

Combating Environmental Pollution An Islamic Perspective	
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Combating Environmental Pollution **An Islamic Perspective**

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Abstract

Ignorance from the commandments of Almighty Allah and lack of God-fearing are some of the reasons for the increased environmental pollution. People don't have the knowledge of do's and don't necessary to maintain and use the natural resources in judicious ways and hence maintain environment in a sustainable manner. Due to lack of Allah-fearing, people carry out activities that affect the natural ecosystem and the environment to an irerepairable extent. The masses could be more often well aware of the negative impact of these activities and in spite of having knowledge about its negative aspects, they are carried out indiscriminate. This study highlights that Islam requires each individual to play responsible role with the realization of accountability from Almighty Allah and act on three aspects; i) prioritize collective interest over individual interest; ii) avoid action that creates negative externalities; and iii) make efforts collective to establish a welfare society in real sense for all members of the community. The saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) describes a true believer "as the one from whose hands and tongue others are safe". Therefore, according to the teachings of Islam, planting a tree, farming and cultivation of land are the prime means of reward and are classified as charitable deeds. Islam encourages economy in consumption of natural resources while strictly prohibits over spending. It orders to fulfill the rights of human beings as well as other creatures. Islam strongly recommends that as Muslims, we must follow the teachings of Islam regarding the conservation and sustainability of natural resources as well as

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environment and play a responsible role to prevent its degradation.. Using the Islamic principles and guide lines can certainly help us achieve a sustainable, cleaner and human friendly environment, thereby creating a welfare society in real terms.

Key words: Islams environmental pollution, natural recourses, sustainability, ecosystem.

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INTRODUCTION

God-Almighty has created the universe with variety and abundance of bounties particularly the natural resources and made the human being authorized to derive benefits from these. The seas, rivers, and fish and whales, plants, trees, flowers, vegetables, fruits and grains, etc are many blessings/gifts and others in this universe are innumerable and are created for the comfort of man. To serve the succession and honesty which he carried to the fullest and it has a duty to preserve and protect it, and it is forbidden to waste it and destroy it without right.

For example water is considered to be one of the most precious natural resources as it has been declared the most prominent constituent of every living organism. The Holy Quran describes this as “¹و جعلنا من الماء كل شئى حى” “And we made every living thing from water”

. In view of its significance, water is being made available from glaciers, underground natural reservoirs and rains and humanity consumes it for a variety of uses as and when needed. While using these resources, the human being is expected to be grateful and keep away from disrespectfulness and exploitation of these resources. Their exploitation and disrespectfulness can lead to several consequences. Among these consequences, benefits of these natural bounties could become restricted due to disobedience and ingratitude’s, or otherwise some interference in its natural system would results in the distortion of the natural ecosystem. Consequently this imbalanced ecosystem no

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more remain supportive for the betterment and welfare of human beings which ultimately result in calamities including, environmental pollution. Scientists are in search of such principles which could provide safety for environment. Islam has indeed ordained such principles for it, and these principles if practiced on regional and global levels can certainly help us to achieve our objectives of a clean environment. Islamic teachings and practices provide great emphasis to reduce environmental pollution. Muslims make a significant proportion about 1/3rd of the world's population. Their practice of Islamic teachings can have a significant impact in making the environment pollution free and human friendly.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to review Islamic teachings and directions to reduce and combat environmental pollution with the following objectives to:

- i. To aware the society about effects of environmental pollution.
- ii. To highlight Islamic teachings and aspects that provides us directions to create awareness about natural resources and thus help us control environmental pollution.
- iii. To understand Islamic principles and guidelines for practice in daily life to inculcate judicious use of natural resources and prevent its over exploitation.
- iv. And at least if the Muslims may adopt there principles into practice as they are the one third population of the world the environment may be improved.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Environmental Pollution is a global issue. Islam claims to offer a complete code of life. Islamic literature offers the guidelines of all sorts of possible problems and issues of human life. The main source of such guidelines is Qura'n and Sunnah.

Researcher feels the need to offer the solution of the problem in

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hand in the light of Islamic literature in the current scenario. The holy Quran says that “²إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ” “Allah does not change the condition of a people unless they change themselves”. And says: “³وَآتُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً” “And beware of a scourge that shall not fall only on the wrongdoers from among you”

In this paper an attempt has been made to search out the causes and solution of environmental pollution from Islamic literature. For this purpose quotations are also cited for reference purpose. In the light of data gathered, researcher has concluded and recommended a strategy to minimize this global issue of environmental pollution. It is hoped that these guidelines will be helpful to cope the issue in Pakistan specially and the world generally.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Environmental Pollution ----- a Background

From an Islamic perspective, the environmental pollution can be attributed to two main reasons, the first being ignorance and lack of awareness of the masses about the environment. The importance of environment is not stressed as it is needed and required for the public and masses. Hence, proper emphasis must be given to this aspect and awareness about environmental education must be created in masses to make them acquainted with environment. The second reason is not having fear of Allah which ultimately results in abuse and exploitation of Almighty Allah’s created natural resources. More oftenly, the human beings could be well aware that what they do is harmful for biodiversity and environment but still they keep on doing that for personal benefits. If fear of Allah prevails over personal benefits, there would have never been corruption at the expense of others. We need to inculcate the fear of Allah in one’s heart to perform his duty accordingly. Islam has given a comprehensive code of conduct in every span of life. It would bear fruitful results for human beings if practiced otherwise it would be full of harm and danger. In categorical terms we are either unaware

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of these teachings or do not put them into practice. The Holy Quran says: “والارض مددنها والقينا فيها رواسي وانبتنا فيها من كل شئى ”⁴ ”موزون

“As for the earth, We have stretched it out and placed on it firm mountains, and We have caused to grow in it everything well-balanced”.

It is inferred from this verse of Quran that God-Almighty has created everything well balanced. He created plants in many kinds which meet the requirements of life and has no detrimental effect on environment. It is needed to utilize all these things in a good manner. If human beings keep on using these natural resources without any proper check and balance, the required harmony in environment will no more be there and would eventually result in calamities and catastrophes.

Causes of Environmental Pollution

Many living creatures along with human beings do exist in the universe. Their lives directly or indirectly depend upon the environment around them. Among these living organisms, human being is the major player on the planet earth and a major proportion of the environmental pollution whether in seas, air or on the earth is primarily attributable to the unabated human activities.

A Muslim’s affairs with the universe must be moderate and fair as he has been conferred upon the authority on earth. Having been authorized, he should keep strict check on those factors which may become a cause for environmental pollution. Islam condemns all those practices which are not favorable in the interest of humanity “ظهر الفساد فى البر والبحر بما كسبت ايدى الناس ”⁵ ”ليذيقهم بعض الذى عملوا لعلهم يرجعون ”

“Calamities have appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of the human being have earned, so that He (Al-mighty Allah) makes them taste some of what they did, in order that they may return (to the right way)”. This verse of Holy Quran issues strong orders of prohibition from the things and actions which pare the path for distortion in whatever form it might be.

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Precautions for the Prevention of Environmental Pollution

- Preference to community interest over individual.
- Avoidance and abeyance from actions which are harmful for the society.
- Struggle for the establishment of a God fearing and pious society.

It is one of the qualities of Islam that one must incorporate religion in individuals life for the betterment of both worldly affairs and the hereafter.

i) A Muslim must have a collective wisdom rather than wisdom based on individual interest and consciousness as well as care for the betterment of entire humanity

Anas (R.A) narrates that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: " ⁶ " لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبُّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ "

“one cannot become a (complete) true believer unless he likes things for his brother which he likes for himself”.

Abdullah ben Umar (RA) narrates that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: ⁷ " **الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ** " "A Muslims is a person from whose tongue (saying) and hands (actions) others are safe”.

ii) A healthy society may thus be brought into existence if we avoid things, harmful for society

Anas (RA) narrates that the Holy Prophet (SAW) said: **الناس مفتاح للخير مغالبق للشر وان من الناس مفتاح للشر مغالبق للخير فطوبى لمن جعل الله مفتاح الخير على يديه وويل لمن جعل الله مفتاح الشر على يديه** " ⁸

“There are some people who open the doors of goodness and shut the doors of evil and there are some people who open the doors of evil and shut the doors of goodness. Congratulation to those on whose hands Allah opens the doors of goodness and destruction to those on whose hands Allah opens the doors of evils”.

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iii). A healthy society have members with feelings and sentiments of sacrifice

A society based on Islamic teachings, and principles produce masses and members with the feelings to prefer the rights of other at the cost of their own rights and privileges as these feelings of sacrifice are embodied in their character. The Holy Quran in Sura Al-Hasher exalts the actions of such believers. This is just because of these noble and esteemed sentiments that the companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) scarified their own lives to save those of others and fed the companion guests but themselves slept empty stomach. It was primarily due to these feeling and actions that a model and exemplary society was established during that golden era of Islam, 1400 years ago.

"وَيُؤْتُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ" ⁹

“And they give preference (to others) over themselves, even though they are in poverty”.

iv). Struggle for a pious society

Effort and struggle for the establishment of a society which is full of goodness and devoid of evil is the prime objective of a pious and God fearing society. Based on such principles a true believer neither himself destroys the peace and law nor let anyone else to do so.

Noman (R.A) narrates that the Holy prophet (PBUH) said: " مثل القائم على حدود الله والواقع فيها كمثل قوم استهموا على سفينة فصار بعضهم اعلاها وبعضهم اسفلها وكان الذي في اسفلها اذا استقوا من الماء مرو على من فوقهم فقالوا لو ان خرقنا في نصيبنا خرقا ولم نؤمن فوقنا فان تركوهم وما¹⁰ ارادوا هلكوا جميعا وان اخذوا على ايديهم نجوا ونجوا جميعا"

“Example of a group of people who stick to the commandments of Allah and those who encroaches them is like a group who are sailing on a boat which is divided into two compartments, the upper and lower. The members of the lower move to the upper in need of water (which is painful for the uppers). Considering the situation, they (people of the lower part) want a chink in their part to get water and leave the upper ones undisturbed. If

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the people of the upper portion do not stop the lower ones from doing a chink, the result will be, drowning of all. While in case of this temporary pain, all will be safe”.

It can be inferred from this narration of the Holy Prophet(PBUH) that a true believer must restrict another from committing such actions which are not lawful otherwise he too, will be entrapped with the wrong doer in punishment. It is obligatory for a human being to conduct himself in a noble way with the universe because Allah-Almighty has put him in an exalted position.

"وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا"¹¹

“And We bestowed dignity on the children of ‘Adam and provided them with rides on the land and in the sea, and provided them with a variety of good things and made them much superior to many of those whom We have created” This verse of the Holy Quran teaches us the sense of responsibility and stresses to do good and pious actions and eradicate evils.

"وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ" ¹²

“Help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression. Fear Allah-"

Measures for the safety of natural environment and ecosystem

It is very much clear that safety and protection of environment is essential for a healthy life and society, for which two things are required to be kept in mind:

- To know and understand the environment clearly.
- A collective and facts based struggle for the prevention of environment pollution.

Rules and regulations given by Islam contain the safety of environment for which human being has been held responsible to make a conducive environment to live in it. Islam has given great attention to the environment and the universe, and urged

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to take care of them and also preserve them. A large number of Quranic verses aimed at achieving environmental balance and stability. Islam considers the protection and care of the environment as a responsibility of all, and is a secretariat in the necks of the nation.

It bears the burden of default in front of God: “إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ”¹³.

“We did offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear its burden and were afraid of it, and man picked it up”.

Two approaches have been emphasized in Islamic teachings. This comprises taking away and removing harmful elements that cause problem for society and human beings. Second adopting good deeds, using pure things and consistent struggle to follow Allah's commandments. This will become the cause of Allah's blessings for all creatures on the planet earth. This is why the cultivation of land has been classified as a rewardable deed: The Holy Prophet stressed upon cultivation of land which is mentioned in many sayings . For example one such saying of Prophet Muhammad underlines it as;
¹⁴

“You must grow the shrub of a date which is in your hand even if you see that the day of judgment is declared”.

Anas (RA) narrates from the Holy Prophet (SAW): “ ما من مسلم يغرس غرساً أو يزرع زرعاً، فيأكل منه طير أو إنسان أو بهيمة إلا كان له به صدقة”¹⁵.

“Any Muslim among you, who grow plant or forest and a bird or human eats from it, the reward is written for him”.

According to a Hadith doing good things is in the disciplines of faith: Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that the Holy Prophet (SAW) said: “الايمان بضع وسبعون شعبة أعلاها قول: لا اله الا الله و ادناها اماطة الأذى”¹⁶.
¹⁶عن الطريق

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“Faith has more than seventy parts, in which the supreme is *Laelaha Ellah* and the minimum of it is putting away harmful things from the path”

Tree-growing is indeed a rewardable deed in the hereafter: Similarly the Holy Prophet (PBUH) declared, cultivation of plants, construction of canals, digging wells, among the rewardable practices and deeds. “سبع يجرى للعبد اجرهنّ و هو في قبره”. “بعد موته: من علم علما، أو أجرى نهرا، أو حفر بئرا، أو غرس شجرة أو بنى مسجدًا أو ترك مصحفا أو ترك ولدا صالحا يستغفر له”¹⁷.

“There are seven good deeds for which rewards continue for the doer even after his death. One who transfer his knowledge, digs well or canal, grow plants, constructs worship places, leaves a written book, or leaves children to pray for him after his death”.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The causes of environmental pollution can be primarily attributed to two main reasons. The first and foremost is the over exploitation of natural resources and the second is the ignorance of masses. These both can be rectified through education for which both religious and contemporary education is necessary. Contemporary education will certainly make one understand environment. Religious education and awareness will make one realize the appearance before Al-Mighty Allah, which will extinct abuse and extravagance of the God created natural resources. This will ensure their sustainability for our future generations.

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