

Man's Ethical Relationship with Nature

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Abstract

The topic of man and nature has been discussed over the centuries. A study on this area has caught the attention of many scholars of diverse specialization. In the present world, as an appreciation for the great contribution of nature to human survival, some have equated nature to God. Since the two are synonymous to them, they worship nature alongside God, equating nature as the manifestation of the Supreme Being. In contrast, others think that nature is an obstacle to human lives and they have to conquer it to prevail. In light of these two extreme positions, this chapter intends to explore and investigate the relationship between man and nature from an Islamic perspective. Apart from that, this chapter would like to find out the reasons why the Muslim community is not paying adequate attention to the conservation and preservation of nature. Amid the negligence in the Muslim world, people in other parts of the world are seriously campaigning to end the ongoing environmental degradation that is happening all over the world. A small portion of this chapter will try to identify the factors that hinder the Muslim community from paying attention to nature and the environment. Finally, the primary objective of the chapter is to bring to light what is supposed to be the ideal relationship of man with nature from the Islamic perspective.

Introduction

Major religions of the world preach that the universe/nature was created long before the arrival of man on this planet. Ever since man came to exist on this planet, it has gone through a dramatic change, particularly with the coming age of modernization, industrialization, colonization and now globalization. Geologists and environmentalists say that the face of the earth is constantly changing at a rapid scale due to pollution of all kinds. Pollution on land, in the ocean, forests, mountains, space, global warming, melting of the ice at the poles, war, and many more pose an imminent threat to human beings, wildlife and marine creatures. The main culprit who is behind all this pollution and environmental degradation is none other than man himself. Man in his greed for riches and dominance has caused great destruction to the living conditions on this planet.

Man's relationship with nature goes a long way. As an appreciation of the great contribution of nature to human survival, some have equated nature to God. Conversely, others who saw nature as an obstacle thought that man should conquer it to prevail. As opposed to these two extreme ideas, Islam takes a moderate stand. The Qur'an asks human beings to explore nature and the universe in the hope that, man will understand the patterns and laws by which God has created all celestial and terrestrial bodies. Ideally speaking, upon discovering God's wonders and creativity in nature and the universe, man should be humbled and thankful for the bounties provided by God. Besides, being obedient to God, the Qur'an also demands man to be ethical in his relationship with fellow human beings and the environment

Though many authorities in Islam have written extensively on the Islamic perspective of man and nature, this study intends to explore the topic in a slightly different manner. Besides explaining the privileged position enjoyed by man in the hierarchy of God's creations, the researchers would like to critically analyze the underlying factors as to why present-day Muslims

pay less or no attention to the preservation and conservation of nature. Upon identifying the conditions in the Muslim world, the researchers would also like to put forward some suggestions to remedy the prevalent attitude among Muslims concerning nature.

The Status of Man in Islam

Among all creations of God in the heavens and earth, only man has been given many distinctive attributes. As the recipient of such attributes from Allah the Almighty, man is placed on the highest pedestal in the hierarchy of creations. Some of man's distinctive attributes are; that he has been created in the best of forms (*Al-Qur'ān, Al-Tīn:1-4*), provided with creative intelligence (*Al-Qur'ān, Al-Baqarah: 31-34*), given the power of speech and freedom of choice (*Al-Qur'ān, Al-Rahmān:4; Al-Insān:3*). Since man has been endowed with such noble qualities or for some other reasons only known to the Creator, man has been chosen to be His *Khalīfah* (vicegerent) on earth. Apart from that, man has been further honoured in his stature and position when Allah made all things created in the heavens and earth to be of service to him (*Al-Qur'ān, Al-Jāthiyah: 13; Al-Isrā':70*).¹ For a more detailed discussion on the position occupied by man in the Qur'an, kindly refer to the chapter on '*Ethics from the Islamic Perspective*'.

Defining the Universe, Nature & Environment

In our day-to-day life, we often hear terms like; the universe, nature and environment have been used interchangeably. Though these terms sound synonymous, there exist some differences in their usage. What we mean by the universe is the description that includes matter and energy, galaxies and the space in between the galaxies. It also means Mother Nature with all its inhabitants; human beings, flora and fauna.² On the other hand, nature means the material world that surrounds man. Nature is also understood as the natural world that exists without man and civilization. Further explanation of nature paints a picture of the natural world with elements like mountains, trees, animals, etc. Another way of looking at nature is the universe with all its phenomena.³ While environment is more commonly referred to things: living and non-living that surround an organism or group of organisms.⁴ In comparing the three terms, one can conclude that the universe is larger in scale, while nature takes the next position in terms of magnitude and finally environment means the immediate surroundings that are around us. Among the three, the environment is a more localized situation and smaller in size compared to the other two.

¹ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, (1977), *Human Nature: A Comparative Study between Western and Islamic Psychology*, (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, 1997), pp.171-173.

² (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/universe>), Retrieved on the 24th Feb, 2015.

³ (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nature>), Retrieved on the 24th Feb, 2015.

⁴ (<http://ecological-problems.blogspot.com/2008/08/environment-definition-and-meaning.html>), Retrieved on the 24th Feb., 2015.

Man's Relationship with Nature

In Islam, man as the *khalifah* of Allah, has to bind a good relationship with nature. It is believed that man's friendly co-existence with nature will eventually lead man to reap the goodness that comes from nature. As a reward for his caring and loving attitude towards nature, it reciprocates him with fresh water, a good supply of oxygen, flowers of all colours and fragrances, fruits of all kinds, natural resources, etc. Moreover, in Islam, nature is seen as a gift from Allah to mankind. It has been created to benefit mankind. In return, man not only has to be thankful to God but has to appreciate nature's beauty and splendour. In Islam, the act of contemplating the intricate artwork and engineering of God in the universe and nature is a form of *Ibadah* (worship) in the sight of Allah.⁵

In the holy Qur'an, there exist many verses that call man to explore the secrets of nature. The whole idea of God calling humankind to investigate and understand the laws of nature is only for a noble reason. It is expected that such discoveries of God's handiwork in nature will enable man to be humble and thankful for His bounties given to him. To enlighten further on nature as a gift of God and on how man should relate to nature, below here are some references from the holy script of the Muslims:

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day,- there are indeed Signs for men of understanding.⁶

Do they not look at the Camels, how they are made? And at the Sky, how it is raised high? And at Mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the Earth, how it is spread out?⁷

The Sun and the Moon follow courses (exactly) computed.⁸

O you assembly of Jinns and men! If it be you can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass you! Not without anything shall you be able to pass!⁹

And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice), In order that you may not transgress(due) balance.¹⁰

He has let free the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together. Between them is a Barrier which they do not transgress. (Al-Qur'an, Al-Rahman:19-20).¹¹

Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you (use) all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen? (Al-Qur'an, Luqman:20).¹²

⁵ (Al-Qur'an, Ali Imran :190)

⁶ (Al-Qur'an, Ali Imran:190)

⁷ (Al-Qur'an, Al-Ghashiyah:17-20)

⁸ (Al-Qur'an, Al-Rahman:5)

⁹ (Al-Qur'an, Al-Rahman: 33)

¹⁰ (Al-Qur'an, Al-Rahman:8-9)

¹¹ (Al-Qur'an, Al-Rahman:19-20)

¹² (Al-Qur'an, Luqman:20)

See they not that it is We Who have created for them- among the things which Our hands have fashioned-Cattle, which are under their dominion? And that We have subjected to them to their (use)? Of them some do carry them and some they eat.¹³

Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joint together (as one unit of creation), before We clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe? And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with them, and We have made therein broad highways (between mountains) for them to pass through: that they may receive Guidance. And We have made the heavens as a canopy well guarded: yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)! It is He Who created the Night and the Day, and the Sun and the Moon: all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course.¹⁴

Conversely, there are others outside Islam, who think that nature is some sort of a rival to man, as such, there is a need for man to conquer it. With such an underlying principle of life, without guilt they would pollute and exploit to whatever extent they can to reap those natural resources that are buried in the belly of the earth, available in the flora, fauna and the ocean. Philosophically speaking, they live a life in constant conflict with nature. For all the evil doings of such people, at times, nature fights back and brings down its wrath on its enemies in the form of a deluge, landslide, mudslide, haze, etc. In commenting on modern man's relationship with nature, Fazlun M. Khalid in his *Environmental Ethics and Jurisdiction Relationships and Interdependence*, said the following:

“...this Islamic mode of expression is severely attenuated, having been swept aside by the forces of history, like the other older traditions, into a domain which treats the natural world exclusively as an exploitable resource. As what we now understand by modernity advanced, as the secular ethic progressively seeped into the Muslim psyche and as industrial development, economic indicators and consumerism became the governing parameters of society, there has been a corresponding erosion of the Muslim perception of the holistic and a withering of its understanding of the sacred nexus between the human community and the rest of the natural order.¹⁵

What is quite disturbing to read in the above quote is the fact that a fraction of the modern-day Muslim population has been influenced by the ideas and ideologies of the West which are secular and atheistic. When the Muslim mind is hijacked and corrupted by such un-Islamic worldviews, one is prepared to go to any extent to transgress the spiritual and ethical principles preached by Islam.

¹³ (Al-Qur’ān, Ya Sin:71-73)

¹⁴ (Al-Qur’ān, Al-Anbiya:30-33)

¹⁵ See Fazlun M. Khalid in Munawar Haque et al., (2010), *Ethics and Fiqh for Everyday Life: An Islamic Perspective*, Selangor: IIUM Press. p.142.

According to Sayed Sikdandar, for mankind to coexist harmoniously with nature, we should follow some fundamental principles delineated in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Below here Sikandar enlisted some of the principles man has to follow in dealing with nature:

1. Man as a vicegerent of God on earth is obliged to safeguard the earth and its resources (Al-Baqarah:30). His position as *Khalifah* only makes him a trustee who is fully empowered to utilise the resources of the earth provided that he ensures its good use so as to leave the world a better place for others who succeed him.
2. Man endowed with the *tawhidic* worldview is duty bound to live in harmony with the ecosystem because he and the whole universe are here to glorify the oneness of God. The Qur'an gracefully portrays this harmony:
The seven heavens declare His glory and the earth too and those who are therein; and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise but you do not comprehend their glorification (Al-Isra: 44).
Accordingly, every creature and element of the ecosystem has an assigned role to play, whose loss and extinction if not remedied is bound to result in environmental crisis.
3. Man as a free agent is accountable to God. Accordingly, he will be questioned about his destructive behaviour towards the ecosystem.¹⁶

Keeping the Ecosystem Vibrant

As this world was entrusted to the children of Adam (AS), we have a great responsibility to keep it unpolluted and vibrant. There has been much emphasis on the Qur'an and Sunnah, for the believing and righteous Muslims to maintain the world given to us by God is fit for human survival. In many parts of the Qur'an, Allah calls mankind not to cause mischief in the land. From the Islamic perspective, like human beings, all life forms in the flora and fauna are God's creations. As such, we should be ethical in dealing with and considerate when dealing with nature or the environment. Here are some of the emphases we find in the Qur'an and Sunnah on how we should treat the flora and fauna:

1. All life forms in the heavens and earth declare the glory of God.
2. The righteous servant of Allah, should contemplate the wonders of God in the heavens and earth.
3. "There is not an animal on the earth nor a being that flies on its wings, but forms part of communities like you...(Surah Al-An'am:38).
4. Kindness to animals (domesticated or wild) becomes the cause of salvation and cruelty to them will cause damnation in the hereafter (Hadith).
5. No killing or hunting of lawful animals is allowed except for food.
6. "No human being kills a sparrow or something larger, without right, except that God will ask him about it on the day of judgement. It was said: O Prophet of God what is its right: He said: it is right is that you slaughter it and eat it, not that you decapitate it and throw it (Hadith in Sunan al-Nasa'i, Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1988, Vol.7, p.177).
7. No killing of wildlife except the vicious ones (Hadith).

¹⁶ Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef, (2013), *Ethics and Fiqh for Daily Life: An Islamic Outline*, Gombak: IIUM Press, p.175.

8. You are not allowed to indulge in deforestation. “You are not to damage any plant life. Because you are the vicegerent of God” (Hadith).
9. “No Muslim, who plants a shoot, except that whatever is eaten or stolen from it, or anyone obtains the least from it, is considered like paying charity on his behalf until the day of judgement” (Hadith).
10. We are not supposed to pollute the water- “None of you must pass urine in water which does not flow and then bath therein” (Hadith).
11. In war ethics, Muslims are not allowed to pollute water catchment areas and the unnecessary destruction of plants.¹⁷

Forbidden Approach towards Nature

From ancient to modern times, there exist communities in the world that worship nature and elements or objects found in nature; like the sun, mountain, moon, snake, elephant, etc. To them, nature equates to God or the manifestation of God Himself. This approach to God and man relationship has its foundation in the philosophical teaching of Pantheism. As a way of life, this philosophy has its origin in Neo-Platonism, which preaches mystical ideas on the existence of God, man and the universe. One of the famous maxims of Pantheism says, “God is everything and everything is God”. This statement has gained acceptance in many religions and cultures of the world. The pantheists believe that everything in the universe is the manifestation of God. In modern times, in the West, some aspects of Pantheism have attracted a great number of adherents towards its doctrine, namely Spinoza (1632-1677), Bruno (1548-1600) and Hegel (1770-1831).¹⁸

Contrary to the Pantheists' concept which says, “God is everything and everything is God”, Islam preaches that “Everything is God's”. As such, Muslims are forbidden to worship nature or the objects found in it. In Islam, the act of revering and worshipping nature and objects in nature are actions equated to *Shirk* (the act of associating partners with God). According to the Qur'an, *Shirk* is the most grievous sin among all sins.¹⁹ We are further told in the Qur'an that God is prepared to forgive all other sins except *Shirk*.²⁰ Rather than committing *Shirk* by worshipping nature, the ideal thing for a Muslim to do is to praise God for the beauty and splendour he witnesses in the universe, nature and environment.

Explore the Universe, Nature and Environment

The Qur'an asks the Muslim community to explore nature and the universe in the hope that man will understand the patterns and laws by which God has created all celestial and terrestrial bodies. Upon discovering God's wonders and creativity in nature and the universe, man should feel humbled and submit himself to the commandments of God. Religious reformer Muhammad Iqbal (1879-1938) was very much in favour of the idea of Muslims interacting with nature through the scientific approach. To Iqbal, for man to progress spiritually he must look into the Qur'an as the 'Revealed Book' from God and the universe as the 'Open Book' of God. Iqbal is

¹⁷ Sayed Sikandar, (2013), *Ibid.*, pp.178-180.

¹⁸ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, (2013), *Iqbal's Theory of Personality: A Contrastive Analysis with Freud*, Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, p.34.

¹⁹ See (Al-Qur'ān Surah Luqman:13)

²⁰ See (Al-Qur'ān Surah Al-Nisa: 38)

of the view that science in many ways is not opposed to the religious teachings of Islam. Furthermore, he believed that scientific facts and findings could complement religion in strengthening one's faith. Iqbal highlighted this point in the *Reconstruction* (1996) when he said:

In our observation of nature, we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego; and this is only another form of worship.²¹ The scientific observer of nature is a kind of mystic seeker in the act of prayer.²²

In his poems, Iqbal called upon the *Ummah* to utilize science to improve their lives by extracting the bounties that God has provided for them in the material world. In his opinion, man must use science and technology to bring out the hidden potentials from the belly of the earth to be utilized for his spiritual development:

Science is an instrument for the preservation of Life.
Science is a means of invigorating the Self.
Science and art are servants of Life.²³

Iqbal further called the Muslims to embrace a positive attitude towards learning and the use of science and scientific research methods. He also highlighted the point that the message brought by the Prophet is very much in harmony with the scientific revolution that was taking place during the early twentieth century. Concerning the relationship between man and nature, Iqbal feels that the Islamic call for man to explore the material world is not meant for man to behave as a tyrant who recklessly plunders the riches and wealth found in the belly of the earth. What Iqbal meant is that, man should use his God-given intelligence in a just and systematic manner in managing the resources available in the physical world to attain his spiritual nearness with God. In order not to be misguided by his sense-perception in witnessing the bounties found in the physical world, man needs to be guided by his inner spiritual dimension to be just and fair in his manner and conduct. Guarded and guided by such principles, man will utilize the wealth found in the world not only for himself but also to be divided and shared with fellow human beings. The exact words of Iqbal (1996) on this matter are:

The naturalism of the Qur'an is only a recognition of the fact that man is related to nature, and this relation, in view of its possibility as a means of controlling her forces, must be exploited not in the interest of unrighteous desire for domination, but in the nobler interests of a free upward movement of spiritual life. In the interest of securing a complete vision of Reality, therefore, sense-perception must be supplemented by the perception of what the Qur'an describes as *Fuad* or *Qalb*, i.e. heart.²⁴

²¹ Muhammad Iqbal, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1996), p.45.

²² Muhammad Iqbal, *Ibid.*, 1996, p.73.

²³ Muhammad Iqbal, *The secrets of the self (Asrar-i-Khudi)*, (Renold A. Nicholson, Trans.), (Lahore: SH. Muhammad Ashraf, 1983), 1983, p.26.

²⁴ Muhammad Iqbal, *Op. cit.*, (1996), p.12.

Destruction Done to Nature

The modern world which we inhabit is no longer the world it used to be in the beginning. The world we live in has undergone dramatic changes with the coming age of modernization, industrialization, colonization and now globalization. The face of the earth is constantly changing at a rapid scale due to pollution of all kinds. Pollution on land, in the sea, in the forest, in the mountains, in space and elsewhere has caused danger to human beings, wildlife and marine life. The main culprit in causing the pollution and degradation of the quality of human lives and the flora and fauna is man himself. Man in his greed for riches and dominance has caused great destruction to his living conditions. The Qur'an has also highlighted the evil and selfish desires of man that have caused pollution and environmental degradation:

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]²⁵

Enlist below here are some of the pollutions caused by man:

1. Air pollution- is mainly caused by the emission of toxic gases into the air. Such toxic gases can cause adverse reactions to the human body, animals and plants.²⁶
2. Water pollution- rivers and oceans around the globe experience this form of pollution. Harmful chemicals discharged into the rivers by the factories will find their way to the open sea. This form of pollution will harm the corals and other marine life. Not only that, such chemicals can cause harmful effects on the human body when man consumes seafood that comes from polluted rivers and seas. Besides that, the quality of water we use for our daily needs is no longer of good quality.²⁷
3. 'Slash and Burn' results in haze in many parts of the world. This is the easiest way by which farmers clear the forest for cultivation. Farmers also carry out such burnings after harvesting their crops.²⁸
4. Deforestation- This is the uncontrolled logging that takes place in a particular area of the forest. Hundreds of trees are cleared at one time in the same area, leaving the land barren. When heavy rain comes pouring, it will be difficult for the soil to hold water in such great quantity. As a result of this, there are landslides, mudslides, and other forms of destruction. Sometimes it can even lead to the loss of human lives. In many cases, illegal logging takes place without the knowledge and approval of the local authorities. Illegal logging is rampant in many parts of Asia and the Amazon forest.²⁹
5. Global Warming- Unpredictable weather conditions, melting of the ice at the poles, etc.³⁰

²⁵ (Al-Qur'an, Surah Al-Rum: 41)

²⁶ (<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/pollution-overview/>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

²⁷ (<http://www.earth.org/view/article/156920/>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

²⁸ (<http://geography.about.com/od/urbaneconomicgeography/a/slashburn.htm>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

²⁹ (http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/deforestation-overview/?rptregcta=reg_free_np&rptregcampaign=2015012_invitation_ro_all#), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

³⁰ (<http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

6. Acid Rain- due to the chemicals released in the air and water. The chemicals are evaporated alongside water to form clouds which later fall as rain. As such rain can be toxic, it will cause erosion, pollute lakes, and harm human beings, vegetation and animals.³¹
7. Modern Warfare- Is horrible. By exploding all sorts of sophisticated bombs on the battlefields, man releases radioactive particles into the air. These radioactive particles which are suspended in the air will stay there forever till eternity. With the changing of the wind direction, the radioactive particles travel to all parts of the world, even to those regions which are free from war. There are no countries safe from these suspended radioactive particles which cause cancer and other serious health problems for man.³² The following quotation explains clearly the environmental damage caused by war:

Wars are devastating on the environment. Often, as in the gulf war, millions of tons of crude oil are dumped into the ocean... Military vehicles burn millions of gallons of fuel and dump millions of tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere. There is no real way to measure the exact amount of pollution caused by war, but in general, it is safe to say that war is bad for everyone and everything.³³

Besides the above, the late President John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) also highlighted the dangers of war when he delivered his speech at the United Nations on September 25, 1961. Kennedy said:

“Mankind must put an end to war - or war will put an end to mankind”³⁴

Conservation and Preservation of Nature

Looking into the Western countries of today, one would observe that there is a change in their mental attitude towards preserving nature. It has been said by many authorities that the people in the West have changed after witnessing the devastating effects of the two world wars. The death toll of millions who were killed and the magnitude of the damages caused to the infrastructure and environment of the countries involved in war has brought a change in their philosophy of life. Ever since the end of the Second World War till to the present time, the masses in the West started to demonstrate a greater level of consciousness towards taking care of nature, the environment, and human and animal lives.³⁵ In their effort to preserve human lives and nature, they have come up with many movements and organizations; like the Greenpeace³⁶, National Geographic Society,³⁷ Nature Conservancy³⁸, Wildlife Conservation Society³⁹, hundreds of anti-war organizations⁴⁰, etc. The emergence of all these organizations is based on their philosophy of

³¹ (<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/acid-rain-overview/>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

³² (<http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5544>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

³³ (<http://www.lenntech.com/environmental-effects-war.htm>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

³⁴ (<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/118124-mankind-must-put-an-end-to-war---or-war>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

³⁵ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, Op. cit., 2013, p.17.

³⁶ (<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

³⁷ (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/about/>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

³⁸ (<http://www.nature.org/>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

³⁹ (<http://www.wcs.org/>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

⁴⁰ (<http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/summary.asp?object=Organization&category=9>), Retrieved on the 25th

life which is ‘here and now’, and live life to the fullest. Moreover, they also want to preserve the flora and fauna for the generations of people that would come after their time. The other factor that makes their preservation program a success is the availability of funds, knowledge and technology. Although the masses and organizations in the West are working towards global peace and a better world, there exist a small group of policy-makers, warmongers and the war industry that work against the aspiration of the masses. Due to this selfish group, we still witness a small scale of war taking place in many parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East.⁴¹

Scenario in the East

Contrary to the scenario in the West, many countries in the East, particularly Muslim countries, have failed to demonstrate a passionate attitude towards the preservation and conservation of nature. The Muslim societies living in the East either pay little or no attention as to why they have to care for nature and the environment. There could be more than one factor which causes them not to pay heed to the call for the preservation and conservation of flora and fauna. The following will be some of the reasons as to why Muslims lack the passion and compassion towards nature:

Ignorance/Negligence: they do not realize that there exist serious environmental problems that need their participation with the rest of the world.

Poverty: this situation keeps the Muslim masses in many parts of the world preoccupied with the issue related to the survival of their families and never allow them to think of other global issues, particularly the ones related to the environment and nature.

War and crisis: Many Muslim countries are preoccupied with sectarian wars, war on terror and wars imposed on them by others. Sad to say, this situation has made some of their citizens go wandering as refugees into foreign territories. Under such a condition, those Muslims who are affected by the war, would not be there psychologically thinking about the care for the flora and fauna, as they will be preoccupied with their survival.

Attitude towards life: A fraction of the Muslim society feels that life on earth is only transitory. As such, they give more importance to their preparation for life in the hereafter. Going by the principle teachings of the Qur’an, Islam calls for a balanced lifestyle to be maintained in life in this world and preparing for the afterlife.

The Natural World is a gift from Allah: Since nature is created for the benefit of mankind, they want to exploit the wealth of resources available in the natural world without considering the moral and ethical issues on how they have to deal with nature and the environment. A greater consciousness is needed to educate governments and the masses alike that overconsumption of natural resources can deplete the availability of such gifts in years to come.

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⁴¹ (<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/01/big-money-behind-war-military-industrial-complex-20141473026736533.html>), Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015.

Consumer Mentality: Muslims are overly dependent on others concerning information and research works on the flora and fauna. Greater effort is needed to produce documentary movies on the flora and fauna of every Muslim country.

Suggestion for Improvement

It is our humble suggestion that oil-rich Muslim countries in the Middle East should set up funds for nature and environmental studies. The materialization of such funds can be of great help to Muslim scientists and researchers to explore, investigate and document the mysteries found in nature. Furthermore, this type of research can even lead the researchers to produce documentary movies of good quality on the universe, wildlife and marine creatures. The love for nature and the environment should be inculcated right from the preschool and elementary levels to see a dramatic change in their mental attitude in years to come. Schools in the Muslim world should provide students with good facilities to conduct research related to the natural world. Universities in the Muslim world should create many more faculties and departments offering programs in the areas of man and nature, and environmental studies related to preservation and conservation of nature and natural resources. Offering such programs will enable Muslim students to discover the mysteries of nature and their role as the vicegerents of God as mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted that man and nature are inseparable. As such, man must take proactive measures to maintain his good relationship with nature. Regardless of whether we live in the East or West; all of us should pay attention to the issues related to preservation and conservation of nature. Unless and until we learn to develop a friendly co-existence with nature, unpredictable weather conditions, melting of the ice at the poles and all other calamities such as landslides, mudslides, etc. will be something imminent in our lives. Many of the tragedies that happen to humanity that relate to the natural world are mainly triggered by human beings themselves. Environmental studies should be given due consideration in many Muslim countries, particularly those involved in the oil and gas industries. Oil-producing countries should also look for alternative energy resources which are eco-friendly. Ecology in the countries involved in the mining, oil and gas industries should be constantly monitored so that they do not pose a threat to human life. World leaders and citizens of the world should work towards global peace by eradicating all uncalled wars on this planet. Schools and learning institutions should teach and propagate the philosophy of universal brotherhood. These institutions should teach young minds about the importance of the preservation and conservation of nature. Besides that, they should be taught the importance of creating a better world than what we have today. The main ingredients for developing a better world will be to avoid war, terrorism and racism, and to promote the attitudes of loving, caring and sharing.