

Sustainable Conservation of Forests: Islamic Guidelines

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Abstract

Forest is a God gifted natural resources and its management and conservation on sustainable basis is considered to be the prime responsibility of every nation if they want to conserve their natural habitats for their future generations. Islam is a universal religion. It teaches humanity especially its believers, to lead a moderate life and prohibits extravagance. Extravagance and following wishes and desires results in the unabated loss of natural resources including forests, which creates several hazards for wild life as well as human being. Environmental experts are focusing the concentration of people to these hazards. About one third of human population comprises Muslims, who prefer to act upon the teachings of Islam. In this article we have tried to clarify that planting trees and forests is means of reward for Muslims in this world as in the hereafter as, it is termed as Sadaqa Jaria by the Holy prophet, for them. Cutting of forests unsparingly, is injustice with humanity and wild life. In this review paper, it has been tried to remind people for increasing and extending forests and consider it as a religious duty.

Keywords: Islam forestry, Natural resources, Forests sustainability, Ecosystem.

Introduction

Due to insufficiency of forests, there is a great increase in the temperature of the earth and its negative impact is a hazard for wild life as well as human beings. Due to decrease in forests and great pressure upon the natural resources, human population has been deprived or is near to be deprived of the benefits of forests. The existing forests are insufficient to compensate the negative effects resulting from the changes in temperature, quality and timings of rains, due to decrease in forests. About one third of

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world's populations are Muslims and they consider it their duty to act according to the teaching of the holy prophet (S.A.W). If Muslims consider populating the world with forests as their religious duty, considerable positive changes can occur, and the enforce humanity will be grateful to them. In this review paper, extending, forest area and their proper protecting have been encouraged and has been called Sadaqa Jaria.

Islam encourages planting trees and calls it 'Sadaqa Jaria' (perpetuating charity) for the one who planted it. Trees are beauty and life of the earth. Forests on proper area help in keeping the climate temperate. The overgrowing human population needs more forests to be planted. Considering this exigency people should extend the area covered by forests. In this article we have tried to bring forward those teachings and instructions of Islam through which we can motivate the Muslims to fulfill their religious duty in this regard.

Importance of Forests

It is essential that at least one fourth of any region must contain forests so that to keep natural environment and ecosystem of that region, in balance. Especially in those regions which rely on agriculture, decrease in forests can affect their economy badly. Forests absorb the ever growing quantity of carbon dioxide in the air. Along with keeping balance in rains, they secure the natural passages of water. They are means of energy on one hand and control the land sliding including soil erosion the other.

Hypothesis

By implementing the teachings and instructions of Islam we can protect the forests

Data

Forests

A large piece of land that is thickly covered with trees.¹

Human Relationship with forest

Forests have a deep relation with human life. Allah settled the first human Hazrat Adam, in Jannah' (Garden of Eden) as Almighty Allah: Says in the Holy Quran: "And We said: O 'Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise; and eat at pleasure wherever you like, but do not go near this tree, otherwise you will be (counted) among the transgressors."²

In this verse of the holy Quran Allah ordered Adam and his mate to lead their lives in Jannah. The meaning that is generally understood from this verse that Allah wanted to give man reverence is quite right. But it is also possible that the body of Adam was obliged to the pleasant environment of Jannah, and it is also possible training by keeping him in Jannah, so that when he and his offspring face gardens and forests in the world they must have some acquaintance with its benefits and maintenance. As it is evident from the verse: “And when Adam was sent to the earth, the earth was ready for bloom. Adam started farming when he came to the world.”³

Calamities on earth are the resultant of human deeds

Man and his deeds are considered responsible for misfortunes/ mishaps, heavy rain falls, storm and famines on earth:

“Calamities have appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of the people have earned, so that He (Allah) makes them taste some of what they did (deeds) in order that they may return (to the right way).”⁴

“Whatever hardship befalls you it is because of what your own hands have committed.”⁵

The distinction of Human beings

Allah gifted human being with such abilities which other animals do not have. For instance the ability to think, speak and plan, with the help which he can control, and use many times powerful animals. But man started using his distinguished abilities for gaining temporary benefits and facilities which resulted in the loss of resistance of natural resources. Islam considers the harmful and injurious deeds as against humanity, as the holy prophet (S.A.W) said: the Muslim is one who saves other Muslims from the harms of his hand and tongue.⁶

Islam encourages land cultivation

Islam greatly encourages cultivating the earth. The holy Quran discusses, time and again, rains and the resulting bloom of earth with greenery and fruits as a blessing. The sayings of the holy Prophet (S.A.W) also contain inducement of planting trees and gardens. Jabir (R.A) reported that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said: when a Muslim grows something and someone eats from it, it is Sadaqa for him. If someone steals from it, it is Sadaqa (charity). If

the birds take from it, it is a Sadaqa for him, and if any one decreases it, it is a Sadaqa for the Muslim.⁷

Jabir (R.A) reported, I listened to the holy Prophet (S.A.W) saying: when a Muslim plants a tree or grows some crop, then animal or birds or others living creatures eat from it, Allah will reward him for it.⁸ Similarly the holy Prophet (S.A.W) called planting of trees and digging well and constructing canals as deeds of everlasting rewards or Sadaqa Jaria.⁹ The above sayings of the holy Prophet (S.A.W) refer to the following points:

- i. Feeding the animals and even taking them to water are virtuous deeds.
- ii. Sometimes a Muslim performs some action which benefits others, though he has no intention of it, even then he is rewarded for it.

Indiscriminate of forests is a hypocrite deed (is a reflection of dual standers

Destroying crops, meadows and brutes are hypocritical deeds, as Allah says in the holy Quran. "Once he turns back, he moves about in the land, trying to spread disorder in it and to destroy the tillage and the stock; and Allah does not like disorder."¹⁰

Explaining this verse Ibne-Kaseer says: hypocrites intend nothing but mischief on earth. Destroying crops means to destroy the places where they grow, and destroying race means destroying brutes, on which human beings depend.¹¹

There must be a group for protection of forests

There must be a force to control any type of mischief's, including destructing forests. "Here has to be a group of people from among you who call towards the good, and bid the fair and the unfair. And these are the once who are successful."¹²

Abu Saeed Khudri (R.A) reported from the holly Prophet (S.A.W) that he said:

*"The one who sees amongst you the unfair, must change it with his hand, if he cannot do this then with his tongue, and if not this, he should consider it wrong with his heart, and it is the weakest degree of faith."*¹³

Enforcement of effective rules for the safety of natural resources and forests

Enforcement of effective rules for the safety of forests is very necessary. Otherwise we cannot have a responsible society. People are not equal regarding the sense of responsibility. Some people

have sense of responsibility and others must be induced to it. But there is a great number of such people too, who have no effect of advice upon them, such men must be corrected through law as such which correct. Law and rule is punishment for the wrongdoer on one side and it is a means to control the mischief on the other hand. But if the punishment is less than the crime committed, crime control becomes impossible.

Conclusion

The first human Prophet Hazrat Adam was inhabited in Eden, where man (Adam) learnt about benefits of forests and pastures. Allah has blessed the earth with unlimited natural resources as long as man does not interfere in it. The weather remains pleasant due to forests, rains come in time. Woods for construction of homes and other human needs are provided. World is saved from calamities due to wild brutes, and for their sake we are blessed with rains. Quran has attributed the calamities on the earth an in the sea for man. The unabated cutting of forest and such other harmful actions have been called deeds of hypocrisy and as against Islam teachings. Islam encourages planting of trees and considers it Sadaqa Jaria, which benefits even after death. Stopping the destruction of forests and such harmful deeds is the collective duty of all Muslims. There must be a group reserved for stopping such activities. We should plant and grow for the reward of here after. Other financial benefits would come as additional and surplus rewards.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for natural rescors especially for forest conservation:

- i. Muslims are sufficient part of world population therefore if the religious spirit is involved in the protection of natural resources, in involved in the protection of natural resources it may produce for better results.
- ii. The Hadith motioned in this article have declared the plantation of trees and lawns as virtue. Therefore it should be publicized.
- iii. A subject regarding environment and Islam should be included in the curriculum on school and college level.

Notes & References

- ¹ *Oxford Advanced American Dictionary*
- ² Al Quran (2: 35)
- ³ Sarakhsi Muhammad bin Ahmad, *Mabsoot*, Volume 3 (Karachi: Idaratul Quran, 2002), p. 120
- ⁴ Al Quran (30:41)
- ⁵ Al Quran (42:30)
- ⁶ Muhammad bin Ismaeil Albukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, Vol. 1 (n.p: Daru Tureqennjat, n.d). pp. 11, No10.
- ⁷ Ibn-e-Hajjaj Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 3 (n.p: Daru Ihyaetrath, n.d). pp. 1188, No1552.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Abu Bakar bin Husain Baihaqi, *Sunan-e-Baihaqi*, Vol. 3 (Beirut: Daru Ktbul Ilmiia, n.d.), pp. 773, No 228.
- ¹⁰ Al Quran, (2:205).
- ¹¹ Ismaeel ben Amar Ibne Kthir, *Tafsir ul Qura'n-e-Azim*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Daru Ktbul Ilmiia, n.d.), p. 419.
- ¹² Al Quran, (3:104).
- ¹³ Ibn-e-Hajjaj Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 1 (n.p: Daru Ihyaetrath, n.d), p. 69, No 79.