

## Taking care of the Environment from an Islamic Perspective

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### ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على التعاليم الإسلامية بشأن الحفاظ على البيئة ، وبخاصة في هذه الأيام، التي يكثر الحديث فيها عن تلوث البيئة وخطرها المدمر، وسبل الوقاية منها، وقد عرضت من خلال هذا البحث التعاليم الإسلامية التي أسهمت في الحفاظ على عناصر البيئة: الإنسان، و المياه، والنبات، والهواء والحيوان. يجب على المسلمين استخدام كل عنصر من هذه العناصر وفقا للسنن الإلهية والتعاليم النبوية.

### Abstract

This research aims to highlight the Islamic teachings regarding the preservation of the environment, especially nowadays, when there are many liberties taken, leading to it's pollution and ruination.

I have demonstrated through this research the contribution of Islamic teachings regarding all the elements of nature, such as humans, water, air, plants and animals. Muslims should use all of these elements according to Allah's moral laws.

### Introduction:

Islam is regarded as a comprehensive way of life suitable for all times and all places. It covers all aspects of life. One of the Islamic teachings is how a Muslim should protect and preserve the environment as Allah commanded us. And to regard it as sacred is an act of faith because Allah appointed the Humans as *Khulafa* (caretakers and trustees) of the earth, as He mentioned in the Qur'an:-

**“Behold, your Lord said to the angels: "I will create a caretaker on earth."** (Surah Al Baqarah V:30)

Allah says in the Qur'an that everything the earth contains was created and subjected for the benefit of humans, such as water, air, plants and animals, as is in the Holy Quran:-

**“And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth”** (Surah Al Jathiya V:13)

The creation was in a balanced way that is sufficient for all creations living in it (in quality and quantity). This is indicated in the following

verse:- **“Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure”** (Surah Al Qamar, V:49).

Therefore it is the duty of human beings to use whatever Allah created without transgressing the delicate balance, in order to preserve it, and prevent pollution. This will benefit humans not only in the immediate life but for generations to come, as Allah commanded us in the Qur'an:- **“Do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order”** (Surah Al-A'raf, V:56).

I have chosen to write on this subject for the following reasons:-

- The importance of this subject today as pollution has been spread so widely and has affected the land, sea, air and living creatures. This may lead to the destruction of the Earth and its elements (such as global warming and affecting the ozone layer).
- The shortage of such studies from the Islamic point of view in foreign languages, especially English. Therefore I felt it necessary to present the Islamic point of view regarding the preservation and protection of the environment (*Al Bi'a*) to

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a wider population. Through this topic, I hope this will be act as a new method of *Da'wa* (calling non-Muslims to Islam).

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**Previous Studies**

There are many books which tackle the subject of the environment, such as:-

- 1) *Environment and Humans: Relations and Problems, Cairo, 1981.*
- 2) *Looking After The Environment in Islamic Shari'ah, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, 2004.*
- 3) *Environment through the Qur'an and Sunnah, Mohameed As-Sayed Gameel.*
- 4) *Environment Issues from the Islamic point of view, Ahmed Abd-Rahim As-Sayeh & Ahmed Aww'ad, Cairo, 2004.*
- 5) *Islam and the Environment, Barakat Murad Barakat, 2008.*
- 6) *The Laws of Protecting the Environment in the light of Shari'ah.*

The above books talk about the environment from a juristic angle, whereas my research talks about the Environment from the educational Islamic point view, in order to show the non-muslims in the West how the Islamic teachings participate taking care of the environment.

**Section 1**

**Definition of the Environment (Al Bi'a) and Pollution (Talawwuth)**

**1:1 – In Arabic Linguistics:**

- *Al Bi'a* (Environment/Ecology):

The root of the word *Al Bi'a* comes from *ba-wa-a*, which means to settle, stay or to be placed<sup>(1)</sup>. This meaning has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:-

**“But those who were before them, had homes (in Medina) and had adopted the Faith”** (Surah Al-Hashr, V:9).

This word is also referred to in a saying of the Prophet (SAWS).

*“Whosoever deliberately speaks a lie about me will take his place in the Hell Fire”<sup>(2)</sup>.*

- *Al Talawwuth* (Pollution)

This word comes from *la-tha ya-loo-thoo*, which means to be mixed with. For example an Arabic sentence could read:-

*“(A person) lawatha his clothes with mud”*

(His/her clothes have been mixed with mud)<sup>(3)</sup>.

### 1:2 –Terminology:

- *Al Bi'a* (Environment/Ecology):

Scholars have mentioned many definitions of the Environment. The most common one is “The place where mankind lives, surrounded by nature and humans. He/she is both influenced and affected by both these elements”<sup>(4)</sup>.

The United Nations held a conference on the Human Environment which was held in Stockholm, Sweden from June 5-16, 1972. It was the UN's first major conference on international environmental issues, and marked a turning point in the development of international environmental politics. The conference was attended by representatives from 113 countries and 400 non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations<sup>(5)</sup>. The term environment was defined at this conference as:-

“A group of natural, social and cultural systems that the human being lives in amongst other creatures. From this a Human will get his/her food and perform their activities”<sup>(6)</sup>.

The Oxford dictionary also defines the word as:-

“The surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal, or plant lives or operates”<sup>(7)</sup>.

The Holy Qur'an refers to *Al Bi'a* in many verses such as:-

**“Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colours. And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of colour, and black intense in hue. And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colours. Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.”** (Surah Fatir V:27-28).

- *Al Talawwuth* (Pollution)

Pollution has been described as:-

“A change to the environment that occurs

directly or un-directly as a result of human activities”<sup>(8)</sup>.

An indication of pollution can be seen in the Qur'an:-

**“Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the need) that the hands of men have earned, that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)”** (Surah Al-Rum, V:41).

Mischief here means polluting the environment by materialistic or physical elements that change the natural environment that was created by Allah. Another aspect of pollution are immoral acts or irresponsible behaviours such as lying, cheating, backbiting, violence, slander, hypocrisy or injustice<sup>(9)</sup>.

And in another verse, Allah forbids humans to do mischief in the land. He says:-

**“Do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order”** (Surah Al-A'raf, V:56).

Furthermore, Allah says in the Qur'an:-

**“It is He Who produces gardens, with trellises and without, and dates, and grass with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety): eat of their fruit in their season, but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loves not the wasters”** (Surah Al An'am V:141).

A definition of what pollution is has also been mentioned in an English dictionary as:-

“The presence or introduction into the environment of a substance which has harmful or poisonous effects”<sup>(10)</sup>.

In the present time, our Earth has been very badly polluted due to the wrong attitude of mankind. I fear it will get worse if we do not put an end to this behaviour.

## Section 2 The Causes of Pollution

### 2:1 – Water Pollution:

Water is one of the vital elements of life and is a necessity for all living creatures, as Allah says in the Qur'an:-

**“We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?”** (Surah Al Anbiya V:30).

It is scientifically known that 70% of the Earth's structure is made up of water. It is therefore essential that water is kept clean and free from any unnatural elements which can pollute it.

Water pollution is when an amount of water (e.g. rivers, streams, seas, oceans or wells) is affected due to the addition of large amounts of materials to it. If these materials cause a change in the natural elements of the water (e.g. its taste, colour or chemical balance), it is considered as polluted and can no longer be used.

There are numerous possible causes of water pollution. Mainly sewage, factory/ chemical waste, oil spills from large tankers and nuclear waste. To illustrate the seriousness of pollution to water, it is important to note that it is estimated that one ton of oil is spilled for every million tons of oil transported<sup>(11)</sup>.

Water pollution can result in the contamination of the sea-bed, fish, sea-plants, beaches and human beings. The affects of water pollution has grown very serious, and it has been found that 5 million deaths per year are related to waterborne diseases<sup>(12)</sup>.

### 2:2 – Air Pollution:

The air is another essential element for living creatures. It contains the oxygen that is needed to breathe. Unfortunately, many of us are not aware of the importance of this element and so we continually damage it by irresponsible acts. These include car fumes, forest burning<sup>(13)</sup>,

factory, cigarette and oil smoke, fireworks and various types of air sprays.

The effects of air pollution are very dangerous. This can be divided into short and long term effects. Examples of short term effects are irritation to the eyes and/or the skin and respiratory infections such as bronchitis. Long term effects could be lung cancer (especially in young children), brain and kidney damage. These effects may extend to plants and animals also.

The effects are so severe that it is estimated that half a million people die prematurely every year in the United States as a result of smoking cigarettes<sup>(14)</sup>.

Between 1963 and 1969, there were more than 5 thousand abnormal births in the USA alone and 86 thousand in the rest of the world due to radioactive material spread through the air<sup>(15)</sup>.

The use of mass-destruction weapons (resulting in poisonous air) can kill or severely affect humans.

### 2:3 – Food, Soil and Plant Pollution:

Food is very important for both humans and animals to grow and gain sustenance for the day. Therefore it is absolutely essential that food is kept clean and free from bacteria or pollution.

Food pollution has been defined as “the entry of undesirable substances into the food chain through environmental agencies”<sup>(16)</sup>.

The Qur'an further indicates the importance of consuming unpolluted food in the verses that follows:-

**“So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do no evil no mischief on the (face of the) earth.”** (Surah Al-Baqarah V: 60).

Unfortunately in today's world, there is much pollution of food that is caused by various elements. Soil pollution is one major issue affecting our world today, as it results in the pollution of plants and the food produced by these plants. Soil pollution is caused mainly by

unclean substances such as using chemical fertilisers and pesticides to a great extent, nuclear waste from power plants and radioactive material.

In relation to food pollution mentioned above, the soil is greatly affected by pollution also, as harmful substances “are physically or chemically attached to soil particles, or, if they are not attached, are trapped in the small spaces between soil particles”<sup>(17)</sup>.

The effects of such pollution can harm the human body and cause diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, hepatitis and gastroenteritis - as well as many others. The health, immune system and brain are examples of the parts of the body that can be affected by consuming polluted food that was produced from polluted soil.

A direct result of the pollution as mentioned above is global warming, which means “the increase of the average temperature on Earth”<sup>(18)</sup> This leads to drastic changes in the climate and an increased number of earthquakes and fires. Examples of these affects are events such as the recent severe floods in Pakistan, India and China.

Due to the pollution of the air, water and soil, the plants of our earth have also been affected. More direct affects to plants and trees include acid rain<sup>(19)</sup> and cutting down or burning of forests (wrong and irresponsible acts by humans), which is forbidden by Islam.

**2:4 – Animal Pollution:**

Pollution affects animals in many different ways, for example the oil that is spilt in seas can harm sea creatures and smoke omitted from factories can reduce the sight of birds. Oil also stops seals fur from trapping air and keeping it warm<sup>(20)</sup>.

The hunting and killing of wild animals is an example of an irresponsible act by Humans and results in the extinction of a species of animal.

Islam forbids the killing of animals (even birds) without reason. The Prophet said:-

“Whosoever kills a bird for fun, this bird will complain to Allah on the Day of Judgement by saying “So and So killed me for fun and not for benefit”<sup>(21)</sup>.

This shows the importance attributed to animals.

**2:5 – Noise Pollution:**

‘Noise’ refers to sounds and is a regular occurrence of everyday life. It can be difficult to control these noises but, occasionally, a sound may disturb a person, animal or even plant. Therefore noise pollution is a type of energy pollution that does not affect the people or animals in the physical sense, but rather by creating a wave of sound that is loud or high pitched and thus causing a disturbance.

Examples of noise pollution are trains, aeroplanes, motorcycles, cars, ships, horns, machines, loud speakers or music, etc. The most common affect of noise pollution is deafness but there can be others such as sleep loss or by affecting the nervous system and heart<sup>(22)</sup>. Stress levels can be greatly increased by noise pollution, which could lead to a decrease in work flow.

Animals can be greatly disturbed in their daily activities also and the growth pattern of plants could decrease<sup>(23)</sup>.

This is why Allah forbids disturbing people by creating loud voices. He says in the Qur’an:-

**“And be moderate in your walk, and lower your voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the donkey”** (Surah Luqman, V: 19).

**Section 3**

**Ways to protect and preserve the environment**

**3:1 - Personal hygiene:**

Human Beings are regarded with the trust

of this Earth. This puts a great responsibility on them. This is indicated in the Holy Qur'an:-  
**“It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth”** (Surah Al-Anam V:165).

Due to this inheritance, Mankind should behave in a positive way in order to preserve and look after the environment. That is why Allah subjected everything in the Universe for the benefit of Humanity, Earth, Heavens, Air, Rivers, Seas, and Animals. Allah says:-

**“And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: Behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect”** (Surah Al-Jathiyah V:13).

Therefore Mankind should exercise his duty and benefit from all that has been subjected to him without polluting it.

So Humans are a very important element of the Earth – they will be either constructive or destructive of the Universe. One of the most effective ways we have to protect others and ourselves from illness is good personal hygiene. This means washing your hands, especially, but also your body.

The following actions are some of the strongly recommended actions that help keep personal hygiene:-

**3:1:1 Ghusl (washing the entire body):**

Personal hygiene, such as bathing, is recommended in Islam, as Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:-

**“He caused rain to descend on you from heaven, to clean you”** (Surah Anfal V:11).

He also says:-

**“And He it is Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy, and We send down purifying water from the sky”** (Surah Al-Furqan V:48).

One of the prayers of the Prophet (SAWS) is:- “O' Allah, cleanse me from my sins in the manner that a white garment is cleansed from

dart. O' Allah cleanse my sins from me with snow, water and hail”<sup>(24)</sup>.

*Ghusl* is performed by the following actions:-

a) After having sexual intercourse, when a woman is in her menstruation or after child birth.

Allah says in the Qur'an:-

**“They ask you concerning women’s courses. Say: They are a hurt and a pollution: So keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean. But when they have purified themselves, ye may approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by Allah. For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean”** (Surah Al-Baqarh V:222).

b) Death:

If a Muslim dies, he or she should be washed<sup>(25)</sup>, cleansed and wrapped with white material<sup>(26)</sup> three times for men and five times for women<sup>(27)</sup>, if possible. This is because Muslims believe that the deceased should be pure when meeting the Almighty in the Hereafter.

c) When a person embraces Islam:

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Haraira that when Thumamah Al-Ha-nafi decided to embrace Islam, the Prophet (SAWS) commanded him to have a bath. So he had a bath and offered to Rak'ah of prayer<sup>(28)</sup>.

The above are obligatory *Ghusl*. In addition to these there are recommended *Ghusl*. They are:-

a. Before friday prayer (Jumma'ah):

Muslims are encouraged to perform *Ghusl* before going to Friday prayer because Friday is a day in which Muslims gather and offer prayer together.

The Prophet SAWS said:-

“When one of you wants to offer Friday prayer you should perform Ghusl”<sup>(29)</sup>.

b. Before Eid prayers:

Muslims are encouraged to perform *Ghusl*

before offering Eid prayers. Eid-ul- Fitr is a festival where Muslims gather to celebrate completing the month of Ramadan. Eid ul-Adha is to celebrate completing the duties of Hajj. Therefore the Prophet (SAWS) recommended everybody to have a bath before to wearing the best clothes and using the best perfume they have<sup>(30)</sup>.

c. Before performing the duty of Hajj (Pilgrimage/ U'mrah):

It is recommended for Muslims to perform *Ghusl* before starting the Pilgrimage. Said Ibn Thabit related that he saw the Prophet when he intended to perform Hajj, he performed *Ghusl*<sup>(31)</sup>.

d. Before entering Macca:

It is recommended, for whosoever intends to enter Mecca to perform *Ghusl*. Ibn- Umar reported that when the Prophet was going to Mecca, he would spend the night in *Tawa* (an area on the edge of Mecca) and perform *Ghusl*<sup>(32)</sup>.

**3:1:2 Ablution (Wudu):**

Part of the Islamic teaching of keeping well being is to keep oneself clean and hygienic on a daily basis. To prepare yourself for Salah it is obligatory to perform *Wudu*.

*Wudu* means to wash the hands, feet, face (including rinsing the mouth and nose) and wiping the head (including the ears). This is done at least a few times on a daily basis. Allah says in the Qur'an:-

**“O you who believe! when you prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles”** (Surah Al-Maid'ah V:6).

The Prophet emphasized this by saying:-

“Allah does not accept the prayer of one who nullifies his ablution until he performs it again”<sup>(33)</sup>.

If a Muslim has urinated or stooled, they must wash their private parts with water.

It is also recommended to perform Wud'hu before reading Qur'an, before mentioning the name of Allah and when going to bed.

The Prophet (SAWS) said:-

“When you go to your bed perform ablution, lie on your right side then say “*O' Allah I submit my soul to you, and I turn my face to you, I entrusted my face to you....*”<sup>(34)</sup>.

**3:1:3 Dental Care (using Miswaak):**

Cleaning the teeth is way of ensuring dental hygiene. This involves using Miswaak - a stick to clean ones teeth. The Prophet SAWS said:-

“Where it not to be a hardship on my community, I would have ordered them to use a Miswaak (toothbrush) for every ablution”<sup>(35)</sup>.

In another saying the Prophet further emphasised cleaning the teeth with Miswaak. He said:-

“The toothbrush purifies the mouth and is pleasing to the Lord”<sup>(36)</sup>.

Dental problems can be prevented by regularly using a toothbrush (*Miswaak*). They are the tools for good teeth.

An important reason for cleaning the teeth is that brushing removes the plaque (a sticky film of bacteria that grows around the teeth) that causes tooth decay, or cavities. Brushing also helps keep gums healthy and breath fresh.

It is recommended to use this Miswaak before going to bed and when waking up. This shows how Islam takes care about the important part of our bodies - in this case the mouth as it is the entrance for food and drinks – to be kept clean at all times to stop germs and infection going with food and drink to the stomach (which may result in many illnesses).

**3:1:4 Acts that correspond to the nature of Mankind:**

The following acts are known as *Sunan Al-Fitra* (nature of Mankind). It is strongly recommended for Muslims to implement them

as personal hygiene. If they are neglected it result in many illnesses. They were mentioned in a saying of the Prophet-

“Five things are part of one’s *Fitra*: Shaving the pubic hair, circumcision, trimming the moustache, removing the hair from under your arms and trimming your nails)<sup>(37)</sup>.

These acts are:-

a) Circumcision:

This prevents dirt and germs and makes it easier to keep the private parts clean. It is medically known that if a man is not circumcised it may increase the chance of infection to both the man and the woman.

Islam recommends that this is done at an early age (7 years) if he is healthy.

b) Shaving pubic hairs:

Again, it is part of cleanliness to keep the private parts area clean so as to not catch illnesses.

It is important to remember that shaving is a critical part of cleanliness, a more acceptable hygienic practice and under the arms also keeps the body cleaner, with less places for bacteria to grow.

c) Pulling out underarm hairs:

Underarm sweat is unattractive, uncomfortable and gives bad odour. It is also clearly discoverable if you sweat as the clothes become moist.

It is strongly recommended that this is done on a regular basis and should not be left longer than 40 days.

A Hadith mentions this:-

Narrated Anas:- “*The time period to trim the moustache cut the nails, plug out underarm hairs and cut out pubic hairs, was 40 nights*”<sup>(38)</sup>:

d) Combing and cutting one’s hair:

Getting your hair cut, combed and oiled frequently is critical to healthy hair. The longer you wait to get your hair cut, the frailer and brittle your hair can become, especially if it is longer. According to a Hadith, it was said by the Prophet (SAWS):-

“*Whosoever has hair should honour it*”<sup>(39)</sup>.

e) Trimming the moustache:

Having a long moustache is un-hygienic as particles of food, drinks and dirt may get trapped within the hairs. These will then accumulate germs and may even enter his stomach and cause illnesses.

This is why the Prophet (SAWS) emphasized upon trimming the moustache. *He said:-*

“*Whosoever does not take of some of His moustache is not one of us*”<sup>(40)</sup>.

**3:1:5 Using Perfume:**

Islam instructs Muslims to be clean, tidy and to use a scent so as to be approachable within the community. Therefore the Prophet said:-

“*Among the things of this World, I love women and perfume, and the coolness of my eyes is prayer*”<sup>(41)</sup>.

**3:1:6 Clothes:**

It is strongly recommended for Muslims to regularly and before going to any gathering to have a bath and wear clean clothes, especially when attending Friday or Eid Prayers. Allah says in the Qura’an:-

**“And your garments keep free from stain!”**  
(Surah Al-Mudathir, V:4).

The importance of these actions are recorded in this matter (“*Every Muslim should have Ghusl on Friday and wear his best clothing and if he has perfume he should use it*”)<sup>(42)</sup>.

In another verse, Allah indicates cleaning the clothes:-

**“O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer”**  
(Surah Al Ar’af V:31).

**3:2 Place of Worship:**

One of the blessings that have been given by Almighty Allah was to make this Earth like a Mosques, so that whenever the time for prayer comes, a Muslim can pray as long as the place



is clean and facing the *Qiblah*. However Muslims are commanded to build Mosques and keep them as a place in which to worship Almighty Allah. Besides this, a Mosque is the heart of the Muslim community where Muslims get together to offer prayer, meet one another and to seek knowledge. Therefore Islam instructs Muslims to maintain it and to keep it clean and tidy. This was indicated in a Hadith, as narrated by A'isha:-

*“He ordered us to build Mosques in residential areas, to build them well and to purify them”*<sup>(43)</sup>.

In another Hadith, the Prophet commands us to keep the Mosques clean of filth and unpleasant smells.

Narrated Jabir bin Abdullah: The Prophet said, *“Whoever has eaten garlic or onion, should keep away from us, or should keep away from our mosque and should stay at home”*<sup>(44)</sup>.

*Umar Ibn-Khattaab delivered a sermon in which he said ‘Oh you People, you eat of two plants which I consider bad (i.e. onion and garlic), for I have seen the Prophet when he perceived their smell from someone, he would order the man to go to Al-Baqi’. Whoever eats them should suppress their odour by cooking them”*<sup>(45)</sup>.

So from the above we can see clearly that it is obligatory on Muslims to keep the Mosque clean and tidy. The Qur'an emphasizes this in the following verse:-

**“O Children of Adam! Take your adornment (by wearing your clean clothes), while praying and going round (the Tawâf of ) the Ka'bah”** (Surah Al-Ar'af V:31).

### **3:3 Home:**

Our home is the place where we relax, sleep, eat and grow. Cleanliness of your home is always an important part of it. It is important that we ourselves are clean, and also our surroundings.

The Prophet (SAWS) instructs us to:- *“Clean your home and its surroundings”*<sup>(46)</sup>.

It is as important as your health to keep your house clean. A clean home can save you from sickness and other problems that may occur otherwise. This means keeping all aspects of house neat, free from filth and hygienic.

A clean house reflects the personality of the people who live in it. If parents keep the house clean and tidy, it will encourage their children to do the same as it provides a good example of the necessity of keeping their rooms and facilities clean.

Cleanliness and purification brings a Muslim closer to Allah and better loved, as He says in the Qur'an:-

**“For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.”** (Surah Al-Baqarah V:222).

### **3:4 Food hygiene:**

Food is a major part of our lifestyle and is eaten every day. It is therefore essential that the food you eat is healthy, nutritious and free from poison or harmful bacteria. Food poisoning may cause serious illnesses or even death.

Providing food is one of the bounties of Almighty Allah. He says in the Qur'an:-

**“So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do no evil nor mischief on the (face of the) earth”** (Surah Al-Baqarah V:60).

And in another verse:-

**“And it is He Who feeds me and gives me to drink”** (Surah Al-Shuar'ah V:79).

This consumption of food should be moderate and not wasted. As is indicated in the Qur'an:-

**“Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters”** (Surah Al-Ar'af V:31).

To keep food from pollution, there are instructions to keep water storage and food

utensils covered at all times. This prevents any insects, mice, cockroaches or dirt (etc), from falling into them – as this could cause many problems.

The Prophet (SAWS) said:- “Cover pans and water bottles”<sup>(47)</sup>.

To prevent food poisoning, it is recommended to wash our hands before and after eating– as our hands easily catch germs which may transfer to food either during preparation or eating.

There are certain foods that Muslims are not allowed to eat, such as dead animals (un-slaughtered according to Islamic rituals), pig and predator animals. Allah says in the Qur’an:-  
**“He has forbidden you only Al-Maitah (meat of a dead animal), blood, the flesh of swine, and any animal which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allâh (or has been slaughtered for idols or on which Allâh's Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering). But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, and not transgressing, then, Allâh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”** (Surah Al-Nahl V:115).

**“He allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad”** (Surah Al-Ar’af V:157).

One of the foods that are forbidden to be eaten is flesh of the swine (pigs) as it harms the body. This has been proven through medical research, which states that the consumption of pig’s flesh can cause many illnesses such as inflammation of the gut line and sweat glands, break-down of cartilage (which may lead to arthritis), disorder of the bile duct and swelling of neck glands<sup>(48)</sup>.

A second forbidden food is those animals which have not been slaughtered according to Islamic teachings. As Allah says in the Qur’an:-  
**“Eat not of (meats) on which Allah’s name has not been pronounced”** (Surah Al An’am V:121).

The reasons why Muslims are ordered to slaughter animals is because the blood drains more effectively from the body, and so the meat is more hygienic. If the blood were to remain within the body of the animal, it may lead to poisoning of the meat.

It will be harder for those Muslims in Western countries to obtain halal meat as it is less readily available than a Muslim country.

Regarding drinks also, Muslims are entitled to drink soft drinks except alcohol. Allah says in the Qur’an:-

**“O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, and Al-Ansâb[], and Al-Azlâm (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Shaitân's (Satan) handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful.”** (Al Ma’idah V:90).

This is emphasized on the saying of the Prophet, who said:-

*“Every intoxicant is Khamr and every intoxicant is forbidden. He who drinks wine in this world and dies while he is addicted to it, not having repented, will not be given a drink in the Hereafter”*<sup>(49)</sup>.

*“Avoid the seven which will destroy you - associating partners with Allah, disobedience to parents, drinking alcohol, committing adultery, consuming orphans wealth and giving false testimony”*<sup>(50)</sup>.

The affects of drinking alcohol can be very severe on the body. It can cause liver and heart failure, a change in the make-up of the brain (leading to depression), slowing down the senses, mouth and pancreatic cancer<sup>(51)</sup>.

This may also lead to committing crimes such as theft, robbery or suicide, as well as possible road accidents resulting from driving whilst drunk. In addition, if a woman drinks alcohol whilst pregnant, it may affect the health or growth of the baby which may result in a handicapped

condition. Furthermore, alcoholism can create problems and break-ups in a family (which could lead to divorce). It is the general rule that in Islam it is forbidden for a Muslim to do anything which may cause hi/her death, or inflict any personal damage on oneself<sup>(52)</sup>, the life, health and wealth of a person.

It is for these reasons that Allah forbids drinking alcohol.

Islam lays down certain rules and guidelines to eat even Halal food in a balanced way without waste. He says in the Qur'an:-

**“So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do no evil nor mischief on the (face of the) earth.”** (Surah Al Baqarah V:60).

This moderation was emphasized in another verse:-

**“But waste not by excess: for Allah loves not the wasters.”** (Surah Al An'am V:141).

The consumption of food should be consumed in a balance way in order to have good health A Hadith says:-

*“The worst part that a Muslim can fill is his/her stomach. It should be a third for food, a third for drinks and a third for easy breathing”*<sup>(53)</sup>.

### **3:5 Roads:**

Roads are for public use and are an essential way of travelling from one place to another. It is the right and responsibility of everybody to use them, keep them free from litter and in good condition.

The Prophet considered looking after roads as part of your Faith. He stated in a Hadith:-

*“Faith (Belief) consists of more than sixty branches. One of them is to remove what injures the people from their footpath”*<sup>(54)</sup>.

In another saying He considered this as an act of charity. Emphasising this, the Prophet said:-

*“I was shown the deeds of my People, and I found out the best deed is to move what could injure people from their footpath”*<sup>(55)</sup>.

Furthermore, the Prophet said:- *“A man was passing by and found a branch of tree blocking the way. The man said “By Allah, I will remove you from the footpath so that people will not get injured because of you”. The reward for such an act is forgiveness from all past sins”*<sup>(56)</sup>.

Thus we can see clearly the importance of keeping roads clean and free from obstacles such as litter.

### **3:6 Water:**

As mentioned earlier, water is one of the important elements of life. It is important to mention once more a verse from the Holy Quran that indicates importance of water for living things:-

**“We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?”** (Surah Al Anbiya V:30).

That is why Allah forbids the wasting of water, as He mentions in the following Ayat:-

**“Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters.”** (Surat Al Ar'af V:31).

Water is for public use and it is therefore the responsibility of all to use it in an un-wasteful way and not to pollute it.

Therefore the Prophet said:- *“People have common share in three things: water, grass and fire”*<sup>(57)</sup>.

It is thus forbidden to abuse or waste water even while we are performing an act of worship, e.g. bathing (*Ghusl*) or ablution (*Wudu*).

*The Prophet passed by Sa'ad whilst he was performing Wudu and said “What is this extravagance, Sa'ad”? He replied “Is there extravagance in the use of water”? The Prophet said “Yes, even if you are at a flowing river”*<sup>(58)</sup>.

In another saying of the Prophet concerning the cleanliness of water, he forbids urinating or stooling in three places – in water, in shade

of trees or in the footpath of people<sup>(59)</sup>.

The above three are for the benefit of the public and therefore should not be polluted. Water supplies that are used by humans or animals to drink from, shade under which people rest on hot days and footpaths that are used by everybody should be kept clean and free from dirt.

Furthermore, the Prophet forbids people to urinate in still water (e.g. lakes or swimming pools) and then to use them for bathing or washing, as it may transfer disease. He said:-

*“Do not urinate in still water and then have a bath from it”*<sup>(60)</sup>.

Dr Jasim (Ph.D Human Resources, Kuwait) commented on the above Hadiths, saying that the Prophet lays down very important laws regarding the safety of the environment and keeping it free from germs and bacteria that can easily transmit disease from urine and stool of humans to other elements of the environment<sup>(61)</sup>.

### **3:7 Plants and trees:**

Plants are a vital part of the Earth and are very important for humans and animals as they produce oxygen, which is a gas needed to breathe. They attract dust and poisonous gases in the air – thus preventing them from spreading through the air. That is why it is the law to build a wall of trees surrounding factories (to reduce the amount of smoke and poisonous gases travelling through the air. Allah also created plants and trees to beautify the Earth and to act as a relaxing sight for us.

Allah mentions generally the existence of mother-nature on Earth and the benefit of them to humans and animals in the following verse:-

**“It is He Who produced gardens, with grass and without, and dates, and trees with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety): eat of their fruit in their season, but render**

**the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loves not the wasters.”** (Surah Al-An’am V:141).

So it is the role of Muslims to protect plants in order the plants and trees in order for everybody to survive. Therefore the Prophet encouraged the Muslims to plant trees, saying:-

*“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”*<sup>(62)</sup>.

Another Hadith that indicates the importance of planting trees is:-

*“If the Hour is established, and someone has a small plant in his hand, and is able to plant it, should do so”*<sup>(63)</sup>.

The above saying illustrates importance of planting, even at the last minute of one’s life. This shows that one should not lose hope or get frustrated, but should have confidence and take every opportunity to continue planting if they are able to.

Islam takes further steps with regards to planting in wastelands or deserts. It lays down a very important law, which is stated in a Hadith:-

*“Whosoever brings life to dead land will own it”*<sup>(64)</sup>.

It is therefore regarded as a duty to every Muslim to plant trees and to consider it as an act of worship.

Even a time of war, Muslims are not allowed to cut or burn the trees of the enemies. Abu Bakr (first *Khalifaah* after the demise of the Prophet) advised his army to not cut or burn a tree of the enemy unless is it necessary to use for making a fire to cook or to keep themselves warm<sup>(65)</sup>.

So we can see from the above that Islam encourages every Muslim to do their best to be “green” (to be constructive towards the environment). However Islam forbids the planting of any plant that affects the human body or

brain<sup>(66)</sup>, e.g. the Heroine drug which is found in the opium poppy plant<sup>(67)</sup>.

### **3:8 Animal Rights/Welfare:**

**“And cattle He has created for you men: from them you derive warmth, and numerous benefits, and of their (meat) you eat. And you have a sense of pride and beauty in them as you drive them home in the evening, and as you lead them forth to pasture in the morning. And they carry your heavy loads to lands that you could not (otherwise) reach except with distressed soul: for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful. And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show; and He has created (other) things of which you have no knowledge.”** (Surah Al-Nahl, V:5-8).

Taking care of animals is another aspect of the responsibility of Muslims in looking after the environment.

Allah SWT says:-

**“It is Allah Who made cattle for you, that you may use some for riding and some for food”** (Surah Al Ghafir, V:79)

Islam forbids the Muslims of killing animals without just cause. Allah SWT says in the Qur’an:-

**“Nor take life - which Allah has made sacred - except for just cause.”** (Surah Al-Isra, V:33).

Allah commanded Muslims to be kind and just to all his creations, including animals<sup>(68)</sup>.

**“Allah commands justice, the doing of good, the keeping of relationships with relatives, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you so that you may receive admonition.”** (Surah Al Nahl, V:90).

The Prophet emphasized this warning by saying:- *"If someone kills a sparrow with no reason, the sparrow will cry out on the Day of Judgment, "O Lord! That person killed me in*

*vain! He did not kill me for any useful purpose”*<sup>(69)</sup>.

Islam considers killing animals as a great sin which could lead to Hell. The Prophet said:-

*“A woman entered the Hell Fire for imprisoning a cat until it died. She did not feed her or let her go out to eat from what Allah has provided on Earth”*<sup>(70)</sup>.

The mercy of the Prophet was extended even to the birds young, as illustrated in the following story:-

*One day the Prophet was on a journey with some of his Companions. One of them found a nest with chicks inside and took them. Their Mother flew over the Prophet’s head flapping its wings and twittering loudly – complaining to the Prophet. The Prophet asked “Who took her chicks”? The Companions replied “So and So, Oh Messenger of Allah”. The Prophet said “Return her chicks back”*<sup>(71)</sup>.

On the other hand, a man entered paradise for saving a dog from thirst. The Prophet said:-

*“A man was walking feeling very thirsty. He found a well and went down to drink from it. When he got out from the well, he found a dog eating soil because it was thirsty. The man said to himself “this dog must feel the same way I felt”, so he went down again to the well and filled his shoe with water. He went up holding the shoe in his teeth and gave the water to the dog. Allah is thankful for his act and he forgave all his sins”. The People replied “Oh Messenger of Allah, do we get reward because of animals”? He replied “Yes, there is reward in every living creature”*<sup>(72)</sup>.

Furthermore, Islam forbids the torture of animals by fire, overloading, barding them, using them for entertainment purposes (e.g. bull-fighting) or using them as a shooting target. Scholars laid down certain rules about how to treat and handle animals. For example, when a person wants to milk an animal, they should cut

their nails in order to prevent cutting/ scratching the animal<sup>(73)</sup>. Or when a person collects honey from a bee hive, they should leave some for the bees to eat<sup>(74)</sup>. Also if an animal has a new born baby we should not milk it until the baby has been fed<sup>(75)</sup>.

Some Muslim scholars have also written books about specific animals. Such as<sup>(76)</sup>:-

- “Horses”, “Camels” and “Birds” By Ibn Al-Nadeem
- “Goats and Sheep” By Al-Asma’i
- “Bees” By Al-Mada’ini
- “Locus” By Ahmed Bin Hatim

Dr Sibaa’i (said Islamic Civilisation have established two things regarding animal welfare<sup>(77)</sup>):

- 1) Building animal hostels and medical centres to treat any illness or injury and provide a place to sleep
- 2) Considering animals as innocent and to not prosecute them.

However there are just reasons for killing animals, such as snakes or scorpions, if they are going to harm human beings.

Thus Islam lays down rules as to how to treat animals justly, utilize them efficiently and not abuse them. Consequently, Islam contributes towards one important element of the environment and gives them their rights.

### **3:9 Reduction of Noise:**

Allah created the night for the humans and animals to have a rest in order to be prepared for the next day. As Allah says in the Qur’an:-

**“And made your sleep for rest, and made the night as a covering, and made the day as a means of subsistence?”** (Surah Al Naba’, V:9-11).

But the Human Beings’ attitude spoils this calmness by noise. As mentioned earlier, noise pollution can affect the heart, ears and brain function. It is therefore necessary to reduce

noise levels and thus cut down on noise pollution. This achieved by controlling sound levels.

Thus Allah forbids disturbing or raising voices as it may disturb others. He said in the Qur’an:-

**“And be moderate in your pace, and lower your voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the donkey.”** (Surah Luqman, V:19).

Even during supplication, one should not raise his voice, as it is said in the Qur’an:-

**“Neither speak your Prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek a middle course between.”** (Surah Al Isra, V:110).

*The Prophet emphasized this calmness even whilst going to worship. Whilst the Prophet was praying in the mosuw, he heard people rushing and making noise. After completinh his prayer he asked “Who made this noise?” Two people replied “We wanted to catch the prayer”. The Prophet then said “when the prayer is established, do not run to it – come to it walking with calmness and join them. Whatever you catch, offer it and whatever you miss, make it up”<sup>(78)</sup>.*

*Whilst the Prophet was going to the mosque for dawn prayer, he heard Abu Bakr reciting the Qur’an in a low voice. He passed by Umar and noticed he was reciting the Qur’an loudly. After offering his Fajr prayer, he said Abu Bakr “I passed by you with you reciting the Qur’an quietly”. Then he said to Umar “And you were reciting loudly”. Abu Bakr replied “Oh Messenger of Allah, I recited quietly because Allah hears those who call upon him”. Umar replied “I read loudly in order to wake up the sleepy and to drive the devils away”. The Prophet (SAWS) said “Oh Abu Bakr, raise your voice a little, and Umar, lower your voice a little”<sup>(79)</sup>.*

A group of people who wanted to become Muslims came to see the Prophet at Madinah

during mid-day. They were outside his home, calling “Oh Mohammed, come out we want to speak to you”. Then Allah revealed the following verse:-

**“Those who shout out to you from without the inner apartments - most of them lack understanding.”** (Surah Al Hujarat, V:4).

From this Hadith, we learn that a part of the Islamic etiquettes are not to shout from outside the house of those you are visiting or calling upon, or not to beep you horn, as he/she may be sleeping, resting, studying or they may be ill.

To conclude, we can see that it is forbidden for Muslims to raise his voice and disturbing other, even when offering prayers. This also indicates that we should not cause disturbance in more general situations (such as in the workplace, loud music, loud laughter/talking, etc)

However, it should be remembered that Allah is all-seeing, all-hearing and all-knowing. Therefore although harmful acts can be performed by humans, nothing that is caused by humans can remain innocent for long, without punishment<sup>(80)</sup>.

Allah warned us from the punishment of such acts, in the following verse:-

**"Allah may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)."** (Surah Al-Rum, V:41).

If we want to live in a safe environment we have to implement the Islamic teaching, as mentioned above, and in accordance with the rulings of the “*Hisba*” (a Islamic public health agency) who’s specific task was to protect people and establish the welfare of society<sup>(81)</sup>.

### Conclusion:

This study concludes with the following points:-

- The environment has been created by Allah in a balanced way and subjected for the

benefit of human beings

- Islam has a wide concept of the environment which includes humans, earth, water, air, plants animals and beauty.
- The human being is the caretaker of the environment and so it is his responsibility to use it according to the law of Allah without abusing it.

### Recommendations:

- The education Ministry should make the students aware of the importance of the environment for humans from the Islamic point of view, the dangers of pollution to the environment and ways to preserve it. And to make these points part of the syllabus for all levels within schools.
- For the Imams of the mosques to elaborate at least one a year on issues of the environment.
- The media must play its important role in educating people about the environment and how to preserve and protect it.
- Institutions such as the agricultural ministry and organisations who deal with environment should encourage people to plant more trees in parks, roads and free land.

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It should be noted that all English translations of verses from the Qur’an were found at the following website:- <http://www.jannah.org/qurantrans/>.

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