

The Responsibility of Human Societies Regarding Climate change and Natural disasters in the Light of Islamic Texts

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ABSTRACT

Climate change inevitably exerts comprehensive impacts on human societies, exposing them to new challenges. Recognizing these negative consequences and challenges, human societies bear a responsibility to address climate change and its associated natural disasters. This research study seeks to illuminate the ethical and social responsibilities, both individual and collective, in this regard. It employs a descriptive library-based qualitative research approach to analyze the pertinent issues. The findings reveal two distinct categories of climate change: those within human control and those beyond it. For the former, everyone in society should strive to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, use water efficiently, and practice reuse whenever possible. Furthermore, individuals should opt for environmentally friendly products, promote public awareness, employ efficient transportation methods, and prioritize the use of renewable energy sources to mitigate pollution. For the latter, a sense of resignation and trust in a higher power may be required.

Keywords: Climate Changes, Natural Disasters, Earthquakes, Storms, Drought

INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and blessings and peace be upon the master of the prophets and messengers. Allah says in the Holy Quran: "وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ... الخ" *And He subjugated for you the sun and the moon, moving constantly, and subjugated for you the day and the night (33). And he gave you whatever you asked for. If you (try to) count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all. Indeed, man is highly unjust, very ungrateful.*" [Quran, Al-Ibrahim: 34]. Almighty Allah has created all the universe and granted human beings a unique rank among all other creatures. Allah, the Almighty, has made the entire universe subservient to humans including the land, the oceans, the sky, and all living beings. Humans are entrusted with the divine message and a profound responsibility to take care of the earth, as mentioned in the Quran: (هُوَ الَّذِي (خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا "It is he who created for you all that the earth contains" (Al-Baqarah: 29). What Allah has created is for the service of humans, and it is their responsibility to fulfill their role as custodians of the creation.

Climate change impacts various facets of our lives, including agriculture, industry, and the overall economy, resulting in damage to the environment, atmosphere, and water. This harm extends to animals, humans, and the global economic system. These changes necessitate prompt action to mitigate negative impacts, involving the control of gas emissions and waste reduction. When addressing challenges, emphasis on ethical, economic, and political responsibilities is crucial to ensure practical and effective solutions.

The primary goal of this study is to underscore both collective and individual human responsibilities in addressing climate change. Its significance lies in ethically guiding individuals/societies on how to effectively mitigate the adverse consequences of climate change and navigate associated challenges comprehensively.

A cursory review of existing literature reveals that climate change-induced natural disasters have global repercussions, drawing substantial attention in various writings and publications. Scholars such as Razziqi (2010) and Hikmatyar (2003) have made noteworthy contributions, acknowledged and preserved in the Afghan Academy's Encyclopedia on natural sciences. However, these articles tend to implicitly address natural disasters without providing explicit recommendations for preventive measures. Islamic Sharia incorporates references to natural disasters in various sources, offering insights into their theological significance. The Holy Quran informs us about the sufferings of nations who disobeyed Allah and Prophet Muhammad. Specific punishments, such as storms of stones, mighty blasts, earthquakes, and drownings, serve as lessons and warnings about the

consequences of wrongful actions (Almanavi, 2007; Tabari, 2001; Zuhaili, 2012). Also, natural disasters have been mentioned in various Hadiths of our prophet, such as the "Chapter on the Occurrence of Calamities". There is a narration about a farmer who leased an orchard and later a calamity in terms of a natural disaster affected the orchard. In this context, it is narrated by Jabir Bin Abdullah that Prophet (PBUH) as saying: “لَوْ بَعْتُ مِنْ أَخِيكَ... الخ تَمْرًا فَأَصَابَتْهُ جَائِحَةٌ... الخ” “If you were to sell something to your brother and it was smitten by blight it would not be allowable for you to take anything from him. Why should you take your brother's property unjustly?” This narration serves as a lesson to support merchants (or anyone else) who are affected by natural disasters (Al-Ayni, 2002; Ibn Hajar, 2002; Ibn Majah, 2002). Further, natural disasters have mentioned many times in the famous books of jurisprudence, for example, in the famous book "Al-Hidayah" among the Hanafis, it is mentioned that if, for instance, an arable land is facing drought; there won't be any Kharaj (taxation based Islamic law on agricultural lands) on the land. This and similar issues related to the effects of natural disasters are found in the Islamic jurisprudential books, such as in matters of transactions, partnership, leasing, agricultural contracts, and various other issues where one party is being affected by natural disaster. Islamic scholars also offer their opinion in terms of Ijtihad and provide solutions for complex cases, such as, in Hidayah - Al Banayah section, there is an explanation on the cancellation of a lease contract. It is mentioned that when the leased house's wall collapses, the leaser has the right to cancel the lease agreement. However, such jurisprudential discussions and terminologies related to disasters, compensation, and loss can be found extensively in the jurisprudential books.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study, grounded in qualitative research and employing a descriptive approach, will draw from a diverse array of reputable sources. It will encompass insights derived from established texts available in libraries, supplemented by the incorporation of recent research studies pertinent to the field of inquiry. This study adopts an academic analytical framework to scrutinize subjects from a scholarly standpoint, culminating in comprehensive conclusions and actionable recommendations.

There are two factors causing natural disasters and climate change. The first is triggered by humans which can be controlled while the second one is caused by nature phenomenon which cannot be harnessed. Humans have individual and collective responsibilities in dealing with them, explained as follows.

a) Responsibilities Pertinent to Human Activities: Every human being should develop a plan and organized programs for their activities and should strive to improve their daily lives. Below are certain duties, both for individuals and communities, aimed at enhancing the environment and, consequently, reducing the repercussions of natural disasters and climate change.

- Communities should strive to decrease their CO₂ footprints, minimize pollution, and ensure efficient use of water resources as is mentioned in Quran and Hadith. Conferences/workshops should be conducted to raise public awareness of the negative impacts of climate change and natural disasters.
- Efficient and sustainable transport methods should be adopted, promoting the use of energy-efficient vehicles, and discouraging the use of excessive and environmentally harmful modes of transportation.
- In sensitive or hazardous areas, it is crucial to carefully use and store chemicals, explosives, and flammable materials. Strict safety measures should be taken for storage facilities.
- Governments should encourage citizens to actively participate in greenery and tree plantation. They should establish agencies/institutions dedicated to disaster risk management at national/provincial levels.
- Governments and organizations are urged to establish membership in international commissions for environmental and disaster management.

b) Disasters beyond human control: In the face of recent devastating natural disasters, such as earthquakes in Herat, Badghis, or Turkey, communities grapple with overwhelming financial and human losses. These events, perceived as manifestations of Allah's will due to societies turning away from Quran and Sunnah, highlight our limited control over circumstances. Recognizing Allah's governance over destinies, our shared responsibility prompts collective efforts. As Muslims, we are urged to seek Allah's mercy through prayer and fulfill our duty to humanity by providing relief services—rescuing victims, treating injuries, and offering shelter and food.

Islamic jurisprudence scholars of the opinion that natural disasters are caused as a result of human disobedience to the orders of Almighty Allah. They argue in this regard on the narration of Abdullah Bin Omar that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said “They do not withhold the Zakah of their wealth, but rain will be withheld from the sky, and were it not for the animals, no rain would fall on them.” Other scholars argue that natural disasters and sufferings occur for the purpose of returning to Almighty Allah. They are reasoning with the Hadith of our prophet (peace be upon him) who said, “when Allah is pleased with people; then He makes them face trials”, therefore sufferings and natural calamities should be looked at from this angle.

RESULTS

In Islam, human responsibility towards the environment, including addressing climate change, is emphasized in the Quran and Sunnah. The Quran states, "And do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption" (Quran 2:60). This verse underscores the importance of preserving the natural balance and avoiding actions that lead to environmental harm. Additionally, the concept of "Khalifah" (stewardship) in Quran (2:30) entrusts humans with the responsibility of caretaking the Earth, implying a duty to protect and preserve the environment. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reinforced these teachings through his actions and sayings, like his encouragement of tree planting and water conservation, exemplified in the Hadith of Al-Bukhāri (2000, Hadith No: 2320): “ما من مسلم يغرس غرساً أو يزرع زرعاً فيأكل منه طيرٌ أو إنسانٌ أو بهيمةٌ إلا كان له به صدقة”. These teachings collectively guide Muslims towards a proactive role in combating climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.

DISCUSSION

The Islamic perspective on environmental stewardship, particularly in the context of climate change, is deeply rooted in both the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Quranic verses, such as the command against spreading corruption on Earth “كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْنُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ” (2:60), and the concept of humans as "Khalifah" or caretakers (2:30), establish a clear mandate for Muslims to engage in responsible environmental practices. This responsibility is not just a passive avoidance of harm, but an active duty to maintain the balance and harmony of nature. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) further substantiate this approach. His emphasis on planting trees and conserving water, as seen in the Hadith from Al-Bukhāri, demonstrates a practical application of these principles. These Islamic teachings collectively underscore the importance of a proactive and conscientious approach towards the environment, framing climate change not only as a global challenge but also as a moral and religious responsibility for Muslims.

CONCLUSION

Individuals have the responsibility to limit their Carbon footprints and avoid toxic gases and materials that degrade the ecosystem. Water resources should be used effectively with the consideration of replenishment of underground water. Workshops, campaigns, and conferences should be launched to increase public awareness and to promote a culture of protecting natural resources. All natural disasters occur as per the will of Almighty Allah. There is always Almighty Allah’s divine wisdom in occurrence of all natural calamities which is beyond the understanding of human intellect. Including government, it is the duty of every conscientious Muslim to demonstrate sympathy by provide practical assistance to the victims of natural disasters. We should not look at natural disasters and calamities from the angle of divine punishment forever, rather, sometimes these calamities occur as a result of Almighty Allah’s infinite love for a nation. Before suffering any natural disaster, we should have a strong relationship of worship and servitude with pit creator. Establishing a strong relationship with Allah in the framework of servitude/obedience is an effective remedy to prevent any kind of grief and suffering.

This study recommends policymakers to establish a robust national organization for disaster management to enhance public awareness about climate change and natural perils and develop relief support entities at various administrative levels for prompt aid and rescue efforts. It also recommends fostering international collaboration by acquiring memberships in global societies dedicated to combating natural disasters. Policies should be designed to cultivate a culture of financial & spiritual support within communities, promoting charitable societies and encouraging affluent individuals to aid disaster-stricken populations.

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