



# ISLAM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

محيط

## Objectives >>>

### Students should:

- Understand some of the general Islamic principles that indicate the importance of the environment to Islam
- Discuss some of the Islamic teachings that naturally protect the environment
- Briefly discuss some Islamic ways in which we can help the environment
- Discuss that we must keep a balance between caring for immediate human needs and for the environment

## The Importance of Environment in Islam

It is unfortunate today that Muslims in general do not have a healthy respect for the natural environment around us. Allah (SWT) tells us in the Holy Qur'an that all His creations are exquisitely beautiful and excellent:

"[God] made excellent all that which He created (32:7)"

The magnificence of the natural creation of Allah (SWT) is manifested in the beautiful trees, mountains, flowers and animals! Allah (SWT) created all of these, each with its own beauty and has put in them a means of peace and cure for human beings. Certainly there is a

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possibility that there may be a cure for cancer in the depths of the oceans or the rainforests!

At the same time Allah (SWT) has made it compulsory upon humankind to take care of this creation and not exceed the limits. Allah (SWT) puts the responsibility of taking care of and developing the earth squarely in our hands!

"[God] brought you forth from the earth and delegated you its development" (11:61)

We have learnt in previous lessons some of the ways we can protect our environment but in this lesson we shall focus more on seeing how Islam is encouraging us to live in Harmony with the environment and *not* to exploit it for worldly desires. We are certainly responsible, and will be questioned about things like global warming: a phenomenon which destroys the environment and changes the climate which results in destruction and death. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

"They strive in the earth to make mischief and destroy the crops and the cattle, and God does not love mischief"

"Corruption has become apparent in the lands and the sea, because of what people have earned."

## CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- a. **Sustainable Development-** When we decide to use the natural resources for development (e.g. building our house) we have to ensure that we do not destroy the resource (e.g. take some wood but to not destroy the whole forest!)

- b. We do not take more than we need. Isrāf (wastefulness) is not allowed in Islam and is forbidden in the Qur'an. The Holy Prophet said:  
"Do not waste water even if you are at a river."
  - c. We must nurture the resource so it can be useful for others in the future.
  - d. In obtaining the resource we do not violate the rights of others: so we are not allowed to eat fruits that have been grown on usurped (stolen) land.
- 2- **Follow the teaching of Islam in our actions-** the laws of Islam are universal and hence they encompass all aspects of human life including the physical. Examples of what we can do include:
- a. **Understanding that exploitation** of this earth and its resources is a result of greed and the love for the physical aspects of this world. Being conscious that we are created for eternity in the Hereafter and understanding that greed is disliked by Allah (SWT) is the first step in protecting the environment.
  - b. **Not being wasteful** in all aspects of life
  - c. **Respecting the creation and creatures of Allah** (SWT) by not abusing them and only using them for what they are not meant to be used for.
  - d. **Being conscious of others at all times.** Even a simple act as clearing a path for others to walk freely is a rewarding act in Islam. Prophet 'Īsā (as) says:

"I passed by a grave of a man who was being punished severely. I passed by his grave a year later but his punishment had stopped. I asked why this had happened. Allah, the Exalted, revealed to me that the man had a son who in the meantime had paved a path for people, and dedicated the reward to his father. Because of this, Allah, the Exalted, forgave the father."

### 3- Living in Harmony with the environment.

- a. **Our physical body is healthiest in a healthy environment.** Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

"Life is not pleasant without three things, clean air, abundant fresh water and fertile land"<sup>i</sup>.

Indeed even noise pollution is forbidden in Islam. In the Holy Qur'an, Luqmān (as) advises his son:

"Lower your voice, for the harshest of sounds is the braying of the asses".

In today's world, the application of this is to reduce the noise from our cars and other possessions. Therefore even if you are playing Islamic *anashīd* loudly from your car it may be considered noise pollution.

- b. **Strive to study and understand the environment-** Knowledge about nature, the trees, bees, honey, olives, mountains etc...has been stressed in in the Qur'an very much. It is through knowledge of nature that we can learn more about Allah (SWT) and become better believers.

- c. **Take advantage of the environment to attain spirituality-** Praying out in the open sky, taking a stroll through a rich rainforest or walking along the beach all serve to elevate our spirituality when we connect to the earth and nature.

- 4- **Improving the Environment:** in whatever we can. Something as simple as planting a tree has great rewards in Islam. The Prophet (saw) says:

"If the Judgment Day is upon you, and you have a small palm tree in your hand, if you are able to plant it before you get up, then do so!"

The Prophet also said:

"If any Muslim cultivates the land or plants it, and then a person, an animal or a bird eats from it, this would be counted as a charity for him on the Judgment Day."

### Class Activity:

Discuss with your teacher what other practical ways you can protect and conserve your environment.

### Questions:

- 1- We are responsible for our environment because
  - a. We are the smartest creatures of God.
  - b. God (SWT) has given us this responsibility

- c. As we are living in it we have to be sure that it is the best for us

2-Sustainable Development means

- a. Utilising whatever resources I want to live comfortably
- b. Being conscious of the future generations and those around me when I utilise resources
- c. Not wasting water

3-Living in harmony with the environment means

- a. Living like a hermit in a cave in a jungle in Africa
- b. Speaking to and hugging trees and plants and animals
- c. Utilising the environment to gain proximity to Allah (SWT)

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<sup>i</sup> Biharul anwaar Vol 75 p 232