

THE PRINCIPLES OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE QUR'AN

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Abstract

This article aims at investigating the nature of interactions of human beings with the environment in the light of Quran. In Quran, it is stated that human beings have relationship with each other as well as with their environment and society. As for their relationship with the environment, humans are reminded to be conscious of their role and resulting responsibilities as worshippers to Allah. Furthermore, Quran states that human beings should determine their relationship with the environment according to the principles of balance, accountability, integrity and interdependence. It could be concluded that humans will not alienate themselves neither from their environment nor from their own nature if humans' relationships with nature are based on these these fundamental principles. Moreover, violence is not expected to dominate their relationship with environment and each other.

Key words: human, environment, Qur'an, relationship

Özet

Kur'an'da İnsan ve Çevre İlişkisinin Prensipleri

Bu makalede İslam dininin kutsal kitabı Kur'an çerçevesinde insan ve çevre ilişkisinin hangi temeller üzerine şekillendiğini ele alarak insanın çevresiyle ilişkisini nasıl oluşturması gerektiği üzerinde durulacaktır. Kuranda insanın tabiatla, toplumla, kendisiyle ve metafizik alanla ilişkisinin olduğu belirtilmektedir. İnsanın çevresiyle ilişkilerinde ise insanın yaratılışının temel amacı olan kulluk bilinci, buna bağlı gerçekleştirilmesi gereken bazı sorumlulukları olduğu hatırlatılmaktadır. Ayrıca Kur'an'da insanın çevresiyle bütünlük, denge ve karşılıklı ilişki ilkeleri çerçevesinde ilişkilerini belirlemesi gerektiği de ortaya konmuştur. Bu ilkeler çerçevesinde oluşan insanın çevresiyle olan ilişkisi sonucunda ise Kurana göre kendine ve çevresine yabancılaşmayan ve kendine ve çevresine şiddet uygulamayan insan profilinin oluşabileceği anlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: insan, çevre, Kur'an, ilişki

Introduction

Nowadays, environmental issues such as air pollution, global warming, and extinction of some animal species have been attracting increasing global interest. Experts incessantly search for the reasons behind these problems and try

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to come up with solutions that may help to end them. Environmental issues are, of course, in the sphere of religious perspective. The issue of religion and environment has been standing out as a crucial point throughout history. The relationship between religion and environment has been heavily discussed in religious circles. There are articles,¹ books,² and symposiums³ on the relationship between environment and religion. Though the religious approach towards environment sets the basic, normative guidelines in the relationship between human and environment, people fail to fully comply with these rules due to several reasons such as egocentric attitudes. In fact, excessive consumption that we witness today is selfish use of the sources that God has given to people to maintain their lives. Hence in evaluating the theme of human– environment relationship, the proper emphasis should be placed on the religious viewpoint. This article is an attempt to contribute to the topic by assessing the grounds on which human and environment relationship is shaped in accordance with Muslim’s holy book Quran. We specifically are going to investigate how the human and environment relationship should be constructed. While doing this, firstly we will focus on the fact that humans are creatures that are in need communication and interaction. Later we are going to investigate, all in the light of Quran, the areas on which human-environment relationships are constructed, as well as the the basic principles that determine these relationships.

1. Human as a Being that Communicates and Makes Connection

As a rational creature, human seeks to understand what he is and what is going on around and so tries to establish relationship with environment. Upon coming to the world, he tries to know of the outward world through his senses;

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- 1 See, İbrahim Özdemir, “Çevre Sorunlarının Antroposentrik Karakteri”, *Felsefe Dünyası* 1998, no: 27; Saffet Sancaklı, “Hz. Peygamber ve Çevrecilik Anlayışı”, *İslami Araştırmalar*, 2001, c. 1, no: 3-4; Seyyid Hüseyin Nasr, “İslam ve Çevre Bunalımı”, *İslami Araştırmalar*, Turkish trans.: Mevlüt Uyanık, 1990, c. 4, no: 3; Celal Türer, “Çevre Etiği; Erciyes’i Anlamak”, *1. Erciyes Sempozyumu*, Kayseri, 23-25 Ekim 2003; Mehmet Bayyığıt, “Çevre Problematikliği ve Din”, *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2002, no: 14.
 - 2 See, İbrahim Özdemir, *Çevre ve Din*, Çevre Bakanlığı Yay., Ankara 1997; Mehmet Bayraktar, *İslam ve Ekoloji*, Diyanet Başkanlığı Yay., Ankara 1992. İbrahim Canan, *İslam’da Çevre Sağlığı*, Cihan Yay., İstanbul 1986. Hüseyin Aydın, *Ekolojik Sorunlara Teolojik Yaklaşımlar*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yay., Ankara 2009.
 - 3 See, “*International Symposium on Environment and Religion*”, 15-16 May 2008, the Faculty of Theology, İstanbul University.

he handles the objects, brings them to his mouth, and tries to recognize them. He reacts to a voice and tries to understand it. The objects of different sizes and colors attract his attention. Therefore, man begins to recognize the environment in the moments following his birth.

His efforts to recognize the things also bring him into contact with the environment. This is because an individual not only recognizes what lies around him but also strives to know the significance they have in his life. By means of this recognition, he tries to define his relationship with them. Socio-cultural environment plays a significant role in this definition because man acquires his first information and behavioral patterns from the family, and adopts social values and rules to maintain his life.

Socio-cultural environment largely shapes mental makeup. An individual questions the social values and norms and this process results with the adoption of some of the values and norms and rejection of some others. Hence, the individual goes on to strive to understand himself and the things around him. In addition, this striving gives birth to what we call "culture", something material and spiritual, which distinguishes the individual from the other creatures.

Man produces his culture out of what he perceives and knows. One may say that the works and products of a person are the natural fruits of his relationship with the environment because he is in a constant interaction with the environment. At the same time, this interaction allows the person to form a new environment. So the newly formed physical and social environment will show the nature of relationship one establishes or should establish with the environment. This is because the new physical and social environment is shaped by the way man perceives and interacts with nature and society.

Religion, science, and ideology attempt to help man understand himself, the life, and the whole being. While science seeks to explain how the measurable, observable, and examinable things are, religions and ideologies try to elucidate why they are. Religions provide some explanations for such questions as why man is created, what is the purpose of his creation, what ground upon which his relationship with existence was based. For religions assign it as one of their primary missions to earn man felicity in this world and the next. Man needs to envisage a reasonable relationship with nature in order to form a physical and social environment in which he will live in peace. The answer to be provided for such questions as what kind of relationship there should be with nature and society, what principles upon which this relationship should be built will play a decisive role in the creation of a peaceful or problematic envi-

ronment.

Because the *raison d'être* of man is to worship and this task can be fulfilled in a certain physical and social settings, the relationship with the environment and the level of this relationship get more importance. Thus, one needs to define some principles on which to establish his relationship with the creatures, which surround him. Therefore, this study aims at providing a new insight into the principles that man should take into account in his relationship with the environment and attempts to discuss the ways which help man protect his physical and psychological health.

I would like to address first the beings which surround man for only if man possesses knowledge of the beings around him, he will pay attention to his relationship with them. The Qur'an provides information about man's abode to help him set up a healthy relationship with his environment. However, it is left to man to investigate the details of his habitation.

2. The Range of the Relationship Between Man and Environment in the Light of the Qur'an

Man cannot live alone. On one hand, he meets his needs and continues physically growing, on the other he seeks to socialize by means of what he learned from the family and society. At the same time, he benefits from nature to meet his needs and maintain his life. Man's interaction with the environment does not allow him to establish an arbitrary relationship with it, rather imposes some duties and responsibilities upon him for the arbitrariness both may harm the relationship and led to the domination of one of the parties over the other. Therefore, one needs to recognize some principles to carry on the relationship healthily.

Throughout history, religions has reminded man of his duties and responsibilities to the medium and creatures with which he might have relationship in his life adventure on earth and thus helped him act upon the purpose of his existence. As the holy book of Islam, the Qur'an also reminds man of his duties and responsibilities to the creatures lying around him by drawing attention to the creatures and the environment. First, the Qur'an states that man was sent down to earth as the vicegerent of God. In the words of Muhammad Asad, man

was entrusted with the possession and care of earth.⁴

The quality of man to be vicegerent becomes complete only through being the servant of God. Man is a servant of God and therefore he should obey Him. As the servant of God, he must be passive and be able to receive the grace and bounty flowing down from the higher world. As the vicegerent of God, he must be active on earth, maintain the cosmic harmony, and disseminate the mercy because he, as the creature possessing a central position in the earthly order, is the means through which the mercy is diffused.

In other words, being man sent to earth as the vicegerent of God is to be aware of the responsibility entailed by the vicegerency.⁵ Calling attention to the status of man on earth, the Qur'an reminds man of the way he should act and makes him aware of this primary mission in his interaction with the creatures in the world. When man acts unwarily of his status, he deserves being called "one who adopts his caprice as his god." (45/23) In addition, there is a strong relationship between the mission of man on earth and the guidelines which man should follow in his relationship with his Creator. Entrusted with the care of earth, man one on hand needs to accomplish this task by continuing his relationship with God as His servant, on the other he should use his own will and power to sustain earth. Otherwise, a terrestrial and cut-off-from-God life will render man to a creature, which took its caprice as his god. On the other hand, he ought to act responsibly, which means that he should both keep away from a completely fatalist attitude appeared in the ascription of all responsibility stemming from the self to God and abstain from a totally dismissal of God.⁶

While the Qur'an reminds man of his position and mission on earth, it calls a special attention to God, to whom man is primarily responsible because He created man and made him inheritor to earth. At the same time, the Qur'an stresses the God-human relationship by warning man of his bearing witness when he was created that God is his Lord (7/172). Moreover, it points to the fact that man is drowned in the divine surrounding by mentioning the name of God "All-Surrounder" (al-Muhit).⁷ The divine name "All-Surrounder" is very im-

4 See, Muhammed Esed, *Kur'an Mesajı Meal-Tefsir*, Turkish trans.: Cahit Koytak, Ahmet Ertürk, İşaret Yay., İstanbul 1996, pp. 11-2.

5 Nasr, "İslam ve Çevre Bunalımı", p. 4.

6 Ali Şaban Düzgün, *Sosyal Teoloji İnsanın Yeryüzü Serüveni*, Akçağ Yay., Ankara 1999, p. 4.

7 *The Holy Qur'an*, 4/126.

portant in respect of man and other creatures for the term “Muhīt” also means environment.⁸ So God forms the environment which surrounds man and the whole being, with which man and the whole being interact. For in the broadest sense, environment is the physical and social medium in which man conducts all his life activities.⁹ Therefore, the Qur’an dwells on the beings which lie before man and the settings which surround him. After God is described as the Being who surrounds man and forms his surroundings, the next emphasis is laid upon nature.

The verse “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” (45/13) alludes to the realm of nature. This verse also gives expression to the fact that man is the only living creature who was given the ability to make use of the nature and thus delineates the frame of the relationship between man and nature. This frame is expressed in the context that God equipped man with such ability. In addition, it is stressed that man’s relationship with nature should take shape and meaning within the God-human being-nature axis. On different occasions, the Qur’an points to the creatures existing in nature and so it both introduces the nature and reminds that man should accomplish his responsibility to nature in accordance with his position of vicegerency.

The verses 13/3-4 tell of the mountains, valleys, the flowing rivers on earth, the creation of fruit of every kind in pairs, the watered vineyards, the diversity of date palms and crops though watered with the same water. These verses draw attention to the Creator of these creatures and call on man to reflect on them and take lesson. Similarly, the verse 67/19 directs the attention of those who deny God to how the fowls fly in the space; thus, it both gives information about the creatures and draws attention to the relationship among God, man and, nature as well.

Another realm of being which forms the environment of man is the other people, i.e., society.¹⁰ The Qur’an also devotes a considerable place to the discussion of social life and interpersonal relationships.¹¹ We also reckon the self

8 Nasr, *ibid*, p. 158.

9 Mehmet Bayrakdar, *İslam ve Ekoloji*, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yay., Ankara 1997, p. 15.

10 Social Psychology addresses the human environment in two categories as physical and social. See Nuri Bilgin, *Sosyal Psikolojiye Giriş*, Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yay., İzmir 1991, p. 304 and on.

11 Of the verses which treat social life, we can mention the following ones: 2/83, 177, 215, 3/149,

of man as another being which surrounds him.¹² The early Qur'anic verses call attention to man himself. It points to the signs lying inside man which prove the existence of God (51/21) and thus stresses the God-human relationship. It also draws attention to the fact that the abilities and features of man, as the miraculously creation of God, enable man to remember God and recognize His might.

The Qur'an establishes two types of relationship between man and environment as vertical and horizontal. The former is between man and God, as the latter is between man and man as well as between man and the nature. In what follows, I would like to touch on how man should establish and conduct these relationships in the light of the Qur'an.

3. The Principles Which Determine the Relationship Between Human and Environment in the Light of the Qur'an

Man needs to follow some principles to conduct his vertical and horizontal relationship with the beings in his adventure on earth and to lead a happy and virtuous life. We would like to attempt to outline the Qur'anic foundations upon which the human-environment relationship should be established.

a. The Meaning of Creation: All the creatures in the heaven and on the earth should act according to the purpose of their creation because every thing has a reason of existence. This point is made in the verse 38-9 of the Sura Fatir: "Verily Allah knows (all) the hidden things of the heavens and the earth: verily He has full knowledge of all that is in (men's) hearts. It is He who has made you inheritors in the earth: if then any do reject (Allah), their rejection (works) against themselves: their rejection but adds to the odium for the Unbelievers in the sight of their Lord: their rejection but adds to (their own) undoing." In another verse, God says "We created not the heavens and the earth and all between them but for just ends, and for a Term Appointed: But those who reject Faith turn away from that whereof they are warned" (46/3) and so makes it clear that the universe is created for an end.

The following verse also succinctly expresses the purpose of the creation of

4/85, 17/23-5, 24/25, 27, 54, 59, 61, 33/53, 49/12.

12 About the location of man into the range of environment see Musa Tosun, "Psikolojik Açıdan Çevre ve İnsan", *İnsan ve Çevre*, edit.: Mustafa Aykaç, Selim Argun, İnsanlığa Saygı Vakfı Yay., İstanbul 1992, p. 55.

the whole universe: "The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet you understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbear, Most Forgiving!" (17/44) So the verse declares that the whole universe is created to remember (*dhikr*) God and celebrate His glory and praise¹³. Seyyed Hossein Nasr asserts that the remembrance of God is to see Him in every thing and feel His reality all-comprehensively. He goes on to argue that the modern environmental crisis is caused by man's refusal to see God as the real environment which surrounds and sustains him. The destruction of nature is the result of man's severance from the divine environment. Thus, Nasr describes man's alienation from the purpose of his creation as the chief factor of the environmental crisis.¹⁴

Nature is the world of creatures which reminds man of God and worships God just like man and supplies man with food to eat and abode to reside. Hence, man should love and respect it, and must shun wasting and polluting the blessings which it offers to him.¹⁵ Nevertheless, is this the way modern man sees the nature? Or else, does he view himself as the absolute possessor of it? The oft-heard statement "One of the best legacies we can leave to our children is a clean environment" shows that modern man sees himself as the absolute owner of nature for one can leave something over only if he thinks of himself as its possessor.¹⁶

b. The Principle of Accountability: The Qur'an draws attention to the fact that man is not left unrestrained; rather he is an accountable being.¹⁷ What makes the human relationships meaningful is that he acts warily that he has some duties and responsibilities to himself and his environment¹⁸. This is because acting responsibly prevents one from behaving arbitrarily and reminds him of

13 For the significance of the remembrance of God by the creatures in the protection of environment, see Özdemir, *ibid*, pp. 127-8.

14 See Nasr, *ibid*, p. 158. For more information on the spiritual grounds of environmental problem, see, İbrahim Canan, *Ayet ve Hadislerle Çevre Ahlakı*, Yeni Asya Yay., İstanbul 1995, p. 24 and on.

15 İbrahim Uslu, *Çevre Sorunları, İnsan Yay.*, İstanbul 1995, p. 11. Ali Rıza Temel, "İslam'a Göre İnsan Çevre İlişkisi", *İnsan ve Çevre*, edit.: Mustafa Aykaç, Selim Argun, İnsanlığa Saygı Vakfı Yay., İstanbul 1992, pp. 72-3. Bayrakdar, *ibid*, pp. 36-7.

16 Uslu, *ibid*, p. 13.

17 For the related verses, see 23/115; 75/36.

18 Bayrakdar, *ibid*, p. 44 and on.

the necessity that he should use his own will and capacity. So the Qur'an describes man as not a completely free creature but as one which has responsibility and thus must act upon the purpose of his creation and existence. The responsible man also considers that he will suffer the consequences of his actions.

In the following principles enunciated by the Qur'an, there are clear signs that man is an accountable creature: What everyone earns belongs to himself; everybody is responsible only for his own actions; nobody will pay the price for the others' sins. So man is reminded of his responsibilities to himself and his environment. The responsibility of man is emphasized by such verses as those which preach avoiding wastefulness¹⁹ being economical and moderate in expenditure, avoiding stinginess and extravagance,²⁰ attending the mosques in nice and clean clothes²¹ and, obedience to the parents.²² Furthermore, the verses which call attention to the foods, drinks and animals which are given to the service of man are also reminders of the same human responsibility.²³ So, in the frame of the God-human-nature relationship, the Qur'an first suggests that man is an accountable being and then articulates the principles which help man establish and maintain a sound relationship with the environment.

c. The Principle of Integrity and Interdependence: The principle which makes us aware that the creatures are not separated and disconnected from each other²⁴ is clearly seen in the verses speaking of the heavens and earth.²⁵ In these verses, the heaven and earth are cited together according to the principle of harmony and integrity.²⁶ The same principle is underlined when speaking of God, human and nature. For instance, the verse 64 of the Sura Baqara is one of the most important verses which show the interconnectedness of the items arti-

19 For the verses which preach abstaining from wastefulness, see 6/141; 7/131.

20 See, 6/141, 7/31, 17/26-7, 29, 31, 47/37-8, 59/9, 64/16.

21 See, 7/31.

22 See, 2/80, 4/36, 6/151, 17/23-4, 29/8, 31/145, 46/15.

23 For the verses which call on to reflect on the creatures in the nature, see, 16/5-9, 11, 78/14-6, 80/25-32.

24 For more information about the importance of holistic approach to the environment, see, Özdemir, *ibid*, pp. 109-12

25 For more information about the integrity of the heaven and earth in the Qur'an, see, Canan, *ibid*, pp. 17-8.

26 Of the related verses, we can mention the verses 22, 107, 117, 118, 164, 255, 284 of the Sura Baqara.

culated within the principle of integrity. This verse states that there are many proofs for the existence and oneness of God for a thinking nation in such phenomena as the creation of heavens and earth, the alternation of the night and the day, the ship slipping through the sea, wind, the water coming down from the sky and the clouds in the air. The verse also makes it clear that the discussion of nature is made for the sake of man and so he should grasp the existence and unity of God by means of the blessings conferred upon him. In doing so, the Qur'an speaks of God, man and nature in the context of the principle of integrity.

In conclusion, the Qur'an expresses that there is an interconnection among the units extant in the realm of being and there is an intertwined order therein. If it is assumed that there is a separateness and disconnection among the creatures, the look to environment consequently will change. At the same time, the notion that whatever is done only concerns the person who does it will prevail, thus this selfish and irresponsible attitude will give rise to several environmental disasters. For instance, because of the lack of consideration about whether there is a connection between the sprays and ozone layer, it was too late when it was discovered that the sprays played a devastating role in the ozone depletion.²⁷

The principle that the creatures are interconnected demonstrates that they do affect each other.²⁸ For instance, the Qur'an draws attention to the relationship between man and nature by saying that what exists in the heavens and on earth is given to the service of man (45/13) on one hand, but on the other that there arose corruption in the land and sea as result of what man perpetuated with his two hands (30/41). This is because man, as a creature thinking, feeling, understanding and, knowing, has a dynamic relationship with the living and non-living creatures in the nature. He produces novelties by using the matters. He meets his needs such as eating, drinking and housing from the Nature.²⁹

However, in meeting his needs, if man exceeds the limits and abuses the nature due to the desire to get mastery over the nature, he destroys it. So the

27 See Ediz Hun, "Canlı Çevrenin Dünü, Bugünü, Yarını", *İnsan ve Çevre*, edit.: Mustafa Aykaç, Selim Argun, İnsanlığa Saygı Vakfı Yay., İstanbul 1992, p. 30.

28 For the importance of the interdependence between man and the environment, see Olcay İmamoğlu, "Psikolojik Açıdan İnsan-Çevre İlişkileri", *İnsan, Çevre, Toplum*, edit.: Ruşen Keleş, İmge Kit., İstanbul 1992, p. 191.

29 Bayrakdar, *ibid*, pp. 34-5.

nature, which man is granted to enjoy and meet his needs, comes to pose threat to him for its balance is now broken down as result of his abusing it. This fact emphatically reminds of the existence of the interdependence between us and nature and that one should not think of this relationship as of unilateral character.

The verse, which informs that all the things in the heaven and on earth are given to the service of man, does not mean or justify the dominion of man over the nature and his carelessly and wastefully using it. On the contrary, a closer examination of the Arabic word “sakh-kha-ra” shows that enjoying the things depends on the condition of knowing the laws which govern them.³⁰ Thus, the verse stresses the interdependence between man and nature and suggests it as complementary element of this relationship that it is God who grants man with the ability to benefit from the nature and that there is a clear lesson in this for the thoughtful nations³¹. So the verse presents a vivid picture of the integral relationship amongst God, nature and man.

If the principle of integrity is not taken into account in any relationship, each party will try to have sway over the other. In turn, this struggle will bring about mischief and corruption, the fact which is predicted by the Qur’an as there will arise corruption in the land and sea because of man’s actions.³²

In the instance of air pollution, being one of the most serious environmental problems in our age, we can find very important clues from the perspective of interdependence. The gases which the factories and motor vehicles emit into the atmosphere have spoiled the composition of the air and consequently brought about air pollution. However, though man is aware of this pollution, he insists on his error.

Polluted by man, the air sends down acid rains to the soil and water; thus, it affects all the organisms on earth including man. The leading of the air pollution to the pollution of soil and water forms one of the most obvious examples of the interrelationship between the heaven and earth.³³ As seen in this example, man’s perception of nature in severance from God and only in accordance with his desire brings about environmental problems and, in turn, these prob-

30 Şakir Kocabaş, *İslam’da Bilginin Temelleri*, İz Yay., İstanbul 1997, p. 106.

31 Kocabaş, *ibid*, p. 107.

32 Özdemir, *ibid*, p. 104. Uslu, *ibid*, p. 30.

33 Özdemir, *ibid*, p. 34.

lems lead to other inexorable problems.

d. The Principle of Balance: It denotes the conduction of the mutual relationship in measure and harmony without violating the present structure. In this regard, the principle of balance suggests that man should pay attention to some limits and measures in his life.³⁴ For instance, the verses 3-4 of the Sura Mulk call attention to the fact that God created the sky in due proportion and harmony by requesting man two times to turn his vision to the sky to find a disharmony, disproportion and, imperfection therein. However, the verses report that the vision will come back frustrated and worn out. Similarly, the verse 2 of the Sura Furqan informs that everything in the universe is created in due proportion and order. This means that there lies a balance in the universe and man should act therewith.³⁵

The Qur'an gives the guidelines of how to preserve this cosmic balance. Of many of them, we can mention refraining from creating mischief on earth (28/83, 29/36), avoiding wastefulness (7/31), observing the trust (3/75-6, 33/72, 82, 23/8, 70/32) and keeping away from extravagance (2/190).

The lack of sufficient attention to the principle of balance played an important part in the rise of the present-day environmental problems.³⁶ Rachel Carson sheds light on the dovetailed balance in nature and mentions a number of examples on this issue. He demonstrates that the chemical medication brings more harm than profit if it is applied without taking account of the complicated biological system; ecosystem is the system of balances and thus the breakdown of one of the systems will affect the entire ecological system.³⁷

To corroborate this point, he mentions what happened to the family of antelope, called "Kaibab", living in Arizona, as a thought-provoking example of the consequences of the breakdown of the ecological balance. Carson relates that once upon a time the Kaibab antelopes led a balanced life but then the people killed all the wolves and hyenas living there in order to protect the antelopes. Afterwards, the antelope population whose enemies died began to increase

34 See, Erol Uluğ, "Çevre Kirlenmesinin Boyutları", *İnsan, Çevre, Toplum*, Ruşen Keleş, İmge Kit., İstanbul 1992, pp. 17-8. Temel, *ibid*, p. 70.

35 Faruk Gürbüz, *Kur'an'da Denge*, Denge Yay., İstanbul 1997, p. 34. Seyyid Hüseyin Nasr, *Bir Kutsal Bilim İhtiyacı*, Turkish trans.: Şahabettin Yalçın, İnsan Yay., İstanbul 1995, p. 163.

36 Temel, *ibid*, p. 70.

37 Doğan Cüceloğlu, *İçimizdeki Biz*, İnsan Yay., İstanbul 1990, p. 53.

speedily to the extent that the food resources could not feed them. Subsequently, they died *en masse*. The antelopes which starved multiply outnumbered those hunted by the wolves and hyenas. In addition, the flora was badly harmed because of the devouring of the starving antelopes.³⁸

This incident revokes us to reconsider the verse “Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of what 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)” and the verse “They make mischief in the land, and mend not it.”

4. The Basic Characteristics Human-Environment Relationship that is Constructed in Accordance with the Quran

Man influences his environment as he is influenced by his environment. This mutually influencing is closely related to the way man establishes relationship with the environment. A healthily established relationship will bring a positive interaction, and vice-versa. Therefore, the relationship of man with the environment has impact on his psychological health.³⁹ So what kind of relationship and interaction between man and nature should be envisaged to protect psychological health? This question can be best answered in the context of the present-day environmental problems which challenge modern man. Therefore, we need first to take a cursory look at the situation of man.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr holds that the present-day environmental crisis not only threatens the life cycle on earth but also represents the manifestation of inner diseases and defects which have long haunted man. So this evident crisis is the symptom of the illness inside man on one hand and on the other, it is a manifested sign of the illness which discloses itself as an obvious exhaustion making the diseased eventually aware of the seriousness of his disease.⁴⁰

Describing the present-day environmental crisis as the manifestation of

38 Cüceloğlu, *ibid*, p. 53.

39 For more information about the importance of the interaction between man and environment from the psychological perspective, see Tosun, *ibid*, pp. 64-7. Fevzi Samuk, “Çevre ve Ruh Sağlığı”, *İnsan ve Çevre*, edit.: Mustafa Aykaç, Selim Argun, Issues Presented in Symposium, İnsanlığa Saygı Vakfı Yay., İstanbul 1992, p. 317 and on. Deniz Gürsel, *Çevre Sizsiniz*, İnsan Yay., İstanbul 1989, p. 93 and on.

40 Seyyid Hüseyin Nasr, *Makaleler*, Turkish trans.: Şahabettin Yalçın, İnsan Yay., İstanbul 1995, p. 41.

modern man's inner malaise, Nasr, in a sense, hints that the current human-environment relationship has deteriorated man's psyche and man's psychological problems exacerbated the environmental crisis. Nasr maintains that the following approach to the environment has aggravated the environmental crisis: The modern man, who first appeared in the West and gradually spread out into the other regions, has for centuries destroyed the planet always in the name of progress, material success, economic advancement and the other errors of the nineteenth century. However, he now sees that this process not only exhausts him inwardly and spiritually but also makes it difficult to breathe the air, which is a dispensable condition for the life on earth. The modern man, who turned his back to the heaven for the sake of the world, is, in a sense, losing the world, too, because of the loss of the heaven. This is an incredible judgment of the history on him.⁴¹

As put clearly by Nasr, modern man relegated his relationship with the environment from the God-human-nature plain, laid down by the Qur'an, to the human-nature level. The church, which exerted a great pressure on the Western man especially in the nineteenth century, and Christian eschatology contributed to the indifference and aversion of man to spiritual values. As for the relationship with the environment, the part of nature in the human nature-relationship had been ignored up to the beginning of the twentieth century and thus the damage inflicted by man on the nature came to be better realized only at the early 1900s.

The violation of the ecosystem affects the psychological health of man. The diminution of green fields and the noisy and stressful life are just few of many overwhelming environmental problems which have a negative effect on our psychological health. The environmental crisis which has become as worse as to threaten human psychology is the manifestation of man's inner illnesses, as pointed out by the Iranian thinker. This is because man came to ignore the principles of the human-nature relationship, let alone those of the God-man-nature relationship. In his relationship with the environment, acting in disagreement with the principles of integrity, reciprocity and, balance, man reduced the two-way relationship between himself and nature to a one-way relationship and situated himself at the center of this relationship.

From this discussion, one can conclude that the environmental problems

41 Nasr, *Makaleler*, p. 42.

stem from man's egocentric attitude towards the nature. This approach also reveals the character of man's inner illness. I would like to discuss the mental problems which man experiences as result of the way he approaches the environment.

a. Human who is not alienated from himself \ herself and his \ her environment: If the human-environment relationship becomes anthropocentric and lacks a strong foundation, man may experience sense of alienation first from himself and then the natural and social environment.⁴² Derived from the Latin root "*alienus*", which means somebody else and foreign⁴³, the term "alienation" includes the senses of estrangement from one's environment, job, products and eventually from himself.⁴⁴ Eric Fromm asserts that this term has kinship with the French term "*aliene*", being closely related to the Spanish "*alienade*", which denotes mentally sick person.⁴⁵

The term "alienation" designates the loss of one's independence of self-affiliation because of the external factors and the treatment of oneself like a matter. So one becomes the slave of matter and even the slave of what one produces.⁴⁶ Eric Fromm informs that Paul Tillich regards idolatry as a certain type of alienation. Tillich thinks that idolatry is not polytheism exactly; rather, it is the phenomenon that though the worshipped idols are produced by the hands of man, some people kneel down before the idols and adore them. Thereupon man is no more human being and has become a matter. He is torn apart from his essence and alienated from himself.⁴⁷

Self-alienation appears as dependence upon the others as result of the failure to make use of one's own talents.⁴⁸ Ali Shariati designates three indispensable human features. The first one is that man is a self-conscious creature, i.e.,

42 Tosun, *ibid*, p. 321-2.

43 *Sosyal Bilimler Ansiklopedisi* , IV/222.

44 Adnan Erkuş, *Psikolojik Terimler Sözlüğü* , Doruk Yay., Ankara 1994, p. 12.

45 Eric Fromm, *Sağlıklı Toplum*, Turkish trans.: Yurdanur Salman, Zeynep Tanrısever, Payel Yay., no date, pp. 134-5.

46 Sadık Kılıç, *Yabancılaşma, İnsana Karşı Süreç* , Rahmet Yay., İstanbul, no date, p. 18. Ahmet Cevizli, *Felsefe Sözlüğü*, Ekin Yay., Ankara 1996, p. 541.

47 Fromm, *Sağlıklı Toplum*, pp. 135-6. Eric Fromm, *Marx'ın İnsan Anlayışı*, Turkish trans.: Kaan H. Öktem, Arıtan yay., İstanbul 1993, pp.105-6.

48 Güven Savaş Kızıltan, *Kişinin Silinen Yüzü Çağımızda Yabancılaşma Sorunu* , Metis Yay., İstanbul 1986, pp. 15-6.

he perceives his own nature and creation, as well as the nature of the universe and the nature of the relationship between himself and the universe.⁴⁹

His second characteristic is that he has the ability of choosing and willing. With this ability, man can resist the nature, the things which have dominion over him such as his bodily and mental needs and even his stimuli. At the same time, he can sacrifice himself for the sake of an ideal and for the others. So he exhibits the ability to choose and actualize what he has chosen.⁵⁰

His third feature is that he has the ability to produce and fashion. He can produce everything ranging from the most minus things to the greatest industrial and artistic works. Furthermore, he seeks to create novelties by making use of the opportunities lying in the Nature.⁵¹

Though these capabilities distinguish man from the other creatures, he becomes human being in true sense only through a fully realization of this potential. As ably put by Şariati, man may also become desolate and imprisoned in his own dungeon.⁵² This is also some kind of self-alienation for if man fails to use his ability to be conscious, he starts the process of self-alienation. In addition, if man fails to grasp his nature, the nature of the universe and the relationship between himself and the universe, he will lose the ability to be a conscious creature.

If man forgets the purpose of the creation of the universe, there will arise a lacuna between himself and the nature and thus he will fail to develop a balanced attitude to the nature. In consequence, he will be alienated from his own environment and become the slave of what he produces. All this process will result in man's self-alienation.⁵³

For instance, the mechanization process which began in the nineteenth century, first took its force from such ideals as producing more, abundance, prosperity and, wealth. Yet as result of the passage of a relatively long time, man forgot why he strived for the machinery. Being once in the hands of man, the control is now held by the machinery. In one of his writings, Atilla İlhan

49 Ali Şariati, *İnsanın Dört Zindanı*, Turkish trans.: Hüseyin Hatemi, Bir Yay., İstanbul 1984, p. 33.

50 Şariati, *ibid*, p. 34.

51 Şariati, *ibid*, pp. 36-7.

52 Şariati, *ibid*, p. 71 and on.

53 Nasr, *Makaleler*, pp. 59-60; Eric Fromm, *Sevgi ve Şiddetin Kaynağı*, Turkish trans.: Yurdanur Salman, Nalan İçten, Payel Yay., İstanbul 1987, pp. 57-8.

depicts the current predicament as the following: "This is what positivism augurates to humanity from the very beginning. However, what do we see in the post-industrial societies, who have been using the most advanced techniques? Technology has subverted the traditional religious, moral as well as legal values and overthrew all which is recognized as sacred and then deployed itself therein. Technology is now sanctified. Once the nature is polluted in that society, the relationship between the society and nature is broken down. More accurately, it [modernity] developed technology, i.e., the facilities of extermination in an incredible cruelty. Not contended with that, it alienated the human being, too."⁵⁴

Alienated from nature and himself as such, modern man writhed in loneliness because he has become now an individual person.⁵⁵ Captured by technology and enslaved by his own products, man comes to be an individual motivated by the vile and temporal concerns of money and consumption, which thwart him of achieving perfection and obtaining his own "human" being. So he has become lonely, alienated and egoist. He is now concerned only with himself. His selfish interests are far above solidarity with the others.⁵⁶ The following verse presents a dramatic picture of the man who experiences such an alienation and loneliness: "And be you not like those who forgot Allah and He made them forget their own souls! Such are the rebellious transgressors!" (59/19)

b. Human that does not behave violently to himself \herself and to his/her environment: Another important factor in the human-nature relationship from the perspective of psychological health is whether the tendencies to aggression and violence have become part of man's personality. Aggressive behaviors and violence actions result from such sensations as anger, anxiety, fear, hatred, and enmity. At the same time, such behaviors and actions lead to these sensation states.⁵⁷ Though its instinctive character is accepted,⁵⁸ the sense of aggression

54 Kılıç, *ibid*, p. 15. Atilla İlhan, "İkili Yabancılaşma", *Milliyet*, Daily Newspaper in the Turkish Language, 30 November 1982.

55 Kılıç, *ibid*, pp. 28-9.

56 Fromm, *Sağlıklı Toplum*, pp. 153-4.

57 Özcan Köknel, *Bireysel ve Toplumsal Şiddet*, Altın Yay., İstanbul 1986, pp. 15, 20.

58 Orhan Hançerlioğlu, *Ruhbilim Sözlüğü*, Remzi Kit., İstanbul 1988, p. 318. Köknel, *ibid*, p. 29. Bilgin, *ibid*, pp. 244-6.

appears mostly as result of one's interaction with the surroundings,⁵⁹ So the aggressive behaviors are more often than not learned behaviors.⁶⁰

The tendency to destroy everything is not the same as the natural and universal impulse to defend oneself in the face of danger or feeling threatened. It is a learned way of action.⁶¹ This occurs with reinforcement or model-taking. Hence, a later-learned social behavior can be reduced and completely terminated if the appropriate conditions are secured,⁶² In addition, the degree of violence and aggression may intensify or diminish in accordance with one's relationship with his surroundings. Hence, the aggressive behaviors of the individual who was alienated as result of the way he established relationship with the surroundings will intensify also because of the sense of loneliness. As demonstrated by an inquiry, the sense of loneliness is described by many as despair, grief, anxiety, fear, self-humiliation, and depression.⁶³

Because the sense of loneliness, being the expression of psychological and social alienation, intensifies fear, grief, anxiety, and worry, it will consequently strengthen the aggressive tendencies. So the individual may exhibit aggressive behaviors towards himself and his surroundings. Man's tendency to destroy everything and act like a bomb ready-to-explode anytime in society is a typical expression of modern man's loneliness in masses. Man seeks to get rid of his loneliness by exploiting and destroying nature, as it were. Overeating, greediness and accumulating money are the behaviors resorted by the lonely because the sense of loneliness pervades through every molecule of the lonely people and seizes their all hopes, passion, dreams, and wishes.⁶⁴

When the human-environment relationship develops in the direction of man's dominion over environment, this leads to the rise of the behaviors aimed at securing this domination. Man has recourse to violence in order to remove the obstacles standing in the way to domination. These obstacles disappoint and anger man because they frustrate him to achieve his desires and expectati-

59 Köknel, *ibid*, pp. 40-1.

60 Bilgin, *ibid*, pp. 258-9.

61 Köknel, *ibid*, p. 28.

62 Erkuş, *ibid*, p. 12.

63 Bilgin, *ibid*, p. 133.

64 Ira J. Tanner, *Yalnızlık, Sevme Korkusu*, Turkish trans.: H. Koray Sönmez, Kural Dışı Yay., İstanbul 1996, p. 30.

ons. In subsequence, these feelings sow the seeds of aggression and violence in individual and societal scale.⁶⁵

Up to the nineteenth century, nature had had the function to serve and supply man in economic life. However, as result of the dramatic changes occurred in the human and world perception of Protestantism⁶⁶ and Industrial Revolution, nature came to be conceived of an economic object yielding profit.⁶⁷ This conception led the people to abuse nature and act aggressively⁶⁸ in order to produce and earn more, which ended up with environmental pollution. Hence, nature was plundered with economic concerns and economy has become an important ground for the conflict between man and the Nature.⁶⁹

The offenses directed to the nature stemming from the sense of loneliness, self-alienation, and economic concerns led to the destruction of nature and the breakdown of ecosystem. The new environment which formed as result of the above factors –one may call it a new physical and social surroundings in which we grapple with environmental challenges- led to the increase of the tendency to violence and aggression. This is because there is a continuous interaction between man and nature. The worsened physical and chemical conditions of nature affect man bodily and mentally. The relationship between the natural settings and the aggressive behaviors and violence crimes has been long debated and acknowledged. Many thinkers and scholars have made observations and researches about how the natural milieu affects man.⁷⁰

This led to the pollution and destruction of nature, which in turn gave rise to the breakdown of ecosystem and the ozone depletion. Such environmental problems as the changes in the sequence of the seasons affect man's physical and mental health, increase the senses of anger, anxiety, and weary. At the same, man is depressed by such problems caused by urbanization and industrialization as noise,⁷¹ overcrowding,⁷² traffic, and economic problems, all of which

65 Köknel, *ibid*, p. 143.

66 Uslu, *ibid*, pp. 83-7.

67 The Qur'an warns man that his relationship with the world should not be confined to saving goods. (9/34) It also advises that the desire of earning should be balanced as it is not preferred over God and His Messenger.

68 Uslu, *ibid*, p. 87 and on.

69 Uslu, *ibid*, p. 85.

70 Köknel, *ibid*, p. 55. Tosun, *ibid*, pp. 57-63.

71 İmamoğlu, *ibid*, pp. 195-6. Gürsel, *ibid*, p. 98-9. Bilgin, *ibid*, pp. 310-14.

increase aggressive tendencies. The examples which all of us experience in everyday life show that people apply to violence in the pettiest issues. So the human being suffers the consequences of the destruction of nature perpetrated by his hands. It had been time that man should revise his relationship with environment. Otherwise, the number of the people who have lost or about to lose their mental health will go on to increase.

Conclusion

There is a vital relationship between man and environment. The way man establishes relationship with environment is undoubtedly shaped by his environment perception. If he regards environment as something which he sees and feels merely at material level, the human-environment relationship will develop accordingly. So man needs to recognize his surroundings very well. The Qur'an describes environment as the triple of God, nature and man. This entails that the human-environment relationship should be established on the principles of interdependence and balance. At the same time, man should take Creator into consideration in his relationship with environment. Such a relationship will prevent man from alienation from himself and the surroundings and help him feel in harmony with the environment.

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