

Sh. Dr. Muhammad Ridwaan Gallant

The Environmental Desk of the Muslim Judicial Council./SAFCEI

Jumu'ah Khutbah on the conservation of water

Khutbah -Islam and Water Conservation

NB Khutbah may be performed on any Friday in March

Insha-Allah

Background to Khutbah

SECTION 1

N.B The first section is a general discussion on the issues concerning water conservation. This is for the Khatib's info only. The aim is to sketch a brief background on water conservation.

Introduction

South African citizens will be having water awareness week during from 5th to 9th of March 2012.

The khutbah will deal how we can approach water conservation from an Islamic point of view.

Over the last year water scarcity and water crisis have become a concern in many part of South Africa. Areas in the Karoo water had import water from other areas. Drought threatened the Southern Cape. The Western Cape received a below average rainfall for the first time in five years.

Water is being wasted at an alarming rate everyday. We use large quantities of water to wash our cars, spend more than half an hour washing ourselves and waste when taking wu'du when only a small quantity would have sufficed. All sectors of society do not realize the importance of conserving a resource that is decreasing in availability every year.

In general, South Africa is a dry country. Water restrictions are becoming the norm in an effort to ensure that the country has sufficient water supply throughout the year.

However, people are still wasting water. Water resources need to be managed in an integrated manner to ensure that everyone can benefit from it, now and in the future. This means that water needs to be used efficiently and fairly and at the same time, we need to protect our water resources.

Three-quarters of the Earth's surface is covered with water, little wonder it has been called the Blue Planet. Of this, 94% is in the form of salt water and 6% can be found in rivers, springs, wetlands, underground aquifers and glaciers

As Muslims we need to reflect on the wonders of Allah (TA) and on the great Mercy Allah (TA) shown us by providing us with sustenance in the form of water for without water, we cannot grow crops nor perform our daily ablutions nor provide our animals with water.

SECTION 2

This section is for the Pre-Khutbah talk.

The Islamic View on Water Conservation

The Khutbah : English-Arabic

Allah speaks about the importance of water in the Quran. Allah (TA) says:

And we send down water from the sky (rain) in (due) measure,
and We gave it lodging in the earth, and verily, We are able to take it away.
(Surah al-Mu'minun 23:18)

Allah mentions His innumerable blessings to His servants, whereby He sends down rain in due measure, meaning, according to what is needed, not so much that it damages the lands and buildings, and not so little to be insufficient for crops and fruits, but whatever is needed for irrigation, drinking and other purposes

All living species are dependant on water. Water is a life-sustaining and purifying resource. According to the Quran the origin of every living thing is in water.

And We have made from water every living thing. (Surah al-Anbiya 21:30)

Allah sends the water as sustenance to his creation. Subsequently man and beast will benefit from the vegetation as stated in the Holy Quran: **"It is He Who sends down water from the sky; and with it We produce vegetation of all kinds..."** (Qur'an, 6:99).

The precipitation is a blessing and provision for the servants of Allah, it is a relief and means of survival for His creatures and it is a mercy for His creation.

Water fulfils many functions in our society. Water is the mainstay of human society - early civilisations were concentrated in river basins, such as the Nile, Ganges, Tigris and Euphrates river basins. Water is used by households, industry, agriculture and also forms the habitat for marine and freshwater plants and animals, an important food source for many societies. Water is thus the basis of life and plays an indispensable role in the sustenance of all life on this earth.

It is a matter of fact that life on earth will not be possible without the presence of water. Man only realizes the value of water when there is a shortage. The Quran describes how water resuscitates the earth. **"And Allah sends down water from the skies, and gives therewith life to the earth after its death..."** (Qur'an, 16:65)

Without the rain the earth is lifeless. When the rain comes the earth becomes alive. Plants start to grow, flowers begin to bloom, man and animals can quench their thirst and benefit from the plants. A whole life cycle starts to bloom.

Man does not appreciate the preciousness and the benefits of water. If the water would have been salty, sour, bitter it would have been unfit for drinking purposes as well as for the growing of plants. The Dead Sea in the Middle East is a good example where no plant or animal life is possible due its high salt content. Allah says in the Quran:

"See you the water which you drink? Do you bring it down (in rain) from the cloud or do We? Were it Our Will, We could make it saltish. Then why do you not give thanks?" (Qur'an, 56:68,69,70).

In the life of a Muslim, water also has a socio-religious function in that it is used for ritual purification. Cleanliness of one's person and one's surroundings is stressed in Islam. Allah says in the Quran:

And it is He Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings,
Going before His Mercy (rain);
And We send down pure water from the sky.

(Surah al-Furqaan 25: 48)

Every living species on the earth must have a right to water. The supply and preservation of fresh water was always regarded as of fundamental importance since the time of the Prophet (SAW). This can be deduced from the following hadith: **"All Muslims are partners in three things: water, herbage and fire and to sell it is prohibited."** (Ibn Maja :1990).The rulers must make provisions for people to have access to water.

In Islam it is not permissible to withhold excess water where there are others who have need of it. The Prophet (SAW) declared: “**Excess water should not be withheld so that the growth of herbage may be hindered**” (Muslim:1993 :Vol3A: 38 no. 1566).

If water is withheld then it will hinder the growth of herbage which is important for the fodder of animals. Excess water should also not be withheld from usage by animals (An-Nawawi:1995:193-194).

Unfortunately, despite the value of this great blessing, we seldom express our gratitude but rather take it for granted and overuse, pollute and waste this precious resource.

Extravagance in using water is forbidden; this applies to private use as well as public, and whether the water is scarce or abundant. The Prophet (SAW) emphasized the proper use of water without wasting it.

When the Prophet (SAW) saw Sa’d performing wudu he said : “**What is this? You are wasting water.**” Sa’d replied: Can there be wastefulness while performing ablution? The Prophet (SAW) replied: “**Yes even if you perform it in a flowing river.**” (Ibn Maja : 1990 : Vol. 1: 147:no.425).

In addition to encouraging water conservation, the Prophet (SAW) himself set the example; for instance it is narrated by Anas: **The Prophet (SAW) used to take a bath with one Sa'a (one Sa'a equals five mudds equals 2.4 litre) of water and used to take ablution with one Mudd (2/3 litre) of water.**(Bukhari:1986: Vol.1:135 no.201).

Imam Al-Ghazzali said that if one were to have a bath one should not keep pouring water continuously, but should restrict oneself to the amount needed Al-Ghazzali, The Revival of Islamic Sciences, vol. 1, p. 139

The Muslim scholars understood from this the importance of water conservation and they have discussed it in their writings. (Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri, Minhaj Al-Muslim Dar Al-Shuruq: 1991, p. 267

Wise use of our natural resources, keeping in mind the preservation of the common good, is thus a key principle of natural resource management in Islam. The basic principles that relate to natural resource management in Islam have been outlined in a book entitled, *Environmental Protection in Islam*. This book was produced for the World Conservation Union and set out the principles as follows:

- The Creator is the real owner of everything in the universe – humans are only trustees who are answerable for our actions. Thus we are accountable for our use of all resources, including water;
- There should be no damage or infliction of damage to any other being. We should not abuse the rights of any other being while securing our access to water, or any other resource;
- Humans have a right to benefit from environmental resources, however if they inflict damage to that resource, then they are held liable to repair the damage as the rights of the whole society has been violated ;

- The benefit of a thing is in return for the liability attached to it. A good example to provide here is the construction of dams which holds benefit in the supply of water, yet it also has liabilities attached to it. Thus, careful consideration of alternatives is required to reach a decision on a particular action;
- The ruling authority must secure the common good and eliminate injuries to society. There is an onus on the authority to manage water resources and to protect the interests of the society as whole;
- All acts are evaluated in terms of their consequences as social goods or benefits and social detriments and evils. Thus, planners, administrators and designers must strive for achieving the common good of all created beings.

Another principle applied to the use of water resources is: “whatever fulfills and helps to achieve the basic necessities of our live is itself a necessity.” By misusing water, a vital resource, through pollution or misuse, we are in fact tampering with its function as the source of life, leading to disease, sickness or even death of life itself.

These principles formed the basis of water law in most Muslim societies, which were largely located in dry areas. The use of these principles, based on guidance from the Qur’an and the Sunnah, defined water rights in Islam.

Water was generally regarded as common property, to be shared, allocated and managed for the collective benefit of all. This was put into practice by such great leaders as Sayyedinaa Uthmaan (RA) the third Khaliph, who established a precedent by purchasing a well and making it freely available for public use.

Water is most often regarded as public (rivers, springs and wells). However, where a private landowner invests labour into digging a well on his/her property, the rights to that water rests with the landowner. However, a number of conditions still govern this private use, for example in times of stress, water should be shared. There is thus strong disapproval of practices where water is controlled for individual benefit, thereby causing hardship and shortages for others. Water is thus regarded as a public concern and practices that result in pollution, wastage and misuse of water is not permitted.

The principles of the shari’ah no longer forms the basis for water laws in Muslim countries. Up to 1926, many countries under Ottoman rule applied the Turkish law (known as the *Mejelle* or Ottoman Civil Code) which incorporated shari’ah principles. In Turkey, these laws were replaced by new water laws based on the Swiss Civil Code, thus repealing all shari’ah-based laws. Many other countries followed suit.

In a semi-arid region such as the Middle East, where the majority of watercourses are shared with other countries, co-operation in water resources management is critical. It has been said that the next war in the Middle East will be fought over water, not politics. Water therefore plays a crucial role in Middle Eastern politics, particularly in the Tigris-Euphrates river basin which supplies water to Turkey, Syria and Iraq and the Jordan River, supplying water to Israel and a number of Arab countries.

The value and importance of shari’ah principles, which formed the basis of water rights in many Muslim societies, has much to contribute to creating a co-operative water management system. Similarly, it lays the foundation for the wise use of natural resources by the individual. In our lives, water fulfils a vital function. We need to transform our understanding of the lessons and teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah into action.

Practical tips to incorporate wise use of water in our everyday lives:

- Use water sparingly;
- Check for leaks and dripping taps;
- Water gardens in the cool of the evening or early morning to reduce evaporation;
- Recycle washing water onto your garden;
- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth;
- Have shallow baths or a quick shower;
- Install water-saving devices or simply place a brick in your cistern to reduce the amount of water (toilets flush away about 11 litres of water);
- If possible, plant indigenous plants which are adapted to the local environment as these require less water;
- Use water sparingly when performing wudhu (ablution) or ghusl (purification bath);
- Encourage mosques in your area to install water-saving taps or to investigate ways of recycling wudhu water e.g. for use in gardens;
- Report any signs of leakages or pollution to your local authority;
- And never dump waste in rivers, seas or wells.

We need to teach our children to use water sparingly. To think of the water that was wasted that could have been used by others. The rivers, streams and dams in our country cannot continue to supply us with water if we continue to have blasé attitudes about water and to think only of ourselves and not of the people dying of thirst across the world.

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