

Environment, Economics and Islam

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1. Environment refers to the state of the entire universe, in which humans are only one part. This environment is in a state of jeopardy due to human actions. The natural disasters that are occurring more frequently since information regarding them began to be collected and published, tells humanity that something had gone wrong. Then floods in Queensland and New South Wales are the latest testimony.
2. Economics is my specialized discipline, and for a long time since Adam Smith published his *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 and since Economics became a specialized intellectual and pedagogic discipline in universities, Professors who taught this subject and researchers who delved into it considered economics a rational science, which had nothing to do with ethics and morals. Environmental issues made their subject unnecessarily complicated and therefore it was conveniently included in that convenient Latin phrase, *ceteris paribus* meaning other things remain same. Only after 1970s and particularly after the Club of Rome warned in its report in late 1960s that the world was fast running out of natural resources, that Environmental Economics became a subdiscipline within economics.
3. Islam is my faith and it is not a religion in the Western sense of that term, but a way of life. The term employed by the Quran is *din*. Hence it is closely linked with ethics and morals. After 1970s, there was a plethora of publications and conferences on Islamic Economics, Islamic Banking, Islamic Science, and so on. Hence the connection among Islam, economics and environment.
4. Humans are the most superior of God's creations. Angels were asked to bow down before Adam. Humans were created as God's **caliph** (vicegerent) on earth. (Quran: 2:30). Who is a vicegerent and what are his/her powers? The most important power the vicegerent was given by God is the power to create. God creates and his vicegerent also creates, but with a difference. God had created from nothing and His vicegerent creates from what God had created already. Environment is God's creation. Humans were also given the power to think and choosing the right from wrong through God given his **aql** or intellect.

5. Having created the entire nature and its environment, and in it the human as the most superior being, God asked all His creations whether they could undertake the responsibility of managing God's creations. They all shuddered and refused out of fear, but Adam accepted it, and he was given the TRUST or **Amanah** of managing God's creations. (Quran: 33:72). It was his mismanagement that had created the environmental issues that humanity is confronting today.
6. To facilitate the management God made all other creations **subservient** to man/woman. (Quran: 14:32). But the human considered environment as his enemy and wanted to conquer it. After the industrial revolution the way science was taught in schools emphasized that to industrialize nature must be conquered. Why? It had been made subservient to you already? Why conquer it? A lopsided approach to science and nature, which contributed to environmental damages.
7. God also reminded the human that He had created everything in a state of **balance** (Quran 15:19). What humans did over centuries in his/her search for material advancement was to ignore and disturb that balance. We are experiencing the consequence of it now.
8. God also warned the consequences of mismanaging the environment. The Quran in several places and most emphatically points this out in the chapter on earthquake where it describes in the most frightening manner the nature of the danger. (Quran Chapter 99).
9. In conclusion, it is time humanity starts repairing the damages it has caused over centuries. In my reading of the Quran the end of the world will not come from God, but from the misdeeds of and mismanagement by his vicegerent. This statement would certainly disturb the conventional way of imparting knowledge about Islam and Quran by Muslim religious functionaries.