

## ISLAMIC TEACHINGS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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### ABSTRACT:

*Since the man evolved on earth, he has tried his utmost to meet his every need whether that need was legitimate or not. In this process of meeting his needs, he used the available resources extravagantly, which resulted in the depletion of natural resources and the pollution of the environment. The environment plays a vital role in the development of the mankind because everything needed is extracted from it. In the same time, Man adopted different types of religious beliefs which he gives more importance than anything. Every man tries to follow his religion at the utmost. This paper is an attempt to show how Islam has given principles for the protection and preservation of the different components of the environment. As the whole world is trying to cope up this problem, the religion must also play it's role in the protection of environment. Some teachings of Islam are presented in this paper which exclusively provide the rulings to save the environment from getting depleted or polluted.*

**KEYWORDS:** Environment, Islam, Environmental Pollution, Ijma, Ijtihad, Sustainability.

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### INTRODUCTION

Islam is the fastest growing religion as the Muslim population of the world was about 1.8 billion in 2015 which comprises of 24 percent of the world population. It is estimated that the growth rate of Muslim population in the time period 2015-2060 will be 70 percent and if this trend continues then the Muslim population will outnumber the population of Christians by the end of this century. So, the muslims, who are the followers of Islam, have more responsibility than any other religious community to protect the environment from any evil.

The teachings of Islam are derived directly for the Quran and Ahadees (hadith). The Quran is the holy book of Islam which is revealed by Allah almighty on his beloved Prophet Mohammad

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(pbuh) while as Ahadees are the saying of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). These two are the basic sources from which the rulings from whatsoever is to be extracted according to Islam. There are further two things added to the basic two which are Ijma, which means the consensus of the knowledgeable people or ulamas and Ijtihad, the personal opinion of the established scholar. So, the rules to preserve the environment according to Islam will also be extracted from these four procedures i.e., Quran, Ahadees, Ijma and Ijtihad. In the present paper i have tried to mention the rulings from the Quran and the Ahadees which have more importance than the later two.

## **Literature Review:-**

A study by researchers from the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) has found a direct correlation between less religious countries and increased overconsumption and pollution (Skirbekk et al. 2020). So, it becomes clear that the religious beliefs make a man more responsible towards the environment as is mentioned in the Quran that almighty has made man viceroy on the earth (Quran 2:30). As a viceroy man has the responsibility to not make imbalance or corruption on the earth. The almighty has made the human race the guardian over natural resources; this falls under the guarantee of the right to use resources, provided they are not abused or destroyed (Kamali Mohammad). According to teachings of Islam, the essential elements of nature- earth, water, fire, forests and light- belong to all living things and not only to the human race (Bsoul et al). So, every component of the environment is given importance and equality in the context of Islam.

## **Research Methodology:-**

This paper is a study about the teachings of Islam to preserve the Environmental components and to control the environmental pollution. For this paper the holy book of Islam, Quran has been studied with special attention paid to the verses which mention the environment. The hadiths from the compositions of sayings of the peophet(pbuh) are studied which include the hadiths from Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmizhi, Musnad Ahmad, etc. Some papers which are related to the subject were also studied and the help of the online sources have also been sought to compile this paper.

## **Islam :-**

As a religion, Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah(5). This is also mentioned in Quran as the Almighty says

*'So then your God is one God. Submit then your will to him and give good news to those who humble themselves'.(Quran 22:34)*

So, in Islam only the will of Allah must be followed in every field. After Allah Muslims have to follow the Prophet which is mentioned in Quran as follows

*'O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority(uli-al-amr) among you'.(Quran 4:59)*

In this verse after Messenger the obedience of those who are in authority is mentioned. The authority here means the government which is in power or in Islamic terminology the authority means the Caliph of the Muslim Ummah. In other words, the uli-al-amr means the person who is an established scholar of islam. The fourth source mentioned in Islam is the Ijma or the consensus of the believers.

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*'But him who breaks with the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him, and follows other the way of the believers, him we shall consign to what he had turned to and roast in hell-an evil home-coming'.(Quran 4:115)*

The Quran, the sunnah, the Ijma and the Ijtihad are the four sources from which the rulings and the principles of the Islam are extracted. So for the preservation and protection of different components of the environment, we have to take these four sources into consideration.

### **Environment:-**

According to Oxford learners dictionary, environment means the natural world in which people, animals and plants live. The environment is defined as the physical, non-living and living, surrounding of society with which it has a reciprocal relationship (Jan J Boersema). According to Boring, a person's environment consists of the sum total of the stimulation which he receives from his conception until his death(Y. K. Singh).The environment consists of biotic and abiotic components, which the man uses in his daily life to fulfill his needs. In this process the environment gets polluted. So there is a need to protect the environment. Islam as a religion has also given importance to the protection of environment which we are going to discuss in the coming parts.

### **Man as a Guardian of the Environment:-**

The Islamic teachings taken from the Quran and Ahadees are binding for all the muslims. The Quran has given a responsibility to the humans to protect and preserve the environment as God has made them the viceroys on this earth as mentioned in the Quran as

*'lo! I am about to place a viceroy on earth'. (Quran 2:30)*

In the sayings of prophet Mahammad (pbuh), it is also mentioned as

*' world is sweet and green and verily Allah is going to install you as vicegerents in it in order to see how you act'.(muslim)*

*'no doubt everyone of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his folk'.(bukhari)*

Therefore, it becomes clear that from the verse of Quran and the sayings of the prophet that man has the responsibility on the earth. He has the responsibility of all the components of the earth. He is installed to maintain the balance on the earth as set by the Almighty which is mentioned as

*' And the sky has uplifted and he has set the measure. That you exceed not the measure'.(Quran 55:7-8)*

*' and do not mischief on the earth after it has been set in order, that will be best for you, if you have faith'.(Quran 7:85)*

As a viceroy on earth, the man is also called sphered in the hadith, so man is not the master of the earth but he is a watchman or caretaker. So the man should abstain from acting like a master and should hold the responsibility of maintaining the balance in the nature which he has imbalanced due to his ruthless actions.

### **Islamic teachings about preservation of the environment:-**

The environment, according to Islam, belong all the humans equally. As prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has said that

*'The muslims are partners in three things: vegetation, water and fire'(SunanAbu Dawud)*

Here it is not mentioned that these things belong to only current generation but the equality is mentioned in a general sense. Here the concept of sustainability can be understood from this hadith that there is partnership among the men whether these men are present or yet to come in future. So, if there is partnership, then we must preserve the environment for the future generations so that they must get their share of the resources present in the environment.

After the general environment as a whole, the most important component is water which plays a vital role in the development of the mankind. But the actions of the men are polluting the water excessively. Many parts in the world are even facing the shortage of drinking water. The Islam teaches us to preserve the water as it is thought to be the elixir of life.As mentioned in a hadith as follows

*' Abdullah ibn Amr reported : the Messenger of Allah(pbuh) passed by sa'd while he was performing ablution. The prophet said, 'what is this extravagance?' Sad asked , 'is there extravagance with water in ablution?' The prophet replied, 'yea, even if you were on the banks of a flowing river'.(Ibn Majah)*

The ablution is a religious activity which must be performed before any prayer. But the prophet abstained from wasting the water even when we are performing ablution(wudu), wasting is prohibited in Quran as

*' O children of Adam! Dress properly whenever you are at worship. Eat and drink , but do not waste. Surely, He does not like the wasteful'. (Quran 7:31)*

*' He is the one who produces gardens- both cultivated and wild and palm trees, crops of different flavours, olives and pomegranates- similar in shape but dissimilar in taste. Eat of the fruit they bear and pay dues at harvest , but do not waste. Surely, He does not like the wasteful'.(Quran 6:141)*

It becomes clear from the above verses that it is prohibited to waste anything in Islam. The Allah does not like the people who waste the resources whether it is water or anything else. We see in our surroundings that how much food is wasted in functions like marriages which becomes a cause of environmental pollution and the stray dogs also gather around this waste which proves dangerous for the man. Further, it is also mentioned that anyone who is extravagant or overuses and wastes the resources is the brother of devil and we are ordered not to follow the devil or Satan as mentioned

*' And squander not in wantonness / lo! The squanderers were ever brothers of the devil's and the devil was an ingrate to his lord'.(Quran 17: 26-27)*

*' o mankind , eat that which is lawful and wholesome on earth and do not follow the footsteps of Satan'. (Quran 2:168)*

The prophet Mohammad (pbuh) himself used the water and other resources prudently. As mentioned earlier we are ordered by Almighty to follow the Messenger, the activities of Messenger in regard of the resources as mentioned in hadith are as

*' As narrated by Anasibn Malik in a hadith : the prophet(pbuh) would perform ablution with one mudd (half a kilogram of water) and would perform a ritual bath with one saa ( two and a half kilograms of water)'. (Bukhari)*

*'Once Aisyah, the wife of prophet(pbuh), was asked what the prophet would do in the house. She replied to the inquirer , ' He did what one of you would do in his house. He mended sandals and patched garments and sewed'. (Al-Adab, Al-Mufrad)*

The above two narrations are a clear proof that Prophet(pbuh) did not wanted to waste the resources and would reuse the used materials. So, the concept of recycling the old things and using them once again are taught by the Islam in order to have a less pressure on the resources and to preserve the environment. Whenever there is overuse or waste of resources, the waste is thrown in the surroundings, on the road sides, in the water bodies or is burnt which pollutes the environment. But Islam has first of all prohibited to waste anything and after that it gives man a moral duty not to harm anyone by his actions. It gives them the duty to not put waste as dispersed in the surroundings as mentioned

*'Abu Hurairah reported that the prophet(pbuh) said, 'while a man was walking along a path, he found a thorny branch of a tree on the way and removed it. Allah thanked him for that and forgave him'.(Bukhari)*

The intention of the removal of thorny branch was only that it may not cause any harm to others. Same is the case with any other kind of waste that must not be thrown on the roadsides that cause harm to men or animals as we are also ordered not to harm any living being as reported in a hadith as

*'The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) issued a decree , ' Do not cause harm or return harm'.( Sunan Ibn Majah)*

It is the duty of everyone not to harm any living being by his actions intentionally or unintentionally. Furthermore, the harm done to animals is mentioned separately in the Quran as

*' And i will lead them astray and give them false hopes and order them to cut the ears of the cattle and I will order them to alter the creation of God.....'( Quran 4:119)*

And in a hadith as narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar , the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said

*' if someone kills so much as a sparrow or anything larger without a just cause, then Allah, the exalted, will ask him about it on the day of resurrection'.( Sunan al-Nasai)*

And in one another hadith Abu Hurairah reported that

*'People asked the prophet(pbuh) about the rewards of serving animals. The prophet then replied , there is a reward for serving any living being'. (Bukhari)*

So, it becomes clear from the above verse and the hadiths that the muslims are not allowed to harm any living being without a just cause. If you have a just cause you can use these but not overuse them as that is prohibited by Islam. Apart from the living beings the Islam teaches men to live peacefully with each other, not to cause harm to each other or not to kill any human being as directed by the Quran in the following verse.

*'Because of that, we decreed for the children of Israel that whoever slays a soul for other than a soul, or for corruption in the land , it shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether ; and whoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind. Our messengers have already come to them with clear proofs, but after that many of them still commit excesses in the land'. ( Quran 5:32)*

It becomes a moral and religious duty of the mankind to live peacefully with each other, not to indulge in wars, not to kill anyone and to help those who are in need because it is mentioned to save the life of people. So, the nations who have any surplus should help those nations whose people are dying of any reasons like hunger, diseases or war, etc.

The life is not possible on this planet without water and air, so air must also be preserved. The polluted air causes many diseases which are life threatening. Islam in its teachings have mentioned air as one of the blessings of Almighty. As Allah Almighty has said in the Quran as

*'And it is He who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy until, when they have carried heavy rainclouds, We drive them to a dead land and We send down rain therein and bring forth thereby (some) of all the fruits. Thus will We bring forth the dead; perhaps you may be reminded'. (Quran 8: 46)*

*'and We have sent down fertilizing winds and sent down water from the sky and given you drink from it. And you are not it's retainers'. (Quran 17: 69)*

In these verses, the wind or air is mentioned as a bounty of Allah by which the mechanism of the rain is set. Further it is also mentioned that the creatures which live in air easily move in it as Quran says

*'things move easily through it'. (Quran 51:3)*

So, the air is one of the most important component of the environment which sustains life on the earth. The atmosphere, which is the blanket surrounding the earth, protects us from the harmful UV radiations of the sun which are obstructed by the ozone layer. But due to air pollution the ozone layer is also depleting day by day due to the anthropogenic activities which is mentioned in Quran as

*'And We have made sky a protected ceiling but they, from its signs, are turning away'. (Quran 21:32)*

Almighty has made the atmosphere as a protected ceiling which supports the life on the earth but humans due to their greed have polluted the atmosphere. The one of the most important step taken to protect atmosphere or air is to plant the trees which not only purifies the air but also help in controlling of soil erosion and climate change. The trees have many other roles to play in the life cycles of the living beings on the earth. So, if we have to protect the air, land and climate we must stop the unnecessary deforestation and plant as more trees as possible. The importance given to plants in Islam can be seen in the following hadiths.

*'The prophet (pbuh) said, there is none amongst the muslims who plants a tree or sows a seed and then a bird or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift'. (Bukhari)*

*'whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruits is rewarded'. (Musnad)*

*'the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, if the resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, then let him plant it'. (Musnad Ahmad)*

From the above sayings, it becomes clear that Islam orders the men to plant trees as possible so that they may get the reward in the afterwards. But the worldly benefits of planting trees is clear

as it will protect our environment from getting polluted. Furthermore, the ruthless deforestation as prohibited by Islam can be understood by the following hadith.

*'The prophet (pbuh) said , if anyone cuts the lote tree , Allah brings him headlong into hell'.(Sunan Abu Dawud)*

In islam, one of the reasons for burying the dead body may be to control the environmental pollution. As the Quran says

*'Have We not caused the earth to hold within itself the living and the dead'.( Quran 77:25)*

*'from the earth We created you and into it We will return you and from it We will extract you another time'(Quran 20:55)*

And in the sayings of the prophet (pbuh) the burying of the dead body is mentioned as

*'On the day of the battle of Uhud, the prophet(pbuh) said , dig the graves deeper, dig well and bury two or three bodies in each grave'.( Tirmizhi)*

*'and He (the prophet pbuh) said, go and bury your companion'.( Muslim)*

From the above mentioned verse and hadiths, it becomes clear that Islam teaches us to bury the dead in the graves. This may control the pollution if we throw the dead bodies in the water or anywhere else. Moreover, this will also help in retaining the fertility of the earth after the dead body decomposes.

The noise pollution caused nowadays by increasing traffic, loudspeakers, etc is one of the irritating thing in human life which affects the health of the man. The Islam has also given guidelines regarding the noise pollution which can be understood in the following hadiths.

*' Abu Musa reported, we were travelling and men started raising their voices in exaltation of God, then the Prophet(pbuh) said, o men lower your voices for you are not addressing a deaf or an absent being, but you are addressing Allah who is nearby and can hear everything.(Muslim)*

And in the Quran it is mentioned that

*' Neither speak the prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek a middle cause between'.( Quran 17:110)*

So, the Islam as a religion gives us the teachings regarding the protection and preservation of the environment which is getting polluted by the anthropogenic activities which are done on a large scale without caring for the environment. The consequences of the environmental pollution will be borne by the humans as is mentioned in the Quran as

*'Corruption has appeared on the earth and at sea because of what the hands of men have wrought, in order that God may make them taste the consequences of their actions , so that they might return'.( Quran 30:41)*

Therefore, it is the humans who are responsible for imbalancing the environment and causing pollution everywhere. Now we need to control our actions and work together for the control of the pollution, otherwise the life is going to end in the near future.

#### **Limitations:-**

In this paper, some of the teachings of Islam are mentioned which give the importance and how to preserve the various components of the environment such as air, water, plants, animals, birds,

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etc. Only few teachings are mentioned from an ocean of literature which Islam has got. Further, only Quranic and hadith teachings have been taken which prove as a limitation of this paper. Further research should be done for getting more verses from the Quran and more hadiths which provide information about how to protect the environment. Further the work on Ijma and Ijtihad has remained untouched by this paper which opens a path for upcoming researchers to do the work. A detailed research is needed in this field, so the humans, especially muslims will become aware about the religious teachings to protect the environment.

### CONCLUSION:-

The environment playing the most important role in the development of the humankind needs to be preserved in order to make the development sustainable. Islam has taught us to remain clean as mentioned in Quran as

*‘ Surely, Allah loves those who always turn to Him in repentance and those who purify themselves.’ ( Quran 2:222)*

For humans to remain clean it is important to purify the environment first, then the cleanliness of the man can be seen because a man is recognised by the environment in which he lives and his health and almost every aspect of life is dependent on his environment. The man keeping his greed aside should always try to maintain the balance of the environment which has been set by the Almighty as Allah has said, ‘ verily all things We have created in proportion and measure’.( Quran 54:49)

After all, it is the humans who are responsible for the degradation of the environment, so it is our duty to change the lifestyle for the sake of the future generations to come. As Allah Almighty has said,

*‘ truly God will not change the condition of a people until they change the condition of their own souls’. (Quran 13:11)*

So, it is the man who has to change himself as claimed by the teaching of Islam. But the duty of the Muslim scholars is very important in this matter than the common muslims. They must preach the preservation of environment. If muslim scholars activate ijihad/independent legal reasoning as an idea to address current issues such as environmental issues, Islam can provide practical and comprehensive solutions to humankind’s many environmental challenges (Idhalene, Samira). At last, it is not only Islam but other religions must have the moral and religious teachings for the protection of environment, it is the duty of the scholars of every religion to spread these teachings and then people must follow the teachings for the betterment of the human race.

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