

What is the environment?

Our environment includes all the things around us, including the air, water, trees, plants and animals. You may have heard from school and other places about the importance of taking care of our environment. This is also an important concept in Islam. In this lesson, we will discuss some of the ways we can help the environment and the importance of the environment in Islam.

THE BENEFITS OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

Can you imagine what would happen if the grass was black? What if the clouds were red and the sky green? Everything in our environment is made of peaceful colours so that when we are feeling down or depressed we can go out and appreciate nature and this will lift our mood. This is one benefit of our peaceful and harmonious environment that Allah (SWT) has made for us.

Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an:

“And whatsoever He has created for you on this earth of varying colours. Verily! In this is a sign for people who remember” (16:13)

The above verse highlights another benefit of the environment, plant and animal life. Let's look at the trees as an example.

Humans produce & breathe out carbon dioxide. This is a gas which makes air dirty. Trees 'breathe in' this gas and 'clean it' before sending it back out to the environment as clean oxygen, which we can then use again. Without the trees doing this, we would suffocate and get sick from all the carbon dioxide. If

Objectives

Students should:

- Discuss the meaning of environment and some of its benefits
- Discuss the importance of the environment in Islam
- Discuss some ways we can help the environment

That is why we should not cut down trees and should in fact take care of them – it is all for our own safety and wellbeing.

ISLAM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Taking care of the environment is our duty as Muslims. It has been commanded to us by Prophets and also by Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an. The following examples show the importance of the environment in Islam:

- The first thing that Prophet Ṣāleh (as) told his people was “He it is created you on the Earth and is expecting you to develop it”. This tells us that it is our responsibility, as ordered by our prophets, to develop the environment and take care of it.
- After becoming Caliph, Imam ‘Ali (as) in his first sermon said:

“O Slaves of God, be dutiful to God, in the matter of the slaves of God and the lands of God. You will be interrogated even about the pieces of earth and the beasts”.

Once again Imam ‘Ali (as) highlights the importance of taking care of the environment and tells us that it our responsibility and we will be questioned about it.

WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

Don't waste food

In the Qur'an Allah (SWT) says:

“...and eat and drink but waste not by extravagance...”
(7:31)

Wasting food is disliked by Allah (SWT) and is highly discouraged in Islam for many reasons; one of these reasons may be because of the harm it brings to the environment.

How does wasting food harm the environment?

Producing food requires the use of large amounts of energy. This results in a lot of pollution. Pollution is when a substance has a harmful or poisonous effect on the environment. For example, the smoke that comes out of a factory producing food has harmful effects on the environment such as people inhaling poisonous chemicals. Smoke is a type of air pollution. Wasting food means more food has to be produced, which means more smoke and more pollution.

Don't waste electricity!

When we leave the light on or forget to switch off the power-point at home –we are wasting electricity. When electricity is produced (being used) energy is being used as well which causes pollution – this harms the environment. As good Muslims, we are responsible for taking care of the environment and we can do that by switching off the lights and power-points every time we are not using them.

Caring for Plants & Animals

As part of caring for the environment, we must remember that we also need to make sure that we make conditions comfortable for other living creatures around us. If someone came to our home and made a mess and spoilt all your things – we wouldn't like that all. In the same way, we live with other living things such as plants and animals and we need to make sure that we can live in harmony with them.

Some ways we can care for plants is to water them so that they can grow and don't step on them when we go outside. Also, we can care for the plants by not cutting down trees. We should also care for any animals who are in need. We should take care of a bird with a broken wing, or a hungry cat. We should not do this alone- we need to call our parents or another adult to help us.

Practical Activity

Materials you will need:

- 1) A3 Paper
- 2) Textas/Colour pencils

Design a poster for someone who wants to be a good Muslim by caring for the environment. Draw pictures to help them understand ways they can improve their lifestyle to care for the environment: for example switching off the light when leaving a room or not throwing away food. The poster should be colourful and should be easy to understand. Ask your teacher for any help.

Review Questions

1. Our environment is:

- a) Our bedroom at home
- b) The air, water, trees, plants and animals around us
- c) The whole solar system

2. The benefits of our environment are:

- a) The colours of the sky and grass lift our mood and keep us happy
- b) The environment has no benefit at all
- c) None of the above