

6. How to Protect the Human Environment?

Protecting the natural and social environment are among the most important Islamic goals of existence, and explaining the sign of its care and concern with human welfare and natural protection, as well as its adherence to the life system, the man's well-being and his continuous existence. This is because the well-being of human species and the living and nonliving things around him, like earth, water and air depends on its protection from pollution and destruction.

Islam has chosen some steps for protecting health and the environment. Some of which are as follows:

1. Enlightening and educating man on how to take care of health and nature, as well as protecting the living creatures on this earth. And this is based on the principle that whatever the Almighty Lord creates is perfect, accurate and is meant for reformation, and there is nothing created in vain and for amusement. Surely, the Qur'an has elaborated on this point, when it says:

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ ۗ صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۗ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ

"...the handiwork of Allah Who has made everything in perfect order..."(27:88)

However, when man becomes egoistic and aggressive, these acts will influence him to destroy the environment and pollute the natural surroundings. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an holds man responsible for environmental pollution, by saying:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought..."(30:41)

And, also, it addresses man and encourages him to protect nature and lead the healthiest of lives, when it says:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا

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

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَاسَادَ

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

2. Exhortation on Purity: The clearest process of protecting the human environment is Islamic guidance toward educating man on purity, cleanliness and the call for purifying the body, clothes, utensils, etc.; the Almighty Lord says:

وَتِيَابِكُمْ فَطَهِّرْ

“And your garments keep from stain!” (74:4)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ۗ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ۗ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ

“...and if you are under an obligation to perform a total ablution, then wash (yourselves)...” (5:6)

مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“...Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you that He may complete His favour on you so that you may be grateful.” (5:6)

From this, purity and the protecting of the environment against pollution is regarded as Allah’s blessing, and which must be appreciated. From here, we will understand that blessings, for instance, the blessing of health, good life and wealth, etc., are incomplete without the cleanliness of the environment and its protection against pollution and destruction, because, if not, it will continue to be under the danger and threat of destruction and cessation.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) speaking on health protection, environmental sanitation and the purity of man’s surroundings, says, “Surely, your body has a right over you.”¹ The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) also says, while elaborating on the importance of protecting nature, “Sweep your

courtyard, and don't be like the Jews.”[2](#)

Imam Ali ibn Musa Al-Ridha (a.s.) while talking on purity and cleanliness says, “Purification is among the morals of the prophets.”[3](#) Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari (companion of Holy Prophet) reported the saying of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) on uncleanness, and says: “One day the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) came to us and he saw a man in a shaggy state; his hair uncombed. He (s.a.w.w.) said, “Does not this one have what his hair needs?”[4](#)

And it was also reported from him (s.a.w.w.) this saying, when he saw another man with dirty clothes, “Does not this one have water to wash his clothes?”[5](#) Surely, the Islamic thought and civilization is far above others, when it emphasizes that the Almighty Allah wants for His servant a pleasant life and purity, and environment which is not polluted. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) elaborated on this point saying, “Surely Allah is good and He likes goodness; He is Pure and He likes purity.”[6](#)

And while talking about Islam's purity and cleanliness and its call toward environmental sanitation, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) says, “Surely, Islam is pure, therefore be pure, because he can never enter Paradise who is not pure.”[7](#)

3. Prohibiting environmental pollution: As Islam exhorts its followers toward purification, likewise, it prohibits environmental pollution and destruction. On this matter, it was reported from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that he prohibited spitting on the earth, because of its harmful effects on the health, and its contradiction to human nature.

However, as the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) prohibits spitting, he also prohibits and warns against defecating under a fruit tree and urinating in stationary or flowing water and also, on the road, so as to protect the environment from pollution and, also, as a protection to health and purity.

We can outline the importance of this advice if we understand the danger of human waste products to our health and to the environment, especially the role which these contaminants of water play in spreading diseases to the community through drinking, bathing and the fruits which are watered by this water.

It was reported from Imam Al-Sadiq (a.s.) that, “The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) prohibited defecation on the edge of a well, river or under a fruit tree.”[8](#) And it was also reported from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that, “It is prohibited for man to urinate in stationary water...”[9](#)

And he (a.s.) also quoted the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that he said: “Surely, the Almighty Allah warns you, oh, my (followers) Ummah!, against twenty four things and prohibits you from them,” and he recited them until he said , “He warns against urinating on the edge of a running river.”[10](#)

4. Prohibition on staying in a state with “Najasah” (unclean things) and their purification: When we read the philosophy of Islamic laws, we will be able to detect the concern and care of these laws toward

man's protection.

The Jurists (Fuqaha) have summarized the philosophy of Islamic laws and analyzed them in a simple formula, i.e., "attracting to the best interest (Masalih) and repelling evil (corruption) (Mafasid)."

Hence, "Masalaha" and "Mafasada" are the two criteria of a particular law and the cause of its legislation. And, of course, at the time of practicing this legislative principle on things which Islamic laws prescribe, like the impurity of some things, and the prohibition of eating and selling them and the necessity of purifying them before praying, one will then understand the value and worth against evil which is harmful to the health.

It is in view of this that the Islamic Shari'a terms the following things as "Najis" and necessitates its purification before praying and circumambulation (Tawaf, ritual circling of the Ka'ba) and they are:

1. Human urine and feces, and likewise, the urine and feces of those animals forbidden for us to eat.
2. The dead body of humans, and animals whose blood gushes out when slaughtered.
3. Human sperm, as well as that of animals whose blood gushes out when slaughtered.
4. Human blood, as well as that of animals whose blood gushes out when slaughtered.
5. Alcoholic liquors.
6. Terrestrial dogs and pigs.

Undoubtedly, the present man's problem, especially in big cities, is how to get rid of human and animal waste products, as well as their dead bodies. This is because they are the most clear and wide range source of microbes and other dangerous diseases, which afflict man.

However, as the aforementioned "Najasah" were outlined and their role in polluting the environment mentioned, man was also commanded to be free from them, as Almighty Allah says:

مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

"...Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you that He may complete His favour on you so that you may be grateful." (5:6)

Indeed, whoever makes a close examination and contemplation of these purification laws, will understand that the Islamic purification method is the most perfect system of purification, health and protecting the environment from dirty things and "Najasah".

It terms water, earth and sun as natural products, dead bodies, blood and semen and some animal

waste products. It also regards transformation (Istihala) from a particular state to another, like the transformation of a dead animal to ashes after burning, as among the purifiers.

In addition, the purification method in Islam is composed of different steps, which are among the most perfect processes and environmental protection practices; they are:

A. Islam, after regarding the dead body, blood, semen and waste products of man and some other animals as “Najis”, being confirmed by scientific researches that they are the sources of some diseases and environmental pollution, it commands that their purification and removal from the human’s body and other things like clothes, utensils, carpets, etc., by using water or other purifiers is mandatory. It also legislates the purification of some “Mutanajjisat” (things which become impure through contacting “Najis”) by earth. Through this step, Islam strives towards the purification of the environment and protecting it from the dangers of pollution.

B. Burying a dead body: Islam has made the burying of a human dead body compulsory, which is among the most important steps in getting rid of microbes and diseases, as well as, protecting the human environment against pollution.

C. Bathing: Islam has legislated different types of bathing (Ghusl) for cleaning man and protecting his body from dirty things and other sources of diseases, thereby, making some compulsory (Wajib) “Ghusl” and others recommended (Mustahab). The compulsory ones are:

1. Ghusl Al-Janabah: It is obligatory (Wajib) on a “Junub” (a person who has Janabah—in a state of ritual impurity due to sexual intercourse or ejaculation) to clean himself from it through ritual bathing to ready the self for prayer (Salat) and to be in a state of impurity to have a valid fast (Sawm).¹¹ Islam has made it “Makruh” (undesirable) for a “Junub” to sleep without performing Ghusl, and likewise, eating and drinking without Ghusl in this state.

2. Ghusl al-Haidh¹²

3. Ghusl al-Istihadhah¹³

4. Ghusl-e-Mass-e-Mayyit¹⁴

5. Ghusl an-Nifas¹⁵

The “Mustahab Ghusl”, which Islam exhorts people to perform, are many, but the most important one is: The Friday “Ghusl”, which is the weekly “Ghusl” for safeguarding the purity of the body.

D. Ablution (Wudhu): Ablution, in the Islamic perspective, is the most clear method of actualizing man’s daily purification. Islam has made five daily prayers incumbent upon all Muslims, (starting from 9 years for girls and 15 for boys) and those prayers cannot be said unless in a state of ablution, thus, one has to clean himself every day five times or at least three times daily, because prayer, whether compulsory or

recommended, will not become valid without ablution.

Consequently, ablution is regarded as purification because it considers washing the face and hands compulsory and rinsing the mouth and drawing water into nostrils as recommended acts. As Islam legislates the compulsory ablution, likewise, it exhorts on being in a state of purity when performing some recommended acts of worship like reading the Holy Qur'an, and it also recommends performing ablution before sleeping.

E. Cleaning furniture and other household appliances: Islam's concern and care for environment, its cleanliness and its protection can be seen through its command of prohibiting the eating and drinking of "najis" and "Mutanajjis" things. Therefore, it becomes compulsory on one who wants to eat or drink from a plate or cup that has become "najis" to purify it with water or, in some instances water with earth, before using it. Surely, the jurisprudence books have discussed how to purify these items when they come in contact with "najis" (for details, please refer to books regarding this subject).

5. Prohibiting some foods and drinks and some other practices, like eating dead animals, drinking blood, liquor and using unlawful drugs, which serve as destructive elements to the health, as well as, polluting the well-being of the society.

6. Prohibiting illegal sexual relations; like adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, masturbation, etc...

7. Creating the concepts of "no injury and no malicious damage" (La Dharara Wa La Dhirara) With this great legal concept or principle which gives the right of freezing and blocking any act or practice which has any harmful result, we can say that Islam has prohibited everything which is harmful to the environment. So, it is left for the experts and religious scholars or in other words, it is their responsibility to specify those harmful acts, items and practices. Afterwards, it may become the responsibility of the government to prohibit the use of those harmful items and activities, so as to protect the well-being and peaceful coexistence of their citizens.

8. The responsibility of "enjoining the good and prohibiting evil" (al-Amru bil ma'rufi wan Nahayi anil Munkar): the injunction of "Amru Bil Ma'rufi Wan Nahayi Anil Munkar" and, likewise, the right and jurisdiction given to a ruler by Islam for the smooth discharging of his duties, forms a good reformative atmosphere in the Islamic society. And comprises all the necessary requirements which can guarantee the protection of the environment and its development for the interest of man. Thus, the Islamic laws are based on this formula:

"Attracting interests and repelling corruption".

And that the principle of "and help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression" is a broad foundation of environmental protection and preserving the natural system. Because the verse prohibits aggression on nature and life and also calls for a collective relationship toward good and reformation.

- [1.](#) Ibn Qayyim Jawziyya Al-Amthal Fi Al-Qur'an Al-Karim, pg.78, Darul Ma'rifa –Beirut.
- [2.](#) Al-Kafi by Kulaini, vol. 6, pg. 531.
- [3.](#) Tuhf Al-Uqul an Aal Al-Rasul by Harrani, The Sermons of Imam Ridha (a.s.).
- [4.](#) Sunan Abi-Dawud, vol. 4, pg. 51.
- [5.](#) Ibid.
- [6.](#) Sahih Tirmidhi, vol. 10, pg. 240.
- [7.](#) Kanzul Ummal by Muttaqi Hindi, vol. 9, pg. 277 and 278, Hadith No. 26001 and 26007, published by Al-Risala Foundation, Beirut in 1979.
- [8.](#) Was'il Al-Shi'a by Hurr Amili, vol. 1, the book of Taharah, pg. 228, Dar Ihyah Al-Turahth Al-Arabi.
- [9.](#) Ibid., pg. 241.
- [10.](#) Ibid., pg. 229.
- [11.](#) There are juristic details on the laws of Ghusl concerning fasting and also on the laws of a menstruating woman, or who is vaginally bleeding (Istihadha) or the blood after childbirth (Nifas).
- [12.](#) Ghusl Al-Haidh is a "Ghusl" which is compulsory upon a woman to perform after the stopping of normal menstruation.
- [13.](#) Gusl Al-Istihadha is a "Ghusl" which is compulsory upon a woman who vaginally bleeds other than "haidh" and "nifas".
- [14.](#) It is a compulsory "Ghusl" which a person must perform, when he or she touches a corpse before it has been duly washed.
- [15.](#) It is a "Ghusl" which is compulsory upon a woman who has had a baby and after the stoppage of the delivery blood.

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