

Man shall have nothing but what he strives for

Protecting health and well-being is not easy, and needs directed work, done for the sake of pleasing and being close to God, regardless of pressures that work against it.

Sounds quite good in theory, but how do you get people to follow these laws?

Firstly, Islam is not a religion of blind belief, so people have to be convinced, in their heart and mind, by evidence and reasoning that the Qur'an is, indeed, the word of God and the truth, and that Muhammad (pbuh) is truly the final Prophet and Messenger of God. Once convinced, the faith of Muslims is not an emotional state but has solid foundations. Therefore, the faith of a believing Muslim can have a big impact on their lives. Firstly their view of nature and attitudes towards it are important in shaping their general behaviour.

The Islamic View of Nature

From the Islamic perspective:

Nature is One, created and sustained by One All-Powerful God, who is constantly, and intimately aware of, and continuously in control of all things, from the tiniest particle to the greatest galaxy. All of it follows God's unified laws, exhibiting perfect pattern and balance. Everything has its role-its reason for existing and interacting with other things in its own particular way, according to God's all-encompassing knowledge and wisdom. Everything in the Universe obeys, submits to, serves and declares the praises of God, each in its own way.

Who is the Earth for?



The earth was created for all living things, not just human beings. Animals form communities like those of humans.

"There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (it forms a part of) communities like you. Nothing have We omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end". (Qur'an: Chapter 6, Verse 38)

God provides sustenance for all His creatures as He wills, and inspires them with the knowledge and instincts with which they need to live. Even though for a long time they did not exist, and were 'not mentioned', human beings are an especially honoured and preferred part of God's Creation.



How does God relate to humans

Human beings are exceptional in having the responsibility of a very limited conscious free will in choosing whether or not to do the same as the rest of Creation and obey God's laws in their intentions, attitudes, words and deeds. However, whether they like it or not, their bodies obey those same laws! This free will of human beings is a test for them, to see who will obey God's commands and who will disobey. To obey they must fulfil their responsibilities as God's appointed custodians and guardians of the earth.

Human Beings are Agents or Custodians of the Earth

God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, has appointed humanity as His agent and inheritor (Khalifah) to act as a custodian by looking after everything according to God's commands. God's Creation, including plants and animals, has been put under the power of human beings for them to use, but they must only do so within the limits set by God.

"It is He (God) who has made you (His) custodians in the earth. He has raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He has given you, for your Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed oft-forgiving, Most Merciful". (Qur'an: Chapter 6, Verse 165)

In many situations, injustice occurs due to lack of accountability. What is the answer?

Muslims believe all humans are held accountable by God, and are judged by Him, so that there are consequences, in this life and in the Hereafter, for all our decisions.

Firstly, in all situations, the natural consequences in this life may be a reward or punishment from God. All good is from God, and all evil and mischief is allowed by God to show the results of the misuse of the free will. If humans disobey God's laws, He only lets them taste a part of these negative consequences, and He is patient before punishing them more severely, to give people a chance to turn back to, and obey Him.

"Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the result) 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)". (Qur'an: Chapter 30, Verse 41)

"Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things your hands have earned, and for many of them He grants forgiveness". (Qur'an: Chapter 42, Verse 30)

Therefore the punishment, in the form of mischief and misfortune is a test of faith, to make us look at our lives and turn back to God, seeking forgiveness, asking for his help and improving our behaviour. The reward of abundance and ease is a test of faith as well, to see whether those rewarded become arrogant and forget God, or are grateful to Him.

Day of Judgement of all souls

Secondly, a central belief of Muslims is that there will be a Day of Judgement, when all souls that have 'passed away' from their earthly life will be raised to life again. Each person will then be held accountable for the degree to which they sought, acknowledged, spoke and lived by the truth. They will also be judged upon whether, when they had the opportunity to make informed choices, they obeyed God, in everything, big and small, that they had power or influence over. The just and merciful outcome will be either the reward of living for eternity in Paradise and being close to God, or the punishment of Hell and being distanced from God.

Every Muslim who has heartfelt faith in Islam is conscious of this in their daily lives. Therefore, they enforce the Islamic Laws from within themselves. Also, if there were a truly Islamic State, as has existed in the past, there would be punishments for publicly witnessed crimes- those that are a threat to society and can be proven without doubt.

Muslims are encouraged to be as mindful of death and the coming judgement as they can. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said that he remembered death about twenty times every day! This does not however mean that Muslims can forget about the importance of this world. On the contrary, such remembrance should heighten their consciousness that every decision made in this life matters a great deal. They are guided by the principle of:

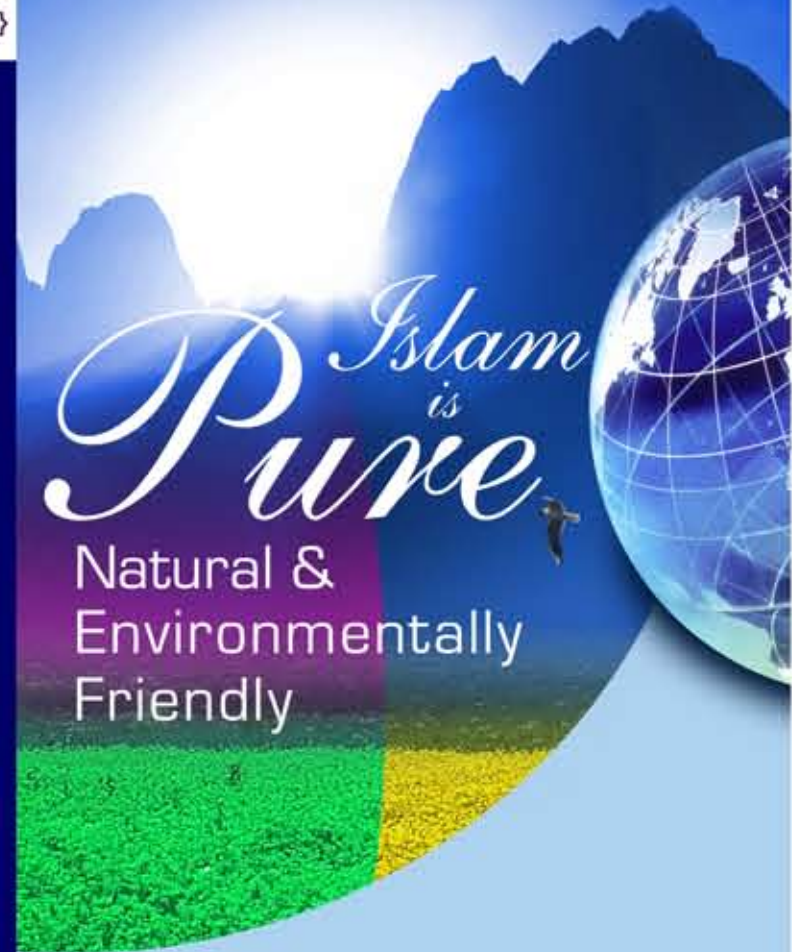
"Prepare for the Hereafter as if you were going to die tomorrow, and prepare for this life as if you were going to live forever" (Prophet's saying)

There should be an attitude of long-termism in this life with a strong and clear consciousness of accountability to God in the next life, on the Day of Judgment, which is faced by the individual after death, at any moment a possibility.

Muslims do not attempt to fulfil all their desires, yearning to create Paradise on earth. Islam is a way of taming and reducing those desires, and attempting to live according to our needs. Therefore practicing Islam nurtures the reduction of consumerism, and the excessive burdens that it places on nature. However Muslims should work to establish the laws of God which help to bring out the best potentials of the human soul; part of these being to care for and manage the environment responsibly, preserving the beautiful and holy signs of God in nature for us to reflect on and learn from.

Even if good environmental projects cannot continue, or disasters occur, a believing Muslim with knowledge should continue to do their best to apply Islamic principles, not losing heart, planning with optimism and hope for the future, with the conviction that God is watching over us.

**The earth is not eternal
but our souls are!**



Do you wish that there were laws to protect the health and well-being of people, animals, plants, trees, land, water...Infact the whole planet.

Well - there are!



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What are the Laws of Nature

The Laws of nature can be observed by watching nature to some extent. However, not only does this require many lifetimes to get a complete understanding, but human beings will always differ in their interpretations of what they see. Their consciences are not reliable by themselves! They need more knowledge and evidence by which to judge what is right and wrong.

The Qur'an claims to be this knowledge and evidence, also describing itself as clear and complete guidance, a light and mercy for human beings, confirming and completing the truths revealed through all the true Prophets that came before the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), including Abraham, Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them). It also calls itself 'the Truth' as revealed and kept pure and free from error by God, and challenges people to analyse it, to prove this for themselves!

The Prophet Muhammad, (pbuh) put this guidance into practice, and many thousands followed his example or Sunnah, during his lifetime. Around 1400 years later there are now many millions of Muslims following both the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the laws that are derived from them.

So- what are the Islamic Laws of environmental management? Read and find out!

Islamic Principles:

All action and words should be following the best understanding of what is right, based on knowledge of the truth, and careful thought.

Actions should not be based on the blind following of superstition and tradition; other people, including family, priests, husbands, wives, bosses, 'holy men', teachers, rulers; the media; lusts, desires and whims for pleasures of the present, or any feeling alone. All these are limited in knowledge, make mistakes and can be selfish and corrupt. Following them can therefore be very destructive to the welfare of people and the environment, e.g. industrial companies dumping toxic waste because it costs too much to prevent or to detoxify it.

Self-restraint and not extremism- neither uncontrolled Capitalism and free markets, nor oppressive dictatorship; not taking everything from the soil without giving anything back; not taking all the valuable trees in a forest, but leaving and planting enough to allow those trees to regenerate.....

Life is sacred

If one human life is saved it is as though the whole of mankind was saved, and whoever kills a person it is as if they killed the whole of mankind, says the Prophet Muhammed (Peace be upon him).

Physical, emotional and psychological suffering in animals should be minimised. Unnecessary harm to plants and trees should be minimised for example during fighting, or the killing of animals for food. Where recycling is a way of minimising harm to the environment and living things, including human beings, it is compatible with this Islamic principle, as well as the Islamic ethic of not wasting things by excess- see below. If recycling does not take place, more and more valleys will be filled in with rubbish, from which toxins often leak into the water table e.g. from batteries, and plastics, or inflammable gases into the area of the dump e.g. methane. The toxins that we take in may be affecting human fertility some research has suggested. The bad drainage of this land, and the gases and toxins in it (especially heavy metals) would make this land unsuitable for agriculture- so eventually there might be no land left for growing food upon.

Alternatively, some rubbish may be burnt releasing toxic gases into the air e.g. plastics, or releasing carbon dioxide- increasing the 'Greenhouse-effect' and therefore global warming-

This would in turn cause difficulty and possibly extinction to many animal and plant species, some of which may be crucial to the whole ecosystem, and the connected welfare of human beings; and would also affect weather patterns and therefore agricultural and forestry production.

Islam, therefore, supports the maximum use of recycling, which today can include the recycling of organic kitchen waste (into compost), glass, paper, cardboard, metal, oil, cloth, books, building and furniture materials, batteries, TV and computer components, and even plastic. The more this is done, the more likely it would be that our water, air and soil would be safe and healthy for humans and all living things.

There should be the safeguarding of freedom of conscience and Faith, the use of the intellect, life, honour and property of all.

Harm to these should be minimised, and some take priority over others in situations of necessity.

There should be no exploitation.

There should be no monopolies, excess profits or charging interest. Money should never be hoarded or kept passively invested in speculative capital assets such as buildings or land that are not being used, with the aim of waiting for the market price to go up and then selling. Gambling also should not be allowed. All these have the effect of concentrating wealth in the hands of a few and not allowing it to circulate freely in the economy, and all generate a wider gap between rich and poor. However, owning and increasing one's wealth through work is encouraged, as it is good to be able to benefit others through sharing wealth, in the form of regular giving- see below. The aim is to minimise the gap between rich and poor. A large factor in rain forest destruction is the need for countries to pay the interest on huge loans made to them by the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as poverty on a local level that is made worse by interest charges. Poverty and deprivation relate clearly to crime levels.

Resources should be distributed according to need.

Water, food, and land, and wages should be fair and support families comfortably. Regular charity, generosity and self sacrifice are encouraged for everyone, with an obligatory minimum charity to be paid and distributed to specific categories of needy persons annually (called Zakat in Islam) according to what people can afford, at 2.5% of their excess wealth.

There should be no waste through excess.

Waste means spending money on luxuries, throwing away unused food, packaging or utensils from extravagant meals or because of excessive haste, or wasting water; due to using more than you need. Money is wasted by not mending or passing on used clothes, or equipment and, on a macro-economical scale, by not recycling materials.

"But waste not by excess; for God loves not the wasters".
[Qur'an: Chapter 6, Verse 141.]

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www.muslimheritage.com
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