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# THE ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

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## 0.1 INTRODUCTION

Climate change is not a mere abstract issue. It is true and real. What we are witnessing every day the frequent earthquakes, floods and polar ice melting resulting from ozone depletion and global warming, are all clear smoking –gun evidences which boldly draw our attention to the fact that energy and other natural resources are increasingly been misused.

But, from Islamic point of view, this is not only the issue. There is another side which is more dangerous and deserves to be understood. The commandments of the earth-creator are being unmindfully violated by mankind. And God frowns seeing his laws being continuously broken and neglected.

Islam is meant to be globally accepted and has openly called upon mankind to make a convivial relationship with other inhabitants of the earth. This is stated clearly in the Qur'an, Allah says: "I will create a vicegerent on earth"<sup>1</sup>. Earth is the human home and it has been designed in human nature. That is why the attention of humankind is always drawn to the fact that no any other place could comfortably accommodate them. Allah says "From the earth did we create you, and into it shall we return you, and from it shall we bring you out once again"<sup>2</sup>. Hence it is left to the human beings to establish lawful ways and means that could safely afford them better life and safe living on this planet.

I hope this paper would be of some help in tackling the main issues of global climate change.

## 1-1 Humankind is Responsible For Building Clean Environment:

It has been the will and intention of God to beautify the earth, and this could be by his first hand designs of creations and by second hand through human being's actions.

Allah created the earth as beautiful and makes everything that beautifies it available. The Qur'an describes this clearly. Allah says: "He spread the earth. And brought forth therefrom its water and its posture. And the mountain He has fixed firmly. To be a provision and benefit for you and your cattle"<sup>3</sup>.

He also says: "And the earth: He has put down laid for the creatures. Therein are fruits and dates-palms producing sheathed fruit-stalks enclosing dates. And also corn, with its leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet-scented plants. And which of the Blessings of your Lord will you both Jinn an Men deny?"<sup>4</sup>.

As vicegerent of Allah and trustees for the rest of creation, humans are to work hard for decorating their respective environments. Allah says: "And do not mischief on earth, after it has been set in order, and invoke Him with fear and hope"<sup>5</sup>. Here are some available ways which mankind are required to preserve the beauty of the earth:

i- Beautifying and cleaning up the environment: environment consists air, water and land in which people, animals and plants live<sup>6</sup>. A quite number of Qur'anic verses have set beautifying the human surroundings as obligatory upon all Muslims since the early prophecies. Prophet Salih- Peace be on him- told his people that "Allah has produced you from the earth"<sup>7</sup>- then he used the word "استعمروكم فيها", to indicate that Allah urged them to furnish their environment with all what can make it beautiful. This view though is not popular but was chosen by great exegetes like Zaid bn Aslam and Qurtubi<sup>8</sup>.

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has been reported to have said: "Cleanse your surroundings and territories"<sup>9</sup>. The Prophet ordered the people of Medina to safeguard the right of living for harmless animals and birds. He once, according to the report of Ibn Mughffal, ordered the killing of dogs and then said: What is the trouble with them ? How dogs are nuisances to the citizens of Medina ? He then permitted keeping of dogs for hunting and the protection of herds and for the protection of cultivated land". He said in other narrations: "Were dogs not a species of creature I should command that they all be killed"<sup>10</sup>.

It is also reported that: "An ant had bitten a Prophet among the Prophets and he ordered that the colony of ants should be burnt. And Allah revealed to him: Because of an ant's bite you have burnt a community from amongs the communities which sing my glory"<sup>11</sup>.

A man once came to Prophet (S.A.W) carrying with him a box. He said, O Prophet ! While I was passing through a jungle, I heard the voice of some bird's babies. I took them and put them in this box. The moment I did that, their mother came fluttering round my head. Then the Prophet said: Put them down. When the man put the box on the ground, the mother of the young birds joined them. Seeing this, the Prophet asked the man who now had a look of surprise on his face, "Are you surprised by the affection of the mother towards her young ? I swear by Almighty Allah who has sent me, suerely, God is more loving to his servant than the mother to these young birds. Returned these baby birds to the place where you took them, and let their mother be with them"<sup>12</sup>.

In view of beautifying the environment, the Prophet (S.A.W) warned against any action that may cause infection and pollute the environment. He said: "Guard against three things which produce cursing, relieving oneself in watering places, in the middle of the road, and in the shade"<sup>13</sup>. In other tradition he said: "Avoid two

things that provoke people's curse; relieving oneself in road side, where people walk and shades places, (where people rest)<sup>14</sup>. Scholars like Imam al Nawawi while commenting on this hadith opined that embarking on any activity that may spoil the environment and thereby cause pollution could be described as unlawful and Imam Dhabbi went on considering it as one of the major sins<sup>15</sup>.

ii- Moderate use of energy: Human use of natural resources is not only the ultimate purpose for creating of it. Qur'an states that: "And there is not an animal in the earth, not a bird that flies its two wings, but they are communities like yourselves"<sup>16</sup>. Allah also says: "The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein, glorify Him (God) and there is not a thing but glorifies His praise. But you understand not their glorification"<sup>17</sup>. This suggests that any move leading to ruthless destruction of other creations is equivalent to preventing it from praising and glorifying Allah. Scientists have been increasingly able to attribute ozone depletion to the increase of man-made halogen compounds and overuse of energy to the extreme<sup>18</sup>.

This attitude from Shari'a point of view is a sort of extravagance which can be considered as corruption on the earth, and whoever is caught on that count should be punished. This is not because of his right to use Allah's bounties; nobody would deprive him of this, but because of obstructing others' right of having good and healthy environment. It is stated in one of the prophetic hadith that: "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm"<sup>19</sup>. Everybody has equal right to live safely. Indulging some one's life in danger is haram. Allah says: "Do not throw yourselves with your hands into destruction. Truly, Allah loves doers of good"<sup>20</sup>. And the prophets (S.A.W) said: "Do not harm the creation of Allah"<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore releasing pollutants into the atmosphere would be regarded as violating the laws of Allah. Because of its negative effects on human beings, animals and plants like breathing

problems, cancer, etc. Thus, creative constructions and innovative designs are all welcomed and encouraged in Islamic point of view, provided they are meant for the benefit of humans not for their destruction.

To show immense importance of safeguarding the cleanness of the environment, the Prophet of Islam has pronounced in a point blank manner a number of hadith commanding his nation to perpetuate goodness in the earth. Anas bn Malik reported the Prophet (S.A.W) saying: "If the last hour comes, and it happened that one of you possessed a tree, he should plant it before elapsing of the hour"<sup>22</sup>. This suggests that when even hope is lost, planting should continue for being good in it.

The Prophet (S.A.W) also said: "There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as charitable gift for him"<sup>23</sup>. In another tradition: "He who cultivates land that does not belong to anybody is more rightful to own it"<sup>24</sup>.

During the regime of four rightly guided Caliphs, and precisely in the reign of Umar bn Khattab, a prophet's companion called Khuzaimah bn Sabit refused to plant his patch for assumption of being old, and almost to die! Umar warned him and insisted in cultivating the land. Thereupon the man carried on with it, and eventually Umar put his hands together in order to see it work<sup>25</sup>.

## **2-1 OBJECTIVES OF SHARI'A ARE SET FOR GLOBAL PEACE:**

It is clear from the rapid changes we witness According to the ecological authorities if serious measures are not taken to support environmental sustainability, the near future of mankind is heading towards massive disturbances.

A number of factors, most of which are humans' have been enumerated in connection to the environmental degradation. This includes disposal of wastes/elements generated by industries, air pollution due to smoke from vehicles, land erosion and

deforestation to mention but few and its negative impact on oxygen and nitrogen is observable. "In 23 countries worldwide, more than 10 percent of death is due to just two environmental risk factors: unsafe water, including poor sanitation and hygiene; and indoor air pollution due to using solid fuel for cooking"<sup>26</sup>.

Six Principles were stipulated by Islam to ensure the security and safety of the people, namely Religion, self, progeny, Intellect, property and honor. These are essential to enhance normal order in society as well as to the survival and spiritual well being of individuals, so much so that their destruction and collapse will precipitate chaos and collapse of normal order in society and the well-being of the families<sup>27</sup>. For this reason governments of all levels must spare no pains in order to give her citizens' utmost protection.

In this regard we have come round to the fact that the so called technologically developed countries are playing double standard role towards the future of the under developing ones. They silently dump their industrial waste in the soil of poor countries in one hand and in other hand they boast of becoming masters of intensive campaign against environmental pollution! This attitude resembles the one which Qur'an explains in this verse: "Of mankind there is he whose speech my please you, in this worldly life, and he calls Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart, yet he is the most quarrelsome of the opponents. And when he turns away, his effort to destroy the crops and the cattle, and Allah likes not mischief"<sup>28</sup>.

### **3-0 CALL FOR INSTANT REVERSE TO THE GOD'S ORDER:**

It is true that mere climate change, according to Islam, doesn't singlehandedly lead world to total destruction. This would not happen like that. But humans along other earth inhabitants would definitely suffer from food shortage, lack of fresh water, floods, plagues and lots of other problems which might originate from misuse of natural resources. Suffering, as it is evident, finds its way



to people through innumerable channels. The biggest one undoubtedly is what the hands of people have earned. Allah (S.W.T) Said: "Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of the meed that the hands of men have earned. That Allah may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back from evil"<sup>29</sup>.

Allah is jealous and he is becoming more jealous when his injunctions of do's and don'ts are undermined. As being the Almighty and the only One Who has power over all things, he promised to show up where ever humans trespass his law. I suppose no any conscious person would deny the fact that Allah's law is at present time encroached upon. Besides aggression of super powers over the developing and under developing countries, we see individual human beings killing one another; nudity and pornographic culture also spreading everywhere. All these things and a host of many others are facets of violating Allah's order which are capable of causing chaos in the earth. The prophet said: "Immorality never appears among a people to such an extent that they commit it openly, but plagues and diseases that were never known among the predecessors will spread among them. They do not cheat in weights and measures but they will be stricken with famine severe calamity and oppression of their rulers..."<sup>30</sup>.

Eclipse of Sun and Moon can be viewed scientifically as natural, but in addition to that Islam has related it to another factor in name of prevalence of mischief among the humankind. Consequently it becomes a disaster which by all means deserves a special prayer. Such thing once happened during the time of the Prophet and after observing the prayer he said: "The Sun and the Moon are two signs among the signs of Allah, they do not eclipse because of the death or life (birth) of anyone. So when you see eclipse remember Allah and say Takbir, offer Salat and give Sadaqa...O followers of Muhammad! By Allah there is none who has more anger/jealousy

than Allah, so he has forbidden his slaves, male or female commits illegal sexual intercourse"<sup>31</sup>.

In line of this, Abdullah bin Abbas was reported to have prayed such a prayer when earthquakes stroke his resident<sup>32</sup>. In the same vein, a specific prayer for the situation of drought has been prescribed by Islam, just to get rid of any evil that can cause harm to the mankind or to other inhabitants of the earth. This prayer is to be performed whenever shortage of rainfall attacks a particular area. Abbas (R.A) the uncle of Prophet (S.A.W) led a drought prayer and in the process he said: "Oh Allah! You wouldn't launch sinister to the earth without being angered, and you wouldn't take it off unless people do sincerely repent"<sup>33</sup>.

We can discern from these instances that Islam means dynamic peace. Peace among the human beings themselves and peace that would make human being to conform to all the laws of other physical beings. If the purity of the nature is divested, how can peace between the two existents be maintained?

### **3-1 Jurisprudential maxims supporting Law enactment regarding climate change**

Health occupies an important position in Islam. Islam recognizes certain rights of the environment in regards to health. The Prophet (S.A.W) once emphasized that: "There are two gifts of which many men are cheated: health and leisure"<sup>34</sup>. The fundamentals of health care are three, namely; food, water and air. Any human being should ensure the safety of these three for himself and other fellow human beings. The Prophet (S.A.W) is reported to have said: "People are partners in three resources: water, pasture, and fire"<sup>35</sup>.

The following maxims were extracted from the dignified juristic books in order to support enactment of law concerning violating the

purity of the environment. The responsibility of government in setting such laws include:

- a- Drawing attention of any person to the order that while making use of anything that is free he should not inflict injury upon other persons. In this regard, it is stated in the Jurisprudence books that "If any person construct a cesspit or sewer near a well of water belonging to some other persona and contaminated the water thereof, he may be made to remove the injury. If it is impossible to remove the injury, he may be made to close up the cesspit or sewer. Again, if any person constructs a sewer near to a water channel and the dirty water from such sewer flows into the channel and causes great injury thereto, and no other way can be found to remove such injury than by closing it, the sewer shall be closed"<sup>36</sup>.
- b- Compensating damages for the inflicted person. Any damage being caused through one of the three causes it should be compensate. These are<sup>37</sup>:
  - i-Illegal Possession; where someone's ownership of say land is being occupied by others through usurpation, robbery etc.
  - ii-Destruction; whereby some destroys the right of others directly by burning, slaughtering, tearing up...etc
  - iii-Causal factor; where the offence has not been done directly but is inflicted indirectly like candling fire closer to the forest in the way that its blow can extend to the other's property. It is duty of the government to compel offenders to compensate for excessive cutting of trees or unnecessary bush burning or overgrazing/overeating the grasses covering the land which exposes the earth's surface to erosion and makes destruction of the vegetation or forest itself<sup>38</sup>. It is clear that all these things are offence if done without any legal reason and it is penalty which the offender deserves severe punishment. Abdullah bn Habshi (R.A) reported that

the Prophet said: "Whoever cuts down a lote-tree in the wilderness under which wayfarers and animals find shade, for no purpose or unlawfully, Allah will put his head in the fire"<sup>39</sup>.

- e- Stiff Punishment for making damages to the others' property or health should be enforced by the government. Islam regards killing a single bird without any valid purpose as cruelty against the Shari'a. On this the Prophet (S.A.W) said: "There is no person who kills a small bird or anything larger for no just reason, but Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, will ask him about it !- It was said : O Messenger of Allah, what does just reason mean ? He said: That you slaughter it and eat it, and do not cut off its head and throw it aside"<sup>40</sup>.

#### 4-0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is now clear that the Qur'anic view of creation speaks of mankind as having been given the role of steward over the rest of inhabitants of the earth. To maintain this prestigious position and to stop any serious damage that can befall the globe I propose that the following measures should be taken into consideration in formulating policies to convert global climate change:

- 1- It is incumbent upon every Muslim and non Muslim alike to ponder over themselves for balance-checking. People collectively and individually should repent and invoke Allah for getting things better.
- 2- Increasing the amount of trees. Everyone should plant 3-units of cover crops and trees every year or once at list in his life time to protect the soil surface.
- 3- People should encourage each other to use local materials.
- 4- Government at different level should give its people sound education about the importance of protection and keeping the environment clean.

- 5- Media, from its side, should launch huge campaign against ongoing ever-expanding energy consumptions and should call for continuous improvements in the prevention of environment.
- 6- Institutions like universities should stage local and international conferences on pollution, energy saving, minimization of wastage and resource recycling.
- 7- Government at different level should impose laws on clean environment, and it must force people and companies to obey such laws.
- 8- Harmful/poisonous chemicals and industrial/factory wastes when dumped randomly may run into streams and rivers. This sometimes results in the death of people, animals and plants and crops are destroyed. Those factories must be made to get rid of wastes properly and/or recycle wastes before pouring them into water.
- 9- Whoever, individual or organization, is found guilty of destroying the environmental atmosphere should be sentenced through discretionary punishment (Ta'zir) in accordance with the damage he/she does and should compensate the damages adequately.
- 10- The developing countries should not be the dumping grounds of developed ones. Leaders and politicians should be very cautious to that effect.
- 11- Governments at all levels including International community should keep the issue of climate change in check all the time.

A close review of an ancient history would prove that in war between mankind and nature, the latter is always triumphant and the former bears the consequences. Therefore, our voice will continuously roar until the state of normalcy is restored, for Allah says: "Never give up hopes of Allah's mercy. Certainly no one despairs of Allah's mercy except the people who disbelieve"<sup>41</sup>.

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