

A Study on Religious Beliefs and Environmental Behaviors in Kashmir Valley

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Abstract

The natural world, such as rivers, mountains and forests, are often seen as sacred in many cultural traditions. Modern protection movements have even begun to draw on spiritual and religious beliefs to promote issues of environmental sustainability. The growing concern with ecological issues and their impact on general awareness is one of the most noticeable phenomena globally. The word for religion (Deen) is found in the holy Qur'an in 90 different places, often in contexts that place it outside the purely ritual. Deen in essence describes an integrated code of behavior which deals with personal hygiene, at one end of the spectrum, to our relationships with the natural order at the other. "The creation of the heavens and the earth is far superior than the creation of mankind. But the majority of mankind do not recognize it" (Qur'an 40:56). The earth is mentioned more than four hundred places in the Holy Qur'an, whereas the sky and ahead are reported only about three hundred times. In this paper, we examine the role of religion in the environment empirically. Using data from the Kashmir valley Social Survey 2018-19, we examined the effects of religious beliefs on environmental behaviors in Kashmir valley. The estimation revealed that a majority of the participants of this research showed constructive attitude towards environmental conservation however their approach was negative. We aim to explore and share that Islam does understand the earth to be subservient to humankind. Hence, the earth should not be administered and oppressed carelessly. Islam, leads to a well-built sense of kindness and purity of the earth by its teachings and principles. Human and environment communication is guided by the impression of the person as a vicegerent or true warden of the earth. The broad support provided by Holy Quran is indicative that the earth is a vital protected element for upcoming sustenance of the future generation and is to be a secure place to stay. It is noticed that rapid industrialization, unplanned development and unprecedented growth in population with its accompanying poverty and deprivation are recognized as being the main causes of environmental degradation, a major threat to the existence of humanity today. The fast deterioration of human environment is nothing except a disaster of morals. Mankind in general are guided to look after the environment and not to harm it. Islamic approach of a sustainable environmental life entails living in "peace and harmony (salam)" at individual, social as well as natural levels. All human actions have some impact on the environment and for that this paper will display the understanding of Islam and environmental sustainability through the lasting reference of the Quran and the Words of Messenger of Allah. The humankind can no longer compensate for the price of our failures. It is the moment that people of all faiths join and set for a common foundation for humankind. The Qur'an and Sunnah offers a clear assistance for our future, pertinent to all, Muslims and Non-Muslims.

Keywords: Religion; Environment; Islam; Quran; Hadith; Allah; Nature; Statistics.

Introduction

The discipline environmental ethics studies the ethical relationship of man to the environment and

its living and non-living things. We cover different theories of ecology and in the midst of them one states that nature has to be sheltered, including prevention of global warming, for the sake of man. Man claims the highest form of creation on earth so

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it is important that he protects earth as being a tool for his gladness. The Western civilization thinks about man as the centre of the ethical world and thinks that the universe exists for the advantage of human beings living on earth. Man tries to protect his land, tradition, culture, and religion in spite of recent technological and scientific development as he considers them precious in life. Worldwide at present environment and its troubles are the mainly talked subject. Human existence and the environment are inter-reliant and interconnected to each other from the very beginning of life as human beings at all times depended on their environment for foodstuff, fuel, fertilizers, etc. Social life of mankind and Environment has a direct link as today globally environment degradation has turn out to be one of the most grave universal problems. Over the last few decades lot of work on religion-environment connection has been done (Gottlieb, 2006). There are several principles of significance to the human future that can be distilled from the teachings of Hinduism – principles relating to the inevitability of the consequences of one's actions, the interconnectedness of all things, the linkage between past, present and future, the integrity of the human family, the harmony that is crucial between humanity and the natural order and many others. It is visible that the a good number of ancient texts on Hinduism express through the admire of the deities an natural awareness and immense admiration for the natural globe. In these sacred writings, there are many detailed wisdom on ecological matters. A few of them are: (i) "Stop cutting of trees, because trees remove pollution." (Rig Veda, 6:48:17) (ii) " Stop disturbing the sky and stop polluting the atmosphere." (Yajur Veda, 5:43) (iii) Devastation of forests is taken as devastation of the state, and reforestation an act of renewal the state and advancing its happiness. Protection of animals is considered a sacred duty. (Charak Sanhita). All of this is a huge resource of concepts, principles, traditions and practices which is of deep significance to the study of the future of humanity and of the lasting perspective which it is very essential to for the present generation. Hinduism and Buddhism considers every phenomenon of the world such as trees, rivers, mountains, etc., as holy (deep ecology) and believes that these blessed phenomena are confined by their own presiding goddesses or gods. So, any direct damage done to the material world is in actuality an ill behavior towards gods. Man's supremacy over nature was made clear upfront in the Holy Bible in the book of Genesis by assigning to him the rule over all other creatures and subjection of the earth. *The*

Christians admit that the world does not belong to men and women only but it belongs to God and humans will be held responsible for the way they treat nature. Environment safety which is beneficial for humans as well as for atmosphere is an essential feature of Islam and it is a practice of shielding the environment on personal, association or at governmental level. The responsibility of Muslims as viceroy of Allah on earth is to be concerned for the environment in a positive way as behind the creation of plants or animals there is a definite purpose. Mankind has the duty to ensure safe care of the environment and maintain the ecological balance shaped by Allah. The Holy Quran talks about people who are fair in speech, however make trouble on earth and destroy crops and progeny. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) established a green belt of twelve miles around city Medina, and barred public from cutting trees or hunting in this area. He (S.A.W) informed that planting of trees and the cultivation of agriculture are good acts. He forbid pollution of drinking water, dumping of garbage and waste products into water bodies. He also encouraged people by giving property rights to those who restore barren land. In the middle ages, because of these traditions, Muslims legislated against industrial activities that make dirty the atmosphere. The viewpoint on environment protection in Islam reflects a constructive image about Islam as Islam not only prohibits over-exploitation of natural resources but also it emphasizes on sustainable development. According to Noble Quran: "It is He who has appointed you viceroys in the earth ... that He may try you in what He has given you." (Surah 6:165). Islam allows to eat and drink but does not like wastage. Everything that Allah has created is a extraordinary sign, full of meaning; pointing beyond itself to the magnificence and importance of its Creator, His intelligence and His purposes for it. "He who has stretch out the earth for you and threaded roads for you therein and has sent downward water from the sky: With it have we brought forth diverse kinds of vegetation. Eat and pasture your cattle; verily, in this are signs for men endued with understanding." (Quran 20:53-54) Allah has not created anything in this world useless, without intelligence, worth and reason. Allah created heavens and earth with some purpose. Hence, the Islamic idea in the Noble Quran is of a cosmos imbued with significance. All things in the world are shaped to serve the One Lord who sustains them all by means of one another, and who controls the amazing cycles of existence and demise: Allah has created all in this world in

due amount and quantify both quantitatively and qualitatively. According to Noble Qur'an: "Verily, all things have We created by measure" (Holy Qur'an 54:49) "...All to Him is calculated." (Qur'an 13:8) Islam gives much significance to the security of environment by guiding its supporters not to cut trees, pollute water bodies or contaminate the atmosphere. Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) educated community to live on a smaller amount, to look after animal and plant life, and to worship the Creator by being merciful to the creation. Planting a tree or sowing seed is considered a charitable (sadaqah) work in Islam, if a bird or a person eats from it. (Al-Bukhari) The views of Islam on environment are universal one as its main commandments are for whole human race, cutting across national, religious and geographical barriers. In Islamic belief, safety of the environment is necessary and mankind has the responsibility to ensure safe custody of the environment. The Holy Quran and the teaching of Holy Prophet (S.A.W) explain the relationship between man and the world as: (i) An association of meditation, consideration, and contemplation of the world and what it contains (ii) An association of sustainable use, enlargement, and service for man's advantage and for the achievement of his wellbeing (iii) An association of care and nurture for man's good works are not limited to the advantage of the human species, but rather extend to the advantage of all created beings; and "there is a reward in doing well to every living thing." (Al-Bukhari) A Muslim as Khalifa of Allah on earth is only a supervisor of the earth and not a proprietor; a beneficiary and not a disposer or ordainer. The main objective of writing this paper is to examine the role of religion on the safety of environment.

Methodology

In view of the specific objectives, method followed in conducting the present study involved mainly the use of data from secondary reliable sources, like articles, journals, internet and news papers. Primary data have also been collected from a sample of 400 respondents selected at random from Kashmir, interviewed using a well designed questionnaire to examine the approach of people towards environment and religion. The data collected using validated questionnaire was presented in tables using appropriate statistical tools. The respondents under study were all Muslims so we focus on the relation of Islam and environment in general.

Literature Review

Speedy industrialization, unplanned expansion and unprecedented intensification in population with its accompanying poverty and deprivation are documented as being the main reasons of environmental degradation. Increase in economic activities in developing countries results in more energy and consumption demand which generally leads to environmental degradation. There is a usual belief that such environmental degradation would resolve as soon as these countries grow economically, since that would enable them to afford environmental friendly technology as well as pro-environmental regulations and policies (Huber *et al.*, 1998).

Husaini (1980) in his study reported that Islam is a natural religion for every human being and in detail he discussed the problems related to environment and Islam. Man as a viceroy of Allah on earth must recognize the right of all creatures to the ecological resources on earth.

In a study conducted by Hassan (2006), it was reported that nothing can aid apart from understanding of general danger, obedience and sacrifice for universal good. In another study conducted by Muhammad Muinul Islam (2004), it was reported that Islamic teaching and rules have no substitute so ecoethics requirements to be implemented at local, national, regional, universal and most significantly, at personal level. Iqbal (2005) in his study discussed that Noble Quran discusses about populace who are fair in speech, but make disobedience on earth and demolish crops and offspring.

Aström (2011) in his research paper discussed the Contribution of Islamic Economics. It is observed that environment and economic development are closely related. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) established a green belt of twelve miles around Medina, and prohibited people from cutting trees or hunting in this area. He barred pollution of drinking water, dumping of garbage and waste products into water bodies and encouraged revitalization of infertile land by passing on property rights in favour of those people who voluntarily did so. In the middle ages, Muslim jurists legislated against industrial activities that spoil the atmosphere. In another study conducted by Nasr (1990), it was reported that man and universe are in a condition of unity, agreement, and complimentarily. He maintains that feeding the underprivileged and attending the ill is as good as planting trees, treating animals kindly, avoiding contamination of water bodies. He

suggests expansion of Islamic knowledge regarding shari'ah's teachings about the moral handling of the atmosphere. In addition, being part of the earth and part of the universe, man is also the executor of God's injunctions and commands. Man has been approved viceroy of Allah on earth to supervise the earth in harmony with the purposes proposed by its designer; to make use of it for his own advantage and the advantage of other creatures, and for the accomplishment of his welfare and of theirs. All of the assets upon which life depends have been formed by Allah as a trust in our care. He has designed nourishment for all natives and for all breathing beings. In Islam the proper utilization of all natural resources is the right and privilege of all people and all species.

Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali (2008) reported different aspects of environmental ethics. Hence, man should take every safety measure to ensure the wellbeing and rights of all others since they are equal partners on earth.

Results and Discussion

The main results obtained from the empirical study are presented in the following figures. The data presented in Figure 1, reveals that majority of the respondents (51%) believe that religion guides to protect environment. It is not a good sign that 49% respondents believe that people ignore that protection of environment is our religious duty also. It is because of this ignorance.

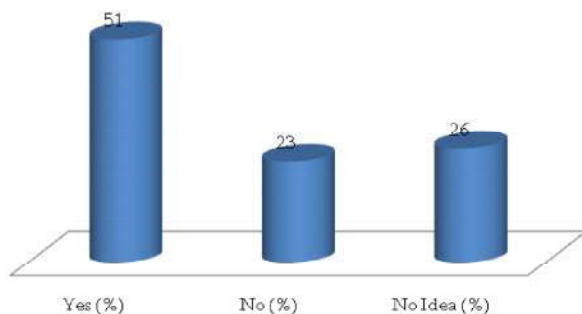


Fig. 1: Effect of Religious Beliefs on Environmental Protection

The data presented in Figure 2, reveals that majority of the respondents (61%) reported that environmental protection is our prime concern. In general, majority of the people under study agreed that protection of environment is the duty of every individual. Statistically, it has been observed that the opinion of respondents was not uniform ($p < 0.05$).

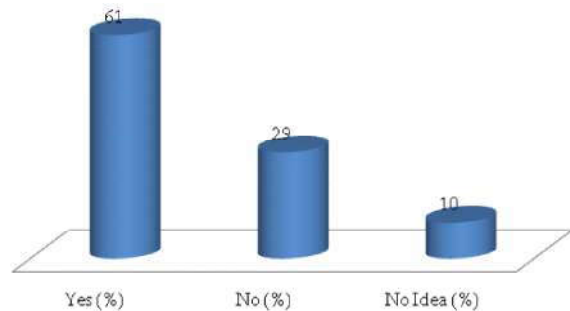


Fig 2: Effect of Religious Beliefs on Environmental Protection.

The data presented in Figure 3, reveals that majority of the respondents (83%) believe that Modernization have effect on our environment. Statistically, the opinion of respondents was not uniform ($p < 0.05$).

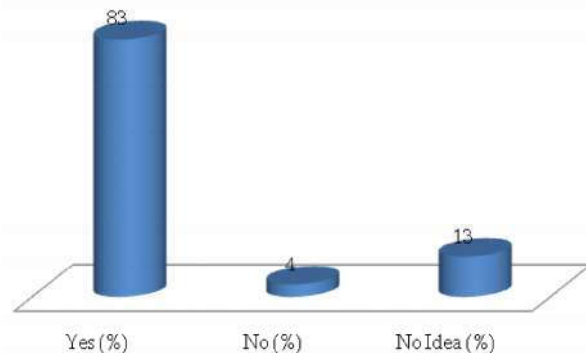


Fig 3: Modernizations and Industrialization have effect on Environment

The data presented in Figure 4, reveals that majority of the respondents (71%) were of the opinion that un precedential growth in population effects environment. Statistically, the opinion of respondents was not uniform ($p < 0.05$). The respondents believed that due to rapid increase in population forests, water bodies and other factors related to environment got affected badly. Generally, people concentrate only on personal developments and ignore their responsibilities as responsible citizens of world.

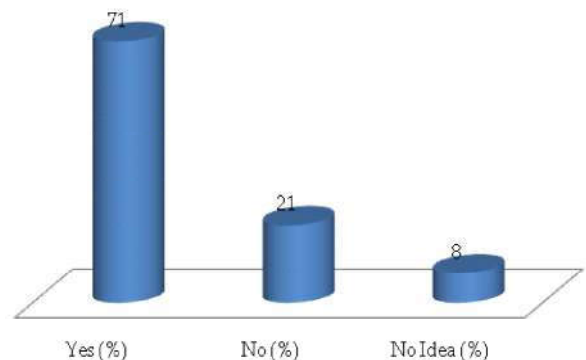


Fig. 4: Growth in Population and its Impact on Environment

The data presented in Figure 5, reveals that majority of the respondents (63%) were of the opinion that poverty and attitude of people towards environment is related. The respondents believed that due to poverty people ignore their responsibilities towards protection of environment. Statistically, the opinion of respondents was not uniform ($p < 0.05$).

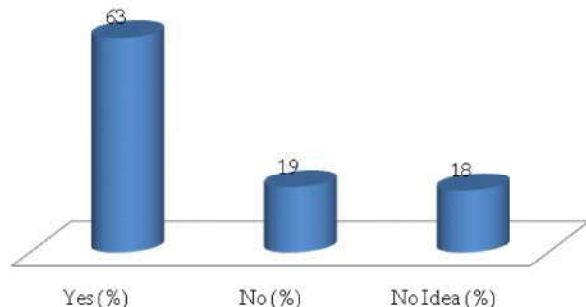


Fig. 5: Poverty and Attitude Towards Environment

The data presented in Figure 6, reveals that majority of the respondents (61.5%) were of the opinion that responsibility of cleanness of environment does not lie on Government only. Statistically, the opinion of respondents was not uniform ($p < 0.05$). The results are in agreement with the study conducted by Bilal et al. (2016).

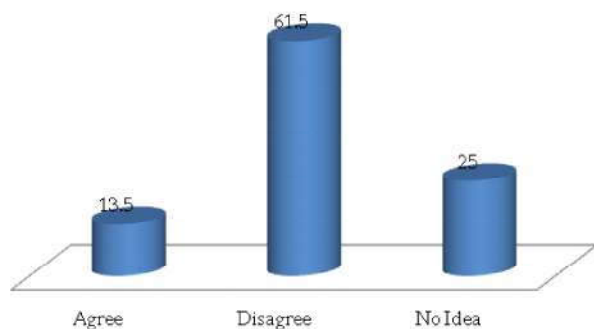


Fig 6: Responsibility of Cleanness of Environment lies on Government

Conclusion

The world belongs to all of us so we are all are obliged to conserve and protect it. A closer relationship with nature gives an individual contentment and it contributes significantly to our life quality. Caring for birds, wild animals, and the natural planet is a common thread running through all the universal major religions. We should co-operate and effort collectively for a healthier world, a superior future, and a improved environment. In the name of our maker and sustainer, we must protect and adore

our environment and all the living creatures on earth as a viceroy of Allah. Every religion teaches us to protect environment as a responsible citizen of the world. In Islam, environmental protection is a fundamental part of belief and as Allah's Khalifa on earth, we have to utilize resources in a sustainable manner. In Islam, the principle of conservation is explained by guidelines for ablutions (wudu). It is said that while making Wudu, people should use minimum water even if they have running water available. A major objective of Islamic knowledge and Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) traditions is to build, preserve a healthy and hygienic environment which is devoid of any source of pollution. The respondents under study showed positive attitude towards environmental protection and considers it a religious duty. The major commandments of Islam, a universal religion are directed, not to the Muslims alone, but to the human race. It is important we all play our role as good citizens of the world to protect environment for future generations. All living and nonliving things are very important for the very existence of this earth. An awareness of environmental ethics has to be created among people through education and mass awareness programmes. There are a number of ways by which we can increase environmental awareness among the people, e.g., using social networking.

Limitations

There are various social, cultural and religious dimensions and values which are relevant for Environmental safety in Islam. A comprehensive study of Quran and Hadiths are requisite to cover all the areas of this topic as this paper pointed out only few of them.

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