

## Pollution and its Islamic Viewpoint

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It is for the first time that entire humanity is facing one of the most horrible crisis—the crises of environmental degradation. Looking around the globe, one can see that such crisis has crossed the boundaries of every nation. Almost every nation seems to be sensitized. The problem is no longer regionalized or localized but issue has turned into a global issue.

Pollution, one of the root causes of environmental degradation, has plunged its vampire claws detrimenting the sky, streams, soils, seas, lakes, fauna, avifauna and flora.

Rampant use of natural resources, unchecked urbanization, vast industrialization backed by fallacy of modern science and technology by man has not only threatened the survival of other species<sup>1</sup> but almost closed the doors of his own existence. Whether is water pollution or air pollution or any other form of pollution, it has left cascading and dreadful effects on human civilization. Due to obnoxious behaviour towards his natural environment which always has remained quite hospitable for centuries, entire mankind has been subjected to misdemeanour.

Contrary to the notion that modern science has lowered human misery and suffering, a gift like pollution is responsible for elevated agony, misery

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and hardships of present man. Depletion of ozone layer<sup>2</sup>, global warming<sup>3</sup>, reduction of growth of crops, acid rains, less drinking water availability, fatal diseases, deluges and draughts are nothing but an outcome of a guile gift like pollution.

The Qur'anic concepts like *fasawwa* (order and proportion), *mizān* (balance), *qadar* (measure) have a remarkable resemblance with modern concepts of ecological balance. As corner stones of Islamic ecological thought, these concepts uphold the inherent potential of Islam to deal with contemporaneous challenges of modern ecological thought.

The Holy Qur'an reveals:

"Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord, Most high, Who hath created and further given *fasawwa* (order and proportion)"<sup>4</sup>

"Verily all things have We created by *qadar* (measure)"<sup>5</sup>

"Everything to Him is (in) *miqdār* (measured)"<sup>6</sup>

"And He has set up the *mizān* (balance) of justice"

"He Who created the seven heavens, one above another; no want of proportion will thou see in the creation of the Most Glorious, so turn by vision again; seest thou any flaw? Again turn thy vision a second time: (thy) visions will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out"<sup>7</sup>

The Holy Qur'an constantly reminds man that every thing in nature has got a perfect balance and everything created is in ascertainable measure. By way of various natural cycles there is an inherent process of replenishment of natural resources. Due to some extraordinary intervention beyond a prescribed

limit, causing the depletion of such resources, some essential function of life supporting systems on earth get disturbed and in this way they inflict injury to living organism.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon humans to maintain such a natural balance at each level of life sustaining processes in the same manner as they are being maintained and replenished by other creatures to uphold *takaful* (symbiosis) in the ecosystem. In this system of interdependence where man has an edge over other creatures his greed and arrogance should never blind him and cause any damage, to the natural colours of life.

The Holy Qur'an not only enlightens the natural harmony in the creation of Allah (ﷻ), the significance of created beings as a revelation of Divine Signs<sup>8</sup> having ordered and measurable passion but also envisages why this natural environment has become the target of human follies and who are responsible for this devastation. In the terminology of the Qur'an, the devastation of any sort, is nothing but a product of human follies and ignorance, making human life miserable. For any regional or global crisis, man definitely is to blame. The Holy Qur'an has used the word *fasād* which means corruption or mischief to connote such devastation at the hands of man.

The term *fasad* as mentioned has been repeated 47 times. Pollution is also a form of *fasād* (corruption). According to Baydawi, the meaning of *fasād* is dryness of the land, many fires, many drowning and the reduction on the blessings of Allah (ﷻ)<sup>9</sup> Ibn Khatir describes that *fasād* will result in lower crops in both food and fruit plants.<sup>10</sup>

There is a specific reference to such *fasād* in the Holy Qur'an at one place in the context of present discussion. The Holy Qur'an says.

There is a type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle thee, and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart; yet he is the most contentious of the enemies when he turns his back, his aim every where is to spread *fasād* (mischief) through

the earth and destroy crops and progeny. But Allah loveth not *fasad* (mischief).<sup>11</sup>

The occasion on which these *ayat* were revealed was that a man named *Al-akhnas bin-shurik* came to the Messenger (ﷺ) to embrace Islam but as he turned to leave, he happened to pass by a pasture and animals, whom he burnt and killed. These *ayat* came down as a sign of Divine disapproval.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from this specific reference, there is a general mention of the grave crisis in the form of global predicament of environmental degradation. The Holy Qur'an reveals:

"Mischief has appeared on the land and sea, because of (the deed) that the hands of man have earned, that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may return back (from evil)"<sup>13</sup>

This *ayāt* from the *sura Rūm* of the Holy Qur'an which has a well known prophecy regarding the dominance of Roman empire, may also be presumed as another prediction of the *Sura* about the coming of the day when both the land and water would become polluted and corrupted at the hands of mankind. In the wake of present environmental crisis only Muhammad Asad, in his commentary on the Holy Qur'an has dealt with it righteously elucidating:

Thus the growing corruption and destruction of our natural environment, so awesomely— if as yet only partially— demonstrated in our time, is here predicted as, an outcome of what mens' hands have wrought, i.e. of self destructive because utterly materialistic— inventiveness and frenzied activity which now threatens mankind with previously unimaginable ecological disasters; unbridled pollution of land, air and water through industrial and urban waste, a progressive poisoning of

plant and marine life, all manner of genetic malformations in men's own bodies through an over use of drugs and seemingly 'beautiful' chemicals, and the gradual extinction of many animal species to human being.<sup>14</sup>

For any crisis in human society whether regionalized or global, man himself is to blame. Any persecution or tyranny inflicted on man is nothing but what mans own hands have wrought. Hence the present environmental crisis is also the product of human follies and nothing else.

The Holy Qur'an not only envisages the environmental crisis as a divine punishment for human transgression, global *fasād* (30: 41) but the very damage and depletion as Allah's punishment for human follies and fallacies while dealing with natural resources.

The Holy Qur'an says:

If Allah were to punish men for their wrong doings, He would not leave, on the (earth) a single living creature, But He gives them respite for a stated term.<sup>15</sup>

If Allah were to punish men according to what they deserve He would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single living creature.<sup>16</sup>

In both the *ayat* the ultimate punishment to man may be seen in the form of absolute annihilation of all moving creatures *dābhah*, from the face of earth, it can be deduced that the partial depletion of moving creatures on the earth is a sort of partial punishment or a sort of divine warning.<sup>17</sup>

It is the man himself who has to take the initiative, check his attitude, curb his greed and arrogance and prove himself as a true version of *khilāfah* by justify using the resources, work for cosmic symbolises and avoid *fasād* of every facet as has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

"And seek not *fasad* in the land, for Allah loves not who do *fasad*."<sup>18</sup>

Not only the Qur'an but Sunnah too inculcate in us to check pollution in its every form.

The Holy Messenger (ﷺ) forbade that 'a person relieve himself in a water course.'<sup>19</sup>

By analogy any thing that pollutes water is prohibited in Islam.

Abu Hurayrah (RA) reported that the Messenger (ﷺ) said "Beware of the two (acts that bring) curses: relieving oneself in the path of people or in the shade (i.e. where they usually rest)."<sup>20</sup>

The Holy Messenger (ﷺ) declared 'the whole earth has been created as place of worship for me, pure and clean'.<sup>21</sup>

The Hadith reiterates that since the entire land is a place of worship, we are charged with treating it with respect, and keeping it pure and polluted.

The Islamic world view is no doubt comprehensive. It has the capability to adapt itself and live up to the new challenges that faces humanity. Environmental issues of the present times can also be treated in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Like every problem that challenges the Muslim *Ummah* the Qur'an and the sunnah have an appalling tone, we as Muslims cannot afford to remain in different, or to think that environmental issues are alien to the Islamic world view.

**References and Notes**

1. It has been recorded that due to human intervention 6 to 9 thousand biological species become extinct every year.
2. Ozone layer- Ozone, a highly reactive pale-blue gas, present in the stratosphere. It absorbs ultra violet radiation from sun which is harmful for both plants and animals.
3. Global warming refers to the possible changes caused by an enhanced green-house effect. Without green-house gases, the earth, heat lost by long-wave radiation would reduced the temperature of land surface. Since more gases (like Methane, carbon dioxide etc.) coming out of automobiles, factories is pumped in air, it results in thickening of heat trapping gases and this causes global warning. Matalogist predict that by the end of this century the average global temperature will go up from 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius.

4. Al-Qur'an, Sura 87, ayat, 1-2. سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى - الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسُوَّىٰ ا

5. Al-Qur'an, Sura 54, ayat, 49. إِنَّا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْتَهُ بِقَدَرٍ ا

6. Al-Qur'an, Sura 13, ayat, 8. وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ا

7. Al-Qur'an, Sura 67, ayat, 3-4.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَّا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِن تَفْوُوتٍ فَاَرْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِن فُطُورٍ ا  
ثُمَّ اَرْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنقَلِبْ اِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيْرٌ ا

8. It is revealed in the Holy Qur'an that the creation(s) are Signs of Allah (swt), Sura 2, ayat, 164.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
وَالْقُلُوبِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ يَمَّا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ  
مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِن مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا  
مِن كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ  
بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

9. Al Mawil Samarai "The Human appointment and creation" in *Islam and Environment*. A.R. Agwan, (ed.) (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 1997), p. 163.
10. Karim S. Ghaneim, "Quran and Environment", *Muslim and Arab Perspective*, 4:1-6 (New Delhi:1997) p.29.
11. Al-Qur'an, Sura 2, ayat, 204-205.  
وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ
12. *The Bounteous Quran*, A translation of meaning and commentary by M.M. Khatib. (London: Macmillian Press, 1986) p.40.
13. Al-Qur'an, Sura 30, ayat, 41.  
ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ
14. Muhammad Asad, *Message of the Quran*, p. 623.
15. Al-Qur'an, Sura 16, ayat, 61.  
وَلَوْ تَوَخَّأْنَا لَللَّهِ النَّاسَ بظُلْمِهِم مَّا تَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهَا مِن دَابَّةٍ
16. Al-Qur'an, Sura 35, ayat, 45.  
وَلَوْ تَوَخَّأْنَا لَللَّهِ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكْنَا عَلَىٰ ظَهْرِهِا مِن دَابَّةٍ
17. A.R. Agwan, "Islam and the issue of Biodiversity", *MAAS Journal of Islamic Science*, Vol.15, No. 1-2, Jan-Dec, 1999, p.22.
18. Al-Qur'an, Sura 28, ayat, 77.  
لَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ
19. Al-Hadith, Sunan Nasai.
20. Al-Hadith, Sahih Muslim.
21. Al-Hadith, Sahih Bukhari.