

The quranic ideology and the environment

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Abstract: the environment which confronts considerable problems nowadays is one of the most important issues of men. According to the author although practical and scientific endeavors have been done to control this problem, it is impossible to solve it completely, except the fidelity to the high revelation teachings of the quran. The present article which has been constructed according to a descriptive-analytic method is going to explore and analyze the verses which are inclined to the environment. These verses state the bases and fundamentals of the quran world view in this field. The most important principles consist of the purposefulness of the environment, the balance of the environment, the aesthetics of the environment, biodiversity and mastering the environment for men. The importance of these bases depends on comprehensiveness, eternities and providing its executive insurance for the environment laws.

Introduction

Increasing human beings knowledge about the results of environmental catastrophes, it turns into one of the most significant global issue, drawing scientific, cultural, economical, and political attentions to itself. Inability to solve this very basic issue leads some scholars to find spiritual-ethical solutions for this problem, revoking to religions specially islam and teachings of holy quran to solve this problem.

Quran is the last holy book of God which its comprehensibility did not exclude the effective issues on happiness of this world and salvation of hereafter, referring to them directly or indirectly. Does quran notice to the environmental issues? Does it offer any plan? What are the fundamentals of preserving environment according to quran? The present article is going to deal with this issue.

The quranic ecological issues are of two types. First, the theoretical concepts reflecting quran's viewpoint about this, such as those verses talking about human beings being served by environment. Second, the practical principles and guidelines determining must and mustn't for an individual, a society, and an administration, like the verses warning human beings of not destroying the earth, commanding them to cultivate it.

Quranic ideology means quran's view point towards the world and life. A part of this ideology points to the environment and its various aspects. Elaborating on environmental aspects of quran's ideology is of

great importance as these principles not only define biological culture and organize muslims' society's treat and manner but also are regarded as the firmest support facing not familiar cultures. Ignorance regarding these principles may cause non islamic believes being injected to these believes, which due to discrepancies of some of them with islamic teachings may result in problems for an islamic community.

The principles of quranic ideology towards environment

A. The purposefulness of environment

One of the oldest attempts of human beings during the course of history was to search for decoding the secret of human being creation. What is the aim of God in creating mankind? Can we find any meaning for creation of human being? Why are we created?

Though quite a few numbers of schools of thought tried to answer these kinds of questions, they failed to find any; because reaching any true answer without relying on revelation is impossible. (ref. Nasri, 1388; 75)

From quranic view point creating this world is for a great cause. This purposefulness of creation has been expressed in different ways such as the trueness of creation, rejecting its fruitless creation. ***“it was in truth that we created the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, for an appointed term. Yet the unbelievers do not turn away from that which they were warned.”*** (the holy quran; 46:3) and so on: rum; 8/ taghabun: 3/ anamm: 73/. Dokhan: 39/ yunes: 7/ dokhan:38/ anbiya: 16) from quranic viewpoint and islamic traditions, the goals of creations are following

each other and not besides each others. Regarding this we can count some of these goals as average goals and some others excellent goals. The average goals pave the way to the excellent goals.

It is worth mentioning that the question of creating human beings has two aspects: first, the question of the usefulness of this creation, for example what is the goal of this creation? It means what the usefulness and application of the elements of environment are and what they are good for? The second aspect is exploring the motivation of the creator of his creation. It means what the goals of God are in creating this world? The present article deals with the first aspect.

Some of these goals are like benefiting human being, paying attention to the aspect of unity of God and its realization.

Benefiting human being

Benefiting human being is one of the reasons of world creation. Quran with different wordings and examples introduces all creations at the service of human beings.

“he created for you all that is in the earth, then, he willed to the heaven, and leveled them seven heavens. He has knowledge of all things.” (the holy quran; 2:29/ and so on like baghare: 22/ anaam:97/ibrahim:32/nahl:5,10-11, 80,81; taha:53/yasin: 80/ghafer:64,79)

The words like ***“for you”*** in the mentioned articles show that natural blessings of God, regardless of their various religious, geographical, or racial differences is for all mankind, as if the mission of these creations is to serve mankind. Due to this fact the islamic

teachings and islamic jurisprudence laws are organized considering benefiting from all natural blessings of God for all people. This view point is not restricted to Muslim societies. But two factors priorities Islamic school of thought over the others: environment's serving human beings is not the final goal of creation but is a middle goal which should pave the way towards perfection and salvation; while in non Islamic schools' of thought serving human beings is the final goal. The second factor is the emphasis that Islam puts on the unity of God and his desires (if he does not desire, environment will not serve human being.).

Regarding this, imam Ali said,

“be aware my companions! The earth which carries you on itself, and the sky which throws shade on you, are in the command of God, their blessings to you is neither for their sympathy on you nor do they seek your closeness or in the hope of a blessing from you, but they are appointed to their benefit, and they are raised for your benefit.”

Unity of God and its different aspects

Unity of God is the base of all islamic beliefs and it denoted the creator of this world is one who is God. It clears that the entire world has been created by God and its consistency and survival again is at his hands.

unity of God is the most basic concepts of quran, which can uncover the final goal of creating this world and human being. Therefore in some verses, along with considering different aspects of unity of God, the realization of these aspects has been emphasized. ***“it is allah who has created the seven heavens, and of the earth their like and the command descends between them so that you know Allah is powerful over all things, and that Allah encompasses everything in knowledge.”*** (the holy Quran; 65:12)

In another verse we read ***“who has made the earth a bed for you and the sky a dome, and has sent down water from the sky to bring forth fruits for your provision. Do not knowingly set up rivals to Allah.”*** (the holy Quran; 2: 22)

Religious scholars always believed that gaining knowledge of God especially about the unity of God is the main reason of creation and is the cause of pride. Holding this view will qualify the relationship among God, society and environment. In the shade of this belief different environmental figure like mountain, plains, seas, will appear as a united reality; and they all can mirror the beauty and power of God. This belief is the most differences among Islam and other views. This view point to the environment will lead human being to the unity of God.

The literal meaning of ayah is “sign, wonder, goal, and halt). Its usage in Quran is sign. Islamic scholars based on sura fosselat verse 53 divided ayah into two types of "anfosi" and "afaghi".

The truth is this: looking at the signs of this world without thinking about them will not help us to understand the unity of God; there are lots of people though studying about the world but because of their negligence they fail to realize the unity of God. **“how many signs in the heavens and earth do they pass by and turn away from”**. (*the holy quran; 12:105*)

Imam Ali said in this regard,

If people contemplated on the power of God and his mercy, doubtfully they would return to the right path, scared of the burning fire and torture, but hearts and souls are sick and eyes are blind to reality.(*naj al-balaghe: 115/2*)

B. The balance of the environment

The balance of the environment means preparing a situation in which each and every creature can benefit the environment. Quranic terms such as "**ghadr**", "**tasviye**", "**mozon**" are showing this balance.

Quranic term "ghadara" and the balance of the environment

The term "ghadar" talks about quality and quantity of everything. The application of this verse and its various uses in different verses of Quran which talk about the universe proves existence of this balance.

According to the verses of Quran, God , the almighty is the creator of all things and beings **“Allah creates everythin”** (zomar,

62/rad:16/ghafer:62/anaam:102) the verses of Quran clear that God creates all things and beings in the best format, observing their quality and quantity, ***“to whom the kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs, who has not taken a son, nor does he have an associate in the kingdom, and he created everything, then he ordained it very precisely.*** “ forghan: 2/raad: 8/hojr:21/taha: 50/forghan: 2/sajde: 7/ghamar: 49/talagh:3)

This balance in the world is so wide spread and abundant that it is impossible to find any imbalance in the world ***“who created the seven heavens, one above the other. You cannot see any inconsistency in the creation of the merciful. Return your gaze, do you see any crack! Then look again and yet again, thy sight will return unto thee weakened and made dim.”*** (molk: 3-4/momenoon: 18/zokhrof:11)

Quranic term "tasviye" and environmental balance

“tasviye” is a word which shows the balance in the environment. “tasviye” is derived from “savaya” which means to make equal, and moderate. The usage of this word and its other derivations in the verses talking about creation of this word clarifies that creation by God in all aspects and for everything is moderate and proper.

Quran, in **sura al-alaa**, by emphasizing on the unity of God and calling upon people to praise God and purify themselves, mentions the attributes of creation by God: ***“who has created and shaped, who has ordained and guided”*** (the holy quran,2-3), here “tasviya” means proper compatible combination of elements of creation. “taghdir” also means special measuring. Putting these two words besides each other

expresses the highest level of compatibility among elements of the world and environment.

Another group of verses also asserts the quality of balance in creation; for example creation of heavens which is stated is superior than creation of mankind. (ghafer: 57). "**Organizing heaven**" refers to the order of its elements and their combination where each element is located in the proper place. The holy prophet likewise described creation of heaven and the earth by the word "just".

It is worth mentioning that authentic prayers and supplications which are replete with religious teachings recognize this balance in creation of mankind as a blessing of God which should be thanked.

The quranic word "mozon" and the balance of the environment

"mozon" is another words of quran referring to this balance. This word derives from "vazn" which means measuring weight . For example in this verse" ***we have spread out the earth and set upon it firm mountains. Everything we have caused to grow therein is justly weighed;*** "(the holy quran; 15:19)

Commentators expressed different ideas about the last part pf this verse:" ***everything we have caused to grow therein is justly weighed;***"; some know "mozon" all mineral materials extracted from the earth which their weight becomes clear by weighting such as gold, silver and iron. Some others believed this part refers to creation of things which

has happened by determining their quantity. (tosi,1409:6/326; tabatabaee,1402:12/39; tabarsi,1372:6/512-513;baghavi, 1420:3/54).

The mentioned verse based on the second interpretation illustrated that creation of all creatures is according balance. According to this verse, all necessary facilities for all creatures' survival have been prepared, in the way that the need for these facilities is equal to their supply. " (ramezan akhtar, 1381:8)

C. Biodiversity

This word is already of new words which has a close relationship with the balance of environment. This word refers to various animals, plants, and other microorganisms of the environment. According to the report of the united nations, the number of recognized species around the world is about 136,000,000.) ardakani, 1388:108) one species extinction can lead to a crucial disorder in the system. Food security, meeting medicine needs, or building splendid natural resorts all depends on biodiversity.

One of the clearest quranic points to biodiversity can be found in fatir sura “**did you not see how allah sends down water from the sky and with it brings forth different colored fruits? In the mountains there are paths of various colors, of white and red, and jetblack.**”(28-27)

In other verses, biodiversity is introduced as a sign of God which can be a lesson for faithful.

In addition, there are some traditions referring to biodiversity such as imam sadiq has been asked about cutting a tree. He replied, it is all right. He was asked again is it permissible to cut sedr tree? He answered: it is all right, though cutting it in dessert is not permissible (as it is rare in dessert but here because it is abundant it is all right.) In this tradition enjoying environment is regarded ok. But due to its scarcity in dessert its cutting was regarded not permissible to preserve it.

D. The aesthetics of the environment

One of the other unique factors of islamic view point to environment is noticing the magnificent beauty of environment and its different realizations. Quranic verses and credited traditions in addition to highlighting the spiritual aspect existing in creation (the unity of God) point to beauty. We should bear in mind that this beauty is not limited in itself but it is superior to a surface beauty; it is in fact a tangible fact relying on the knowledge and wisdom of God. Expressing the beauty of nature, sky, or animals are of the most significant points of quran. The word "behjat" and its derivations have been frequently used in quran to depict the beauty of nature. "behjat" means an enjoyable beauty as we feel upon seeing flowers, green trees or gardens. There are verses concerning this issue like this: ***“we spread out the earth and set upon it firm mountains and we cause every delightful thing to grow in it.”*** (the holy quran; 50:7; haj/5; fater/ 27-28) ***“is he who created the heavens and the earth, and sent water from the sky for you and caused gardens to grow full of beauty of***

which its tree you could never grow, is there a God with allah? No, but they are a nation who set up equals with him!” .(naml,60), *“o people, if you are in doubt about the resurrection, remember that we first created you from dust, then, from a sperm drop, then from a clot, and then from a bite size tissue formed and unformed, so that we might clarify for you. We establish in the wombs whatever we will for an appointed term, and then we bring you forth as infants, then you come of age. Some of you die, and some of you are kept back to the vilest state of life, after knowing somewhat, they know nothing. And you see the earth dry; but no sooner do we send down rain upon it than it begins to quiver and swell, putting forth every fine variety (of herbage).”* (hajj/5)

The holy quran pays special attention to the beauty of plants. The reason can lay in their continuous growth. In traditions also the beauty of nature has been emphasized as imam sadiq's talk to mofazzal.

In quranic view point also other beauties of environment have been reflected. Like beauties of skies or living animals. ***“we have adorned the lower heaven with lamps...”*** (the holy quran: 67:5. & haj/16; safat/6; fosselat/12).....(nahl/5-8)

E. Mastering the environment

This issue is one the important issues mentioned in quran. Regarding this issue we can raise different questions: does mastering environment mean using it or possessing it? What is the difference between islamic ideas of mastering environment and the extreme use of

nature believed in some societies? How can we manage mastering the nature?

Following we are going to answer this question:

The literal meaning of "mastering"

Tabarsi believed "mastering" means **"to subdue"**. Tabatabaee also wrote, "mastering means forcing a doer to do something in the way that the doer does not do his action by his will, but does that by the will of master, as a writer who forces a pen to write based on his will." Therefore mastering something means subduing something to reach a specified goal.

A brief look over verses referring to mastering the nature

The verses related to mastering nature can be divided into 3 groups:

First: the verses in which the word "mastering by you" has been used to show nature and its elements are for human beings. **"do you not see that allah has made what is in the heavens and what is in the earth subservient to you, ..."** (the holy quran: 31:20; raad/2; ibrahim/32-33; nahl/12-14; haj/65; jasiye/13-12)

Second: the verse in which the expressions like **"created for you"** or **"set for you"** have been used; **"he created for you all that is in the earth, then, he willed to the heaven, "** (the holy quran; 2:29; molk/15;

baghare/22; asra/66 and 70; taha/53-54; yasin/80; ghafer/64; zokhrof/10-13; molk/15; nooh/19-20)

Third: the verses showing the nature being subdued for some prophets, like ***“(remember) when mooses prayed for water for his nation, we said to him: 'strike the rock with your staff. ' Thereupon twelve springs gushed from it, and each tribe knew their drinking place. 'Eat and drink of that which allah has provided and do not act evilly in the land, corrupting.* “** (the holy quran; 2:60; araf/73; hood/64; anbiya/79; shoara/63)

We can call the first and second group as general mastering as it is for all people and the third group as special mastering as it belonged to special people; i.e. Prophets.

The essence of mastering

Now this question should be asked: in quranic view point what is "mastering?" does mastering mean God without considering mankind's endeavor tamed the world for him or does mankind relying on his talent and knowledge should master the nature?

Quran denotes that the nature should be tamed to serve men's interest not to be abused by them in the excuse of possessing it like ***“he created for you all that is in the earth, then, he willed to the heaven,* “** (the holy quran; 2:29)

It is worth mentioning that mastering the nature is for all not for a special group. Also this mastering is not limited to a special time. ***“and he subjected to you the sun and the moon, which are constant in their***

courses. And, he has subjected to you the night and the day, and gave you all that you asked of him. *“(the holy quran; 14:33)*

The connection among mastering the nature and other quranic concepts

According to the verses of holy quran human being is the representative of God on the earth. **“when your lord said to the angels: 'i am placing on the earth a caliph,”** *(the holy quran;2:30 & anaam/165; araf/69; yunes/14; naml/62; fater/39)* some commentators believed that the intention of being a representative does not mean human being is the successor of the extinct residence of the earth. Another point is the representativeness of human being is not for adam (*p.b.u.h.*)Only but his offspring share this with him.

This successor ship makes great responsibilities for human being. One of them is to be a guardian of this position, **“after them we made you their successors in the earth, so that we might see how you would do”** *(the holy quran; 10:14).* To this end, it is obligatory for men to preserve nature as God does the same.

This position is in close connection with "building the earth": **and to thamood, (we sent) their brother salih. He said: 'my nation, worship allah; you have no God except he. It is he who made you from the earth and let you live upon it. Ask his forgiveness then repent to him. Indeed, my lord is near and answers (prayers)** *(the holy*

quran; 11/61). According to some interpretations of this verse building the earth has been appointed to mankind.

As we read human being is the representative of God on the earth to build it to prepare the way to his salvation.

A review over an idea

Some people regard religion and its teaching the cause of the environmental crises. For example some say this crisis is due to the mastership that bible gives mankind and it supports mankind's abuse of nature. But in fact there is no disagreement between this crises and religion, because religious or non religious countries both confront these crises. And the meaning of mastering does not mean abusing or possessing. The great number of religious orders to preserve nature is a proof on this claim.