



THE IMPACT OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS ON FOREST PRESERVATION AND ITS CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract

Deforestation activities especially among the rural communities have continued to generate serious problem to the environment as whole. Recently, before the commencement of the rainy season there was a high increase in temperature in our areas and it has reported that the massive deforestation which are being carried out by in our different communities have contributed immensely to the rising of temperatures in our respective environment. Today governments, institutions, unions and organization are doing the utmost to ensure the protection of forests, but Islam categorically provided the importance of forests and its protection. The research is aimed at discussing the impact of Islamic teachings on forest preservation and its significance in contemporary societies, In doing so the researcher attempt to discuss the significance of forest in the light of *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. The article sheds light on the impact of Islamic teaching in safeguarding the forest, as protection of forest is essential to Islamic beliefs and mankind has the responsibility to ensure the protection and preservation of forest. The method applied in carrying out the research is by consulting books of *Ahadith* as well verses of the Glorious *Qur'an* which indicates the importance for the preservation of forest. A number of measures were recommended for maintaining as well as protection of the plant and trees, which includes strict adherences to the teachings of the *Quran* and *Sunnah* of the Noble Prophet (PBUH) on the preservation of forest must be maintained, as well enactment of laws that would deter deforestations needs to be implemented in our respective court of laws, and punishment for the violators must be meted severely in the presence of public to serve as the deterrent to others.

Key Words: Islamic Teachings, Impact, Forest, Preservation, Significance

Introduction

There is no doubt that, the religion of Islam touches all part of human life as it greatly guides the believers in their day to day activities. Islam highly recommends planting trees and urges people to protect them to the extent that planting a tree is considered as an act of worship, for which special prayer is recommended. The Noble Prophet (PBUH) warned the believers against cutting trees unnecessarily.

The teachings of Islam have significant impact on forest preservation as the *Quran* and *Sunnah* strongly forbids the cutting and destroying of plant and trees. The Noble Prophet (P.B.U.H) said he who cuts a lot-tree [without justification], Allah will send him to Hellfire. Islam forbids wasting of resources and destroying the forest. The Noble Prophet (Peace Be upon Him) ordered the Muslims not to cut trees during the war. He emphasized on the preservation of the forest and the prevention of its destruction. Therefore in this respect, it is considered that maintaining the forest has a specific place in the Islamic thought.

The paper discusses on the impact of Islamic teachings on forest preservation and its significance in Muslim contemporary societies. In doing so, the researcher provides an introduction which is currently ongoing. The paper also highlighted on the Islam stand point on preservation of trees in which many *Quranic* verses and the sayings of the Noble Prophet (PBUH) were cited to indicate the importance of the preservation of plant and trees. The article also provides vivid explanation on the significance of forest in the light of *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. Finally, the paper concludes by offering valuable recommendations, which if effectively applied would protect the massive deforestation activities which became the practices of people today.

Islam Stand Point on Preservation of Forest

The teaching of Islam encourages the protection of forest from the detriment of all kinds and considered it a duty for human to take care of the conservation and sustainability of the forest. Stopping the destruction of forests is considered in Islam as collective responsibility of all Muslim. In the *Qur'an* Allah (SWT) Said

...But waste not by excess|: for God loves not the wasters (Al-Anam-142)

Islam is against the cutting or destruction of forest unnecessarily as mentioned clearly in the following *Hadith*:

Abdullah *ibn* Habashi reported that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: He who cuts a lote-tree [without justification], Allah will send him to Hellfire.

From the aforementioned *Hadith* therefore, preserving the trees is a religious duty of every Muslim. Along with proper care of environment, Islam also cautions not to be Profligate and wasteful. Allah gives order to humankind:

Oh Children of Adam! Beautify yourselves for every Act of worship, and eat and drink [freely], but do not Waste: verily, He does not love the wasteful! (Quran, 7:31)

In a *Hadith* the Noble Prophet (Peace be upon Him) said,

The world is beautiful and verdant, and verily God, be He exalted, has made you His stewards in it, and He sees how you acquit yourselves.” (*Saheeh Muslim*)

Such forest preservation in the light of *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* includes:

He who cuts a lot-tree [without justification], Allah will send him to Hellfire.

Islam highly recommends planting trees and urges people to protect them to the extent that planting a tree is considered as an act of worship, for which special prayer is recommended.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

Unless you are compelled, do not cut down a tree!

This solution corresponds with the Islamic civilization and indicates that Islam has predicted these problems thousands of years ago. Moreover, Allah created everything in balance. Utilizing natural resources in the wrong way can harm this balance. Allah said in the Quran:

He created man and taught him clear expression. The sun and the moon both run with precision. The stars and trees bow down in prostration. He erected heaven and established the balance, so that

you would not transgress the balance. Give just weight do not skimp the balance. "He" laid out the earth for all living creatures' (Al-Rahman: 3-9).

This passage indicates that Allah created everything in balance. The abuse of natural resources can harm the balance of the environment. For example, environmental phenomena such as global warming and climate change are the result of the abuse of natural resources. These phenomena represent the imbalance of the environment.

In another verse Allah (SWT) said,

And do good as Allah has been good to you. Moreover, do not seek to cause corruption in the earth. Allah does not love the corrupters' (Al-Qasas: 77).

The Prophet (PBUH) declared:

If any Muslim plants a tree or sows a seed in a field, and a human, bird or animal eats from it; it shall be reckoned as charity from him. (Bukhari and Muslim).

While in another narration

Any Muslim who plants a tree or sows a seed in a field then whatever a bird or a human or animal eats from it is a charity on his behalf (Ahmad)

In another narration to indicate the significance of planting tree and preserving the forest, the Noble Prophet (PBUH) said

Jabir (R.A) reported that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said: No Muslim plants a tree then whatever is eaten from it is charity for him, and whatever is stolen from it is charity for him, and whatever the beasts eat from it is charity for him, and whatever is lost from it is charity for him. (Muslim).

The above mentioned *Ahadith* is an indication that, the reward for the person who plant tree as well preserve it continues as long as the produce of this tree is eaten or used by individuals and animals.

Destroying the forest is encroaching on the rights of future generations. The forest must be maintained as it was found. People should consider the future of the next generations, which also have the right to benefit from the forest. According to the Islamic thought, benefits from the forest should not be limited to some people. Instead, it should be the source of life for all people at all times.

Significance of Forest Preservation in Islam

The teachings of Islam highly recommends planting trees and urges people to protect them to the extent that planting a tree is considered as an act of worship, for which special prayer is recommended. The Noble Prophet (PBUH) in his practices attached great importance to planting trees, protecting existent ones as well as conserving the existent ones. Allah (SWT) declared forest as the beauty and ornament of this universe, the basic food for human being and an important source of comfort and recreation for mankind.

From the aforementioned, there are numerous importance of preserving the trees and plant in Islam. Among them include the following:

- 1) Preservation of trees serves as a charity, this is mentioned in the saying of the Noble Prophet (PBUH) “a Muslim who cultivate a tree or plant, the birds, humans and animals eat from it, it is a charity for him”. Therefore, looking at the above sayings of the Noble Prophet (PBUH) planting and preservations of the trees is considered and declared as act of charity. It is considered in Islam as ongoing charity. Which is one of the most rewarding deeds we can do in our lives, since we can get reward from it while we are alive and after our death?
- 2) Trees and plants can play a significant role in stopping and reducing air pollution in our various communities, that’s why the Noble Prophet (PBUH) encouraged plantation and strictly discouraged cutting trees unnecessarily. This statement is in accordance with the sayings of the Noble Prophet (PBUH) as ‘Unless you are compelled, do not cut down a tree!’
- 3) The trees and grown greens have a vital role in maintaining the balance of ecosystem and keeping human health healthy.
- 4) Planting a tree as well preserving it is considered in Islam as an act of worship for which special prayer is recommended. The Noble Prophet (PBUH) said in the *Hadith* that ‘Unless you are compelled, do not cut down a tree’.

- 5) Trees are the main source of shade and cover against heat and extreme cold, forest protects birds and other animals in their nests from rains and the human beings and animal sitting underneath. Due to utmost benefits attached to the trees, the religion of Islam forbids individuals from urinating under a tree. The Noble Prophet (PBUH) categorically prohibited the human beings from urinating under the trees. In the *Hadith*

Narrated Abu Hurairah: The Prophet (PBUH) said: Be on your guard against two things which provoked cursing. They said: Prophet of Allah what are these things which provoke cursing | ? He said: Eating in thoroughfares (where people walk) or under the shade of the trees (where they take shelter and rest). (Abu Dawud)

- 6) Forest are sources of variety of food for human beings as well for grazing and feeding for livestock and wildlife, many plants, animals and viral species usually survives on the tree. The Honey mostly is obtained from the beehives on trees, and usually is used for the treatment of illness.
- 7) The forest provides privacy for animal breeding, resting and nesting, it supports all types of biodiversity in their survival.
- 8) The diversity of trees that become forests will definitely serve as a means to prevent erosion and over flooding in our communities
- 9) Forest are capable of being and wildlife habitat of no small benefit, these animals also form part of the food chain and the natural hatching process of existing plants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research clearly spelt out the position of Islamic teachings on the unnecessary cuttings and destructions of plant and trees which became the common practices among individuals especially in the rural communities.

Islam is the complete code of life; it is a religion that touches all part of human life, the religion that guides the believers on what is lawful and what is unlawful. Plant and trees is of immense significance in the Islamic teachings as they provide numerous benefits to the lives of individuals and animal.. We have seen in the research Allah (SWT) Has appointed man as his vicegerent on the earth for looking after the plants and animal. Man in numerous Sayings of the Noble Prophet (PBUH) has been advised

to preserve the trees even during adverse environment of war. Likewise believers were warned not to destroy trees unless for a compelling circumstances. Therefore, people have to protect and prevent any act that can destroy the forest. Allah (SWT) forbids destroying the forest and orders the people to utilize it in the best way possible.

Findings:

From the above discussion we can get the following results;

- 1) The religion of Islam encourages afforestation and urges the Muslims to plant trees and discourage cutting the trees unnecessarily.
- 2) The findings of the research also indicate that Islamic teachings is based on the *Quran* and *Sunnah*, so strict compliance with the teachings of the *Quran* and *Sunnah* would enhance the maintenance and sustenance of forest available in our communities
- 3) The importance of forests is essential in the religion of Islam, due to this Islam order the preservation and strict protection of it.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, the Researcher recommends the following:

1. Islamic teachings provides utmost care on forest preservation, therefore, Muslims would seek to know deeply about their religion for better and goodness of life and humanity.
2. Muslims should pay much attention to the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* in order to understand the teachings of Islam in relation to the forest preservation.
3. Strict adherences to the teachings of the *Quran* and *Sunnah* of the Noble Prophet (PBUH) on the preservation of forest must be maintained as well Legislation to deter unnecessary cutting of trees needs to be implemented practically and by punishing the violators severely in the presence of public.
4. There is need by the authorities, Islamic scholars, *Imams* in the mosques and schools to create awareness among people on the importance of forests maintenance in the light of the *Quran* and *Sunnah*.

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