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## Islamic Concept Of Forest Preservation And Its Contemporary Significance

**Dr. Saeed Ul Haq Jadoon** Lecturer, Department of Islamic and Religious Studies, Hazara University Mansehra, Pakistan. [saeedulhaqjadoon@gmail.com](mailto:saeedulhaqjadoon@gmail.com)

**Dr. Muhammad Fayaz** Assistant Prof., Department of Islamic and Religious Studies, Hazara University Mansehra, Pakistan. [drfayaz1970@gmail.com](mailto:drfayaz1970@gmail.com)

**Dr. Aminullah** Assistant Prof., Department of Islamiyat, Shaheed Binazir Bhutto University Sheringal Dir Upper, [Pak.aminullah@sbbu.edu.pk](mailto:Pak.aminullah@sbbu.edu.pk)

**Dr. Salih ud Din** Associate Prof, Department of Islamic Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pak. [salihuddin@awkum.edu.pk](mailto:salihuddin@awkum.edu.pk)

**Dr. Muhammad Nawaz** Lecturer, Department of Islamiyat, University of Peshawar, Pak. [muhammadnawaz@uop.edu.pk](mailto:muhammadnawaz@uop.edu.pk)

**Muhammad Imtiaz** Phd Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pak. [iahaqqani86@gmail.com](mailto:iahaqqani86@gmail.com)

**Dr. Najmul Hasan Assistant professor** Department of Islamic Studies University of Malakand [najmulh639@gmail.com](mailto:najmulh639@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

The importance of forests cannot be denied. In the modern scientific era, where science and technology are developed, there are many problems of climate change and environmental pollution. Forestry is very important to deal with these Challenges. Today governments are aware of forests and are enacting laws to ensure the protection of forests, but Islam has informed the importance of forests and its protection centuries before today. The Prophet ﷺ has encouraged planting trees and has described the virtues of planting trees, which can be used to estimate the need for planting trees among people. In this way, the Prophet ﷺ forbade the cutting of trees in Medina, which indicates the prohibition of unnecessary cutting of forests.

Today, deforestation is a daily routine in our society, which is having a very bad impact on the environment and climate. Studying Islamic teachings to prevent deforestation is an

important need of the hour. Keeping this need in mind, this research paper has researched Islamic teachings regarding forest conservation.

**Keywords:** forest preservation, contemporary significance, climate change, environmental pollution, Islamic concept.

## Introduction

Undoubtedly, the trees and grown greens created by ALLAH have a vital role in maintaining the balance of ecosystem and keeping human health healthy. Life on earth as well as aquatic both will be not possible if the oxygen breathing combustion process continue like this.<sup>1</sup> Environmentalist emphasized and urged on plantation because the more the area green the more it will be producing oxygen and the lower will be the pressure of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the air.<sup>2</sup> Forests and green plants grown over it are among the elements of the ecosystem and they are the chief source in terms of food and air.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore it is an essential for human health and also vital to maintain balance of ecosystem. In depth study of Quran revealed that it considers trees and plants are the greatest of blessing bestowed by ALLAH for mankind. Additionally demands to show gratefulness and urged for the protection of natural resources and to keep it protection from pollution. The Holy Quran depicts trees and plants in the form of paradise and green gardens.<sup>4</sup>

Translation; "We sent down water for you from the sky, and we made you capable to grow green gardens through it. Without it you could not grow these trees."

## ALLAH saying;

{وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ} <sup>5</sup>

**Translation;** "And it is we who have spread out the earth and placed mountains on it and we have made everything in assessable."

Considering in mind the expansion of agriculture from the blessed habits, the prophet SAW initiated several laws. In which the procedure of taking land on lease<sup>6</sup> or rising bulls for agriculture and signing agreements with other nation for the extension of making arid and barren land useful and cultivable,<sup>7</sup> besides this to adopt ways for the process of irrigation and so on. The methods and issues are described in vast details .From which we can get an idea of the expansion of agriculture in Islam and step taken for this can be evaluated. Prophet SAW says;

**Translation;** "The Messenger of ALLAH Prophet SAW said that any Muslim who plants a tree or sows a seed in a field then whatever a bird or a human or animal eats from it is a charity on his behalf."<sup>8</sup>

In short Islam has adopted laws and emphasized for the protection of forests and identified the benefits and its positive outcomes. The importance Islam has given to forests can be seen in current time to. Due to this, it is the main concern of this era and its prevalence will be discussed in this research paper.

### **The Prophet SAW Concept and Strategy for plantation;**

As the current era is the era of science and technology, new inventions ,industrial plants, vehicles ,ships, airplane have boost up the level of land, air and sea pollution to hazardous level. The toxic gases present in air enter to human and others human body through breathing, due to which all animals are suffering from several deadly diseases. The benefits and usefulness of modern technology and communications devices cannot be denied, however we can mitigate and lesson its harmful effects by maximum plantation and by growing ample numbers tress.

Islam is the religion of nature, the teaching of Islam in this regard is very clear and bright, like beliefs, prayers, matter, worship etc. In the Holy QURAN there is ALLAH saying;

**Translation;** ‘Since ALLAH is the one who sent down the water that you drink and the trees that grow from it that you feed you animals with. And help you to cultivate and get dates, olive, grapes and others kind of fruits through it. Indeed there are signs for us in all these. ALLAH SWT decorated the universe with trees and objects within the universe.” So it is said

{ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا لِنَبْلُوهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا }<sup>9</sup>

**Translation;** “whatever is on earth, we have made it for the decoration of the earth that we may test who among them do well.”

After the Quran, the importance of plantation and tree growing more increase when we study the said subject in blessed hadith. If we take Prophet SAW sayings in this regard we can get a crystal clear views that he emphasized on plantation .Therefore it is said that “ a Muslim who cultivate a tree or plant, the birds, humans and animals eat from it ,it is a charity for him” ,in this hadith planting tree is declared charity. Another hadith, it is said “ whoever plant a tree and protect it.”<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the cultivation of barren land, he said that

«مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَغْرِسُ غَرْسًا، أَوْ يَزْرَعُ زَرْعًا، فَيَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ طَيْرٌ أَوْ إِنْسَانٌ أَوْ بَهِيمَةٌ، إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ بِهِ صَدَقَةٌ»<sup>11</sup>

**Translation;** “Any person who plants a tree or sows a seed in a field, and then whatever is eaten by a bird or human beings or animals is a charity on his behalf.”

“whoever has land cultivate it, if he cannot do it himself, then he should give it to his Muslim brothers.”“If the end hours is near and standing on heads, and someone has a plant in his hand and he is sure that that he can plant it ,he must plant it”.

Planting and horticulture is a source of brotherhood. Planting trees and gardening in Islam has been described as a sacred and religious duty based on Hadith. The Prophet SAW took a special planting trees and gardens in his life. This is the reason that after the establishment of brotherhood in Medina, he SAW performed many responsibilities of planting trees and gardening.

Abu Hare Yara RA narrated that once the Ansari said to the Prophet SAW that you should divide our gardens between us and our emergent brothers’ .He stopped them and the Ansari said that to the emergent that you people should work in the gardens and we will share in the fruits. They replied we listened it and accepted it.<sup>12</sup>

According to the rules of Islam, the agreement is called Musakat, according to it the land or garden belongs to one and the work and labor done by other person so they both of them will share in the crops or production.

## **MAIN CAUSES OF DEFORESTATION**

### **1. INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE**

Industrial agriculture accounts for around 85% of deforestation worldwide. While this can mostly be attributed to meat production (beef in particular), soy and palm oil plantations follow closely behind as causes for deforestation.<sup>13</sup>

### **2. TIMBER LOGGING**

Around 380,000 hectares of forest are cut every year to meet the incredible global demand for wood and wood products, accounting for around 60% of degradation. Another 25% of forest is degraded for fuelwood and charcoal. From clear cuts to massive logging roads providing access to previously untouched areas, these degraded forests are much more vulnerable to conversion to other land uses like mining, agriculture, and settlement.<sup>14</sup>

### **3. MINING**

Thanks to an ever-increasing demand for minerals, mining in tropical forests is on the rise. And because large-scale mining is an intensive, industrial undertaking, it necessitates the development of massive infrastructure, which only amplifies the degradation.

### **4. EXPANSION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

As the tide of human population growth washes over the land, large swaths of forest get cleared to make way for the expansion of cities and settlements. And with these settlements come even more infrastructure and expansion.

## 5. CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a leading cause of deforestation. Extreme weather events like wildfires (which are responsible for an estimated 10% of degradation annually), droughts, and storm surges destroy millions of hectares of forest every year — and their intensity is only increasing with global warming. <sup>15</sup>

### PROHIBITION OF DEORESTATION AND ISLAMIC TEACHINGS;

Air pollution is devastating to human health, due to this Islam has urged to take measure to stop it and prevent it from spreading. Forests and plants can play a huge role to stop and reduce air pollution, that's why MUHAMMAD SAW encouraged plantation and has strictly forbidden deforestation, the Prophet SAW said;

«إِنَّ صَيْدَ وَجِّ وَعِضَاهَهُ حَرَامٌ مُحَرَّمٌ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ»<sup>16</sup>

**Translation;** "Hunting and cutting trees in Waj valley is prohibited."

Al Izzah (عِضَاهُهُ) is every tree which has a big and its only Azah.<sup>17</sup> In the interpretation of this Hadith, the narrators' of hadiths have mentioned the reasons due to which Prophet SAW forbade the cutting of Waj. So Imam Abu Yusuf writes;

وقد قَالَ بعض العلماء: إن تفسير هذا إنما هو لاستبقاء العضاء، أي المحافظة على الشجر<sup>18</sup>

**Translation;** Some religious scholars have said that its mean the survival of trees, in others words the protection of trees.

Else Prophet SAW also had forbidden the cutting of trees even in the state of war.

### BENEFITS OF FORESTS;

Forests are very useful and fundamental for human. The major benefits are as follows;

1. Forests protect the desert agricultural land from erosion.
2. Forests produce Oxygen which enable living being in the process of respiration on earth especially animals.
3. Forests are providing woods which are used in home furniture and sports equipment.
4. Forests are used in medicines which are manufacture for human health. More is the plants

obtained from forests are the major source of medicines.

5. Forests cause rainfall as it changes the air into water drops.

6. Forests provide fruits for human and grass for animals.

7. Forests not only provide food to human but also provide employment opportunities.

8. Forests increase the fertility of soil and an excellent deterrent to weeds.

9. Forests provide us an enchanting, attractive and charming landscapes and sceneries and can make it immense beautiful.

10. Forests are refuge and asylum for several useful and beautiful birds and animals, trees provide them shelter and food.

### **Need of Forests to Deter Air Pollution;**

Prophet MUHAMMAD SAW urged to plant trees to prevent air from pollution and declared this act as a charity. He himself participated in planting trees and along with his companions planted hundreds of trees. Trees though producing oxygen which play role in preventing from air pollution, due to this Prophet SAW urged on plantations. Explaining the importance and virtue of trees, he said;

**Translation;** "Any Muslims who plants a tree or cultivate a crop and a human, bird or animal eat from it, then he get the reward of charity."<sup>19</sup>

Although in this regard plantation campaign is in full swing and continues with zeal and zest but on the other hand cutting trees or deforestation is more than that, the result is the level of oxygen is continuously reducing and decreasing day by day. It is a tragic fact on daily basis that 10 different species are becoming extinct, 15 acres rainforests are being destroyed annually, and 75% of people face death due to diseases caused by air pollution.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore it is the foremost duty of government to adopt and form legislation and implement it practically to deter and stop deforestation, so to reduce pollution through the medium of forestation.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Importance of Forests and The view of the jurists;**

The importance and necessity of forests is in Islamic fact. In Islam the government has an immense and wider power to protect environment from pollution. Therefore the incumbent government has a power and authority to take proper and sufficient initiatives to protect environment from the damage of air pollution. The evidence regarding it can be considering from the following Hadith and rules of fiqh.

1: لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ<sup>22</sup>

2: الضَّرْرُ يُزَالُ<sup>23</sup>

3: عظم شرف الشتي عظم خطره<sup>24</sup>

In the lights of these mentioned rules, the Muslim ruler has an authority to take all such steps and to enforce strict punishment that ensures the protection of environment from desolation, destruction and pollution, including all its connecting units, because it is in the favor and welfare of whole world and to make them able to fulfill their duties to establish and manage world for coming population. The ruler has the duty and right to take grave and serious concern regarding said issue because protection of environment is of utmost importance regarding the individual and collective lives of human beings. Due to its importance, it has been mentioned by Allama Al Qarafi in his Kitab al Farooq, about the aforementioned precautionary measures. And in another place the same rules were described in these words, when the value and price of something increases, it become hard to acquire and the condition increases. Harshness is a matter of necessity, there are many such practical examples of these important jurisprudential rules in social and political life and in the protection of natural environmental resources.<sup>25</sup>

For example the ruler has the power not to issue a license to build a factory that risks polluting the soil, but if the factory or project is producing something that provide and feed people and if not, in such a case at the time of executive and non executive , the ruler should take in account the temporal and spatial condition and matter that are around him. Therefore the following Naqhi rule emphasizes the fact that the public interest should be given priority over the private interest and the beneficial attitude over the beneficial behavior.

### **Discussion Finding;**

From the above discussion we can get the following results;

1. The importance of forests is the Muslim fact, due to this Islam order the preservation of it.
2. Science has explained that forests are indispensable for protection from environmental pollution including human health.
3. It can be obtained and inferred from Seerat e Tayyaba that Messenger of ALLAH SAW encouraged plantation and did not like deforestation.
4. The jurists have argued in the protection of context of jurisprudence, which makes protection of forests compulsory.
5. Prevention and deter deforestation is among the responsibilities of government.

## Recommendations;

After discussion, followings are some steps that the researcher has to recommend to adopt regarding forests and plantation;

1. There is a dire need to do research in the context of jurisprudence rules including the preservation and prohibition of its cutting.
2. Legislation to deter deforestations needs to implement practically and punish the violators severely.
3. To create awareness among people about the importance of forests in the light of Quran and Sunnah.
4. Every year forestation and plantation campaign should be actively participated and every social person supports the government in the preservation of forests.

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