

Collection of
*Khutbahs on
the Environment*



Khutbahs from Claremont Main Road Mosque

**Collection of Khutbas
on the Environment**

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Our Work

Foreward



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Environmental Injustice

Shaykh Sadullah Khan

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. All praise is due to our Creator, our Nourisher and our Sustainer. We bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but Allah., We bear witness that of all the Prophets who came in the great line of the divine that we bear witness that Prophet Muhammad Ibni Abdillahi Rasoolullahi (pbuh) is the final of all the emissaries of Allah.

In the verse from Surah Qassas, Allah (s.w.t) says:

“Seek the good things of this world (which Allah has exposed), but do not forget that you will attain the hereafter through a process of what we engage in this world. Do not forget therefore, your caution of this world. Be good, as though Allah has been good to you, but in the process do not seek an occasion for mischief, nor spread corruption in the Earth. For surely, Allah does not love those who do mischief, nor those who cause corruption.”

One of the themes rarely addressed is one of Environmental Justice. I have been asked specifically to address this issue today.

When we speak about Islam, we speak about an ethical value system. Besides being an ideology and philosophy of life, it is also fundamentally an ethical system. And when we speak about the world we live in, we speak about the environment, and therefore in Islam, environmental ethics refers to the discipline that evaluates the moral and

ethical relationship of human beings to the universe around them and to the world and their findings. What is disturbing is the reality of the recent survey done by the Millennium Eco-System Assassinate consisting of 1 300 researchers. They have done a research in over 95 nations over a period of 4 years. Their research indicates, and I quote: “The human abuse of the environment through pollution, through deforestation and indiscriminate exploitation of the natural resources has caused irreversible changes that are degrading the natural processes that support life on earth. This will directly impact on hunger, poverty and health care.” Degradation has reached such a level that the World Conservation Union has said that faced with extinction are: 25% of mammals, 20% of reptiles, 11% of bird species, 34% of fish and 12.5% of plant species. With that reality facing us, we ask a question: What is our moral responsibility?

One of the ironies is that we have reduced all things, really, to a basic religion of a Church or Mosque. And the impact of our faith and the implications of our faith rarely extend beyond the borders or parameters of institutions like these. And therefore, we will discuss or study Fiqh, and the first thing we study in *Fiqh* is about water and the kinds of water for *wudu* and so forth. We forget that Allah (s.w.t) in this liquid of life

“The human abuse of the environment through pollution, through deforestation and indiscriminate exploitation of the natural resources has caused irreversible changes that are degrading the natural processes that support life on earth. This will directly impact on hunger, poverty and health care.”

and it is so often referred to in the Qur’an where Allah (s.w.t) says: “Everything that exists is constituted with water, and life itself has come from water.” We discuss the kinds of water yet the issue of the availability of water, the preservation of water, the purification of water is not discussed. When we perform *wudu* we need pure water. Part of the study of Fiqh is to ensure that the water is pure. But the culture has not inculcated in us how to make sure that we maintain a degree of pure water. Future wars will not be fought for the oil. It will be fought for water resources.

What is our global responsibility? We are part of “*Maghlooqa*” of the creation of Allah. Allah is “*Ghaaliq*” and every one of us is part of the creation of Allah. We acknowledge that we are part of a larger system of creation and that our whole existence is facilitated by the sole Creator. Allah is not the Rabb of the Muslims, nor is He the *Rabb* of the

human beings, but in the Qur'an He introduces Himself as "Bismillaahi Rahmaani Raheem". In the name of Allah, most Compassionate, and most Merciful – as if that if the beginning of everything, that attribute of the Divine that supersedes all other attributes, the attribute which the Qur'an itself says: "*My mercy encompasses/supersedes everything.*" Then there is the nature of the Divine that is an action of the Divine. "*Bismillahi Rabmaani Raheem*", the designation of the Divine, "*Alhamdulillah*". Who is He? Is He the manager of our affairs? What is He? Is He in charge? No, His interview is in the Qur'an; "*Alhamdulillah Rabbil 'Aalameen*". First, He attributes to mercy and then the designation of the Divine as the Facilitator, *Rabb*, *Mubiyyah*. The word *Mubiyyah* has no connotation in the English language.

The idea of Lord or Rabb means the *Mubiyyah*, the Facilitator of development. He is the One who creates that acorn and grant it the potential to become an oak tree. Despite the fact that the acorn is very weak and small and can be crushed underfoot, if nurtured, it has the potential within it to become an oak tree and can live for thousands of years. The *Mubiyyah* is the facilitation of that potential.

So, we are part of a larger system of creation and all existence is facilitated by the Creator. Our main interaction with everything is bound by our interconnectedness of the Divine and this is why in Islam the notion of *Huqooqullah* and *Huqooqul 'ibaaad* are those nights you pray to Allah individually and on a personal level. The prayer you perform and the fasting are very personal but there are many dimensions even in our Fiqh which has to do with *Mu'amalaat* (our social interactions) and it is our engagement with the creation of Allah. So, the rights we owe to Allah are those of prayer and those individual things. But, at the same time, *Huqooqul 'Ibaad* are not only the rights we owe to creation, but the rights we owe to Allah by virtue of Him being the Creator of that creation. Our duty and responsibility, therefore, is to creation.

As human beings, our introduction in the Qur'an has "*Khaleefatullahi fil Ard*". In Surah Baqarah Allah introduces human beings to the Angels as "*Inna Jaa'iloen Fil Ardi*". Allah did not say "I am making a human". He gave us the designation "*Innee Jaa'ilun Fil Ardi Khaleefa*". He did not say he is making a human being. He did not call out what it was but gave a designation because He is *Rabbul Aalameen*. He said *Rabbul Aalameen* is making a *Khaleefatullahi Fil Ard* – A vicegerent of Allah on Earth. The fact that Allah (s.w.t) has taught Adam (A.S.) "*wa Allama Adamul Asma*" that names are more than just names. It is the knowledge of certain things being communicated. It indicates an organic connection between proper knowledge, responsibility and rightful behaviour.

A scholar, Dr Frederick Denning, writes about Islam in his book “Islam and Ecology”. As a non-Muslim scholar he writes: “With respect to humankind’s stewardship of the Earth, the privilege entails a profound responsibility. Other living species are also considered by the Qur’an to be communities [*Ummah, Ummamul Amthaalukum*]. The creation itself, in all its million diversities and complexity may be thought of as a vast universe, as the *ayaat*, the signs of God’s power, of His wisdom, of His beneficence and of His majesty. The whole creation praises God as if it were by [engraving].”

There are more than 500 verses in the Qur’an dealing directly with the environment and natural phenomena. *Surah al-Balad* (town), *Surah al An’am* (cattle), *Surah Baqarah* (cow), *Surah Ankabut* (spider), *Surah Shams* (the sun), *Surah Duha* (the morning), *Surah Al Qamar* (the moon), *Surah Tur* (mountain) and *Surah Teen* (fig). *Surahs* in the Qur’an are named after natural phenomena. Of all the themes that can be found there are more references, by name, to natural phenomena than any other concept. More *surahs* in the Qur’an are named after natural phenomena than after Prophets. It does not mean that it is more important. These references to natural phenomena throughout the Qur’an aim at a few things, among them is conscientising us about the Creator of the creation. Instilling in us a respect for Allah’s creation, making us cognisant about inextricable things and the relationship with creation, with nature and it reminds us of an *amaanah*, a trust. We have a moral responsibility because everything that has been created, has been created subservient to us in some way. By subservient I mean available at our own use and of course, we easily abuse it as well.

The Qur’an says: “*Was saggara lakum maa fissamaa waati wa maa fil ardjamee an inna fee thaalika la ayaatikomee yatafakkaroon*”. There are places in the Qur’an where Allah says: “*Yu’mi noon*” and “*Yaatafakkaroon*” – for those who think. Allah says here: And Allah has subjected to you, from Him, from His signs (as a gift) all that is in the heavens and the earth. Behold! In there are signs for those who think. “He did not say for those who believe, but for those who **think**.”

Where does the responsibility of not causing corruption (lie) in what Allah (s.w.t.) has made “You do not see in the creation of the Merciful discrepancies and so, therefore don’t you cause corruption, mischief and degradation of the situation by your mischief.” “*Wa laa tuf sidoona fil ard*”. Because, although creation is there for our use, it is not there for our abuse.

A Native American saying reminds us as a generation of people: “You do not inherit the land so much from your parents as much as you borrow it from your children”. So we have a responsibility. “*Kullukum raa im*”, the Rasool (pbuh) says each of

you is a person who has a stewardship, a responsibility, “*Wa kullukum mas ooloon an raa iyyatee*” and each of you must be held accountable to the extent of their responsibility.

When we speak about environmental justice, however, I want to remind you that it goes beyond the idea of the natural environment. Environmental justice refers to the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, colour, national origin, income and level of development, and their implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policy to secure the wellbeing of the Earth.

“You do not see in the creation of the Merciful discrepancies and so, therefore don’t you cause corruption, mischief and degradation of the situation by your mischief.”

It is indeed, I must say, a progressive plan of Claremont Main Road Mosque to be registered as an eco-congregation. In other words, a faith community committed to working towards a more sustainable world, thereby advocating the view that the current environmental crisis can be viewed as a symptom of a deeper spiritual problem which comes with a consumerist lifestyle and upsets the balance between human beings and nature. As conscientious people of faith, therefore, we realise that our environment is not only about animals. It is about the places where we live and work, it is about the air we breathe, it is the water we drink, the land we live on and the people because people are part of the environment. The resources needed for development comes from the environment. Hence, it is a strange notion that people have that religion is separate from politics. In Islam, there is no separation.

We need to be aware that political power is shifting in a way whereby there is a tremendous amount of corruption. Leeway is given to rich companies to dump waste in poor areas, where people are forced to relocate and live in informal settlements. We complain that they mess. But where are they going to go? There is no provision made for the needs of the people.

Too many people say it is an Islamic law to cut off the hand of a thief when they steal. To me that is not an Islamic state at all. When we have removed, as an authority, the need to steal, then only is it an Islamic state.

The resources needed for development comes from the environment. If the environment is destroyed you won’t be able to make *wudu*. You would need to make

tayammum. If the environment is destroyed, the possibility of development is also destroyed, and with that, the hopes and aspirations of the future. Development is also about who controls the resources. If you do not have access to political power, you can talk Islam all you want but this is a masjid, make *takbeer*, etc. You will remain where you are!

Development is about controlling resources. At present, the richest 20% of the world consumes 80% of the global resources and produces 80% of waste. 20% of the people! America produces 5% and they consume over 57% of the world's resources.

So, environmental justice is a way of thinking of the environment, of our development, which provides tools for people irrespective of which level they are at, where they are at, and therefore start addressing pertinent issues that touch society and the world around us.

*"You do not inherit the land so much from your parents as much as
you borrow it from your children"*

And therefore I say the concept of environmental justice is inextricably linked to environmental abuse. It is never divorced from social injustice. It always addresses the issues of social justice. Then one can understand the unequal power relations in society and how people are abused and how resources are abused.

Many of the cities' polluting industries dump mostly in poor areas. You don't find people dumping things in rich areas. Many workers often don't know that the substance they are working in is dangerous for them. They don't suffer so much but when their women give birth the children are born deaf or with defects. They and their families carry the cost of environmental injustice.

There is increasing control of resources on a global scale by fewer people. Nothing wrong, if you can be a millionaire and billionaire, for God's sake, become that. If good people become rich it is the best thing. Don't ask Allah to be poor. The Prophet (pbuh) didn't ask to be poor, although he loved the poor. He asked: "Oh Allah, provide for my family sufficiency." They never begged and they never wanted to become beggars. Be rich, be a millionaire, be a billionaire. If you are a good person, thousands of people will benefit from you.

"Wa laa tu ti'u amra musrifee nallatheena yus firoona fil ard wa tus bihoon", (Do not be subservient or obedient to the dictates of the extravagant of those who indulge

excessively at the expense of others, those who cause corruption in the land without being part of the solution.). “*Wa laa tus bihoon*” the Prophet (pbuh) reminds us “*albalkukule omal’ayadoebillah*” (All of creation, everything you see of creation are all signs of Allah). “*Inna halqis samawaati wal ardi wag tilaafil layli wannahaari*”. All of these are the signs for those “*khalaakul bil’ibaad*” who exercise their intellect, who ponder.

*Watching what we do and what we allow to be done to the environment
is our main responsibility. We are accountable.*

All of creation is dependent on Allah. Allah loves those who are beneficial to His dependents. Rasoolullahi (pbuh) said: “*Inna dunya khaleefa fel ard wa innallaha mustaflifukum fee hafa naathierun ta’maloon*”. (Surely the world has been made green and grand, and Allah has put you in charge of this world and He is observing very carefully what you are doing with it. Watching what we do and what we allow to be done to the environment is our main responsibility. We are accountable.

SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Islam and the Environment

Imam Noor Salie

Almighty Allah exhorts us in the Holy Quran:

“Eat and drink from the provisions which We – Allah — have provided for you, and do not commit abuse on the earth, and spread corruption.”

(Qur’an, 2:60)

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: Many people are using the property of Allah in a wrongful and unjust manner. For them is the Hellfire on the Day of Judgment. (Reported by al-Bukhari)

World Environment Day was celebrated on June 5th 2014. It is a day that should stimulate awareness of the environment and should enhance political attention and public action among all people.

The first World Environment Day was celebrated in 1973. It is hosted every year and in a different city around the world with a different theme and is commemorated with an international exposition in the week commencing with 5th June.

In South Africa we have an organisation called “Green Deen South Africa” which is an initiative of the Union of Muslim Students’ Associations of South Africa and they aim to raise awareness and mobilise action in the South African Muslim community about current environmental issues and to provide proactive tools for caring for the environment.

Green Deen South Africa has issued an annual call-out for South African Muslim leaders to raise the Islamic-environmental banner from their *mimbars*.

All religious leaders are challenged to look into their traditions for any inspiration that could guide us towards averting a (which global disaster) global disaster.

This new demand on old traditions forces us to look creatively at the world's religious heritage and reinterpret or reapply sacred texts and principles to our present problem.

To begin with, the Qur'an calls on us to recognise our own contribution to the crisis.

It is surprising, however, that the texts of the Islamic religious traditions speak directly on many issues that are pertinent to our problem. Hence, the task for the Muslims here is not so much a reinterpretation of the traditions, but mainly a reapplication of old texts to new problems.

To begin with, the Qur'an calls on us to recognise our own contribution to the crisis. The emphasis is to educate Muslims and to make them aware of their responsibility to the environment.

Now if we look at the term "environment" and related concepts like ecology, environmental awareness, environmental degradation, sustainability, sustainable development, biodiversity and global warming – they are all modern-day terms that were formulated in the face of growing concerns about the contemporary state of the natural world around us.

The environment was always there and humanity always lived in harmony with it. It is since the last two centuries that there has been a dramatic change globally in the world around us.

The relationship between human beings and the earth is increasingly complicated and urgent. Every day there are stories about pollution, global warming and animal species facing extinction. All religions are responding with views on the environment and our responsibility for it.

In the Holy Qur'an in 6:165, it is stated:

“And it is He (Allah) who made you VICEGERENTS (khalaa'ifa) on the earth – and has raised some of you above others in degrees of rank/intellect/awareness /influence/ wealth. So that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.”

In the classical Arabic the word for earthling is '*khalifah*'. This is a magnificent word with multiple meanings like deputy, guardian, friend of the Earth, viceroy, vicegerent, custodian or caretaker. It all boils down to stewardship.

Human beings are the most intelligent beings on earth so it makes sense that we should have the responsibility to care for our planet. However, human beings are also responsible for almost all the damage done to the planet. We are a species that would sacrifice our health for money. We then reach a point where we become ill and are compelled to spend that money to make ourselves healthy again. We do the same to the environment. We rape the land seeking its value, and then we have to use our profits to fix our errors. Allah has set severe punishments for those who damage and abuse the natural resources.

Islam's regard for environmental ethics is very clear in the organisation of its sacred scriptures. The titles of the Qur'anic *surahs*, refer both to the attributes of Almighty Allah and a series of natural phenomena, including animals, e.g. Al Baqarah, Al An'aam, Fil; plants, e.g. Masad, Teen; insects, e.g. Al Nahl, Al Naml, Ankabut; mountains, e.g. Tur and weather, e.g. Ar Raad, Dhaariyaat.

This holistic vision of man's relation to Allah and the environment is likewise evident in multiple passages of the Quran, which indicates that people will be accountable for how they treat all of the earth's natural resources. Allah also exhorts us in the Quran in 2:60:

“Eat and drink from the provisions which Allah has provided for you, and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption.”

If I destroy a person's property that is called vandalism and I could be taken to task, but when global corporations clear hundreds of acres of land, destroying the lives of millions of creatures we call it progress. This land is not inherited from our ancestors it is borrowed from our children and is a trust left to us by Almighty Allah.

About Islamic belief and the environment the Qur'an says that Allah (God) is the Creator of the world. Human beings are in the world as trustees or 'vicegerents'. They are instructed to look after the earth for Allah and for the future. The whole earth has been created as a place of worship, pure and clean.

In the Qur'an Muslims are instructed to look after the environment and not to damage it. In surah 30:30, Almighty Allah says:

“Devote yourselves single-mindedly to this way of life, and follow the nature designed by Allah, and which He (Allah) has fashioned for mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah.”

Muslims have to look after the earth because it is all Allah’s creation and it is part of a human’s duty to Allah. In surah 13:4 Almighty Allah says:

“It is Allah Who spread out the earth and made therein firmly fixed mountains and rivers, and of fruits of every kind He has made pairs (“zawjain ithnain”). He causes the night to cover the day. Verily in all this, are ayah/ signs/proofs/evidences/ lessons for people who can reflect (yatta faqqaroon).”

Because of this instruction, people should see themselves as being responsible for the world which Allah created and they have to make their own decisions about how to do this. We have a duty to protect and take responsibility for the well-being of Allah’s creation. The world and everything in it provides for the needs of mankind and all other creatures.

However, the utilisation of this creation should be done in a respectful and responsible manner, all the while recognizing the generosity of Almighty Allah. Muslims believe in accountability. Cruelty to Allah’s creation and lack of respect of the natural world will be one of the bases for judgment. In *Shariah*, there are regulations and guidelines on how we are supposed to treat the natural world. This ranges from the prohibition of cruelty to animals, to the allocation of water resources, as well as the process behind land designation.

Cruelty to living creatures is absolutely forbidden. A variety of stories and anecdotes exist in Islamic teachings regarding the evil of those who mistreated animals, and the virtue of those who went out of their way to demonstrate kindness to animals.

It is also prohibited to cut down trees without just cause. Damage to the natural environment and all living things is a criminal offence and laws do exist for its protection, assigning punishments to those who oppose the law.

The punishment of crimes against nature, as well as the duty to protect and conserve Allah’s creation, makes Islam very much in tune with the needs of the environment.

Let us look at the wisdom of some of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and see how many solutions there are for these modern terms:

About the role of plants and trees: The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) encouraged the planting of trees and the cultivation of agriculture which are considered as good acts. This is illustrated in the following tradition narrated by Anas bin Malik (RA) that Allah's Apostle (pbuh) 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 a charitable gift for him."* (al-Bukhari)

The Prophet (SAW) knew the value of planting and cultivation. Planting trees results in more nutritious food for man and beast. It serves as a shade from the burning sun especially in hot areas. It supplements the oxygen in the atmosphere. In certain areas it prevents soil erosion and prevents mudslides. It is also home to several species of insects and animals.

Islam is against the cutting or destruction of plants and trees unnecessarily as is evident in the following *hadith*. Abdullah ibn Habashi reported that Nabi Muhammad (pbuh) said: *"He who cuts a lote-tree [without justification], for him awaits a severe chastisement in the hereafter."* (Abu Dawud)

Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi explains many *ahadith* in terms of protecting the natural resources and preserving the balance that exists between the creatures and the environment, He says Islam teaches that Allah created all things in perfect balance and measurement. There is a purpose behind all living and non-living things, and each species has an important role to play in the balance. In this regard Almighty Allah states in the Holy Qur'an in 55:7-13:

***And the Heaven – He (Allah) raised high and He set a balance –
In order that you may not transgress the due balance;
And observe the weight with equity and do not make
the balance deficient;
And the earth has been created for all the creatures.
Therein are fruits and species of dates
And also corn with its leaves and stalk for fodder (feed for animals)
and sweet scented plants.
Then which of the favours and blessings of your Lord do you deny?***

The deforestation in many countries causes devastating soil erosion and kills much of the biodiversity of the earth. Planting of more trees will restore the earth's health, reduce soil erosion and flooding. There will be a recycling of rainfall inland and there will be a restoration of aquifer recharge. (Aquifer recharge or deep drainage is a process where water moves downward from surface water to groundwater)

Sustainable use of land: The Prophet (pbuh) was a strong proponent of the sustainable use and cultivation of land. The Prophet (pbuh) thus encouraged the cultivation of land. Abu Hurayrah (RA) said that Muhammad (pbuh) said: *“Whoever owns land should cultivate it himself or give it to his (Muslim) brother for cultivation.”* (Bukhari)

Unsustainable use of land affects the physical space, the natural resources of soil, the mineral deposits, water, as well as plant and animal life. The expansion of human activities has affected the quality of the land. It causes instability of the earth’s ecosystems. It leads to the disruption of the global nitrogen cycle.

Conservation and saving of water and using it sparingly were pointed out by the Prophet (pbuh) to his companions. When the Prophet (pbuh) saw Sa’d performing *wudhu* he said: *“What is this? You are wasting water.”* Sa’d replied: *Can there be wastefulness while performing ablution?* The Prophet (pbuh) replied: *“Yes, even if you perform it in a flowing river.”* (Ibn Maja)

In addition to encouraging water conservation, the Prophet (pbuh) himself set the example. It is narrated by Anas (ra): *“The Prophet (pbuh) used to take a bath and ablution with very little water.”* (Al-Bukhari)

In the 65th Qur’an in 6:65 Almighty Allah says:

“And Allah sent down rain from the sky and give life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness. Indeed in that is a sign (clear proof) for people who listen (and obey)”.

This verse leaves one with no doubt that the preservation of water is paramount to the natural order found on Earth. Wastage of water causes deficiency in nature and it affects the ecological balance. It violates the rights of forthcoming generations to live in a healthy environment. All living beings are affected by water wastage.

The Prophet (pbuh) was also concerned about the purity of water. He warned against water pollution by forbidding the relieving of oneself in stagnant water.

The Prophet (pbuh) said: *“Be on your guard against three things which provoke cursing: relieving yourself in the watering places, and on the thoroughfares, and in the shade (of the trees).”*(Abu-Dawud)

This *hadith* prohibits humans from defecating at places frequented by others and also teaches them that human waste has its specific place. If it is dropped at unguarded areas it can cause a health hazard and can lead to many illnesses.

The world is moving into a water stress era. Water tables are falling in almost every country that irrigates with under-ground water. Farmers are losing water to the ever

growing cities. Glaziers are melting faster than expected due to global warming which results in mountain peoples' reduction in their water supply. Underground water becomes contaminated due to mining activities in many areas. Every citizen of the world has to adopt a water conservation attitude.

The Treatment of animals and insects: play a vital role in the ecosystem of the earth. The species should be respected, protected and not be destroyed. If a species becomes extinct it can never ever be replaced and a whole ecosystem with many lives can be affected.

The Prophet (pbuh) preached that animals should be treated with dignity. He promised a reward for those who care for animals. He showed great gentleness towards animals and he was also extremely sensitive to the suffering of animals. Any killing of animals without justification in Islam is not allowed even if the victim is a very small animal or bird.

Global warming has a significant impact on the biodiversity of the earth which contains much of animal life. We are still presently discovering many new species of animal life and many species of the fauna are already extinct or on the brink of extinction. Destruction of habitat and over-harvesting are eliminating animal life on a great scale.

Conclusion: I have mentioned only a few of the narrations here but much of the Prophet's (pbuh) advice can be appreciated and applied. Today one finds that everyone is concerned about the effects of global warming and climate change mainly brought about by the hands of humanity. The Prophet (pbuh) told us: "*There should be no harming (daraar) or reciprocating harm (diraar).*" (Imam Malik)

The world is suffering due to deforestation and the Prophet (pbuh) showed us the importance of trees and plants. Land degradation and desertification is practiced by many countries worldwide and sustainable use of land is in our Islamic teachings.

Developed as well as developing countries are suffering from water stress and how to overcome this was given to us 14 centuries ago. Biodiversity of the world is suffering and this includes over-fishing and over-hunting due to human activities and human greed, but the Prophet (pbuh) taught us the value of animal life.

Islam is characterised by an all-encompassing spirituality which is found in all acts of a Muslim's life and his way of consuming the gifts of Nature is part of worship.

What is distinctive about the Prophet's approach to environmental issues is the connection he established between green practices and rewards in the Hereafter,

which, represents, an incentive greater than any worldly gain or reward. Thus, his lessons prompt a greater care for the Earth and more effort to conserve its resources.

This planet and body is a TRUST from Allah and we should make *du'ah* that Allah allows to continue taking care of that trust.

Environmental stewardship is a Qur'anic mandate and commission from Almighty Allah. All of Allah's creation is important, down to the last sparrow and blade of grass. We have wrongfully assumed that creation exists for our own consumption. It is the responsibility of every true believer to take stewardship seriously and that includes environmental stewardship. We need to embrace the task to start "tending the garden."

I believe there is most certainly a message from Islam and our beloved Prophet (pbuh) for many future world conferences and meetings on environmental justice.

Let us pray - Oh Allah, creator of the heaven and earth, we thank you for the wonder and beauty of nature. May we be ever vigilant and responsible with the world that you have given us, keeping mindful not only that we are your stewards, but also that your creation is a gift for all generations.

Oh Allah! Breathe into us solidarity with all those who suffer now and the future generations who will suffer because of our environmental irresponsibility. Move us into action to save our earth and to build your sustainable kingdom.

O Allah!! We have caused corruption on land and sea, and it is up to us to mend our ways. Our present crisis calls on religious leaders to find faith-based messages that will inspire the faithful towards a heightened environmental awareness.

Ameen.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Restoring the Balance: A Theological Response to Climate Change

Imam Dr. A. Rashied Omar

Introduction

We express our gratitude to Allah, the Most High, that this year the entire Muslim community of South Africa is celebrating *‘Id al-Adha* in unison with the *hujjaj* (the pilgrims) who have freshly returned from the plains of *‘Arafat*. By celebrating *‘Id-al-Adha* in solidarity with the pilgrims (*hujjaj*) we are giving this great day of happiness and joy its true meaning and significance. It is our sincere supplication and *duah* that South African Muslims will continue to be united in celebrating *‘Id-al-Adha* in unison and solidarity with the *hujjaj* and the global *ummah* in future years, insha-Allah.

Since *‘Id-al-Adha* is inextricably linked with the *hajj* it behoves us in this *‘Id khutbah* (sermon) to reflect on the significance of this fifth and final pillar of Islam in our lives today. But in order to do so effectively we need to remind ourselves that the *manasik* (rites) of the *hajj* have great symbolic significance which can only be correctly understood in the life-histories of Prophet Ibrahim, his son, Isma‘il, and his wife Hajira (may Allah’s everlasting peace and blessings be upon all of them).

Hajj and the Environment

I would like in this *'Id-al-Adba khutbah* to go beyond the customary explanations of the symbolic meanings of the *hajj* and to focus on the not-so-familiar theme of the environment. The link between this theme and the *hajj* is apparent when we reflect on the *sa`i* as an obligatory rite of the *hajj*. When the pilgrim performs the *sa`i*/he is re-enacting the running of Hajira between the hills of *Safa* and *Marwa*, in search of water for her thirsty baby, Isma'il. Performing this rite, should not only remind the pilgrim of Hajira's plight, but should also inspire the pilgrim to reflect upon the millions of mothers all over the world who are forced, as a result of the unjust distribution and abuse of natural resources, to emulate Hajira in search of basic sustenance for their babies. According the *United Nations World Water Development Report* (WWDR), currently 2.4 billion people – or just under half the world's population – have no adequate water supply for their daily needs.

A further recommended rite of the *hajj* is to drink water from the sacred well of *zamzam* to quench the pilgrim's thirst after completion of the *tawaf* of the *ka`ba* and before undertaking the *sa`i*. This recommended *hajj* rite of drinking *zamzam* water before undertaking the *sa`i* should further inspire the pilgrim to consider the vital importance of water as the source of life, spirituality and good health.

The Glorious Qur'an affirms the profound significance of water to human existence when it proclaims in *Surah al-Anbiya* (The Prophets), chapter 21, verse 30:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

We made from water every living thing

These rites of the *hajj* should thus transform the pilgrim to return home more committed to support causes that promote the just distribution of resources in the world, and more conscious of the need for water not be monopolized or polluted, and to strive to defend the right of every human being to have access to clean water. Hence, when we ponder the environmental messages of the *hajj* in contemporary society, environmental justice and cherishing water as a precious resource are important lessons that not only pilgrims but all of us would do well to internalise.

The purpose of this *'Id khutbah*, however, is not to provide a grand narrative on the complex causes of the environmental crisis or injustices our world is facing, nor is to

shock you with dismal statistics about climate change, which, according to experts, indicate that the temperature of the earth will increase by over 2 degrees centigrade in the next century as a direct result of irresponsible and careless human actions. It is also not to remind you that Africa is already experiencing the devastating impact of this global warming witnessed by the worst drought in Somalia in recent history. I leave this complex task to experts in the field of environment and climate change.

Living in Reverence and Harmony with Nature

My purpose in this *‘Id khutbah* is simply to remind us that environmental justice and consciousness is not the sole responsibility of environmental experts or public officials, but rather it should be an integral part of what it means to be a conscientious Muslim. The conscientious Muslim, however, is not someone who is only concerned about issues of environmental justice and access to water but is also one who lives in reverence and harmony with nature and the environment. In this regard, the companion, Abu Sa’id al-Khudri narrated in the *hadith* collection of *Jam’i al-Tirmidhi*, that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) advises us as follows:

The world is green and delightful and Allah has made you a custodian over it (the world) and is observing carefully how you deal with it.

Nature and the environment are indispensable guides and intimate companions of faith in Islam. The Glorious Qur’an, in numerous verses exhorts Muslims to *tafakkur* i.e. observe, contemplate and reflect on the signs of God in the universe. The Qur’an insists that these signs (*ayat*) manifest all we need to know about God and about our rightful place in it.

For example, in *Surah Ali-`Imran*, chapter 3, verse 190-1, Allah, the Sublime, proclaims:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَإِخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ
الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ

وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day- there are indeed Signs for people of understanding who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth (with the thought): "Our Lord! not for nothing have You created (all) this! Glory to You! Give us salvation from the torment of Fire.

It has been reported that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) wept all night long when the above verses were revealed to him. At dawn, when his *mu'adh-dhin*, Bilal, came to call him for the *fajr* prayers, and enquired about the reason for his tears, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) told him: "Woe to anyone who hears this verse and does not meditate on its illuminating meaning."

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) grew up in the desert, became a shepherd at a young age and throughout his life shared an intimate relationship with nature. He espoused an environmental philosophy which showed compassion (*rahma*) for all living things and advocated the harmonious balance between humans and nature. The Arabic word for balance is *mizan* and God warns humans in many verses of the Qur'an not to transgress this balance through negligent and uncaring behaviour. In *Surah al-Rahman*, chapter 55, verse7-9, Allah, the Sublime, proclaims:

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ
أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ
وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ

*And He (Allah) has raised the cosmos,
And set up (for all things) the Balance.*

***So do not transgress the balance.
Weigh, therefore, (your deeds) with justice,
And cause no loss in the balance!***

From an Islamic perspective, the environmental crisis humanity is facing today can be viewed as a symptom of a deeper spiritual malaise. This spiritual malaise has come about through our extravagant and consumerist lifestyles that have transgressed the balance between humans and nature. An imbalance or altering of the *mizan* (balance) has taken place at the individual, social and global levels and this is now being reflected in the environmental crisis.

Climate Change

A critical dimension of the environmental crisis that we are currently experiencing is that of global warming and climate change. What exactly do we mean by climate change? Climate change is occurring because we are burning fossil fuels coal, oil, and gas at alarming rates. When we burn these fossil fuels they release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This gas acts as a blanket trapping the heat which reflects from the earth and causes the earth's temperatures to rise. This is what we call the 'greenhouse effect' and global warming.

The result of global warming is that we have weather patterns that are more erratic and extreme. For example, in recent years, we have had devastating droughts in Somalia and ravaging floods in China, Pakistan and Thailand. We have also had the coldest winters in parts of Europe in 90 years, while Russia has experienced its hottest summers ever, causing devastating fires. Hence it is incumbent on all of us, as conscientious Muslims and responsible global citizens, to try our best to reduce our carbon emissions and to restore the balance in our relationship with nature and our environment. But how best can we do this?

Becoming an Eco-Muslim

I would like to end this *khutbah* with some practical suggestions as to how each one of us can become an eco-Muslim, i.e. a Muslim who takes the ethical principles of Islam with respect to the environment as central to their faith and lifestyle. There are many things that each of us can commit to in adopting a low carbon economic lifestyle. Recycling waste and becoming eco-friendly consumers are good starting points. Eco-friendly consumers are devoted to reducing waste and so for example, always use their

own shopping bags, use only energy-saving bulbs, avoid buying bottled water and buy things for their usefulness not their status. This disposition goes hand in hand with an Islamic consumer ethic which encourages the individual to live within his/her means and avoid incurring unnecessary debts, and most of all, to show gratitude for our many blessings, including our environment.

An eco-Muslim is also one that strives to save water and to avoid being wasteful in their consumption of this precious resource. In this regard I would like to cite an instructive quote from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It is related by the companion, `Abdullah ibn `Umar, in the *hadith* collection of Ibn Majah, that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) passed by his companion Sa`ad, who was performing his *wudu*' (ablutions), and said:

“What is this wastage, O Sa`ad?”

“Is there wastage even in (such a sacred act as) washing for prayer?”

asked Sa`ad; and he (the Prophet) said,

“Yes, even if you are by a flowing river!”

The message is crystal clear: *Do not waste water, even if you perform your prayer ablutions.* In this regard, Allah proclaims in Surah Al-`Araf, chapter 7, verse 31:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ
وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

O, Children of Adam! Adorn yourselves with your most beautiful apparel whenever you attend the house of worship, and eat and drink but waste not by extravagance, for Allah loves not the wasters.

At the communal level, I am delighted to announce that the Claremont Main Road Masjid has registered as an eco-congregation. An eco-congregation is a local faith community committed to working for a more just and sustainable world in response to the wisdom of its sacred texts and teachings. By registering as an eco-congregation, we at the CMRM commit ourselves firstly, to measure our masjid's carbon footprint and work consistently towards reducing our carbon emissions.

We were shocked to learn at our mosque's last Annual General Meeting that, for such a small congregation, we spend R4 518 a month on ablution paper. We would like to urge all our congregants to reduce their consumption of paper and water when taking prayer ablutions. We also commit ourselves to recycling all our waste and exploring options for greening our mosque.

Last, but not least, we will endeavour to include environmental themes as a regular feature of our weekly sermons (*khutab*) and encourage courses on the environment to be included in the syllabi and curricula of our Saturday morning madrasa. We need to ensure that new generations of Muslims are trained and nurtured in the ethical principles of Islam with respect to the environment. These modest actions should be augmented by many others and should be annually evaluated.

At the global level, one of our social responsibilities as conscientious Muslims should be to join and support non-governmental organisations that raise awareness and campaign around issues pertaining to environmental justice. In particular, I would like to recommend that we support the 'Have Faith: Act Now for Climate Justice' campaign. The campaign consists of a petition to world leaders. One of the key demands of the petition is for each member state to set clear, short and long term targets for carbon emission reductions that keep average global temperature increases well below 1.5 degrees centigrade. We urge the South African government to take a courageous lead in this regard. The petition will be delivered by a youth caravan that will leave from Nairobi bringing petitions from many African countries to a mass interfaith rally at the King's Park Stadium on November 27 – the day before the COP17 climate talks. The campaign will culminate in a multi-faith Day of Prayer on Sunday 4 December, 2011 in which we hope the Claremont Main Road Masjid will participate.

Conclusion

On this blessed day of *'Id-al-Adha* let us all resolve to become eco-Muslims and implement some of the practical proposals I have shared with you in this *khutbah*. Let us strive to restore the balance in our lifestyles and re-commit ourselves to live in reverence and harmony with our environment.

Let us remember all the pilgrims (*hujjaj*) gathered at the sacred places in and around Makka. We pray and make *du`a* that Allah, the Most High grant all of those who were blessed with being present at *'Arafat* an accepted *Hajj Mabruur*, forgive them their sins (*Dhanb Maghfur*), and allow them to return to their homelands as true ambassadors of Islam.

I greet you all:

'Id Sa'id Wa Mubarak
May you enjoy a joyous and blessed 'Id
Kullu 'Am Wa Antum Bikhayr Ma'as-Salamah Was-Sihhah
May your entire year be filled with Goodness, Peace and Health
Baie Slammat vir Labarang

'Id al-Adha Khutbah

Claremont Main Road Masjid- Sunday 6th November 2011/10th Dhu al-Hijja 1432



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Environmental Justice: An Ethical Response to a Global Crisis

Rafiq Khan

Introduction

*It is Allah who has created the heavens and the earth
And sends down rain from the skies,
And with it brings out fruits wherewith to feed you.
And He has made subject to you the sun and the moon,
Both diligently following their courses:
And the night and the day He has made subject to you.*
(Qur'an 14: 32-33)

*And He gives you of all that you ask for.
But if you count the favours of Allah,
Never will you be able to number them:
Man is truly unjust and ungrateful.*
(Qur'an 14:34)

There is a growing body of recently published literature and opinions expressed by leading Muslim environmentalists and scholars of the Islamic religious tradition attempting to analyze the environmental crisis and to formulate an authentically Islamic response to meet its manifold challenges.

No right thinking person can remain in a state of denial of the enormous challenges mankind faces in dealing with this monumental problem. It has the potential either to put under severe strain or to eradicate many forms of life sustained on the only planet in the entire universe we can call home.

This is a universal problem which touches all peoples, all cultures, all nations all continents and all forms of life known to us. Yet the solution can only come from one species which walks the surface of the earth.

The root cause of this crisis is man's insatiable greed to exploit the earth's resources. The earth is barely given a chance to regenerate itself. Scant attention is paid to the destructive consequences of polluting the soil, the atmosphere, the rivers, the oceans, the forests and the habitat of every known species of plant and animal life on earth.

With such unchecked and unaccountable behavior we have altered the delicate balance in nature, which has hitherto been able to support such an astonishing degree of biodiversity. Little do we realise that harming just one seemingly insignificant plant, insect or animal species, we produce a cascading effect which eventually has a negative impact on our very own survival.

The effects are no longer subtle and silent. The last few years have shown all the signs of an angry planet taking its frightful revenge in the form of an increase in the number of floods, tsunamis and hurricanes affecting many parts of the globe. The rising ocean levels -a direct consequence of global warming -threaten the very existence of some thirty-five island nations across the world.

Our world is fragile and there is just so much it can endure. It is crying out for just treatment at the hands of those it strives to sustain. The time has come for us to intensify our efforts to promote environmental justice, just as we strove for a more just and equal society in our fight against colonialism, racism, sexism and other forms of human discrimination. Promoting environmental justice must become an integral part of our quest to build a more just, humane and compassionate order on this earth.

The environmental crisis has the ability to rewrite all of our understanding of what it means to live on this earth. It challenges us to re-evaluate our relation with the

environment. It gives us pause to reflect and an opportunity to start a new narrative of how we walk on the surface of this earth, how we partake of its many gifts and what imprint of our actions we leave behind for it to witness.

Crises reveal our weaknesses. They can also inspire to bring out the best of the latent qualities we are all blessed with. Amongst all of Allah's Creation, it is human beings who are uniquely placed to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour and it is only they who have the ability to change the direction of their actions such that we all can have a better outcome. No matter how intractable or insurmountable the problem might seem, only human beings have been uniquely endowed to think of and to envisage a better future through the power of their imagination.

Principles of a Green Deen

Muslims, as a globally identifiable cultural community, are privileged to have rich symbolic, scriptural and ethical resources stemming from their religious heritage, which place them in an advantageous position to make a special contribution to resolving the present environmental crisis.

My sense is that there is not so much a need to rediscover or to unearth these rich treasures on a piecemeal basis as much as it is to re-read the whole of the Islamic tradition through a new lens informed by the severity of the crisis affecting all of mankind at this critical juncture. Our *deen* or way of life is an organic and wholesome entity. Trying to disaggregate some part of it, for its purely utilitarian value will never reveal its true intent and latent power.

At the very heart of an Islamic response to the environmental crisis is a tacit acknowledgement that the present crisis is as a result of a profound injustice committed against the environment. It is an act of *thulm*, a form of brutal oppression meted out by peoples and nations who fail to take responsibility for their deeds.

Our *deen* sees everything in the universe, human or otherwise, as being a manifestation, a sign or an *ayat*, a symbol, signifying the Creative Power of Allah Almighty. The most fundamental teaching of our *deen* emphasizes that there is only One Creator and the order, the delicate balance, the sheer ingenuity, the harmony, the diversity and the magnificence of creation from the subatomic to the cosmos and the galaxies, are all manifestations of the all-important organising principle of our faith of the Oneness or the *Tauhid* of Allah (SWT).

If Allah alone is the Creator, Lord, Master and Possessor of everything in the universe, mankind loses any claim to absolute rule and power over any part of creation. Yet,

Allah in His infinite Wisdom and Mercy has chosen for human beings a special role of viceregency, as trustee or a protector over His earth. Man benefits from this exalted position in that the earth and what it contains has been made subservient to him. Allah has appointed him as His *khalifah*, as a steward over his Creation.

The destruction of the environment through activities which severely impact its regenerative and healing capacities, causes a severe imbalance in nature. We fail to live with a spirit of *mizan* (balanced life) for our behaviour is not driven by Allah Consciousness but rather by our own selfish desires. In our foolishness we think that our short-term gains will not boomerang and eventually hurt us in the process.

Such behaviour is not only destructive to the environment but also to our fellow human beings. The unjustified exploitation of the earth's resources, which leads to the impoverishment of millions, whilst enriching a few, removes any traces of *adl* or justice for many of the world's most economically disadvantaged peoples. Thus the need to enforce environmental justice is integral to the struggle to uphold human dignity and to advance the cause of human rights for all of Allah's Creation.

Allah, Humankind, Nature

Muslims believe Allah has blessed them with a soul or a *ruh*. This is the seat of their moral and ethical consciousness. Allah has also placed something of this sacred presence in the rest of His Creation. Every creation of Allah, including the environment and all its constituent parts, acknowledges this. They are in a continuous state of submission or *Islam*. Submission to Allah puts them in a state of *athkar* or remembrance of the Divine.

All of Creation, besides human beings, is engaged in a continuous state of remembrance and glorification of Allah. They have no choice. They are on earth to fulfill a certain role. This law applies both to animate and inanimate matter. They have laws pertaining to their behaviour, which Allah has placed upon them, which regulate their behaviour. It is mankind's duty to understand those laws and to act in the best interest of all of Allah's Creation and not, as so often happens, in the interest of the one who wields power and domination.

Inhibiting or destroying their potential to reach fruition in their lives is an act of *thulm* or oppression and such inhumane treatment takes on many forms of which the species extinction so emblematic of our current environmental crisis is nothing short of biological genocide. Spiritually speaking, we are impoverishing the earth as we destroy the lives and habitat of those who are constantly engaged in Allah's *athkar*.

As *ayat* or symbols they are in fact the primordial revelation or teaching from Allah. Like the textual Quran and other Divine Revelations, they are a potent reminder to mankind of Allah Almighty.

Divine Revelations speak to humankind. They teach us to remain humble. They teach us not to make any false claims. We cannot run faster, see further, dive deeper, or hear further than any other animal on earth. Yet we have been endowed with wisdom, which comes from our ability to read revelation. This is our unique ability to rise to a higher level of behaviour, of compassion, of care and fulfilling the rights of others. It is this capacity to transcend our own individual needs and to be sensitive to the needs of others which is the hallmark of a culturally and morally evolved individual. In a sense this is what it really means to be fully human, fully cognizant of our role as *khalifatul-ard*.

It is our failure to realise the higher dictates of our faith, which makes us selfish, narrow-minded and so destructive to ourselves and to our environment.

I believe there are four main areas of our daily existence where we give a more concrete expression of how close we are to the ideal behaviour Allah expects of us as his vicegerents or stewards of His Natural World, caring for and nurturing the environment as a trust or *amana* from Him.

If we manage our interaction with the environment very well in these four critical areas we can make a significant contribution towards a healthier habitat for all of Allah's Creation. It shows that we take our environmental responsibility seriously.

It ties in with our final accountability before Allah Almighty. Acknowledging that we have strayed from the behaviour expected of us could inspire a different behaviour – that of seeking Allah's forgiveness for our past transgressions. It will lead us onto a path of renewed commitment to live a more environmentally conscious and eco-sensitive existence characterised by gratitude, simplicity, contentment and real happiness. It will help us to overcome the scourge of individualism and consumerism. This is change from *within* but its effects extend far and wide, having a positive effect on all we touch, resulting in us becoming instruments of Allah's Mercy wherever we go.

Water

We made from water every living thing. (Qur'an 21:30)

If prayer opens our heart to faith, understanding and wisdom, it is water and ablution, which paves the way to prayer. It makes prayer possible. Our interaction with this

most precious commodity teaches us profound humility and gratitude. Even before you wash your face, your most prized possession signifying your beauty and your individuality, Allah asks you to taste the water, smell the water and to feel the water so as to engage all your senses to make you understand what it really means to be thankful for what you have been blessed with.

“Whether it is in the gentle mist that cools your lips, or between your toes as you walk barefoot through long grass tipped with morning dew, water is important to how our path of Islam is a faith in concert with protecting and cherishing the planet – a Green Deen.” (Abdul-Matin, Ibrahim p.117)

To be in state of *wudhu* is to be in state of consecration. Water facilitates this transformation for you. A *wudhu* properly done facilitates reflection on our relationship with the Divine as well as into the very depths of our souls. It is a ritual we engage in so many times a day. It is a pervasive reminder of the intimate relationship Allah in His Infinite Mercy and Wisdom has engendered within our hearts for the natural world and the environment we share with it.

Every time we utilise water for *wudhu* or for any other purpose it must remind us how precious and scarce commodity remains for more than a billion people worldwide. The search for this precious life-sustaining substance forms an integral part of the narrative of the *Hajj* or the fifth pillar of our faith. It is a stark reminder for us for the need to be actively involved in the *jihad* to fight poverty, the most pervasive social disease around.

The Prophet of Allah (pbuh) tells us about the consequences of withholding water.

“There are three people whom Allah will not look at on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them and theirs shall be a severe punishment. One of them is a man who possessed superfluous water on a way and withheld it from travellers.”

In our modern context we can take lessons from this very important *hadith* and draw strength from it to support the struggles of those whose water resources, amongst others have been severely curtailed or denied. It affirms the legitimacy of their just struggle for something withheld which has no ethical or moral justification whatsoever. Such tyranny will never last for it is not Allah’s way to support oppressors.

Without water there is simply no agriculture, no aquaculture, no plant and animal life possible. Not surprisingly therefore the *aHadith* and the *Seerah* of the Prophet of Allah are filled with many references how we ought to manage this precious resource. Rasullullah (pbuh) once admonished a companion against wasting water whilst

making *wudhu*, even if he was getting it from a river flowing in front of him. It thus teaches us to be careful and avoid any israf or abuse of what we are blessed with. Our wastage and carelessness will be somebody else's ruin down the line. It teaches us to act responsibly. Water, more than anything emphasizes the central tenet of our *deen* – that of making *shukr* or being in a state of gratitude for what we are blessed with. Spare a thought for those mothers, sisters and children who have to walk for miles on end to reach a supply of clean potable water – a daily reality for many in Africa and other parts of the world.

This leads me to the second important area in life where we impact our environment and that is in the cultivation, production and sourcing of our food.

Food

“O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer. Eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters.” (Qur’an 7:32)

Food production is where the management of water, energy and waste intersect to provide nourishment for our minds, bodies and souls.

Living in large conurbations has cut us off from the process of cultivating our own food. We have lost the skills to work with the soil. We have little knowledge of how to promote the welfare of animals and even less knowledge of gardening and growing crops. We are far removed from the chain of events, which determines how food lands on our table. We have become passive consumers allowing others to profit from our desire for convenience. Our tastes have been warped to become addicted to foods, which are high in salt, sugars and fats. We are slowly killing ourselves by eating!

We are at the mercy of big agribusinesses and corporations who do not share our concern for food production to be environmentally sensitive or eco-friendly nor do they treat the animals whose flesh we consume with any shred of dignity.

They have put their drive for profits above the need to promote sustainable agriculture and the need for the humane treatment of animals.

Today, most of the meat we consume is raised in what are called factory farms. These are concentrated animal feeding operations where huge numbers of animals are crowded together in inhumane conditions, pumped with pharmaceuticals in their feed to promote rapid growth, and slaughtered on assembly “killing lines” for the

sake of making a quick profit. Cattle and chickens are fed substances they were not genetically designed for. They have shortened life spans and sadly even their method of ritual slaughter leaves much to be desired.

The *halaal* stamp or symbol, let us be clear about this, is the lowest common denominator of what constitutes quality produce for us to consume.

That is simply entry-level permissibility of what animal flesh we can eat. Are we going to be satisfied with that? *Halaal* can also refer to kosher meat or meat slaughtered by *ahlul-kitab* (people of the book) as well. We must insist on more. We must insist on animals being slaughtered humanely and in strict accordance with the principles of *dhabihah* (proper ritual slaughter) avoiding cruelty to the animal at all times. *Dhabihah* meat is *halaal* and has also been slaughtered with a proper prayer and blessing.

But I will insist that not even that is enough!

We must also insist on the animal we eat as being *tayyib* or pure. Such meat comes from animals which have been raised properly, allowed to graze freely and permitted to act in the most natural way as Allah had intended them to live.

Thus our demand ought to be for food that is *halaal*, *dhabihah* as well as *tayyib* at all times.

Consuming food, drinking water or even sneezing for a Muslim is never simply a mundane activity. The boundaries between the spiritual and mundane fall away as we sanctify our actions by using the name of Allah. In this way we ensure our sustenance is legitimate, earned in a pure manner and is an occasion for us to express our gratitude to our Lord for making available such bounties for our consumption and wellbeing.

How is it that we never question how the animals whose flesh we consume as *halaal* had been treated while they were alive? Were they free roaming animals, fed on grass or were they caged and battered with all sorts of pharmaceutical agents and deprived of rest to ensure their natural growth? What harm are we not inflicting on these poor animals? What about the consequences to their genetic make-up if generation upon generation of these animals is passed in this manner? Just how do we think the dreaded Mad Cow Disease arose in the first place?

When we act irresponsibly we harm not only the animal but, eventually, ourselves as well, for we have upset the delicate balance Allah has placed in the natural world.

Not surprising then that many Muslims these days are adopting a vegetarian diet for they feel that the injustice caused to animals is not worth the guilt they have to carry by consuming meat.

They are not making meat consumption *haram*. That would be a violation of Allah's right. They are simply expressing their choice. They want to tread on this earth gently without causing any discomfort to any of Allah's Creation.

“And the servants of the All-Merciful are they who walk on the earth gently (hawnan).” (Qur’an 25:63)

It is time that we honoured the animals we consume by paying more attention to their welfare and their humane treatment. The moon and star logo has, in some cases, the unintended consequence of numbing our conscience so that we do not question the inhumane treatment of Allah's Creation. Of course, the inhumane treatment is skillfully kept out of our range of vision.

These animals give up their lives, that most precious gift Allah has given to all of Creation so that our life can be sustained. Is it not time that we showed care and concern for what is happening to these animals instead of simply consuming what is certified “*halal*”. Is it not time that we formed our own independent *halal* watch body to independently monitor this whole certification process? We need a strong consumer lobby driven by our desire to ensure proper standards are adhered to and animals are treated humanely. Our *halal* certification bodies, sadly, are only about “*halalification*” and serve the needs of the food industry more than the needs of conscientious Muslim consumers. They have sold the signs of Allah for a miserable price by having a myopic approach to animal welfare. They stand in violation of the rights of Allah's Creation – a clear case of environmental injustice!

There are ways out of this conundrum for us.

We can read all the verses of the Qur'an and all the *Abadith* we want to but it will not change our food supply and availability if we are not prepared to implement the inspiration which comes from these sources. This means education, teaching congregations about healthy foods, about going organic, buying and consuming meat which comes from animals humanely treated, not eating tuna which has been caught in vast nets which entrap dolphins in the process, etcetera.

It is also about ensuring Muslims are investing in alternate sources of food production, thereby getting some control of where we spend our hard-earned income. This is not an elite or upper crust society issue. Poor people are just as much in need of proper nutrition as the rich. We need as a matter of urgency to ensure food prices, especially those of good, nutritious and healthy alternatives come down so that its benefits can reach as many as possible.

Energy

*“Among His signs is this,
that He sends the Winds, as heralds of
Glad Tidings, giving you a taste of His (Grace and) Mercy.”
(Qur’an 30:46)*

*“By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour
By the Moon as she follows him
By the Day as it shows up (the Sun’s glory);
By the Night as it conceals it;”
(Qur’an 91: 1-4)*

Simply one hour of the sun’s radiation reaching the earth is enough to meet all its energy needs for one entire year! We have utilised more than fifty percent of all the energy expended over the last 2000 years in the last century. Our reliance on fossil fuels has produced such an extraordinary amount of greenhouse gases. The latter is the important cause of global warming, causing a rise in the levels of the oceans and major climate changes over the last few years.

Energy, which we extract from the soil, whether hydrocarbons such as oil or coal, or gas through fracking, is destroying our environment. It is toxic to water, sky and ground. It is the direct cause for wars and other serious political instability. Energy derived from the soil is dirty and destructive and non-renewable. Our dependence on fossil fuels is simply very high.

Whether it is the BP oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico or the destruction of some of nature’s most pristine environments such as in Alaska, or coal mining in many parts of our country, extracting these fossil fuels from the earth destroys the quality of life of people in these communities.

The rubble from coal mining goes deep into valleys covering streams and communities that live in those valleys. It is not surprising therefore that there is a significant increase in the rate of respiratory diseases, asthma, hyperthyroidism and breast cancers. Even in Cape Town, residents living in areas such as Killarney, Bothasig, Edgemoor and Du Noon have a far higher incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases due to the proximity of the oil refinery to those areas.

Extracting coal is just as devastating to wild life, fish and bird species. Mining waste pollutes water supplies of communities. Removing vast areas of topsoil and

destroying the trees and plants in areas of mining means there is very little plant life to absorb rainfall water in those areas. This can cause sudden flooding with devastating consequences in those areas.

Energy derived from the atmosphere is renewable, clean and in endless supply.

Solar power is one clean source from heaven. We look at the sun not with reverence or ascribe any divinity to it. We look at it with awe. It is a sign of the power of Almighty Allah. It is 93 million miles away from us, yet the intensity of its heat can be felt from so far away. It has existed up until now for something like 35 billion years. Yet it still continues its activity day in and day out.

It is our natural partner for growth. It provides heat and light.

We have to harness this power either via passive thermal systems, which store, collect and move the heat or via photovoltaic systems, which convert sunlight into electricity. This is a burgeoning industry. It needs our best minds in mathematics and science and our best business scientists to construct models to maximise our investment potential. It also requires our ability to network and lobby political powers to remove obstructive legislation to ensure alternate clean energy sources.

Similarly, wind is a powerful source of heaven-sent energy.

***“Amongst His signs is this,
That He sends the Winds,
As heralds of glad tidings,
Giving you a taste of His (Grace and) Mercy.
That the ships may sail majestically by His Command
And that you may seek of His Bounty:
In order that you may be grateful.” (Qur’an 30:46)***

Wind is like a gift, driving rains which bring much needed precipitation to crops and in days gone by the knowledge of its strength and change of direction was used by ancient mariners to chart their ways across the globe in search of trade and commerce.

Like solar energy, wind-powered energy is making a serious comeback. I came across a report recently of wind turbines being installed in minarets suddenly changing an architectural and functional feature of mosques into an efficient means to generate a clean source of energy and thereby reducing the carbon footprint of congregations.

We, too, can be a part of this exciting new wave of innovation and moves to get off the grid as it were or to build a new smart grid or smart network of sharing energies as the

old electricity grid is rapidly becoming obsolete. We must also learn ways to become energy efficient, habitually switching off lights and appliances we do not use, using low voltage lamps, etc.

Perhaps we, too, can emulate examples elsewhere and strive to get our *masjid* off the grid within a year or two and pay no electricity costs to the city council or Eskom! That would be a worthwhile venture to undertake. We can provide the lead for other mosques to go green as well!

Let us set ourselves that modest target. We do not have the luxury of endless time to do the things to heal our troubled planet. Without targets, without deadlines, without innovation and without thinking beyond our present paradigms of how we conduct our affairs, we will make no meaningful dent to the problems we face.

Innovation knows no bounds. With our Mother City being awarded the design capital city of the world title for this year, let us see how we can utilise such energies, ideas and networking opportunities to make our mosques more greener and cleaner and environmentally safer places. Even a simple energy audit will show up ways and means how we can minimise water and electricity costs. In this way we reduce the carbon costs to the environment.

Living a life connected to the environment made people realise just how dependent they are on the natural world for their existence. This led them to ponder on the *ayat* of Allah and brought them closer to their Creator. One of the most damaging effects of modern living is that it has severed that link leaving us to think of ourselves as being self-sufficient. Man has turned himself into an *ilah* or a deity, a subtle form of the worst spiritual affliction.

Earth

“There are certainly signs in the earth for people of certainty:

And in yourselves.

Do you then not see?” (Qur’an 51: 20-21)

The Prophet of Allah, as the most perfect of human beings who walked the surface of the earth, teaches us so beautifully what it means to be truly sensitive to the environment. He used to recognise below the soles of his feet how the pebbles he used to tread on were in state of constant *athkar* (remembrance) and *khawf* (in fear and awe) of their Lord!

If we adopt such an attitude towards nature, which can only come from our belief in the Ultimate Reality, the Transcendental Being Who is our Lord and our *Rabb*, it will impel us to love the natural world, both plant and animal for no other reason than it is the Creation of Allah. Doing any good to them automatically ensures that we become recipients of Divine Mercy and Compassion. The *Seerah* of the Prophet of Allah is filled with literally hundreds of examples of his humane and compassionate care of the earth and all forms of life on it.

Perhaps one *hadith* most pertinent to our subject under discussion deals with the Prophetic saying relating to the “*earth as a masjid*”. This is an entreaty for us to respect every piece of soil on earth as every part of it is sacred. It is not only about a narrow principle in *fiqh* about the permissibility to perform your prayer anywhere and not necessarily in a mosque. It tells us rather to have a prayerful attitude towards every piece of land we tread upon. It is a creation of Allah. It is spiritually alive. It will be a witness bearer on the Day of Judgment of how it was utilised, who prayed on it and who used it for purposes other than prayer. It will be our final abode one day. If we display a spirit of humility and of deep respect to it whilst alive, it will welcome us one day when we die.

Perhaps the one teaching, which to my mind, shows the Prophet of Allah as being the most eco-sensitive person who ever walked the surface of the earth, relates to the *hadith* wherein he is reported to have said:

“If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift (sadaqah) for him”.

What I find so beautiful about this *hadith* is its remarkable understanding about the inter-dependency of various species on one another. It shows an understanding of how ecosystems work. It also shows how bird, animal and plant life have a symbiotic relationship. What remarkable insight into modern biological principles of which a degree of understanding and elucidation was only achieved many hundreds of years later.

Even more astounding is the *hadith*:

“If the hour of the day of Resurrection is at hand and one of you is holding a palm shoot in his hand, let him plant it!”

The above *hadith* makes it quite clear that it is never too late to uphold the principles of a Green deen, of caring for the environment, adding to its beauty and strength and most importantly, leaving something for the future generations.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let me state that environmental justice should be the new frontier for us to pursue towards making this world of ours a safer, more just, caring and compassionate society for all of us to live in and be contented.

We begin by acknowledging that the heavens and earth and *all* that it contains, belongs to Allah. Allah has chosen us as human beings with the capacity to reflect and to take the moral responsibility for our deeds and to be the guardians of his Creation.

Thus to practice environmental justice, to promote a certain ethical way of how to engage with the environment requires, in the first instance, that we act with completely unselfish motives. Our aim should always be first and foremost to attain Divine Pleasure.

I believe that this is an exciting new development, which can generate much energy amongst Muslims. With the unique religious and cultural resources our *deen* provides, coupled with our understanding of this world and the cosmos and its ability to weave our sojourn on this earth with a sense of responsibility, Muslims have a ready-made alternative for a better engagement with the environment than many other contemporary approaches towards environmental and ecological justice.

The major challenge is of course to translate the intent of the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions into meaningful goals, which are practical and realisable.

We need to embrace the promotion of environmental justice and an eco-sensitive spirit wherever we go. This is a call for all of us to serve something bigger than ourselves for the greater good of all of us. Answering such a call prevents us from becoming selfish. We will realise that we are a part of a bigger movement centered on adding value to others. Such a mission will give us a lasting sense of lasting joy and satisfaction. Our work will begin to make a difference. We will embrace a cause.

"Where your talent and the needs of the world cross, your calling can be found". (Aristotle)

We need hope – something all religions provide so easily and abundantly. We can find all sorts of evidence to make us feel the environmental cause is already lost. My understanding of the Quranic message of: ***Laa taqnatumir rahmatillah*** (*Do not despair of the Mercy of Allah*) leaves no room for any doom and gloom scenarios in my mind. We can never fathom the extent of Divine Mercy and Support. There is no simple linear relationship to explain how Divine Help and Succour has seen humankind overcome many difficult issues in the past. The HIV-AIDS epidemic is just one recent

example. I am positive humankind will find the answers and the will to make this world a better place for all of the Creation of Allah.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Towards an Eco-Conscious Muslim Childhood: Reflections of Tarbiyyah and the South African Madrassah Framework

Nafisa Patel

This year marks 25 years since the signing of UNICEF’s *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, a globally ratified undertaking to help protect the world for its youngest children. Central to this declaration is the recognition that “childhoods” are considered to be an entrusted existence – not only for any future potentialities and promise they may hold, but essentially because children of the world serve as a mirror of our collective human conditions. Presently, however, this reflection appears potently abysmal. In many parts of the world, childhoods are often experiences rooted in impoverishment, hard labour, violence, disease, natural disasters, malnutrition, conflict, danger and fear. Increasingly, the plight of young children and the failures of the human adult world to protect their childhoods are being linked to global cultures of environmental abuse and neglect. For example, the loss of top soil, over-fishing, acidification of our oceans, loss of potable water and other issues related to climate

change, including industrialization and corporate control of land, wanton depletion of natural resources, pollution and lack of access to safe food sources (Lowenstein *et al*, 2010:100) are noted to be critical determiners of childhood experiences and wellbeing. Environmental damage and its impact upon the lives of children, in particular, are therefore considered symbiotic violences.

Consequently, educational reformers have been paying closer attention to ways that childhood learning can be better utilised as one way of addressing critical environmental concerns and dealing with the impact of eco-violence upon children's lives. As an emerging framework of analysis, the field of Eco-justice Education has contributed importantly to the re-thinking of current childhood learning structures. Drawing from and expanding upon the theoretical insights of Critical Pedagogy¹, an eco-justice educational framework seeks to interrogate the intersections between the environment, culture and education (Gruenewald, 2003:10). At its nexus, an eco-justice ethic holds global ecological politics to account and poses a challenge to oppressive systems that compromise childhood environments. Ecological issues are therefore increasingly being prioritised not only as a subsidiary inclusion into existing early childhood educational programmes but are also providing the critical lens through which many scholars are currently thinking about contemporary childhoods.

Reflecting upon these issues from the perspective of Islamic childhood learning, this article briefly considers how *madāris* in South Africa can help contribute to efforts at alleviating global childhood violences caused by environmental damage. Few Islamic educators, scholars and activists have interrogated the links between environmental justice and childhood justice, despite the fact that the notion of childhood justice is wholly captured by and encapsulated within a fundamental Islamic pedagogical concept of *tarbiyyah*. Broadly defined as child-nurturing, *tarbiyyah* offers an instructive conceptual tool for articulating an Islamic eco-justice educational ethic².

Typically, *madāris* in South Africa are considered to be supplementary educative spaces whereby young Muslim children learn about Islam and also learn about being Muslim. However, very often these spaces also tend to be under-resourced, lack adequate infrastructure, have insufficient or rely on ineffective intellectual commitments and/or communal investments. Furthermore, *madāris* often need to compete with and/or adapt to young learners' regular schooling hours and other extra-curricular activities. Not surprisingly then, within these operational limitations, there exist few opportunities for *madāris* eco-engagements much less be motivated into developing a more eco-conscious Muslim childhood pedagogy.

However, at an abstract level, the general learning programmes offered in most South African *madāris* do involve some level of eco-education, since most Islamic childhood learning content is replete with nuanced references to caring, preserving and protecting the natural world. The interconnectedness of faith and action also provides a key pedagogical construct around which much of Islamic childhood teaching and learning occurs. However, many of these learning programmes, including curricula structures, learning texts and pedagogical methods often fail to expand these eco-concepts beyond an abstracted level of instruction. The reasons for this are multiple, partly due to the practical operational limitations noted above. However, a significant and proportional implicate is the lack of critical and reformist thinking within this framework. An Islamic eco-justice education requires not merely a teaching or learning about environmental issues, it necessitates a deeper activist commitment towards justice.

Typically, madaris in South Africa are considered to be supplementary educative spaces whereby young Muslim children learn about Islam and also learn about being Muslim.

Islamic institutions of learning are often located within “communities of practice”, that is, they form part of a much broader pedagogical world of a young Muslim child. By extension, whatever acts of faith are taught and learnt within the madrassah framework should necessarily resonate with and respond to the life worlds of children outside of the classroom. Holding justice as its centralizing concept, the notion of *tarbiyyah* – that is the commitment to and effort of guiding and nurturing children as opposed to merely teaching and instructing – means that Islamic educators should take seriously and pay attention to all types of social inequalities, all forms of oppression and dominance including that of racism, sexism, ableism, classism and elitism. *Tarbiyyah* is based on the premise that the learning texts of a Muslim child’s pedagogical world is one of “witness”. In other words, an eco-conscious Muslim childhood is one that is rooted within a community of practice that is actively and holistically committed to challenging and transforming all forms of oppressive and unjust systems. From this perspective, *tarbiyyah* is not only about identifying and including certain “green” or “just” Islamic concepts or teachings within a learning programme, it is essentially about locating the intersections and also the blind-spots that enable, perpetuate and thus create childhood experiences of eco-violence.

Scholars of eco-justice education have noted the importance of how language is used within pedagogical relationships (Gruenewald: 2003; Lowenstein *et al*: 2010; Stanley and Young: 2011) they refer to such as “root metaphors”, i.e. the symbolic and associative meanings of certain words and phrases, the “taken for granted” and the unsaid yet understood meanings. In an eco-justice education framework, language provides a critical pedagogical tool to help make the necessary conceptual links between how human bodies and human actions are interconnected with and intimately tied to its broader environments. In other words, global concerns of poverty, pollution, land depletion, gender inequality, consumerism and commodification are not separate from nor unrelated to teaching children to recycle, to not litter or pollute, to conserve energy and save water, etc. From an Islamic pedagogical or a *tarbiyyah* perspective, the notion of *tawhid* (unity) provides the overarching eco-concept or the root metaphor for understanding environment-faith-action complexity.

As part of a community of practice and as a community of learning, madaris in South Africa provide an invaluable scaffold towards nurturing an eco-conscious Muslim childhood.

Another important consideration of an eco-justice education, particularly within a childhood learning framework, is to guard against what scholars refer to as “premature abstraction” (Gruenewald, 2003:7), that is an expectation that young children will or should instantly develop a strong affinity to environmental crises such as global warming, or saving the rainforests or starving children in distant lands – issues that some children might feel very far removed from or remain unaffected by. Rather, the aim of an eco-conscious childhood pedagogy is firstly to help raise and nurture ecologically literate children; secondly, to create opportunities for children to intimately bond with the natural world, i.e. “to learn to love it before they are asked to heal its wounds”. (ibid)

As part of a community of practice and as a community of learning, *madaris* in South Africa provide an invaluable scaffold towards nurturing an eco-conscious Muslim childhood. *Madaris*, therefore, need to be at the forefront of creating greener learning spaces, adopting and encouraging eco-friendly practices, providing opportunities for young children to engage with and immerse in nature, involve themselves and take an interest in the broader community’s needs, be the vanguards at helping to transform

unjust and unequal social systems, provide welcoming and inclusive spaces so that diversities and differences can be appreciated and become part of a young Muslim child's faith repertoire. The notion of children learning to love the world so that they can be part of helping to heal its wounds provides a profoundly edifying lens for thinking about *tarbiyyah* and how it can be effectively utilised as an opportune tool to develop, incorporate and implement an eco-justice ethic within the *madrassah* framework. Re-thinking and re-framing *tarbiyyah* through an eco-lens offers a possible useful starting point towards ensuring and realising childhood justice.

Endnotes:

1. Critical Pedagogy as developed by Paulo Freire's 1970 seminal work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" that advocated for education to be a means for both resistance and transformation of oppressive systems.
2. See Mohamed N, 2012, for an excellent analysis of curriculum content of South African *madāris*, the research provides innovative insights and offers practical recommendations for revitalizing and implementing an Eco-Justice ethic within the South African *madrassah* framework.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

World Water Day

Dr. A. Rashied Omar

Tomorrow, Saturday 22 March 2014, is World Water Day. World Water Day has been observed since 1993 when the United Nations General Assembly declared 22 March as “World Day for Water.” One of the principal aims of World Water Day is to focus public attention on the critical water issues of our times and to conscientise citizens of the world with regard to the dire need to conserve water.

The purpose of today’s *khutbah* is to remind us that the conservation of water and more broadly environmental consciousness should be an integral part of what it means to be a conscientious Muslim. An environmentally conscious Muslim is someone who lives in reverence and harmony with nature and uses water and all other natural resources frugally and sparingly.

In this regard, the companion, Abu Sa’id al-Khudri narrated in the *hadith* collection of Jam’I al-Tirmidhi, that the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah’s everlasting peace and blessings be upon him) advises us as follows:

ةولح ةرضخ ايندلا نا

اهيف مكفلختسم الله نا و

نولمعت فيك رظانف

The world is green and delightful and God has made you a custodian over it (the world) and is observing carefully how you deal with it.

The Critical Need for Water Conservation

On World Water Day, the United Nations releases its annual World Water Development Report (WWDR). According to a recent World Water Development Report, 2.4 billion people – or just fewer than half of the world’s population – have no adequate water supply for their daily needs. It is also estimated that as a direct result of poor hygiene and lack of access to water and proper sanitation, 1.5 million children under the age of five die every year because of diarrhoeal diseases alone.

If you were thinking that the water crisis is only relevant to the developing regions of the world, it is instructive to note that the U.S. Population has doubled over the past 50 years, tripling the thirst for water, and analysts estimate that at least 36 states will face water shortages by 2014. So the need to conserve water is becoming critical not only in the developing regions of the world but also right in the US.

Even more alarming, however, is the prediction by environmentalists and other conflict analysts that as a result of the high numbers of international water courses which are shared between countries, future wars will more likely be fought as a result of competition over water resources. It has thus become critical for all citizens of the world to rise up to meet this contemporary global challenge by changing our uncaring approach to water consumption.

The Centrality of Water in the Glorious Qur’an

What inspiration and guidance can we derive from the teachings of Islam to assist us in joining the rest of humanity in conserving our water resources? God, the Sustainer of all Life, draws our attention to the centrality of water in the ecosystem in numerous verses of the Glorious Qur’an. For example, the Qur’an affirms the profound significance of water to human existence when it proclaims in *Surah al-Anbiya* (The Prophets), Chapter 21, Verse 30:

عيش لك ءاملا نم انلعجو

We made from water every living thing.

From this verse we learn that God created water as the source and origin of all life. Plants, animals and humans depend on water for life and existence. Without water, life on this planet would cease to exist or continue. We know from scientific research that 72% of the surface of the globe is covered with water, and that 80% of the human body consists of water.

Furthermore, in *Surah al-An'am*, Chapter 6, Verse 99 God proclaims:

ءيش لك تابن هب انجرخأف ءام ءامسلا نم لزنأ يذلا وهو

*It is He (God) who sends down rain from the skies.
With it we produce vegetation of all kinds*

In addition to this vital life-giving function of water, it also has a socio-religious function. Muslims use water as spiritual purification and cleansing of the body and clothes from all dirt, impurities and defilement. We purify ourselves using water so that we may encounter our Creator clean, pure and purged. For God proclaims in the Qur'an, Chapter 8, Verse 11:

هب مكرهطيل ءام ءامسلا نم مكيلع لزنو

*And He (God) caused rain to descend on you from heaven to clean
therewith.*

Muslim Juristic Principles on the Equitable Use of Water Resources

Because water is such a highly valued and precious resource Muslim scholars on the basis of sound principles in *usul al-fiqh* (jurisprudence) have emphasized its fair and equitable distribution. There are two fundamental Islamic precepts that guide the right to water. First, the right of thirst establishes the universal right for humankind to quench their and that of their animals thirst, and second, the right of irrigation which gives users the right to water their crops. Various *ahadith* i.e. traditions passed down from Prophet Muhammad, relate to who has the priority over water and whether or not it can be owned.

Some prophetic traditions relate to the quantity of water one is allowed to take for drinking or irrigation and others prohibit the overuse of water sources even when there is an abundant amount available.

Using these same Islamic evidences some contemporary scholars have argued that even Muslim rituals of worship, such as *salah*, *zakat*, fasting and *hajj* need to be rendered eco-friendly. Such an endeavour would capture not only the spirit behind these acts of worship but also their correct execution. In this regard I would like to cite an instructive quote from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It is related by the companion, `Abdullah ibn `Umar, in the hadith collection of Ibn Majah, that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) passed by his companion Sa`ad, who was performing his *wudu* (ablutions), and said the following:

رمع نب الله دبع نع

أضوتي وهو دعسب رم ملسو هيلع الله لصل الله لوسر نأ

راج رهن بلع تنك نإو معن لاق فارساً ءوضولا يفاً لاقف فرسلا اذه ام
لاقف

“What is this wastage, O Sa`ad?”

*“Is there wastage even in (such a sacred act as) washing for prayer?”
asked Sa`ad; and he (the Prophet) said, “Yes, even if you are by a
flowing river!”*

The message is crystal clear: Do not waste water, even if you perform your prayer ablutions.

Water Conservation is Part of Being a Conscientious Muslim

We should all work harder to save water and try not to be wasteful in our consumption of this precious resource. I would especially like to urge all of us to reduce our consumption of water when taking prayer ablutions. Every time we make *wudu*, it would be useful to remind ourselves that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used a third of a litre to make his *wudu* – that is less than a can of soft drinks.

Another practical way in which we can reduce our water consumption is by challenging ourselves and our families to take shorter showers. Cutting down our shower time by one minute not only decreases wastage, but can also have a substantial effect on our water bill.

In a society spoilt by choice, we should commit ourselves to favouring greener options in all aspects of our lives – even exploring options for greening our Islamic Centre. For more detailed ideas and a unique approach to how we as Muslims can live eco-ethical lifestyles, I would highly recommend the book *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet* by Ibrahim Abdul Matin (an environmental policy consultant). In this practical book he covers a range of topics such as water, energy and food waste, and shares a number of ideas that aim to inspire a faith-based commitment to protecting the environment.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this *khutbah* by encouraging all of us to drink many more glasses of water daily and to recite the same supplication that pilgrims do when they drink zamzam water in the sacred city of Makkah:

“O God (through my drinking of this water) grant me knowledge that is beneficial, abundant sustenance, and healing from all illnesses.”

In this way, every time we drink water, we nourish our bodies and our souls with the consciousness of the source of life.

In commemoration of World Water Day let us all resolve to restore the balance (*mizan*) in our lifestyles and re-commit ourselves to live in reverence and harmony with nature. And above all, let us take active steps to conserve water.

Khutbah

Islamic Center of Michiana – South Bend, IN

Friday 21st March 2014/19th Jamad al-Awwal 1435



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

World Environment Day

Imam A. Rashied Omar

The 5th June 2013, was commemorated as World Environment Day.

The purpose of today's *khutbah* is to remind us that environmental justice and consciousness should be an integral part of what it means to be a conscientious Muslim. The environmentally conscious Muslim is someone one who lives in reverence and harmony with nature and the environment. In this regard, the companion, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri narrated in the *hadith* collection of *Jam'i al-Tirmidhi*, that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) advises us as follows:

ان الدنيا خَضْرَةٌ حَلْوَةٌ
وان الله مُسْتَخْلِفُكُمْ فِيهَا
فناظرٌ كيف تعملون

The world is green and delightful and Allah has made you a custodian over it (the world) and is observing carefully how you deal with it.

The Issue of Water Conservation

The focus of World Environment Day 2013 is food and eating more sustainably. I have, however, chosen to focus on the related area of water, not only because water is becoming a more scarce and valuable resource, but also because of its relevance to the Claremont Main Road Masjid's greening programme.

According to the *United Nations World Water Development Report* (WWDR), currently 2.4 billion people – or just fewer than half the world's population – have no adequate water supply for their daily needs. To further impress upon you the gravity of our water crisis I would like to remind you that despite the abundant rains we experienced over the past weekend, water restrictions are currently still in place in the City of Cape Town. As a result of Cape Town's precarious water supply the municipality has been forced to prohibit the watering of gardens between 10am and 4pm daily.

This water restriction is underpinned by a frightening reality that by 2020, the amount of water available per person living in the City of Cape Town will be halved. This is not so because our rain supply is decreasing. It is estimated that the rain supply will remain constant, but the population is growing, living standards are being raised all the time and commerce and industry are growing. All of these factors will place a severe strain on the water supply. We thus need to prepare ourselves to meet this challenge by changing our uncaring approach to water consumption.

Water Conservation is part of being a Conscientious Muslim

What inspiration and guidance can we derive from the teachings of Islam to assist us in joining the rest of humanity in conserving our water resources? Allah, the Sublime, draws our attention to the centrality of water in the ecosystem in numerous verses of the Glorious Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an affirms the profound significance of water to human existence when it proclaims in *Surah al-Anbiya* (The Prophets), chapter 21, verse 30:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ

We made from water every living thing

From this verse we learn that Allah created water as the source and origin of life. Plants, animals and humans depend on water for life and existence. Without water

life on this planet would cease to exist or continue. We know that 72% of the surface of the globe is covered with water, and that 80% of the human body consists of water.

Furthermore, in *Surah al-An'am*, chapter 6, verse 99, Allah says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

It is He (Allah) who sends down rain from the skies. With it we produce vegetation of all kinds.

In addition to this vital life-giving function of water, it also has another socio-religious function. Muslims use water as spiritual purification and cleansing of the body and clothes from all dirt, impurities and defilement.

We purify ourselves using water so that we may encounter our Creator clean, pure and purged. For Allah proclaims in the Qur'an, chapter 8, verse 11:

وَيُنزِّلُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ بِهِ

And He (Allah) caused rain to descend on you from heaven to clean therewith.

Because the conservation of water is such a vital element in the preservation and continuation of life on this planet in its various forms, some Muslim scholars, applying sound principles in *usul al-fiqh* (jurisprudence), have declared that it is *haram* (prohibited) to waste water. These scholars have argued that even our rituals of worship, such as *salah*, *zakat*, fasting and *hajj* needs to be rendered eco-friendly. Such an endeavour would capture not only the spirit behind these acts of worship but also their correct execution.

In this regard I would like to cite an instructive quote from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It is related by the companion, `Abdullah ibn `Umar, in the *hadith* collection of Ibn Majah, that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) passed by his companion Sa'ad, who was performing his *wudu* (ablutions), and said:

عن عبد الله بن عمر

أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم مر بسعد وهو يتوضأ
فقال ما هذا السرف فقال أفي الوضوء إسراف قال نعم وإن كنت
على نهر جار

“What is this wastage, O Sa’ ad?”

“Is there wastage even in (such a sacred act as) washing for prayer?”

asked Sa’ad;

and he (the Prophet) said, “Yes, even if you are by a flowing river!”

The message is crystal clear:

Do not waste water, even if you perform your prayer ablutions.

I am delighted to announce that the Claremont Main Road Masjid has installed new water taps that have assisted us in reducing our water consumption. We have also in the past two years reduced our monthly ablution paper expenditure from a staggering R4 518.

Notwithstanding these modest improvements we should all work harder on saving water and not be wasteful in our consumption of this precious resource. We would like to urge all our congregants to reduce their consumption of paper and water when taking prayer ablutions. We also commit ourselves to recycling all our waste and exploring options for greening our mosque.

I conclude this *khutbah* by advising all of us to drink many more glasses of water daily and to recite the same prayer that pilgrims do when they drink *zamzam* water:

“O God (through my drinking of this water) grant me knowledge that is beneficial, abundant sustenance, and healing from all illnesses.”

In this way every time we drink water we nourish our bodies and our souls with the consciousness of the source of life.

In commemoration of World Environment Day let us all resolve to restore the balance in our lifestyles and re-commit ourselves to live in reverence and harmony with our environment.

Finally, let us remember in our *duahs*, all those people in informal settlements who are struggling to keep warm and dry during inclement weather. We pray that Allah, the Most Compassionate, shelter the poor and needy this winter season from all harm and distress, *Insha-Allah*.

Khutbah , Claremont Main Road Masjid

Friday 7th June 2013/28th Rajab 1434 AH





Feeling the Heat

**Martin Cottingham (Islamic Relief UK)
Dr. Victoria Johnson (nef – new economics foundation) and
Sarah Stewart (Development Consultant)**

We owe it to the world's poorest people to take decisive action to help them prepare for the worst, rather than standing by and hoping for the best.

As climate change bites, natural disasters such as floods, drought and tropical storms are becoming more frequent and severe. The people paying the heaviest price are the world's poorest communities, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

With the global economy stagnating, the international community can ill afford to throw ever-increasing amounts of emergency aid at the countries affected by these disasters. And poor communities can ill afford an approach that is content simply to pick up the pieces after disaster strikes, regardless of the cost in human lives and livelihoods.

Islamic Relief believes that what the poor really need is proper protection against disaster – programmes that strengthen their resilience and ensure they are better equipped to withstand climatic extremes. Our growing experience of 'disaster risk reduction' (DRR) projects is that they offer huge potential to save lives and save money. What our research reveals, however, is that the resources allocated to such projects are woefully inadequate.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Greening the Desert

Reyhana Patel, Elias Fon

This report shows us that there is hope for the people of West Africa.

Throughout West Africa, the impact of climate change has been strongly felt over the last 40 years, with increased desertification, cyclical droughts and flooding. As a result, the people of West Africa are suffering from repeated outbreaks of diseases, persistent malnutrition and currently one of the worst cases of food insecurity in the world.

Islamic Relief has always aimed to be effective in alleviating poverty. This can only be achieved if disasters such as droughts and floods are controlled and mitigated.

Islamic Relief believes that much poverty is linked to problems with water. With effective provision of water, communities can get cleaner water and through this they can attain a better diet, improved income generation, better health care, education and much more.

In the past, aid agencies have focused on what they thought was appropriate for the people of Africa to deal with climate change adaptation. This included water provision methods such as boreholes and planting trees to combat environmental degradation. In the main, however, many such measures have failed to make a positive impact in the long term. Some, like boreholes, have in places actually contributed towards over-grazing and increased land degradation.

Islamic Relief has been on the ground in West Africa and has seen at first hand the most effective and sustainable ways to provide access to reliable water for people, animals and agriculture. We have listened to the communities themselves, and they

told us the most difficult problems they face are water harvesting and sustaining food security. We have adjusted our priorities and adapted our projects accordingly.

If water can be controlled and food production can be increased, communities can thrive. Based on field work in West Africa and broader research in this area, Islamic Relief has identified what it thinks are the two single most important new initiatives that the communities where we are working need. These are growing the highly drought resilient and adaptable plant sisal to ensure increased food security is available and building reservoirs, lakes and micro-dams to harvest rain water. Investment in these activities has the potential to empower communities and lift millions out of poverty.

The construction of hafirs and micro-dams to harvest rainwater in Sudan and Mali shows what a profound impact such initiatives can have on communities. The use of sisal to provide income generation demonstrates that people like Elizabeth really can provide an income for their families. The fact that community ownership is emphasised in all of these projects also highlights how solutions like these can encourage peace building and empower communities.

Continuous access to water can go a long way in lifting millions out of poverty. Simple solutions like reservoirs and micro-dams are helping millions out of poverty.

But we can't do it our own. We need the sustained support of our donors and partners. We also need other aid agencies to join the debate, to raise their game and to help find new solutions to age-old problems. Let's start by listening to communities to see what they need. Let's observe and engage with them. They can tell us what they need. We can provide it in the most effective way. And together, we can help green the desert and lift them out of poverty.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Questioning South Africa's Nuclear Path

Imam Dr. A. Rashied Omar

Introduction

The 5th June is annually commemorated as World Environment Day.

At the Claremont Main Road Masjid (CMRM) we believe that environmental justice and consciousness is an integral part of what it means to be a conscientious Muslim. Consequently, we advocate the view that Muslims should be at the forefront of campaigns, such as World Environment Day, that seek to create awareness of the critical need for humanity to live in reverence and harmony with nature.¹

Consonantly in this *khutbah*, which coincides with World Environment Day, I would like to address one of *the* most critical environmental issues facing South Africa at this time, namely its energy crisis. This crisis is currently being manifested in an acute electricity shortage that is causing frequent power outages.²

On 19 May 2015, South Africa's Energy Minister announced in Parliament that one of the principal ways the government is proposing to resolve our country's electricity crisis is by building six new nuclear energy plants by the year 2030.³

This contentious proposal comes at an opportune time for our government, since ordinary South Africans are exasperated by the unprecedented electricity outages

and are thus susceptible to embracing the government's nuclear solution. A number of civil society groups, such as the South African Faith Community's Environment Institute (SAFCEI), have already raised the alarm concerning the government's plan to build six new nuclear energy plants.⁴

An Islamic Perspective on Nuclear Energy

In this *khutbah*, I would like to offer an Islamic perspective on the debate about the use of nuclear energy to resolve our country's energy crisis. It might be useful and expedient to begin by reflecting on a relevant verse from the most primary source of Islamic guidance, the Glorious Qur'an. In *Surah al-Hadid*, chapter 57, verse 25, God, the Sublime, proclaims:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ

We bestowed upon you the ability to make use of iron, in which there is awesome power as well as a source of benefit for humankind (Q57:25)

It is instructive to note that the entire *Surah* takes its name from this critical verse. In his illuminating commentary on the above Qur'anic verse Muhammad Asad (d.1992), asserts the following:

“It is to warn man of this danger that the Qur'an stresses – symbolically and metonymically – the potential evil (ba's) of “iron” if it is put to wrong use: in other words, the danger of man's allowing his technological ingenuity to run wild and thus to overwhelm his spiritual consciousness and, ultimately, to destroy all possibility of individual and social happiness.”⁵

In the above verse God not only reminds us of one of the great gifts He has bestowed upon human beings: namely our ability to convert natural resources such as iron into useful technology, but He also warns us that that this wonderful talent and skill can be utilized for destructive purposes.

On the basis of Qur'an 57:25 and other supporting evidences from the primary sources of Islamic teachings, Muslim jurists have argued that Islamic law is basically neutral towards technological innovation. However, we are invariably confronted

with cases of technological advancement in which both positive and negative aspects are mixed. Thus the decision to embrace or proscribe a particular technology should be based on the norm of requiring that forbidding damage or negative consequences be placed ahead of obtaining benefits or positive consequences, known in Arabic as *dar ul mafasid muqaddamun 'ala jalbil masalih*.⁶

In light of the above juristic norm, the critical question that confronts conscientious Muslims and responsible South African citizens is to consider whether the advantages of our use of nuclear energy to resolve our country's energy crisis outweigh its destructive potential?

Reservations Regarding the Pursuit of Nuclear Energy

During the past few weeks I have carefully reviewed and studied the various arguments for and against the use of nuclear energy.⁷ It is my considered view that while there may be some benefits in building six new nuclear reactors to relieve our country's electricity crisis, the disadvantages and dangers far outweigh the benefits for the following reasons:

1. No Safety Guarantee

First, nuclear energy is never safe and will leave future generations of South Africans with a toxic radio-active legacy to manage. Some of us may remember the worst nuclear disaster in world history – the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe, when two explosions destroyed a nuclear reactor unit and caused radioactive releases that caused an epidemic of thyroid cancer in people who were exposed as children.⁸

The 1986 Chernobyl disaster, the 2011 Fukushima earthquake that led to the meltdown of three of six nuclear reactors at the site, and other smaller nuclear accidents, is a stark reminder that nuclear energy can never be a safe choice. There will always be an unforeseen combination of human failure, technological error or natural disaster that could lead to a major accident and a dangerous release of radiation. There is thus no such thing as “nuclear safety”. The only way to make sure that these disasters do not happen again is to phase out the use of nuclear energy.

2. Exorbitant Costs

Second, nuclear power is exorbitantly expensive to procure. It is estimated that the building of six new nuclear power stations could cost in the order of

R1-trillion. Given the current slow-down of our country's economic growth, and the future not looking any better, we will never be able to afford this extravagant expense.

Energy expert, Steven Thomas, puts the matter starkly in an article in the Business Day of 3 June 2015. He challenges our government's estimated nuclear tender costs as follows:

The government has promised that if the bid prices were higher than \$6,500/kW, the tender would be abandoned. Given that prevailing prices in the world are now about \$8,000/kW, if the government keeps its promise, the tender being launched this year is doomed to failure. It would be useful for Energy Minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson to confirm now whether the promise still applies and, if it does not, how much the state is prepared to pay.

Moreover, nuclear power plants have a limited lifespan and decommissioning power plants is equally expensive. For example it is estimated that decommissioning the two Koeberg reactors would be in the region of R34 billion.⁹ Who will pay for the decommissioning of six more nuclear power plants when we are no longer around? This will be yet another expensive legacy we leave our children.

3. Limited Employment Opportunities

Third, nuclear technology requires a small and highly skilled work force. Thus building nuclear plants will not provide massive employment opportunities, which our country sorely needs. In addition, while South Africa has a large number of engineers in the nuclear field, it is evident that we do not have the requisite skilled work force to construct and manage six new nuclear power stations. Consequently, our government is now scrambling to send students to Russia and China to be trained.¹⁰

4. Time to Construction

Fourth, nuclear plants take many years to construct. The historical record of the Koeberg nuclear reactors indicates that it took 8 years to construct Unit 1, while Unit 2 took 9 years.¹¹ We are now informed by our Minister of Energy Affairs that our government's proposal to build six new nuclear plants will be completed by the year 2030. Given the fact that almost all nuclear reactors built elsewhere in the world took much longer than initially anticipated it is highly likely that our

government's proposed nuclear energy plans will be realized well beyond 2030.¹² We need energy security now, not in fifteen years' time.

5. Risk of Corruption

Fifth, civilian and military use of nuclear energy cannot be separated. Any uranium plant used for energy is also capable of producing highly enriched uranium for use in atomic bombs.¹³ The huge security risk associated with nuclear procurement and uranium enrichment, requires high levels of secrecy and confidentiality, which then opens itself up to corruption.

In this regard it is distressing to note that in response to an application by SAFCEI for information regarding South Africa's nuclear deals with foreign entities, our Department of Energy has refused to release any affordability or feasibility study. According to them the process of deciding on the nuclear procurement involves "technical, scientific and commercially sensitive information and if released prematurely could prejudice the interests of the other parties, as well as the State and negatively impact on the process".

This has led SAFCEI's vice chairperson, Moulana Riaz Simjee, to cynically conclude that: "[T]his nuclear deal poses an enormous corruption risk. It is happening in secret and will make the arms deal look like a walk in the park".¹⁴

Unfortunately, the cavalier manner in which our government is proceeding with its nuclear procurement does not help to mitigate against the threat of corruption. For example, in 2012, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum (WCRLF), I undersigned a letter on behalf of the interfaith community addressed to President Jacob Zuma expressing our concerns about South Africa's nuclear energy plans.¹⁵ To date we have not even received an acknowledgement. It appears, therefore, that the government in its haste for nuclear power is in danger of breaking a whole range of constitutional guarantees regarding consultation, accountability and financial expenditure. The pursuit of nuclear power is now threatening our democracy and faith communities and their partners in civil society need to challenge the government to be more transparent and accountable.

For all of the above five reasons and more, it is my considered view that as conscientious Muslims and responsible stewards of the earth (*khalifatu Allah fi'l Ard*) we should join the growing social movement calling on our government to reconsider their commitment to nuclear energy and to rather invest in secure renewable energy.

Harnessing Renewable Energy Resources

South Africa has the best solar energy resources in the world, as well as extensive wind. We only have to harness it. The movement of wind and water, the heat and light of the sun, the carbohydrates in plants, and the warmth in the Earth—all are energy sources that can supply our needs in a sustainable way. A variety of methods are used to convert these renewable resources into electricity. For example, solar energy – power from the sun – can be collected and converted in a few different ways. These include domestic solar water heating with solar roof panels or conversion of sunlight to electrical energy using mirrors and boilers. Wind energy can be harnessed through wind turbines to pump water or generate electricity. Geothermal energy, which is generated within the earth, can be used with heat pumps to heat a building in winter and cool a building in summer. This form of energy can lessen the power to maintain comfortable temperatures in buildings. Biomass energy – derived from plant material and animal waste - can be converted to electricity with appropriate use of technology.¹⁶

Several countries are pioneers in the use of renewable energy. For example, Iceland gets 85% of the country's electricity from geothermal and hydropower. Norway is around 98% renewable and uses hydroelectric, geothermal and wind energy sources. Portugal relies on hydroelectricity for up to 58% of electricity; wind power contributes one fifth and solar energy around 1%. Germany uses 98% renewable energy.¹⁷

Moreover, renewable energy is safe, it will create more jobs since it does not require highly specialized skills such as nuclear power, and it can be installed relatively quickly. It is decentralized, will not damage our climate, can be constructed on large and small scales, will be cost effective in the long run and private enterprise is longing to invest in it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, on this World Environment Day I make a passionate plea for members of our congregation to strengthen and provide greater support for CMRM's environmental justice project. Our goal should be to promote renewable energy and energy conservation as part of responsible stewardship of the earth and as a faith response to climate change.

I would also like to call upon our congregation to make our voices heard and join SAFCEI's weekly Wednesday morning "No to Nukes vigil" outside the South African

Parliament. If you are unable to join the protest, then you can show support by letters of protests and signing petitions calling on our government to reconsider its hazardous and unwise nuclear path.

At this sacred hour of jumuh`ah please join me in a special supplication to ask the Lord of Compassionate Justice to make us more responsible stewards of the earth:

***O Allah the Creator of the heavens and earth
and everything that exists***

***Forgive our inaction
as we confront the destructive power of nuclear energy***

***We pray for all those who suffer because of nuclear radiation
and environmental damage***

***Help us to re-examine our lifestyle choices,
to reduce our carbon footprints and
stem the tide of climate change***

***We pray for the defenseless creatures harmed or made extinct
by our selfishness and heedlessness.***

***We pray for our leaders to implement new and just policies
that will protect our fragile world for future generations.***

Inspire us to work together in pursuit of environmental justice

***May we follow the example of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
in caring and being a source of compassion (rahmah) for everything
that exists in our precious universe.***

Allahumma Amin

Endnotes:

1. For an elaboration of the CMRM's environmental justice mission see: Omar, A. Rashied, *Restoring the Balance: A Theological Response to Climate Change* (Claremont Main Road Masjid, Cape Town: 6 November 2011).
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3. For full text of Energy Minister, Tina Joemat-Petterson's speech see: <http://www.gov.za/speeches/policy-and-budget-speech-minister-energy-ms-tina-joemat-petterson-mp-national-assembly>. Accessed 3 June 2014.
4. For SAFCEI'S protests against nuclear procurement see their website: <http://safcei.org/power-for-people-nuclear-is-a-moral-issue/> accessed 3 June 2015.
5. *The Message of THE QUR'AN*: Translated and Explained by Muhammad Asad. (Dubai: 2003 Edition, Oriental Press), pp.955-956.
6. I am indebted to the "fatwa" of the *Nahdatul Ulama* in Indonesia for their use of this jurist principle in opposing a proposed nuclear plant in Muria, Indonesia. See: "Nuclear fatwa: Islamic jurisprudence and the Muria nuclear power station proposal", APSNet Policy Forum, December 13, 2007, <http://nautilus.org/apsnet/nuclear-fatwa-islamic-jurisprudence-and-the-muria-nuclear-power-station-proposal/> accessed 3 June 2015.
7. A useful book detailing the history of South Africa's nuclear trajectory is: David Fig, *Uranium Road: Questioning South Africa's Nuclear Direction* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2005).
8. New York Times, 23 March 2011, "Anxiety Up As Tokyo Issues Warning On Its Tap Water" by David Jolly and Denise Grady.
9. 'Funding Nuclear Decommissioning: Lessons for South Africa' Pay More With Nuclear: Report 2, Report Author: Steven Thomas, University of Greenwich, July 2104 (Johannesburg: Earthlife Africa).
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12. ‘What Does It Take To Finance New Nuclear Power Plants?’ Pay More With Nuclear: Report 3, Report Author: Steven Thomas, University of Greenwich, July 2014 (Johannesburg: Earthlife Africa).
13. See document, *Claremont Main Road Masjid Supports Plea for a World Free of Nuclear Arms* (Claremont Main Road Masjid, 1999). For the other views of Muslim scholars on use of Nuclear Weapons see: Sohail H. Hashmi, “Islamic Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: An Argument for Non-Proliferation”, in Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven Lee (eds.), *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).
14. “Keep South Africa’s Lights on With Renewable Energy - or Irradiate a Darkened Nation” by Patrick Bond, in *Counterpunch*, February 18, 2015. See <http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/02/18/keep-south-africas-lights-on-with-renewable-energy-or-irradiate-a-darkened-nation/> accessed on 3 June 2014.
15. For details of this letter dated 18 July 2012, see, CMRM offices, WCRLF Zonnebloem Offices or SAFCEI offices.
16. For information on renewable resources consult: <http://www.altenergy.org/renewables/renewables.html>
<http://www.ucusa.org/our-work/energy/our-energy-choices/our-energy-choices-renewable-energy#.VW9hB9qqko> accessed 4 June 2015.
17. For information on renewable resources in different countries consult: <http://www.altenergy.org/renewables/wholly-renewable.html> accessed 4 June 2015.

Jumu`ah Khutbah

World Environment Day

Questioning South Africa’s Nuclear Path

Claremont Main Road Masjid

Friday 5 June 2015





Our Work

We believe that every one of us has a responsibility to maintain the balance of the earth especially since disruption of this balance is causing widespread suffering amongst the world's poorest people. As a result, communities are facing droughts, flooding and shortage of water. With such ever-changing weather patterns, it is getting more and more difficult to grow produce, keep farms and sustain food security.

Climate Change and Food Security is therefore crucial to Islamic Relief as not only is it one of the Islamic principles on which Islamic Relief was founded, but also because of its importance when it comes to poverty reduction.

Environment, climate change and food security

We're all responsible to maintain the balance of the earth

Islamic Relief considers environmental sustainability to be crucial to its work because the environment is intimately linked with poverty. A majority of the world's poor depend on environmental goods and services for their sustenance and livelihoods. Many poor people in developing countries also live in ecologically vulnerable environments. These together make the poor the most exposed to environmental changes while at the same time making poverty a key driving force behind unsustainable use of environmental resources.

Human-made climate change is happening and it threatens the basic elements of life. For example it is predicted that melting glaciers will initially increase flood risk and then strongly reduce water supplies; declining crop yields, especially in Africa (where over 70% of workers rely on small-scale farming that is dependent on direct rainfall)

could result in an additional 80-120 million people at risk of hunger; rising sea levels will result in tens to hundreds of millions more people affected by flooding each year; changing climatic conditions will result in geographic shifts in human diseases; and ocean acidification, a direct result of rising carbon dioxide levels, will have major effects on marine ecosystems, with possible adverse consequences for fish stocks.

Islamic Relief will work towards addressing the challenge of environmental sustainability by increasing understanding of Islamic faith teachings on the subject, implementing measures to responsibly discharge its duty for environmental stewardship, supporting communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change on food security, and assisting them to build resilience to climate-related disasters.

An important principle that the Holy Qur'an enunciates prescribes humanity's relationship to the environment through the appointment of humans as custodians (khulafa) of creation.

Promoting responsible environmental stewardship is an important principle in Islamic teachings and traditions. Many verses in Qur'an and several sayings of the Prophet Muhammad indicate the great importance that has been given to environmental concerns and the responsibility of man to the environment. An important principle that the Holy Qur'an enunciates prescribes humanity's relationship to the environment through the appointment of humans as custodians (*khulafa*) of creation. Therefore the responsible stewardship of the environment is a sacred trust (*amana*) bestowed on humanity by Allah.

In addition to dedicated work on climate change, Islamic Relief's work in this area consists of developing and updating its own internal policy on the environment together with strategies for integrating environmental concerns into its programmes and projects. We also work in partnership with like-minded organisations to develop e-learning modules on Islam and the environment.

Assessment Reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC) have shown that the vulnerabilities of poor people to disasters and other risks will be compounded by climate change and that strategies aimed at disaster risk reduction (DRR) and building the resilience of communities need to incorporate components of climate change adaptation. In the context of building resilience to disasters, climate

change adaptation involves an analysis of the vulnerability of communities to current climatic hazards and builds on this to address future uncertainty.

Islamic Relief is developing its global framework for assisting communities to become more resilient to disasters. The framework aims to closely link disaster risk reduction with climate change adaptation. This framework will form the basis for its partners and country offices to develop their own national strategies. Since this is a new area of work for our organisation, we will pay particular attention to building our own capacity across the various parts of IR. We are increasing our efforts in this area so as to achieve sustained improvements in peoples' lives and the resilience of communities.

