

# Environmental Protection in Islamic Shari'ah

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This text underlines the importance of protecting the environment. It links all the issues of protecting the environment with the command of Allah in the verses of the Holy Qur'an regarding the environment. It also provides a short history of international effort that have been undertaken for the safety and health of all.

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# A Word From the Foundation

*In The Name Of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Merciful*

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا

*And do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order...(7:56)*

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

*“We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of the creation.” (17:70)*

Surely, the Almighty Allah has deposited His blessings and wealth in this world, exceeding human needs, in order for man to live in problem-free comfort and has also created him in the most appropriate form and given him a mind and body which helps him utilize these bestowed blessings; like, day and night, the earth and heaven, rivers and trees, the sun and the moon...etc.

But, with all these blessings and great treasures surrounding us, existing on the surface of the earth and beneath it, one-fifth of the world population, i.e., one billion and two hundred million people, are living on the verge of poverty.

In light of all the technological advancement in the present era with diversification of industrial products and services, obsessive fear is still in the mind of man from the West to the East, where the present man may be more anxious than yesterday's man, because of what is threatening him from the dangers of polluting the environment, nuclear radioactivity, lack of natural resources, as well as wars.

In our present world, a person who has abundant food to eat cannot be regarded as someone who lives comfortably, because it is possible that an epidemic, diseases or other destructive elements, like hidden micro radiations will attack him under conditions he is not familiar with, and which can enter his home through contaminated and polluted bottles of milk or through the poisonous air that he breathes.

Therefore, it is not surprising for the Chairman of the ‘Conference for Social Development’, which was conducted in March, 1995, in Copenhagen, Denmark, to announce to world leaders that the aim of the

conference “is to reduce the unrest and insecurity which threatens people all over the world and put more effort on securing a suitable life for society”. And prior to this, another conference was held, which emphasized on the lack of efforts to counter the human factors affecting the environment.

Then, there are the dangers of environmental pollution, the penetration of harmful and destructive solar rays to the ozone layers, the danger of deformity in children and the spread of cancer by nuclear pollution. Likewise, the dryness of rivers and deforestation and cessation of thousands of plants and animals is not confined to a particular region, north to south, in developed countries or underdeveloped ones.

Thus, there is a serious need for a collective effort toward achieving the international resolutions for protecting the environment, the plant and animal species, so as to protect and guarantee the existence of man, which is also the resolution of the United Nations, UNESCO, and the 12th Earth Conference.

But, unfortunately, some countries, especially the industrially developed countries, are not respecting these resolutions by continuing their nuclear tests and producing other destructive products for their own selfish, material interests, without the least consideration for human beings and the future of the world.

This is what UNESCO confirms in its analysis on world environmental problems, thus: “Surely, the problem of production and consumption of the industrial countries carries a preference on all those problems, where the effort and striving toward a great and quick profit means overlooking the trouble and hardship of environmental disorder...and this kind of act and behavior will create and give way to a great and tremendous damage, which will cause stress on the exhaustion of natural factors in the developing countries...”

The evidence of this inhuman act and the selfishness of those developed countries can be seen in the insistence of France testing her nuclear power in the Caribbean sea, the continuance of nuclear testing by the American government after all the agreements against this had been signed, or the danger of the spreading of nuclear weapons.

There are the events of leaking nuclear plants occurring in America in 1985, which only confirms the occurrence of 2300 events, the exportation of nuclear wastes, as well as dumping them in some third world countries and the ugly exploitation of natural wealth in some African countries without paying heed to the environment.

And still, the British export of beef to other countries, affecting them with mental disorders, and other unaccounted examples witnessed by us, are causing great damage and discomfort to human existence on this planet.

# 1. Definition of Environment

“Environment is the complex of physical, chemical and biotic factors (as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival; the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community.”

The environment is the natural condition and circumstances in which people, animals and plants live, and in turn, they are referred to as the natural environment, social environment and political environment. Therefore, environment means those conditions and circumstances, which surround a particular thing.

The natural environment is a natural surrounding, and it refers to the natural conditions, atmosphere and circumstances which relate to man, and this includes plants, forests, water, air, sea, animals and other living things, the nature of the earth and what it contains, like mountains, rivers, swamps, deserts, and also includes hot and cold weather, rain and clouds, rays of the sun... etc.

All creatures and entities are interrelated and have reciprocal effects, some having an effect on the conditions of others, and it has its positive, as well as negative effects on the life of man, especially in our present day after industrial advancement and the increase of man’s interference in the natural condition and changing its direction.

Other scientific sources have defined environment as “the condition in which man lives and obtains the components of his life, like food, shelter and medicine and conducts his relations with his fellow human beings in it.”<sup>1</sup> So, this is the definition of environment considering man being the pivotal point in it.

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1. Al-Bi’ah Wa Mishkilatuha (Environment and its Problems) by Rashid Hamad and Muhammad Sa’id Sabarini, pg.14, reported from book “Insan Wa Bi’ah” (Man and the Environment) by Dr. Abdullah Atawi, Dar Izzuddeen, pg. 14.

## 2. Man and the Natural Environment

Man is part of the natural world in his formation, growth and the continuity of his existence on this earth; interacting with the natural components and their environmental conditions, continuously. The Holy Qur’an, in many instances, has referred to man’s relationship with nature and the environment. Here, we quote some of the verses:

وَاللَّهُ أَنْبَتَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ نَبَاتًا

**“And Allah has made you grow out of the earth as a growth.” (71: 17)**

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

**“...and We have made of water everything living...”(21:30)**

وَالِي تَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۚ هُوَ  
أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ  
مُجِيبٌ

**“And to Samood (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: O my people! Serve Allah, you have no god other than He; He brought you into being from the earth, and made you dwell in it, therefore ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him, surely my Lord is Nigh, Answering.”(11:61)**

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۚ وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ  
فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ ۚ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ

**“He created the heavens without pillars as you see them, and put mountains upon earth lest it might convulse with you, and he spread in it animals of every kind; and We sent down water from the cloud, then caused to grow therein (vegetation) of every noble kind.” (31: 10)**

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهُ  
ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً ۚ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ  
مُنِيرٍ

**“Do you not see that Allah has made what is in the heavens and what is in the earth subservient to you, and made complete to you His favour outwardly and inwardly? And among men is he who disputes in respect of Allah though having no knowledge, nor guidance, nor a book giving light.”**

(31:20)

وَيُنزِّلُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ  
عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ

*“...and sent down upon you water from the cloud that He might thereby purify you, and take away from you the uncleanness of Satan...”(8: 11)*

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا

*“...and We send down pure water from the cloud.” (25:48)*

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ  
الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ  
الْأَنْهَارَ

*“...and He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command...”(14:32)*

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حَلِيَّةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا  
وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَازِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

*“And He it is Who has made the sea subservient that you may eat fresh flesh from it...”(16: 14)*

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حَلِيَّةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا  
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*“From it We created you and into it We shall send you back and from it will We raise you a second time.” (16: 14)*

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ  
الْفَسَادَ

***“And when he turns back, he runs along in the land that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock...”(2:205)***

The above Qur’anic verses speak about man as a part of the natural environment he interacts with; gaining from it and likewise, giving to it. He is also responsible for its growth as well as preventing vices and corruption in it.

Man, this living creature, represents a part of the natural system, which activates its components toward understanding and the coordination between each other. Thus, the natural world can be defined as the balance and the accurate, scientific, calculated equilibrium from the most learned and knowledgeable being.

The amount of water, the salinity of sea, the sweetness of river, the ratio of oxygen, the grade of light rays, the degree of heat and the quantity of rain, fish, animals, plants...etc., all this is well calculated without the least error.

The earth and its gravitational force, rate of movement, and power of absorption has an effect on the life of man, animals and plants, and their continuous existence in this universe shows that the knowledgeable Creator has arranged it accurately.

Consequently, the above–quoted verses have discussed the reality in the life of man, naturally and environmentally, viz:

Man was created from the earth and he grows from it, that water is a fundamental part of life, and that the Almighty Allah has colonized man in this world, i.e., He entrusted him with the building of it by using its natural resources and its good environmental conditions, so as to understand the power of the Almighty Allah and His blessings to him.

And that the natural environment of this world, like mountains, is meant for protecting the equilibrium of the earth and its living creatures, by production and consumption, which live under the system of life’s equilibrium.

Thus, the rains which fall, the plants which grow, all this is a proof of Allah’s greatness, His power, knowledge and wisdom, and any action of the Wise Knower must be accurately calculated without the least contradiction, and even if it is abused it will act in accordance with the natural system and protect the environmental equilibrium, which, in one way or the other, is evidence of the greatness of the Creator and His wisdom.

Everything in this world and its natural surroundings, such as, water, animals, forest and plants, the aquatic living creatures, solar rays, heat, rain, the salinity of the sea and the sweetness of the rivers, were all created for man, in order to make his life better.

In view of this fact, the Holy Qur'an enjoins man to reflect on the blessings of Allah to him and calls him toward monotheism, thanksgiving and worshipping Him alone. This is how the Holy Qur'an places man in the natural environment as part and parcel of it.

However, after explaining this relationship between life, intellect and nature, the Holy Qur'an discusses the activities, responsibilities and social systems, which protect the well-being of the environment, as well as protecting the divine will of the world of existence under the power of Shari'ah.

### **3. Organization and Natural Equilibrium in the Environment**

The environment world is an accurate and balanced world, which is built on experience, knowledge and wisdom. So, nature, environment and life is a complete and interrelated unit, as if one body. Thus, water and earth, air and weather...etc., are all created with an aim and purpose.

There is nothing created on this earth without aim, or incomplete, or with contradictory aims; glory be to Allah Who created all things, shaped them and made them accurately balanced. Allah has predestined the creation of everything, which is beneficial to the creatures, and life cannot do without them.

Allah's actions are purposive (He does not something without an aim) and that all His actions are based on wisdom.

In view of this, the Ahlul-Bait's (a.s.) school of thought engaged in debate with other Islamic schools of thoughts concerning this controversial issue in the natural, intellectual and social world, which human knowledge and researchers confirm. For further clarification of the Islamic analysis on this issue, we should review ideological books that deal with these two ideological issues:

“Allah's actions are founded on goal and purpose, because He is Wise, and the actions of a wise one must not go against wisdom.

Whoever acts uselessly without a purpose is a foolish and stupid fellow; Allah is far above this.”

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ



***“We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, merely in (idle) sport.” (44:38)***

رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

***“...‘Our Lord! Not for naught have You created (all) this! Glory to Thee!’” (3: 191)***

All this purpose and benefit return not to Almighty Allah, because He stands not in need of anything from His creatures, rather it returns to themselves through the acquisition of Paradise and (Allah’s) contentment, as well as saves them from punishment and loss without the least decrement on the side of Allah, the Almighty, because He is perfect and complete in His essence and from all angles.

But, the Asha‘irite claim that: “It is impossible for Allah to do something for a purpose, and for Him to hurt His servants without any benefit and interest.”<sup>1</sup>

The Asha‘irites have repudiated the principles of finality and misinterpreted the fact that anyone who performs an act for purpose needs that very action, but we have already seen that the purpose and the aim are for the interest of the creatures, and He, the Most High, is too exalted from need.

The Islamic philosopher, Nasirudden Tusi wrote, emphasizing the necessity of interest (maslaha): “The interest may be necessary due to the existence of reason and the absence (non–existence) of what restrains its achievement.” and Allamah Hilli comments on this by saying: “People differ, Abu Ali and Abu Hashim and their companions say, ‘Interest is not necessary for Almighty Allah’, but Balkhi contradicts them saying, ‘It is necessary and this is the path of the people of Baghdad and some people of Basra’, while Abul–Hasan Basri concludes: ‘It is necessary under certain circumstances, but not all circumstances.’ This is so, also, the opinion of the writer.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we can deduce that ideological thought, in Islam, has already confirmed the principle, and this is: The Almighty Allah doesn’t do or create anything in this natural universe or in the human world except with a purpose and interest which returns to man and other creatures.

And, of course, scholars and researchers in different scientific fields have supported this ideological opinion, which, in one way or the other, affirms the authenticity of this opinion and idea. For further elaboration of the matter, let’s quote what the chemist, Thomas David Parkison<sup>3</sup>, wrote: “But the system we are witnessing in our surroundings is not a sign of the power of things, rather, it is above that with wisdom and moving forward toward the establishment of man’s interests, which confirms that the Lord’s concern over His servants is not less than His concern over the systems and laws which govern the universe.”

Have a glance at the perfect wisdom, which is attached to your surroundings, which sometimes contradict the accustomed procedures, for instance, water. Man will expect to see its molecular weight

(18) to be gaseous under the cooling point, and for example, ammonia's molecular weight (17) to be gaseous under the imperfect boiling point (73) in the normal atmosphere, and hydrogen sulfide, which nearly has the same characteristics of water, with the molecular weight of (53), to be gaseous under the imperfect boiling point (53), in view of this, the liquid state of water under the contrast boiling point will confuse man.

In addition to this, water has another important characteristic, which, by merely looking at it, man will understand that it is well planned. Consequently, water covers  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the earth's surface, and in view of this, it has a great effect on the general atmosphere and temperature, which if reduced, a great and undesirable change will occur.

Likewise, water has another precious characteristic, which indicates that the Creator of this universe has designed it in order to serve the interests of His creatures, hence, water is the only known element of which its density decreases when it solidifies, and this feature has a great effect and importance on life.

And so, ice, which floats on the surface of water when temperatures become frigid, instead of sinking, becomes a solid block which will neither melt nor split, therefore ice, in its solid state, which floats on the surface of the river, creates a buffer layer that protects the water under it. With this, the fish and other aquatic creatures will continue their lives and in spring the ice will melt quickly.”<sup>4</sup>

On this part, Dr. Christie Morrison in his book 'Science Calls for Faith' while discussing the natural equilibrium and the coordination between its components, and the accuracy of the environmental system and its perfection, so as to protect the system of life, as well as the greatness of the Creator, wrote: “The thick air, having the necessary magnitude taken from the passing of chemical rays, needed by plants, and which kills microbes and produces vitamins, without the least harm to man, except if he exposes himself to it for long, unnecessary periods, will remain uncontaminated or unpolluted, and without change in its necessary equilibrium toward man's existence. The great equilibrium is that surface of water, i.e., the surrounding of which life, food, rain, balanced climate, plants and man himself grows. Surely, whoever comprehends this, will stand in awe of His greatness, and bow to His command.”

Also, Dr. Lawrence Kolinon Woker, a botanist and physiologist, as well as a lecturer at the University of Georgia, wrote that: “I am writing this article as an expert in forest research, as well as someone who gives great concern to environmental studies and plant physiology, so as to show the importance of the forest as a proof of Allah's existence.”

Furthermore, we will discuss more on that while discussing on the Holy care and Divine power, which is manifested in the restoration of the earth's fertility. In a virgin forest, which undergoes no human activity, the trees increase and their different species grow from generation to generation until their numbers increase; except if man's activities interfere with it, or it is destroyed by fire, or any calamity befalls it.

The interruption by man's activities, however, against the natural forest, its plants and its fertility will lead to the reduction of its fertility, and in the end, we will lose the trees and the soil, which will give way to

the occurrence of floods.”

Then, he adds: “Man spends huge amount of money for constructing big dams in order to prevent the danger of floods, but this is just a temporary solution to this gigantic power which neither stone barriers, nor big buildings can repel. Therefore, it is necessary to find a real solution to this problem from its source and this cannot be achieved through the construction of dams, rather it can only be achieved through afforestation, and this is something which nature, itself, can do.”<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Christie Morrison, while discussing the natural and environmental system between earth, man, plants and animals, wrote: “Surely, the marvelous relationship, which exists between oxygen and carbon dioxide with regard to the animal, as well as, plant worlds, will attract the attention of every sensible person.”

And he continues: “This is how every plant and tree, and likewise, all bryophytes, etc., grow from carbon and water. In addition, atmospheric oxygen is converted to carbon dioxide in animal respiration and regenerated by green plants in photosynthesis. Hence, without this cordial relationship, the life of both the animals and plants will be exhausted, i.e., whenever this life equilibrium changes, the condition of both of them will be completely changed.”<sup>6</sup>

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1. Sayyid Abdullah Shabbar, *Haqqul Yaqin Fi Ma'arifat Usul Al- Din*, vol. 1, pg. 58.

2. *Sharh Tajrid Al-'itiqad*, pg. 270.

3. Dr. Thomas David Parkison, a Chemistry lecturer, holding doctorate degree of the University of Linus and former Head of the Chemistry Department in research institute called Stanford.

4. *Allah Yatajalla Fi Asr Al-Ilm*, Allah Appears in Scientific Era, p. 42.

5. *Ibid.* pg. 62–63.

6. *Al-Ilm Yad'u lil Iman*, ‘Science calls for faith’ by Christie Morrison, translated by Salih Falaki, p. 72.

## 4. What Surprises the Equilibrium System?

“The following fact is a clear example of an important criterion with regard to man’s existence. Some few years back, a type of cactus was planted in Australia and, in no time, this plant covered a large tract of land to the extent that it disturbed the whole community and their farming activities. All efforts to prevent the spread of this plant proved fruitless, and Australia continued to be plagued by this plant.

Consequently, research conducted by some entomologist found that an insect, which cannot live without this cactus, reproduces rapidly, unhindered in the whole of Australia. In no time, this insect invaded and destroyed the cactus. Therefore, this is how this criterion and balance was changed.”<sup>1</sup>

## 5. The Environment and Destructive Practices

A survey and a close look at the natural world and its components, and the relationship, balance and changes that occur in it, will show the wisdom, accuracy and perfection that surrounds it, because, there is nothing created uselessly or to hurt anyone, and even if it harms human beings, it is rather a relative harm, due to the fact that the human being was prohibited from practicing it in the first place.

And often this harmful element is changed by natural processes to be useful to the plants, earth and even to man, himself. Surely, if the natural laws are left to work as they are created by their Creator, they will protect the healthy, natural and environmental beauty and good life for all.

The distribution of water, mountains and forests, and the nature of weather, climate and earth, and the ratio of gases, light rays...etc., works under a well-equipped, interrelated system, as bacteria and dead bodies of animals and plants enter the natural chemical processes in order to be well acquainted with the environmental interests, as well as, ensuring the welfare of the surroundings.

But, when humans, due to ignorance and destructive activities, interrupt and enter the environment system they cause a great damage to this very system. The Holy Qur'an, while elaborating on the environmental, as well as the natural perfection, and likewise, the destructive role of man, says:

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ  
الْفَسَادَ

***“When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle...”(2:205)***

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۗ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ  
قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

***“And 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.”(7:56)***

The Holy Qur'an emphasizes that the earth and all its natural and life components are perfect and healthy; it is man who plays with its perfection and destroys it. In view of this, we see this scenario elaborating on man, in the suitability of the earth in its natural form, as the destructive element to the earth; destroying plants and killing animals and human beings.

Surely, our present world has witnessed the most dreadful kind of corruption on earth and environment, as well as natural destruction which man was enjoined to protect and take care of. Allah creates man from earth as one of its components and commands him to protect it, the Almighty Allah, with emphasis on this responsibility, through Prophet Salih (a.s.) says:

وَالَّذِي تَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۚ هُوَ  
أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ  
مُجِيبٌ

***“To the Thamud people (We sent) Salih, one of their own brethren. He said: ‘O my People! Worship Allah: You have no other god but Him. It is He Who has produced you from the earth and settled you therein: Then ask forgiveness of Him, and turn to Him (in repentance): for my Lord is (always) near, ready to answer.’” (11:61)***

So, this is the Qur'anic warning of the corruption on earth and environmental destruction, as well as the call for building up and protection of its balanced laws. The dreadful, environmental, destructive work of man is manifested in the manufacturing of chemical, nuclear and biological weapons, which cause great damage to the world. Furthermore, his destruction of nature is manifested in cutting down trees and polluting the atmosphere with burning the waste products.

Scientific studies and statistics conducted by archaeologists, show that man's interference in the natural laws by destroying the environment and life, and even those that he thinks are beneficial to him, like using chemical fertilizers and other poisonous substances used to kill large number of insects and plants; all cause great damage to the environment balance and life stability in the world.

The most obvious problem of our present era is pollution, which is caused by domestic industries, as well as wars. Thus, pollution, through the use of carbon and carbon dioxide, and the destruction of the ozone layer or chemical pollution caused by poisonous and harmful chemical substances, or the nuclear pollution, or water pollution by crude oil or man's waste products, or pollution by the use of agricultural fertilizers, like phosphate, nitrate compounds...etc., are all clear proofs and meaning to what the Almighty Allah prohibits in His saying:

## وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا

***“And do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order...”(7:56)***

However, everything in the natural world acts according to the system of purity, perfection and balance. Hence, the natural ration of carbon is fixed and balanced, so plants absorb a large amount of natural carbon dioxide for their growth.

The scientific studies confirm that the average amount of carbon in the natural world is approximately 300 parts in every 10,000 parts of air, but the ratio has increased since 1984 to 345 parts in every 10,000 parts. And this ratio will double its present rate by year 2020 if combustion and burning of forests continue. 1

(We mention, here, that there is great increase in the ratio of Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and this is due to the atmospheric heat of the sun, which can be sensed, as well as bring a great damage in the near future. And this will cause great harm to man and his inventions, forever.)2

In its report on natural destructive practices to the Conference of Earth’s Climax and Human Rights, the Arab League for Human Rights wrote: “Statistics show that 160 thousand poisonous gases are endangering the atmospheric layer in U.S.A. alone. For instance, the U.S. is using 350 million tons of Hydro-floro carbons, which are used in the manufacturing of Air-solate, i.e., the average of 25% of the world’s usage which reaches 1400 million tons. This act, alone, will cause the weakness of the ozone layer.

And at the same time, the developed countries alone, produce 800 thousand tons of toxic waste, which is approximately 30% of the world’s waste products, and later they dispose it off in the Sahara and rivers of underdeveloped countries.”

The League continues in its report that 600 million people live below the poverty line, 100 million Africans are dying from hunger, and 43 million acres of forest are destroyed annually. And also 80% of the world’s population will face disability and difficulties in terms of earth, food or water in the next century. But, upon this painful reality, the general line of earth’s climax put the blame and burden of this natural atmospheric and ozone layer destruction on the poor countries.

In addition to what was mentioned before, the conference shows that the Third world countries import goods from northern countries, which causes environmental pollution. And at the same time, it emphasizes that foreign hands undertake this project in those countries in view of their need for industrial work, lower wages and taxes, crude resources and free, as well as easy laws, where no one will be questioned or forced to protect the environment or face hard penalties for abusing it.

What can these poor countries do to face this drastic problem, in view of their poverty,

underdevelopment and day-to-day problems, and hunger, which inflicts its citizens? Can they overcome their problems alone?

In order to face this dreadful danger, the sum of approximately 600 billion dollars was presumed to be able to cure this problem, but most of the industrial countries refuse to comply with the U.N.'s proposal, which states that the rich countries should sacrifice 7% of their annual income until the year 2000, so as to help the poor countries in their development projects.

But, the organization became more concerned when the American government not only refused to sign the said agreement, rather it also declined to commit itself to decrease carbon dioxide gas products in the environment at the end of this century. And in fact, it emphasizes that these products may increase in the range of 1.7–6% in eight years to come.

Surely, the human activities presently are the causative factors that produce approximately 7.5 million tons of carbon dioxide into the environment, which, without any doubt, is the main factor in the changing of the world's climate and air pollution.

Although the protection of the environment and its safeguarding were regarded as the major and basic factors in the process of economic, as well as social development, human activities, which include deforestation, marine pollution, chemical farming and other modern inventions, turn this biological source, plants, animals and other natural phenomenon to a dangerous stage, which may threaten their very existence.

However, man is alleged to be responsible for the crime of polluting the air, water, and the atmosphere, in general, but, who is this man? Is it the man of Somalia, India, Sudan and Yemen, or that man that is living in America, Canada and Japan?

A closer look and thought on the statistics conducted will throw more light on the importance of the Qur'anic injunction regarding environmental destruction and pollution. And it will also give us a good understanding of the difference between Islamic civilization and Western (material) civilization which threatens environment and human existence, uncovering Islamic legislative tendency and its accurate solution to the social and cultural matters and its concern to man's, as well as the environmental issues.

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1. See "Talawth Mishkilat Al-Asr" by Dr. Ahmad Madhat Salam, pg. 26.

2. Ibid. pg. 31.

## 6. How to Protect the Human Environment?

Protecting the natural and social environment are among the most important Islamic goals of existence, and explaining the sign of its care and concern with human welfare and natural protection, as well as its adherence to the life system, the man's well-being and his continuous existence. This is because the well-being of human species and the living and nonliving things around him, like earth, water and air depends on its protection from pollution and destruction.

Islam has chosen some steps for protecting health and the environment. Some of which are as follows:

1. Enlightening and educating man on how to take care of health and nature, as well as protecting the living creatures on this earth. And this is based on the principle that whatever the Almighty Lord creates is perfect, accurate and is meant for reformation, and there is nothing created in vain and for amusement. Surely, the Qur'an has elaborated on this point, when it says:

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ ۗ صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ سِوَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا يَفْعَلُونَ ۗ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ

***“...the handiwork of Allah Who has made everything in perfect order...”(27:88)***

However, when man becomes egoistic and aggressive, these acts will influence him to destroy the environment and pollute the natural surroundings. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an holds man responsible for environmental pollution, by saying:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

***“Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought...”(30:41)***

And, also, it addresses man and encourages him to protect nature and lead the healthiest of lives, when it says:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا



**“And do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order...”(7:56)**

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ  
الْفَسَادَ

**“When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle...”(2:205)**

2. Exhortation on Purity: The clearest process of protecting the human environment is Islamic guidance toward educating man on purity, cleanliness and the call for purifying the body, clothes, utensils, etc.; the Almighty Lord says:

وَتِيَابِكُمْ فَطَهِّرْ

**“And your garments keep from stain!” (74:4)**

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ  
وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ۗ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ۗ وَإِنْ  
كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ  
تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ

**“...and if you are under an obligation to perform a total ablution, then wash (yourselves)...” (5:6)**

مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

**“...Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you that He may complete His favour on you so that you may be grateful.” (5:6)**

From this, purity and the protecting of the environment against pollution is regarded as Allah’s blessing, and which must be appreciated. From here, we will understand that blessings, for instance, the blessing of health, good life and wealth, etc., are incomplete without the cleanliness of the environment and its

protection against pollution and destruction, because, if not, it will continue to be under the danger and threat of destruction and cessation.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) speaking on health protection, environmental sanitation and the purity of man's surroundings, says, "Surely, your body has a right over you."<sup>1</sup> The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) also says, while elaborating on the importance of protecting nature, "Sweep your courtyard, and don't be like the Jews."<sup>2</sup>

Imam Ali ibn Musa Al-Ridha (a.s.) while talking on purity and cleanliness says, "Purification is among the morals of the prophets."<sup>3</sup> Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari (companion of Holy Prophet) reported the saying of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) on uncleanness, and says: "One day the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) came to us and he saw a man in a shaggy state; his hair uncombed. He (s.a.w.w.) said, "Does not this one have what his hair needs?"<sup>4</sup>

And it was also reported from him (s.a.w.w.) this saying, when he saw another man with dirty clothes, "Does not this one have water to wash his clothes?"<sup>5</sup> Surely, the Islamic thought and civilization is far above others, when it emphasizes that the Almighty Allah wants for His servant a pleasant life and purity, and environment which is not polluted. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) elaborated on this point saying, "Surely Allah is good and He likes goodness; He is Pure and He likes purity."<sup>6</sup>

And while talking about Islam's purity and cleanliness and its call toward environmental sanitation, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) says, "Surely, Islam is pure, therefore be pure, because he can never enter Paradise who is not pure."<sup>7</sup>

3. Prohibiting environmental pollution: As Islam exhorts its followers toward purification, likewise, it prohibits environmental pollution and destruction. On this matter, it was reported from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that he prohibited spitting on the earth, because of its harmful effects on the health, and its contradiction to human nature.

However, as the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) prohibits spitting, he also prohibits and warns against defecating under a fruit tree and urinating in stationary or flowing water and also, on the road, so as to protect the environment from pollution and, also, as a protection to health and purity.

We can outline the importance of this advice if we understand the danger of human waste products to our health and to the environment, especially the role which these contaminants of water play in spreading diseases to the community through drinking, bathing and the fruits which are watered by this water.

It was reported from Imam Al-Sadiq (a.s.) that, "The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) prohibited defecation on the edge of a well, river or under a fruit tree."<sup>8</sup> And it was also reported from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that, "It is prohibited for man to urinate in stationary water..."<sup>9</sup>

And he (a.s.) also quoted the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that he said: “Surely, the Almighty Allah warns you, oh, my (followers) Ummah!, against twenty four things and prohibits you from them,” and he recited them until he said , “He warns against urinating on the edge of a running river.”<sup>10</sup>

4. Prohibition on staying in a state with “Najasah” (unclean things) and their purification: When we read the philosophy of Islamic laws, we will be able to detect the concern and care of these laws toward man’s protection.

The Jurists (Fuqaha) have summarized the philosophy of Islamic laws and analyzed them in a simple formula, i.e., “attracting to the best interest (Masalih) and repelling evil (corruption) (Mafasid).”

Hence, “Masalaha” and “Mafasada” are the two criteria of a particular law and the cause of its legislation. And, of course, at the time of practicing this legislative principle on things which Islamic laws prescribe, like the impurity of some things, and the prohibition of eating and selling them and the necessity of purifying them before praying, one will then understand the value and worth against evil which is harmful to the health.

It is in view of this that the Islamic Shari’a terms the following things as “Najis” and necessitates its purification before praying and circumambulation (Tawaf, ritual circling of the Ka’ba) and they are:

1. Human urine and feces, and likewise, the urine and feces of those animals forbidden for us to eat.
2. The dead body of humans, and animals whose blood gushes out when slaughtered.
3. Human sperm, as well as that of animals whose blood gushes out when slaughtered.
4. Human blood, as well as that of animals whose blood gushes out when slaughtered.
5. Alcoholic liquors.
6. Terrestrial dogs and pigs.

Undoubtedly, the present man’s problem, especially in big cities, is how to get rid of human and animal waste products, as well as their dead bodies. This is because they are the most clear and wide range source of microbes and other dangerous diseases, which afflict man.

However, as the aforementioned “Najasah” were outlined and their role in polluting the environment mentioned, man was also commanded to be free from them, as Almighty Allah says:

مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَليُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

***“...Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you that He may complete His favour on you so that you may be grateful.” (5:6)***

Indeed, whoever makes a close examination and contemplation of these purification laws, will understand that the Islamic purification method is the most perfect system of purification, health and protecting the environment from dirty things and “Najasah”.

It terms water, earth and sun as natural products, dead bodies, blood and semen and some animal waste products. It also regards transformation (Istihala) from a particular state to another, like the transformation of a dead animal to ashes after burning, as among the purifiers.

In addition, the purification method in Islam is composed of different steps, which are among the most perfect processes and environmental protection practices; they are:

A. Islam, after regarding the dead body, blood, semen and waste products of man and some other animals as “Najis”, being confirmed by scientific researches that they are the sources of some diseases and environmental pollution, it commands that their purification and removal from the human’s body and other things like clothes, utensils, carpets, etc., by using water or other purifiers is mandatory. It also legislates the purification of some “Mutanajjisat” (things which become impure through contacting “Najis”) by earth. Through this step, Islam strives towards the purification of the environment and protecting it from the dangers of pollution.

B. Burying a dead body: Islam has made the burying of a human dead body compulsory, which is among the most important steps in getting rid of microbes and diseases, as well as, protecting the human environment against pollution.

C. Bathing: Islam has legislated different types of bathing (Ghusl) for cleaning man and protecting his body from dirty things and other sources of diseases, thereby, making some compulsory (Wajib) “Ghusl” and others recommended (Mustahab). The compulsory ones are:

1. Ghusl Al-Janabah: It is obligatory (Wajib) on a “Junub” (a person who has Janabah—in a state of ritual impurity due to sexual intercourse or ejaculation) to clean himself from it through ritual bathing to ready the self for prayer (Salat) and to be in a state of impurity to have a valid fast (Sawm).<sup>11</sup> Islam has made it “Makruh” (undesirable) for a “Junub” to sleep without performing Ghusl, and likewise, eating and drinking without Ghusl in this state.

2. Ghusl al-Haidh<sup>12</sup>

3. Ghusl al-Istihadhah<sup>13</sup>

4. Ghusl-e-Mass-e-Mayyit<sup>14</sup>

5. Ghusl an-Nifas<sup>15</sup>

The “Mustahab Ghusl”, which Islam exhorts people to perform, are many, but the most important one is: The Friday “Ghusl”, which is the weekly “Ghusl” for safeguarding the purity of the body.

D. Ablution (Wudhu): Ablution, in the Islamic perspective, is the most clear method of actualizing man’s daily purification. Islam has made five daily prayers incumbent upon all Muslims, (starting from 9 years for girls and 15 for boys) and those prayers cannot be said unless in a state of ablution, thus, one has to clean himself every day five times or at least three times daily, because prayer, whether compulsory or recommended, will not become valid without ablution.

Consequently, ablution is regarded as purification because it considers washing the face and hands compulsory and rinsing the mouth and drawing water into nostrils as recommended acts. As Islam legislates the compulsory ablution, likewise, it exhorts on being in a state of purity when performing some recommended acts of worship like reading the Holy Qur’an, and it also recommends performing ablution before sleeping.

E. Cleaning furniture and other household appliances: Islam’s concern and care for environment, its cleanliness and its protection can be seen through its command of prohibiting the eating and drinking of “najis” and “Mutanajjis” things. Therefore, it becomes compulsory on one who wants to eat or drink from a plate or cup that has become “najis” to purify it with water or, in some instances water with earth, before using it. Surely, the jurisprudence books have discussed how to purify these items when they come in contact with “najis” (for details, please refer to books regarding this subject).

5. Prohibiting some foods and drinks and some other practices, like eating dead animals, drinking blood, liquor and using unlawful drugs, which serve as destructive elements to the health, as well as, polluting the well-being of the society.

6. Prohibiting illegal sexual relations; like adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, masturbation, etc...

7. Creating the concepts of “no injury and no malicious damage” (La Dharara Wa La Dhirara) With this great legal concept or principle which gives the right of freezing and blocking any act or practice which has any harmful result, we can say that Islam has prohibited everything which is harmful to the environment. So, it is left for the experts and religious scholars or in other words, it is their responsibility to specify those harmful acts, items and practices. Afterwards, it may become the responsibility of the government to prohibit the use of those harmful items and activities, so as to protect the well-being and peaceful coexistence of their citizens.

8. The responsibility of “enjoining the good and prohibiting evil” (al-Amru bil ma’rufi wan Nahayi anil Munkar): the injunction of “Amru Bil Ma’rufi Wan Nahayi Anil Munkar” and, likewise, the right and jurisdiction given to a ruler by Islam for the smooth discharging of his duties, forms a good reformative atmosphere in the Islamic society. And comprises all the necessary requirements which can guarantee the protection of the environment and its development for the interest of man. Thus, the Islamic laws are based on this formula:

*“Attracting interests and repelling corruption”.*

And that the principle of “and help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression” is a broad foundation of environmental protection and preserving the natural system. Because the verse prohibits aggression on nature and life and also calls for a collective relationship toward good and reformation.

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1. Ibn Qayyim Jawziyya Al-Amthal Fi Al-Qur'an Al-Karim, pg.78, Darul Ma'rifa –Beirut.
  2. Al-Kafi by Kulaini, vol. 6, pg. 531.
  3. Tuhf Al-Uqul an Aal Al-Rasul by Harrani, The Sermons of Imam Ridha (a.s.).
  4. Sunan Abi-Dawud, vol. 4, pg. 51.
  5. Ibid.
  6. Sahih Tirmidhi, vol. 10, pg. 240.
  7. Kanzul Ummal by Muttaqi Hindi, vol. 9, pg. 277 and 278, Hadith No. 26001 and 26007, published by Al-Risala Foundation, Beirut in 1979.
  8. Was'il Al-Shi'a by Hurr Amili, vol. 1, the book of Taharah, pg. 228, Dar Ihyah Al-Turahth Al-Arabi.
  9. Ibid., pg. 241.
  10. Ibid., pg. 229.
  11. There are juristic details on the laws of Ghusl concerning fasting and also on the laws of a menstruating woman, or who is vaginally bleeding (Istihadha) or the blood after childbirth (Nifas).
  12. Ghusl Al-Haidh is a “Ghusl” which is compulsory upon a woman to perform after the stopping of normal menstruation.
  13. Gusl Al-Istihadha is a “Ghusl” which is compulsory upon a woman who vaginally bleeds other than “haidh” and “nifas”.
  14. It is a compulsory “Ghusl” which a person must perform, when he or she touches a corpse before it has been duly washed.
  15. It is a “Ghusl” which is compulsory upon a woman who has had a baby and after the stoppage of the delivery blood.

## 7. The Plant Environment

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً ۖ لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ

يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ  
لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

*“It is He Who sends down rain from the sky: From it ye drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation*

***on which ye feed your cattle. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes, and every kind of fruit: Verily in this is a sign for those who give thought.” (16: 10–11)***

In our previous discussion, we have offered the opinions and outlooks of some experts and researchers in the field of plants and forests, and the plant’s relationship with the environmental balance and well-being. Likewise, we have shown the role played by plants in man’s and animal’s lives, not in the realm of clothes, medicine or food, rather in organizing the natural environment and its balance.

The importance of arranging the ratio of oxygen and carbon dioxide, as well as, fighting and stopping floods and rectifying the atmosphere and renewing the fertility of the soil, have, also been pointed out.

Plants are the third living creature in this world and the first producing creature, therefore, plants are man’s and animal’s companions. In this regard, the Holy Qur’an in different places talks about plants, crops, trees and arable land, as well as, plant’s environment and the relationship between man and plants.

The Islamic message encourages the act of farming and planting trees and prohibits the cutting and removing of trees during war, as some aggressive rulers practiced in their time, due to their aggressive behavior. So, Islam calls for protecting the plant’s environment and encourages the planting of trees and farming, so as to preserve the environmental sanity of the society.

Rather, Islam regards the act of planting trees and preserving the earth as an act of worship and a charity for the doer as an act that conforms with the companionship of man and animals with the plants. Allah has made it clear, saying:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ ۗ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

***“He brought you into being from the earth, and made you dwell in it.” (11: 16)***

Also, in the Prophetic Hadith, it is narrated from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that, “No Muslim will grow a plant or sow a crop, that birds, animals or man eat from it, unless he has a reward for it.”<sup>1</sup> “No man will grow a plant unless Allah writes a reward for him, as much as the fruit that grows from it.”<sup>2</sup>

Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) further emphasizes on farming or planting when he says, “If one of you has a palm seedling and can sow it before he rises up on the Day of Judgement, then, he should do so.” And, it was reported from Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that, “A Muslim will not grow a plant and man or animal or bird eat of it, unless he has a reward for that.”<sup>3</sup>

Ibn Umar says; “We were in the presence of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) when a date pit was brought,

then, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said, ‘Indeed, among the trees, there is a tree which is like a Muslim’, and I wanted to say it is a palm tree, but when I looked around I found that I was the youngest among the people there. Then, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said, ‘It is a date palm tree.’”<sup>4</sup>

So, this is how the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) made farming and concern for the protection of the farming environment for the benefit of man and animals as an act of worship, as well as, a charity (Sadaqah), and on the other hand, compares a date palm tree to a Muslim who serves a great benefit to the community.

While discussing the issue of crime and aggression against life, the Holy Qur’an condemns the destroyers of the animal’s, plant’s and man’s environment, and rather, terms the aggression an act against humanity, because, aggression against the sources of man’s life is an aggression against that person. Concerning this the Holy Qur’an says,

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ  
الْفَسَادَ

***“When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle...”(2:205)***

In this verse, the Holy Qur’an compares the destruction of plants and animals with corruption in the earth, and regards it as an aggression against the system of life, as well as an evil which must be wiped out. So, from here, we can see how the principles of Islamic law and its ideologies correspond with the natural laws and life’s balanced system. These two points will show Allah’s wisdom and will in His legislation and creation.

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1. Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 3, Bab Fadhi Al-Zari’ Wa Al-Gharis, Chapter on the merit of cultivation and planting, pg. 135.

2. Ahmad Bin Hanbal, vol. 5, pg. 440.

3. Ibid., pg. 192.

4. Ibid., vol. 2 pg. 12.

## 8. Protecting the Animal Environment



إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

**“Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the Night and the Day; in the sailing of the ships through the Ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise.” (2:164)**

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّمٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ ۚ مَا فَرَطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ

**“There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end.” (6:38)**

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ۚ كُلُّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

**“There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on Allah: He knows the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit: All is in a clear Record.” (11:6)**

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالْدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُكْرِمٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۚ

**“See you not that to Allah bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth,-- the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the trees, the animals; and a great number among**

mankind?” (22:18)

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ صَافَّاتٍ ۗ كُلٌّ قَدْ  
عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ

“See you not that it is Allah whose praises all beings in the heavens and on the earth do celebrate, and the birds (of the air) with wings outspread? Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise.” (24:41)

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ۗ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ  
وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا

“...There is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet you understand not how they declare His glory!” (17:44)

وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا ۗ لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ

“And cattle He has created for you (men): From them you derive warmth, and numerous benefits, and of their (meat) you eat. And you have a sense of pride and beauty in them as you drive them home in the evening, and as you lead them forth to pasture in the morning.” (16:5-6)

وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً ۗ وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show; and he has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge.” (16:8)

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً ۗ لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ

يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ  
لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

***“It is He Who sends down rain from the sky: From it ye drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation on which ye feed your cattle. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes, and every kind of fruit: Verily in this is a sign for those who give thought.” (16: 10-11)***

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

***“And He has set up on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and rivers and roads; that you may guide yourselves;” (16: 15)***

وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ

***“And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors (and qualities): Verily in this is a Sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude).” (16: 13)***

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا  
وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاحِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

***“It is He Who has made the sea subject, that you may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender, and that you may extract therefrom ornaments to wear; and you see the ships therein that plough the waves, that you may seek (thus) of the bounty of Allah and that you may be grateful.” (16: 14)***

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

***“If you would count up the favours of Allah, never would you be able to number them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (16: 18)***

In this collection of verses, the Holy Qur’an describes the environment in a marvelous way, and joins its different components; viz., man, earth, air, atmosphere, rivers, seas, rain, clouds, plants, animals, birds,

fishes, etc., in one circumstance and a perfect, as well as, complex formation serving a particular and interrelated purpose. Hence, all this is meant for the interest and welfare of man, and for the protection of the environment.

In this connection, the Holy Qur'an warns and cautions those who destroy and pollute the environment, thus:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۚ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

***“And do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order...”(7:56)***

In another instance, the Holy Qur'an describes those who spread corruption on the earth and play with the life system on land, as well as in the sea, as wicked and evil people; the Holy Qur'an states:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

***“Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought...”(30.41)***

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ  
الْفَسَادَ

***“When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle...”(2:205)***

Indeed, from these above verses, we will be able to understand Islam's concern towards the animal world, as well as for all the living environment. It addresses man and presents him with major formula on how to live with the other creatures who live in the same environment as himself in order to be able to put them at his service and disposal; however, by Allah's permission. The Holy Qur'an describes this issue by saying,

لِتَسْتَوُوا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَانَ  
الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ

***“In order that you may sit firm and square on their backs, and when so seated, you may celebrate the (kind) favour of your Lord, and say, ‘Glory to Him Who has subjected these to our (use), for we could never have accomplished this (by ourselves).’” (43:13)***

In the same light, though, the Holy Qur’an describes the animal world as an independent world, which has its own system, laws, social formations and relationship between its subject, as well as its Lord, as its also has its system of relation with man, plants and the material world. The Holy Qur’an describes this by saying,

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمٌّ أَمْثَالِكُمْ ۗ مَا فَرَطْنَا فِي  
الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ

***“There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you.” (6:38)***

Therefore, animals are also creatures like us, which have their own special animalistic systems and until now, man has been unable to discover from them but only a little knowledge. The Holy Qur’an portrays animals as creatures who know their Lord, go toward Him and have their own prayers, Tasbeeh, and prostration that correspond with their existence, although man has been unable, for the most part, to detect this.

And like man, animals have their own wealth in the natural world, which is only meant for them by the Almighty Allah. In addition, Allah, through His grace and blessings, has created animals for the service of man, where he gets food from their meat and by-products, uses their hair and waste products (for clothing and agricultural purposes) and uses them for riding, transportation and cultivation of land and also keeps them as a source of beauty, decoration and wealth for himself.

Thus, the Holy Qur’an places the animal world side by side with the human world, so as to live with this creature as part of his environment, but he is responsible for its protection and care. This is why Islam prohibits aggression and wickedness toward animals needlessly, except at the time of need. This is because the right and superiority given to man over animals is so that he should use them with kindness and leniency.

Hence, the Islamic laws warn against harming and hurting animals or their environment, such as destroying their grazing land or killing them; with the exception of those that are harmful to man, where,

when necessary, killing them will serve as a saving of one's health and self, for instance, snakes, scorpions, etc.

It is narrated that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) warns against the killing of bees and the eating of wild donkeys. It was said that the prohibition of eating wild donkeys was to prevent their extinction. In another tradition, it prohibits catching birds from their nests at night or taking them before they are fully grown and have not learnt to fly.

This is because the Islamic principles respect the law of environmental balance between man and animals, thus, the animals have the right to depend on and protect themselves from any intruder by running or flying away, but in the above-mentioned condition they cannot depend on themselves as expected.

Consequently, the law which we have mentioned earlier, i.e., the law of “La Dharara Wa La Dhirara” has an overwhelming effect in the field of protecting and preserving the animal environment. Like the prohibition of hunting birds, animals and fishes in their reproductive season, or the prohibition of throwing poisonous substances into the rivers so as to kill aquatic animals, or the prohibition of destroying trees and crops, as well as the prohibition of causing or spreading corruption in the earth.

From this Qur'anic description, we can detect Islamic views and opinions towards animals and our responsibility toward this universe and how we should live with it. We have already seen this Prophetic Tradition which states, “No Muslim will grow a plant or sow a crop, that birds, animals, or man eat from it, unless he has a reward (Sadaqah) for it.”

So, this means that man is rewarded for whatever good deed he performs, like protecting another man, or any other animal. This shows the Islamic concern and encouragement toward protection and preservation of animals, in that the animals, also, have their own rights and wealth, as these verses clearly state,

كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَامَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَىٰ

***“Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: Verily, in this are signs for men endowed with understanding.” (20:54)***

وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ

***“And fruits and fodder, for use and convenience for you and your cattle.” (80:31-32)***

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ۗ كُلٌّ فِي  
كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

***“There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on Allah.” (11:6)***

Thus, in the Islamic point of view (Shari‘ah) of protecting animals and feeding them, it is a charity (Sadaqah) and killing animals cruelly and hurting them is a prohibited action (which has its own severe punishment).

On the other hand, the Islamic laws have prohibited the mutilation of animal’s bodies and changing their shape, like cutting off their ears, castrating them, etc., whether done by hand or by the use of modern equipment and instruments. Allah has cursed the devil who deceives man, prompting him to carry out this aggressive act, and Almighty Allah, while narrating Satan’s wiles against man, says,

وَالضَّلَانَةَ وَالْمُنِيبِينَ وَالْمُرْتَدِّينَ فَلْيَبِيتْكُمْ أَذَانَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَلَا مَرْنَهُمْ فَلْيَغْيِرَنَّ خُلُقَ اللَّهِ ۗ  
وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُبِينًا

***“I will order them to slit the ears of cattle, and to deface the (fair) nature created by Allah.***

***Whoever, forsaking Allah, takes Satan for a friend, hath surely suffered a loss that is manifest.”***  
**(4:119)**

Indeed, through these texts, laws and concepts, we are able to understand the Islamic principles which call for the protection of animals and their environment.

## **9. The Government and Environmental Protection**

Islam terms government as a political power responsible for the protection of its citizen’s welfare, as well as planning and executing their affairs.

This guidance or protection is comprised of all their different endeavors, politically, financially, socially and health wise...etc., in order to preserve the system of life, which includes wealth, personality, mind and body.

The Islamic scholars summarized this concept as a major component in the Islamic social system, and it has a more extensive and universal principle, which is this: Islam came in order to protect man's interests and repel corruption on earth. Likewise, these principles work towards organizing natural laws, the law of "La Dharara Wa La Dhirara", which is a Prophetic text that works in man's legislative life.

Therefore, there are intellectual, as well as legislative rules or principles which empower the government, on one hand, and on the other hand, oblige it toward environmental protection, and these are: "La Dharara Wa La Dhirara" Islam came in order to protect man's interests and repel corruption from the earth.

The Islamic government is responsible for the protection of its citizen's welfare and their general interests, as the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said, "The leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock." According to these principles, a government, in the Islamic point of view, is responsible for preserving the environment, as well as protecting nature, because the preservation of man's environment and likewise, the animal, plant and natural environment is the most clear aspect of man's material life.

Thus, these intellectual and legislative rules empower the Islamic government to prohibit the cutting of forests, or destroying fruit trees, or hunting animals where their number is less, so as to preserve their existence...etc.

It is also responsible for preventing or prohibiting any act which is harmful to the environment, like using poisonous and toxic substances, or which carry dangerous and contagious microbes, or like building industries which cause pollution inside the city and deposit human and animal waste products near human habitations and communities.

Because all these are harmful and destructive to the life system and spread corruption on the earth after it was well-planned and built, the Holy Qur'an prohibits this, in this statement:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۚ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

***"And do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order..."(7:56)***

PRAISE BE TO ALLAH, THE LORD OF THE WORLDS

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**Source URL:** <https://www.al-islam.org/environmental-protection-islamic-shariah>

**Links**



- [1] <https://www.al-islam.org/user/login?destination=node/45486%23comment-form>
- [2] <https://www.al-islam.org/user/register?destination=node/45486%23comment-form>
- [3] <https://www.al-islam.org/organization/world-islamic-network-win>
- [4] <https://www.al-islam.org/library/general-education-society>
- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/library/politics-current-affairs>
- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/library/general-laws-worship>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/environment>
- [8] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/islamic-law>