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## 5. The Environment and Destructive Practices

A survey and a close look at the natural world and its components, and the relationship, balance and changes that occur in it, will show the wisdom, accuracy and perfection that surrounds it, because, there is nothing created uselessly or to hurt anyone, and even if it harms human beings, it is rather a relative harm, due to the fact that the human being was prohibited from practicing it in the first place.

And often this harmful element is changed by natural processes to be useful to the plants, earth and even to man, himself. Surely, if the natural laws are left to work as they are created by their Creator, they will protect the healthy, natural and environmental beauty and good life for all.

The distribution of water, mountains and forests, and the nature of weather, climate and earth, and the ratio of gases, light rays...etc., works under a well-equipped, interrelated system, as bacteria and dead bodies of animals and plants enter the natural chemical processes in order to be well acquainted with the environmental interests, as well as, ensuring the welfare of the surroundings.

But, when humans, due to ignorance and destructive activities, interrupt and enter the environment system they cause a great damage to this very system. The Holy Qur'an, while elaborating on the environmental, as well as the natural perfection, and likewise, the destructive role of man, says:

"When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle..." (2:205)

"And do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): For the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good."(7:56)

The Holy Qur'an emphasizes that the earth and all its natural and life components are perfect and healthy; it is man who plays with its perfection and destroys it. In view of this, we see this scenario elaborating on man, in the suitability of the earth in its natural form, as the destructive element to the earth; destroying plants and killing animals and human beings.

Surely, our present world has witnessed the most dreadful kind of corruption on earth and environment, as well as natural destruction which man was enjoined to protect and take care of. Allah creates man from earth as one of its components and commands him to protect it, the Almighty Allah, with emphasis on this responsibility, through Prophet Salih (a.s.) says:

"To the Thamud people (We sent) Salih, one of their own brethren. He said: 'O my People! Worship Allah: You have no other god but Him. It is He Who has produced you from the earth and settled you therein: Then ask forgiveness of Him, and turn to Him (in repentance): for my Lord is (always) near, ready to answer." (11:61)

So, this is the Qur'anic warning of the corruption on earth and environmental destruction, as well as the call for building up and protection of its balanced laws. The dreadful, environmental, destructive work of man is manifested in the manufacturing of chemical, nuclear and biological weapons, which cause great damage to the world. Furthermore, his destruction of nature is manifested in cutting down trees and polluting the atmosphere with burning the waste products.

Scientific studies and statistics conducted by archaeologists, show that man's interference in the natural laws by destroying the environment and life, and even those that he thinks are beneficial to him, like using chemical fertilizers and other poisonous substances used to kill large number of insects and plants; all cause great damage to the environment balance and life stability in the world.

The most obvious problem of our present era is pollution, which is caused by domestic industries, as well as wars. Thus, pollution, through the use of carbon and carbon dioxide, and the destruction of the ozone layer or chemical pollution caused by poisonous and harmful chemical substances, or the nuclear pollution, or water pollution by crude oil or man's waste products, or pollution by the use of agricultural fertilizers, like phosphate, nitrate compounds...etc., are all clear proofs and meaning to what the Almighty Allah prohibits in His saying:

"And do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order..." (7:56)

However, everything in the natural world acts according to the system of purity, perfection and balance. Hence, the natural ration of carbon is fixed and balanced, so plants absorb a large amount of natural carbon dioxide for their growth.

The scientific studies confirm that the average amount of carbon in the natural world is approximately 300 parts in every 10,000 parts of air, but the ratio has increased since 1984 to 345 parts in every 10,000 parts. And this ratio will double its present rate by year 2020 if combustion and burning of forests continue.1

(We mention, here, that there is great increase in the ratio of Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and this is due to the atmospheric heat of the sun, which can be sensed, as well as bring a great damage in the near future. And this will cause great harm to man and his inventions, forever.)2

In its report on natural destructive practices to the Conference of Earth's Climax and Human Rights, the Arab League for Human Rights wrote: "Statistics show that 160 thousand poisonous gases are endangering the atmospheric layer in U.S.A. alone. For instance, the U.S. is using 350 million tons of Hydro–floro carbons, which are used in the manufacturing of Air–solate, i.e., the average of 25% of the world's usage which reaches 1400 million tons. This act, alone, will cause the weakness of the ozone layer.

And at the same time, the developed countries alone, produce 800 thousand tons of toxic waste, which is approximately 30% of the world's waste products, and later they dispose it off in the Sahara and rivers of underdeveloped countries."

The League continues in its report that 600 million people live below the poverty line, 100 million Africans are dying from hunger, and 43 million acres of forest are destroyed annually. And also 80% of the world's population will face disability and difficulties in terms of earth, food or water in the next century. But, upon this painful reality, the general line of earth's climax put the blame and burden of this natural atmospheric and ozone layer destruction on the poor countries.

In addition to what was mentioned before, the conference shows that the Third world countries import goods from northern countries, which causes environmental pollution. And at the same time, it emphasizes that foreign hands undertake this project in those countries in view of their need for industrial work, lower wages and taxes, crude resources and free, as well as easy laws, where no one will be questioned or forced to protect the environment or face hard penalties for abusing it.

What can these poor countries do to face this drastic problem, in view of their poverty, underdevelopment and day-to-day problems, and hunger, which inflicts its citizens? Can they overcome their problems alone?

In order to face this dreadful danger, the sum of approximately 600 billion dollars was presumed to be able to cure this problem, but most of the industrial countries refuse to comply with the U.N.'s proposal,

which states that the rich countries should sacrifice 7% of their annual income until the year 2000, so as to help the poor countries in their development projects.

But, the organization became more concerned when the American government not only refused to sign the said agreement, rather it also declined to commit itself to decrease carbon dioxide gas products in the environment at the end of this century. And in fact, it emphasizes that these products may increase in the range of 1.7–6% in eight years to come.

Surely, the human activities presently are the causative factors that produce approximately 7.5 million tons of carbon dioxide into the environment, which, without any doubt, is the main factor in the changing of the world's climate and air pollution.

Although the protection of the environment and its safeguarding were regarded as the major and basic factors in the process of economic, as well as social development, human activities, which include deforestation, marine pollution, chemical farming and other modern inventions, turn this biological source, plants, animals and other natural phenomenon to a dangerous stage, which may threaten their very existence.

However, man is alleged to be responsible for the crime of polluting the air, water, and the atmosphere, in general, but, who is this man? Is it the man of Somalia, India, Sudan and Yemen, or that man that is living in America, Canada and Japan?

A closer look and thought on the statistics conducted will throw more light on the importance of the Qur'anic injunction regarding environmental destruction and pollution. And it will also give us a good understanding of the difference between Islamic civilization and Western (material) civilization which threatens environment and human existence, uncovering Islamic legislative tendency and its accurate solution to the social and cultural matters and its concern to man's, as well as the environmental issues.

- 1. See "Talawth Mishkilat Al-Asr" by Dr. Ahmad Madhat Salam, pg. 26.
- 2. Ibid. pg. 31.

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