives. The following are some narrations from the Prophet (SAW) that suffice to show these details of how Islam concern about Environmental Preservation:

2.1.1 Preservation of water:

It was mentioned in the narration from Abu Hurayrah (RA), who said, that the messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

None of you may urinate in stagnant water, and then use it for bathing (Bukhari and Muslim).

Muadh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated from the Prophet (SAW):

Avoid the three actions that bring people's curses: defecating in water sources, on roads, and in the shade." (Abu Dawud and ibn Majah).

Abdullah ibn Amru bin Al-Ás (RA) narrated that:

The messenger of Allah (SAW) happened to pass by Sa'd as he was performing ablution. Whereupon he said: Sa'd what is this squandering? Sa'd said: Can there be any idea of squandering (israf) in ablution? Whereupon he (SAW) said: Yes, even if you are by the side of a flowing river." (Ibn Majah)

2.1.2 Removal of harmful or anything injurious on Road:

The messenger of Allah (SAW) was reported to have said:

Iman is some 70 or 60 branches, the highest is to testify there is no god besides Allah, and the lowest of which is to remove something harmful from the road (Muslim)

In another narration the messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

To remove something harmful from the road is a charity. (Bukhari).

It was reported that, messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

A man found a thorny branch on his way, whereupon he picked it up. Allah was then pleased and applauded his action and forgave him. (Bukhari).

2.1.3 Deforestation: Islam is against the cutting or destruction of plants and trees unnecessarily as is evident in the following Hadith: The messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

There is no Muslim who plants a tree or grows crops, and a bird, a human or an animal eats from it, except that it will be counted as a charity for him. (Bukhari).

When the Prophet (SAW) sent his companions to Jihad he (SAW) used to advise them with the following words:

Go forth in the name of Allah.... and do not cut down any tree, except the trees which prevent you from fighting or constitute a barrier between you and the Polytheists (Bayhaqi).

2.1.4 Birds and animals:

And there is no creature on (or within) the earth or a bird that flies with its wings except that they are nations (communities) like you.(Quran, 6:38)

This qur'anic verse says that all living things are partners to man in existence and they deserve respect. Muslims must be merciful toward animals and strive to ensure the preservation of different species.

The messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

While a man was on a road, he became very thirsty and he found a well and went down into it. He drank and then came out. There was a dog panting and eating mud out of thirst. The man said, 'This dog has become as thirsty as I was.' So he went down the well and filled up his shoe with water and let the dog drink. So Allah thanked him and forgave him." They (companions) said, "Messenger of Allah, do we have a reward for animals?" He (SAW) said, "There is a reward for every living thing (with a moist liver) (Bukhari)

Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

A woman was doomed to Hell on account of a cat, because she tied it. She had not given the cat anything to eat nor did she free it to enable it to feed itself from among insects and other creatures of the earth till it died (due to losing weight) (Bukhari).

2.1.5 Anti-Corruption: Corruptions are of many types Crime, political fraud, illegal banking systems, theft, rape. Etc. Now add to that list littering, deforestation, toxic waste and pesticides. Sure, these are hardly equivalent to murdering but in the long run, these things take human lives too, a fact. That is what the Qur'an is alarming readers about.

...And do not desire corruption in the land. Indeed, God does not like corruptors. " (Quran 28:77)

In another verse Allah (SWT) states:

Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption. (Quran, 2:60)

2.1.6 Poverty alleviation: Various scientific studies have established that poverty and environmental degradation are directly proportional to each other. Hence, ending poverty is essential for environment protection. In Islam charity is prioritized to the neediest and the closest.

And you do not encourage one another to feed the poor. No! But you do not honour the orphan. (Quran, 89:17-18)

2.1.7 Simplicity: Simplicity is an important feature of Islamic life having far reaching implications for the environmental balance. The Holy Quran has ordained such a life by proscribing extravagance. It says:

Do not be extravagant, surely Allah does not like extravagances. (Quran, 6:141)

The environmental implications of simple living are significantly favorable. These implications occur by two ways. (i) Reduced input demand for the natural resources due to the reduced consumption of the final goods. Consequently, a substantial amount of saving of the natural

resources takes place which tends to augment the existing supply of these resources. (ii) It controls the quantity of waste material which occurs as a result of reduced consumption (Ashtankar 441).

2.1.8 Preservation, not Profligation: Protecting the environment from detriments of all kinds and preserving the nature is the philosophy of Islamic environmentalism. Being the trustee of the nature, this is humans' duty to take care of environmental sustainability. Along with proper care of environment, Islam also cautions not to be profligate and wasteful (Ashtankar). Allah gives order to humankind:

O Children of Adam! Beautify yourselves for every act of worship, and eat and drink [freely], but do not waste: verily, He does not love the wasteful!" (Quran, 7:31)

3.0 The Role of Islam in the Management of Environment: In accordance with the motto as a religion that is *rahmatan lil alamin* (love for the universe; (Q21: 107), it is only natural for Islam to become a pioneer in environmental management as a manifestation of compassion for the universe. Apart from prohibiting damage to the earth, Islam also has an obligation to maintain a shady, beautiful clean environment (Sabrina 2918). Because cleanliness is part of the life of the Islamic community as expressed by the prophet Muhammad (SAW) with a hadith which reads: "Cleanliness is a part of faith".

Islam invites humans to actively manage the environment, among others, by disposing of garbage in its place. This is in accordance with Islamic philosophy which generally prefers to prevent (preventive) bad actions or incidents rather than cure (curative) bad events or actions that occur (Sabrina 2918). However, Islam also does not stand idle when there has been a bad incident or crime, such as stated in the religious law (Shari'ah) which regulates the punishment for breaking the rules. Imam Kabul (2008: 2) argues that demographically, the number of Muslims is relatively large, which is around 1.5 billion and this number is expected to continue to increase, Muslims have great potential in saving the environment (Sabrina 2918).

4.0 Conclusion & Recommendations:

Based on the foregoing discussions, it is recommended that if Muslims consistently implement the teachings of the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (SAW) as stated above, environmental damage will be minimized, taking into cognizance a country like Indonesia which has economic characteristic that relies on natural resources with the largest number of Muslims. A large number of Muslims is a great asset to carry out sustainable economic development on condition that Muslims must understand and know Islamic concepts about the relationship between economic development and the environment and do so in real actions in daily life.

However, if only there was a commitment from all Muslims in the world every year, each person planted a tree, then in this world there would be an addition of about one and a half billion new trees every year (Sabrina 2981). The movement for six years will produce 9 billion new trees and will match the world's population. This step is very effective in preventing damage to the world's environment.

More so, in terms of occupation and position, Muslims have varied occupations and positions. It is hoped that everyone will have a commitment to their position to always uphold environmental values as an effort to preserve the environment based on Islamic teachings. For example, if a leader who is Muslim is obliged to make an environmentally friendly economic development policy, a teacher is obliged to disseminate environmental-friendly economic development programs economic development programs to his students, a lecturer must teach environmental functions in

economic development. In principle, every Muslim from all walks of life must play an active role in environmental management in accordance with their field of work or in accordance with their respective fields of expertise based on Islamic teachings. There are other several aspects that can be followed by Muslim to achieve effective environmental management and Preservation including, environmental education, Islamic mass media, and Islamic environmental law enforcement policies.

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