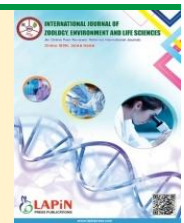




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Review Article

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ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: PROPHETIC PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSERVATION

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Abstract:

Environmental stewardship, defined as the responsible management and care for the environment, is deeply embedded within religious teachings. In today's world, the urgency of this principle has intensified as unsustainable practices have led to widespread ecological degradation. Islam, with its holistic guidance encompassing all facets of life, offers profound insights into environmental stewardship. This review paper examines the perspectives on sustainability and conservation derived from prophetic teachings, demonstrating how these enduring principles can address contemporary environmental challenges. The Quran and Hadith emphasize the necessity of a balanced, respectful relationship with nature, positioning humans as stewards (khalifah) of the Earth, entrusted with its care and preservation. Protecting the environment is essential to maintaining the delicate balance of life, as highlighted by the Quranic principle of humanity's guardianship over nature and the Hadith stating, "The earth is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you His stewards over it." The current global environmental crisis, exacerbated by globalization, economic competition, and political conflicts, underscores the need to revisit and integrate Islamic environmental teachings. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations in 2015 align with Islam's strong commitment to environmental protection, reflecting the timeless relevance of the Prophet Muhammad's environmental practices. This paper concludes that integrating prophetic teachings into modern environmental discourse offers a holistic approach to tackling the urgent ecological issues of our time, effectively bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and contemporary environmental stewardship.

Keywords: Environmental stewardship; Islamic teachings; Quranic principle; Sustainability

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1. Introduction

The global environmental crisis is among the most formidable challenges currently faced by the society. It is characterized by a range of interconnected problems, such as climate change, deforestation, and the loss of biodiversity, all of which jeopardize the stability and sustainability of life on Earth.

Climate Change is arguably the most urgent facet of this crisis. Largely fueled by the combustion of fossil fuels and the release of greenhouse gases, it has resulted in rising global temperatures, altered weather patterns, and a growing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. The ramifications of climate change are extensive,

impacting food security, water availability, and human health, while also worsening social and economic disparities.

Deforestation represents another significant challenge, greatly influencing both climate change and the decline of biodiversity. Forests serve as important carbon sinks by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; however, deforestation—often driven by agricultural expansion, logging, and urban development—reduces this ability. Furthermore, it results in the destruction of habitats, jeopardizing countless species with extinction and disrupting ecosystems that are crucial for maintaining the planet's ecological balance.

Biodiversity Loss constitutes another significant aspect of the environmental crisis. The Earth is currently facing an unprecedented rate of species extinction, caused by habitat destruction, pollution, climate change, and the over-exploitation of natural resources. This decline in biodiversity not only detracts from the natural beauty of our world but also weakens the resilience of ecosystems that provide essential services for human survival, such as pollination, water purification, and disease regulation.

The interconnection of these issues underscores the necessity for comprehensive solutions. However, tackling these challenges demands more than technological advancements and policy reform; it calls for a fundamental transformation in our perception and interaction with the natural world. This is where ethical frameworks become crucial.

Ethical frameworks grounded in religious, cultural, and philosophical traditions can provide valuable insights for reevaluating our relationship with the environment. These frameworks highlight principles such as stewardship, responsibility, and justice, encouraging us to act not solely for immediate gains but for the long-term welfare of all living beings.

The concept of sustainability, which is frequently defined as making sure that the demands of the current generation are satisfied without sacrificing the necessities and wants of future generations, is the cornerstone of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By 2015, all of the member countries of the organization had embraced it. Religion affirms that humans and the environment are interdependent. It is reasonable to seek the assistance of religion in order to rectify, repair, and ensure the long-term health of the environment. A person's religious beliefs can influence their actions and behaviors in a positive or negative way anywhere in the world. Creating a framework that enables individuals to apply the timeless wisdom of all spiritual traditions to their everyday lives is vital. To protect and preserve the ecosystem, scientists should work with environmentalists and religious authorities. Islam emphasizes that humans and the environment are interdependent. It seems sense to mobilize religious support in efforts to repair, restore, and safeguard the environment's long-term health.

Islam is a holistic way of life that touches on every facet of human existence, not just a religion that preaches about spirituality and morally upright behavior. It provides thorough guidelines on even the smallest issues of daily living, such as what to eat and sleep. Over time, scientists have also verified that the advice provided by Islam regarding these matters is likewise scientifically accurate. Islam provides substantial instruction on environmental conservation, given its all-encompassing guidance on life's dimensions. The significance of protecting the Earth and promoting a harmonious and considerate relationship with nature is emphasized throughout the Quran and Hadith.

2. Environmental Sustainability in the Light of Islamic Doctrine

Tawheed, or the oneness of God, is one of the main tenets of the Islamic faith. It recognizes the presence of a single, all-powerful Creator who bears responsibility for every action taken by man. According to the Qur'an, All that is in the heaven and on earth belongs to Him because God encompasses everything (4:126). Allah maintains the division between day and night, creates the rain, preserves the heavens, and commands the waters to flow upon the ground. He is the owner of the entire cosmos, which is rich and lovely because he created everything. Verse upon verse in the foundational book of Islam, the Al-Qur'an, strives to establish equilibrium and harmony between individuals and their environment. The fundamental themes of the Qur'an portray a coexisting universe and humanity, reinforcing humanity's intrinsic bond with the natural world. He is the one who makes gardens, both tamed and wild, palm trees, different kinds of crops, and different and comparable kinds of olives and pomegranates. Significant insights from the Qur'an and the Sunnah and traditions of the Prophet closely correspond with the requirements for living an eco-friendly life. Based on a careful reading of the Quranic texts, it can be concluded that the universe and our surroundings are proof of God's creation. Their similar ancestry and shared objective—doing God's will—unite them. Islamic beliefs hold that all living things, not just people, are made of the basic components of nature: earth, water, fire, wood, and light.

Islam underscores the importance of preserving the environment and its resources. Scholars like Samira Idlallène suggest that Islam can offer practical and comprehensive solutions to current environmental issues if Muslim scholars employ independent legal reasoning (Gabe Ignatow, 2007; Hasan, 2020; Idlallène, 2021; Shihatah, 2001). The principles and goals of the UN's agenda align closely with those of Islam, especially regarding responsible consumption and production, and the elimination of poverty and hunger (Agenda Goals 1, 2, and 12). Hadiths advocate for the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources and prohibit their wasteful use. According to the Qur'an, protecting the environment is both a moral and a civic duty. The idea of guardianship is the oldest Islamic doctrine that places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability. To be called the caliph or "guardian" suggests that one can respect creation without going too far because it is not just for him but also for society and future generations. He has to take all the required precautions and measures to ensure that these properties are maintained and protected and that he can successfully pass them on to future generations.

The principles of rationalization in consumption through moderation, moderation in all actions, and subsequently sustainability are highlighted in the Islamic approach to environmental preservation. As it says in the Qur'an: "O

Children of Adam!" Every time you attend a place of worship, dress appropriately. Consume food and liquids, but do not waste. He certainly does not like wasteful behavior. Q. 7: 31. He is the one who supplies gardens, both cultivated and wild, and palm trees, crops of diverse flavors, olives, and pomegranates, which are similar "in shape" but dissimilar "in taste," the Almighty opposes excess in the Qur'an. Pay your harvest dues, eat the fruit they produce, but don't waste. He detests wasteful behavior without a doubt. Q. 6: 141. The Holy Qur'an verse that follows is supposed to depict the negative effects of disobedience, such as pain and natural calamities on land and at sea. The Qur'an foretells the several kinds of environmental and mental pollution that humanity will produce in the future, according to Masri (1992): Mischief has emerged on land and at sea as a result of what is gained, so that (Allah) may give them a taste of order so they might turn back (from Evil). This is done to help them turn away from evil. 30:41 Qur'an (30:41) The Holy Qur'anic verse above restates the harm that mankind have caused to their own surroundings. It highlights how dangerous it is to damage the environment and how important it is to protect nature and refrain from causing harm to it in order to maintain it. However, Islam grants man the authority to control nature because nature is a gift to him. He is the one who ends up being God's most cherished species, so he shouldn't abuse his authority (Rahman 1980)(Guillaume, 1954). In the Islamic faith, man is considered the most noble of all creatures and is considered to be God's Caliph or "vice-regent" on earth, delegating divine authority (Canan 1995; Izz-Dien 2000). The heavens and the earth were constructed for him by the Almighty, who also handed it to him to rule over.

3. The Prophet's Advocacy for Ecological Balance

Prophet Muhammad first and foremost had a holistic approach to the environment. Its beliefs are based on the notion that all natural elements are inherently interrelated and dependent on one another, and that the natural world would suffer if man misused or depleted any one of them. The cornerstones of the Prophet's philosophy of nature are the teachings of the Quran and the concepts of stewardship, trust, and oneness. Tawheed, or the oneness of God, is one of the main tenets of the Islamic faith. It recognizes the presence of a single, all-powerful Creator who bears responsibility for every action taken by man. What the Qur'an means is this: All that is in the heavens and on earth belongs to Him because God encompasses everything (4:126).

The prophet Muhammad held that all living things, including land, forests, and bodies of water, should have rights because all of God's creations are equal in his eyes. As a result, mistreating any of God's creation—a live being or a natural resource—is unacceptable. The Prophet claimed that there were other purposes for which the cosmos and all of its living things—plants, animals, water, and land—were created in addition to humans. Although man is able to utilize resources, he is never allowed to possess them. Islam

therefore restricts property ownership even if it permits it. For example, a landowner must continue to use their land in order to maintain their ownership; otherwise, they forfeit it. Istanbul, which was awash in countless candles and oil lights. During the Ottoman Empire, Sinan, a creative engineer and architect, came up with a recycling technique in which the smoke was directed into a different chamber and the soot was used as writing ink. Water conservation was commonplace in Islamic Spain, where rainwater was collected from ceramic-tiled roofs and sent through a network of pipes to be stored underground in cisterns. Prophet Muhammad (s) addressed about cleansing in general, which includes cleaning one's surroundings and one's body both internally and externally. True believers have an obligation to pursue all forms of purification. This Hadeeth says that if one does not keep one's surroundings and body clean, one cannot be said to have complete Islamic belief (Eeman). Ceremonial bathing, also known as ablution, has several advantages. It purifies the body and protects against infections brought on by bacteria or viruses. Pollution of the environment can be avoided by cleaning up nature. To maintain their accessibility, natural resources must be safeguarded while encouraging growth. The prophet never stops telling his people how much God values beauty and how much He appreciates it." It is declared of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that "cleanliness is half of faith."

The hallmark of a believer is cleanliness, both on the inside and the outside. He had been kicked "He who goes to bed at night with soiled hands should only blame himself, (if he falls ill)"

The preservation of natural resources, the humane treatment of animals, sustainable land usage, and overall environmental protection were all very important to Prophet Muhammad (Musa, 2002). Basically, a lot of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad support and encourage environmental sustainability.

Prophet Muhammad emphasized the need of exercising moderation, abstaining from excess, and preserving resources when it came to natural resources. Furthermore, the Prophet believed that continuous charitable works included cleaning rivers, drilling wells, and other advantageous jobs (Morsi 1999, pp. 9–11). Prophet Muhammad may have been the one to popularize the idea of "protected areas" and the conservation techniques that are now more commonly employed. In order to preserve the land, the forests, and the wildlife, he established the protected areas known as al-aram (preservation possession) and al-imĒ (a preservation area for environmental protection). It is thought that Prophet Muhammad created preservation zones south of Medina.

He outlawed hunting in some regions and during certain hours, and he made it unlawful to cut down trees and other vegetation within a 12-mile radius. The creation of these protected areas is evidence of the Prophet's belief in the value of maintaining agriculture, the environment, and natural resource management through sustainable

practices (Safa 2010; Shihadah 2005, p. 22). Islam prohibits the use of the environment for unethical or excessive purposes, especially in times of conflict.

4. Sustaining the Earth through Responsible Actions

For what actions is the environment responsible? Does God have to answer for it? Is it the surroundings that are at fault? Or are those who possess the authority to utilize all natural resources for personal gain responsible? Islam maintains that the natural environment is ultimately the responsibility of the individuals who inhabit and utilize it. According to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), "Everyone is a guardian, and he will be questioned on this subject."

The prophet Muhammad (s) emphasized that men should proceed with extreme caution when handling everything that comes from this world. Man will not destroy and deface the natural resources if he truly understands his environmental obligations.

Overuse of Natural Resources

The Prophet forbids taking more water than is absolutely necessary. Whether you are performing ablution from a vast water reservoir, a gushing spring, or a place next to a river, he says it is forbidden in Islam to use water to wash a specific region of your body more than three times. According to the Prophet Muhammad (s), it is over the top. In fact, it is against the environmental conservation mandate of the prophetic law for humans to do anything that jeopardizes the structural and biological integrity of water, including improper use, extravagant use, and pollution with urine or other soiled materials. Because of man's careless actions, nature is no longer suitable for his use, which is the main cause of environmental problems. Man is therefore lured against man. The prophetic lessons about not urinating in still water provide an excellent approach for keeping the water clean.

Animal Welfare

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) believed that as animals are an integral part of the ecosystem, they should be treated with the decency and respect that they deserve. In his journeys and battles, he had considered horses and camels to be valiant comrades. Therefore, prophetic teaching holds that mankind and animals should have appropriate environmental interactions. Islam prohibits the slaughter of animals unless they are necessary for food; nevertheless, in extreme cases, only certain animals may be killed when they pose a threat to human safety.

Islam allows hunting, but only in dire circumstances. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could not stand it when any animal was killed needlessly. Prophet Muhammad (s) reacted when he saw the mother bird's emotions because, more than any other environmentalist, he understood the link between mother birds and their offspring.

Prophet is a trailblazer in preserving the environment. The Quran and the Holy Hadeeths contain several references to concepts like "sustainable development," "ecology," "water conservation," and "environmental

awareness." He espoused the belief that natural resources are a gift from God Allah to humanity. Furthermore, males have no right to abuse or overuse these natural resources. Second, because of Prophet Muhammad, men are now responsible for the environment (PBUH). His character will also be questioned. This little-discussed ideology is absent from all other academic publications and faiths. The majority of species would still be here today, and the planet would have remained clean and habitable if people had thought about their responsibility for all living and non-living creatures in their surroundings. In addition to encouraging the wise use of fertile land, Prophet Muhammad also imparted to his disciples the advantages of turning land into a productive asset: sowing a seed, watering dry soil, and planting a tree are all altruistic deeds. A tract of "dead" or arid land is thus claimed as their own by anyone who waters it.

Muhammad (s) had issued a warning about contaminated land, water, or air. He had also imparted wisdom on how to care for animals and plant as many trees as one could. Because of these high environmental standards, we can see Prophet as a bright scientist, ecologists, and pioneer of environmental protection during a period with minimal scientific instrument and technical innovation. Therefore, individuals who invest a great deal of money in environmental conservation need to remember the lofty principles of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and work to ensure that these qualities are respected everywhere. The prophet Muhammad advocated for a biological and ecological balance between man and nature, but that equilibrium has nearly completely disappeared today.

Conclusion

Islam emphasizes that caring for the environment is a divine requirement and that environmental management is a duty. One can help create a more sustainable and peaceful world by upholding the Islamic values of moderation, conservation, and balance. The lessons included in the Quran and Hadith offer a timeless framework for protecting the environment and exhort believers to treat all of creation with justice and compassion.

In a time when environmental issues are constantly apparent, Islamic teachings can provide insightful direction for creating a sustainable future. It is essential that we accept our responsibility as stewards of the world and work to safeguard it for the benefit of all living things as well as future generations. Everyone has the power to uphold the trust placed in them and create a society that is healthier and more sustainable by acting with faith.

Conflict of Interest

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