

Preserving the Environment

Description: A general introduction to Islam's attitude toward the universe, natural resources, and the relation between man and nature.

By Imam Mufti (© 2016 NewMuslims.com)

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Objectives

- To appreciate Islamic instructions on environmental protection.
- To understand our relationship with the universe and surroundings.
- To understand that every creature in the universe is in a balance which demands their preservation.
- To learn some tips for combating climate change.

Arabic Words

- *Iftar* - Meal to break the fast.

Our Relationship with our Surroundings

Environment protection is an important aspect of Islam.

Being stewards of the Earth, it is the responsibility of Muslims to care for the environment in a proactive manner. There is a definite purpose behind the creation of different species, be it plants or animals. Muslims are encouraged to reflect on the relationship between living organisms and their



environment and to maintain the ecological balance created by Allah. Protection of the environment is essential to Islamic beliefs and mankind has the responsibility to ensure safe custody of the environment.

The universe is enormously diverse in form and function. The universe and its various elements fulfill human welfare and are evidence of the Creator's greatness. He determines

and ordains all things and there is not a thing He has created but celebrates and declares His praise.

**"Have you not seen that Allah is glorified by all in the heavens and on the earth - such as the birds with wings outspread? Each knows its worship and glorification, and Allah is aware of what they do."
(Quran 24:41)**

All created beings are created to serve the Lord of all beings and, in performing their ordained roles in a cohesively designed society, they benefit themselves and each other in this world. This leads to a cosmic symbiosis. God's wisdom has ordained stewardship of the earth to human beings. Therefore, in addition to being part of the earth and part of the universe, man is also the executor of God's injunctions and commands. He is only a manager of the earth and not a proprietor, a beneficiary and not a disposer. In Islam, the utilization of resources is the right and privilege of all people and all species. Hence, man should take every precaution to ensure the interests and rights of all others since they are equal partners on earth. Man should not abuse, misuse, or distort the natural resources as each generation is entitled to benefit from them and is not entitled to "own" them in an absolute sense.

Furthermore, all human beings and, indeed, livestock and wildlife as well, enjoy the right to share in the resources of the earth. Man's abuse of any resource, such as water, air, land, and soil as well as other living creatures such as plants and animals is forbidden, and the best use of all resources, both living and lifeless, is prescribed. Integration of the development and conservation of natural resources is clear in the idea of bringing life to the land and causing it to flourish through agriculture, cultivation, and construction. Allah says:

"...It is He Who has produced you from the earth and settled you therein..." (Quran 11:61)

God has called on man to appreciate the value of this so essential source of life:

**"Say: Have you considered if your water were one morning to have seeped away, who then could bring you clear-flowing water?"
(Quran 67:30)**

Owing to the importance of water as the basis of life, God has made its use the common right of all living beings and all human beings. The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

"Muslims are to share in these three things: water, pasture, and fire." (Abu Dawud)

Air is no less important than water for the perpetuation and preservation of life, playing a vitally important role in pollination. God has said:

"And we send the fertilizing winds..." (Quran 15:22)

From the minerals of the earth are made the solid constituents of our bodies, as well as

those of all the living animals and plants. God has said in the Quran:

"And among His signs is that He has created you from dust; then behold, you are humans scattered widely." (Quran 30:20)

One of the fundamental principles of Islamic law is the Prophetic declaration:

"There shall be no damage and no infliction of damage." (Al-Hakim)

Americans discard 40% of the food supply every year and the average American family of four ends up throwing away an equivalent of \$2,200 annually in food. 55 square feet of tropical rainforest are destroyed for the production of each fast-food hamburger made from rainforest cattle.

Even though Americans constitute only 5% of the world's population, they consume 24% of the world's energy. If a Styrofoam cup was used at an *iftar* meal during the time of the Prophet, it would still be here today. Styrofoam, a type of foamed plastic, never decomposes.

Tips for Combating Climate Change

- Walk, bike, or use public transport.
- Use fuel efficient cars.
- Get an energy audit for your home to save power and money.
- Switch to green power, energy efficient light bulbs and appliances.
- Use clothe lines, not a dryer.
- Be conservative when making ablution or taking a bath.
- Buy fresh and local food - not frozen.
- Go to farmer's markets.
- Eat less meat.
- Cancel junk mail.
- Use recycled paper.
- Use a cloth bag when shopping.

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