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TOPIC

The Role of Islam in Transforming the Landscape & Sustainable Development

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THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Prevailing new ideas about global landscaping is the most important topic that helps in controlling environmental pollution and several other issues related to Geology. Target of the subject “Global landscaping” is to enhance the physical appearance of the Earth. Actually, it is about to aesthetical study of Earth on a large scale, such as planting trees, reshaping countryside, creating green spaces, applying sustainable land management practices. Now the question is, what does Islam say about this? To what extent Islam can play a role to maintain and enhance the aesthetic beauty of the world’s landscape. But the major purpose of this paper is to explore the human behaviors that are also causing changes in the beauty of nature. So, this is not just focusing on the physical aesthetic view of land but also pointing out the indirect behaviors of humans that count to change the landscape. Because the transformation of the land and ecosystem is based on the behaviors of human beings. The discussion of this paper just relies on the Holy Quran and Hadith and not after the period of the last Prophet P.B.U.H.

Key words: Landscaping, Aesthetic, Ecosystem, Transformation, Reshaping

Introduction:

Global Landscaping is the subject that talks about the maintaining of outdoor spaces, such as garden, yards and parks. Landscaping is a vast subject related to Environmental studies, Geology and Geography. It can be said that all human made or non-human made phenomenon are discussed in this subject that connected to Earth surface. The area of this subject is to emphasize aesthetic appeal and functionality of natural phenomenon and resources. For instance, planting trees and flowers, installing pathways and water features, sustainable development of nature like renewable energy sources such as solar, wind etc.

The word “landscape” actually comes from the Dutch word “Lands chap”. This was used by the Dutch painters for their natural and rural scenery or paintings. The meaning of the word ‘Landscape’ in Cambridge dictionary following as,

“A large area of countryside, usually one without many buildings or other things that are not natural.”¹

However, the Oxford dictionary define it in different words but both have similarities and describe the same concept.

“Everything you can see when you look across a large area of land, especially in the country.”²

After understanding the meaning of the landscape, it is apparent that, this is a vast area of the earth. It is designed to be close to nature and improve its aesthetic nature approach for well-being of humans and other creations of the world. There are two types of landscaping: cultural and natural. Cultural landscaping ascribes as deliberated design in a landscape to reflect and express a particular cultural identity. Culture landscapes provide a perceptible simulation of human interactivity with the environment, thereby influencing relationship between society and nature. However, the natural landscape refers to landforms such as mountains, valleys, rivers, forests, deserts and coastlines etc. So general landscaping is interlinked with behaviors of humans and nature. How beautifully new ideas related to landscaping can be beneficial for all creations of Allah. There is introducing day by day new methods to improve global landscaping, including water saving strategies, solar utilization, green roofs, permeable paving and windbreaks. These new approaches are creating more resilient and friendly environment for people and animals.

The role of Islam related to Landscapes and sustainable development is unique and it always encourages humans to use natural resources in a better way. All behaviors that are causing changes to the real beauty of nature related to landscaping ideas are discouraged by Islam. These ideas can be about cultural landscapes, human rights, ethics or even about the beauty of natural landscape surfaces.

Islam and Landscaping Sustainable development:

The Quran and the Sunnah both pay attention to enhancing natural resources. Islam emphasize the better use of natural resources, not only for mankind but also for other creatures. The topic’s discussion will be based on the Quranic verses first, and then will be discussed according to Sirah of Muhammad P.B.U.H.

The Quranic word “Ayaa or Ayat” is strongly argued regarding landscaping and sustainable development. Because the meaning of the word is “signs of Allah”, the Quran clearly highlights the things that are representative of nature and consider them as the signs of Allah.

Because Allah subhana wa tala said in the Holy Quran;

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth; the alternation of the day and the night; the ships that sail the sea for the benefit of humanity; the rain sent down by Allah from the skies, reviving the earth after its death; the scattering of all kinds of creatures throughout; the shifting of the winds; and the clouds drifting between the heavens and the earth—‘in all of this’ are surely signs for people of understanding.”

While the other usage of the word *ayat* is as verse of the Quran or a holy sentence of any sacred book. Suppose if someone try to remove or change the verse of the Quran, he will surely punish by Muslims but imagine if someone misuses the nature or want to remove the universal signs of Allah, reaction will be just a protest against. But think for a minute that both are signs of Allah, then why the stuff of nature should be not protected as the verses of the Quran. That’s why all-natural phenomenon should be protected by human beings for the betterment.

The word “Earth” used several times in the holy Quran. Allah Subhana wa Talaa draw human attention again and again towards earth that human can observe His evidences on the earth. For instance, as the following verse is;

There are ‘countless’ signs on earth for those with sure faith,
as there are within yourselves. Can you not, see?

Allah subhana wa tala said in the above Holy verses that find my several signs on the earth including yourself. He emphasizes the importance of these signs that are part of landscaping. According to an online website the detail of an environment is giving below;

“The environment is perceived as the place where the signs (e.g. rivers, plants, and birds), pointing to Allah [S.W.T.] exist”³

“Verily in the heavens and the earth, are Signs for those who believe. And in the creation of yourselves and the fact that animals are scattered (throughout the earth), are Signs for those of assured Faith. And the alteration of Night and Day, and the fact that God sends down Sustenance from the sky, and revives therewith the earth after its death, and in the change of the winds, -are Signs for those that are wise.”

An article published by “Islam online” website sheds light on a very beautiful point that;

“Any destruction occurring to the environment is tantamount to destroying these signs. If any species becomes extinct, it is considered a loss of a Sign that reflects the greatness of the Creator. It is indeed a very sad thing if we continue to destroy

the environment, because we will prevent the generations to come from having a healthy relationship with the environment, where “healthy” means the chance to experience these Signs.”⁴

He also invites the humans to walk on earth to strong your faith and admired the beauty of Allah’s creation.

“Say, ‘O Prophet, ’ “Travel throughout the land and see how He originated the creation, then Allah will bring it into being one more time. Surely Allah is Most Capable of everything.”

Say, “Travel throughout the land and see the fate of the deniers.”

The same concept is about Hajj. Hajj is also a fundamental Islamic worship that basically works as a reminder of Allah’s signs. Indirectly Islam gets our attention towards all nature phenomena. It means environment and landscaping is very important in Islam. In Quran there is clearly mentioned that nothing is useless in lands of Allah.

Allah stated in Quran;

“We have not created the heavens and earth and everything in between without purpose—as the disbelievers think. So, woe to the disbelievers because of the Fire!”

Muhammad Akram Rana stated in his article that;

“Human interaction with environment might take the form of social and economic activities for the development of better environment., which, in turn, could provide the opportunity for improved social and economic activities such as housing, commerce, industry, tourism, transportation and recreation.”⁵

Now the time to discuss the points of Islam related to sustainable development to maintaining the resources of land for landscaping such as garden, fields, mountains, deserts, water falls, river and fountains.

For example, the verse of surah Yusuf promotes the idea of sustainable development. The verse is following as;

According to above mentioned verse, Hazrat Yusaf get an authority over the Egyptian land as a protector or guardian of the land. Because he was the prophet and having strong knowledge about His job. According to the Tafsir ibn Kathir;

Similarly, the verses 84 to 97 of surah Kahf depicts the importance of sustainable development by highlighting the incident of hazrat Zulqarnain and Yajooj Majooj. That how beautifully Hazrat Zulqarnain controlled the situation

by using natural sources and made a strong barrier that Yajooj Majooj could not climb over the wall or barrier.

Bring me blocks of iron!" Then, when he had filled up 'the gap' between the two mountains, he ordered, "Blow!" When the iron became red hot, he said, "Bring me molten copper to pour over it."

The Holy Quran also talks about the preservation of earth. For instance, the verse of surah Al-araaf shows the message that take ease of Allah's blessings but don't waste them and follow the path of moderation.

Protection of the natural resources by Prophet P.B.U.H

When Prophet P.B.U.H came to Madina after hijrah, there are several challenges such as starvation, water conservation, agricultural problems and providing shelter for refugees. So, prophet P.B.U.H resolved all problems very beautifully and encouraged the idea of sustainable development and landscaping. For instance, those who not engage in trade such as Abu Bakar, Umer, Ali ibn e Abu Talib and others, took to farming on the land owned by Al-ansar under the system of sharecropping.

Francesca De Chatal said about Hazrat Muhammad P.B.U.H that

The idea of the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) as a pioneer of environmentalism will initially strike many as strange: indeed, the term "environment" and related concepts like "ecology", "environmental awareness" and "sustainability", are modern-day inventions, terms that were formulated in the face of the growing concerns about the contemporary state of the natural world around us.⁶

The biggest problem that He (P.B.U.H) was confronted with was the issue of saving water, conserving water and safeguarding the purity of water. To solve this problem Hazrat Muhammad P.B.U.H encouraged Muslims to buy well for their poor brothers because they cannot afford a costly drop of water for their basic needs.

Narrated 'Uthman: The Prophet said, "Who will buy the well of Rumah (a well-known well in Al-Madina) (and endow it for the good of Muslims) so that he may use it as the other Muslims do without any privilege?" 'Uthman bought it.⁷

In this following hadith Hazrat Muhammad P.B.U.H beautifully encouraged Sahaba Ikram to buy a well of Ruma for dedicated the Muslim Ummah. Hazrat Usman addressed in this hadith in front of rebellions that remember when he bought Bair Rumma for Muslim Ummah.

Aba ‘Abdur-Rahntén narrated: When ‘Uthman se @! «+; was circled (by the rebels), he looked upon them from above and said, “I ask you by Allah, I ask nobody but the companions of the Prophet #, don’t you know that Allah’s Messenger # said, “Whoever will (buy and) dig the well of Rama will be granted Paradise,’ and I (bought and) dug it? Don’t you know that he said, whoever equip the army of ‘Usra (i.e., Tabtk’s Ghazwa) will be granted Paradise,’ and I equipped it?” They attested whatever he said. When “Umar founded his endowment he said, “Its administrator can eat from it.” The management of the endowment can be taken over by the founder himself or any other person, for both cases are permissible.⁸

According to Islamic tradition the well which originally belonged to a man named *Rumah*, a Jewish Medinan, who used to sell the water for profits. And at that time, it was quite difficult for Muslims, who were already struggling financially, to pay for the water they needed. Seeing this, on the request of prophet Muhammad, Uthman ibn Affan purchased the well from its Jewish owner and made a waqf for all, Muslims and non-muslims. This well is still active and the Waqf tradition is still on-going.⁹ One more Well bought by Hazrat Usman for the dedication of poor Muslims. The name of the well is “Bair al Malik,”¹⁰ some consider it the well of Rumma but some consider it another well bought by hazrat Usman R.A. Detail talk on this matter finds in the article of Dr. Muhammad Abu Bakr Sidiqi.¹¹

Sometime Hazrat Muhammad P.B.U.H miraculously enhance the water of well for the needs of the human beings. The following Hadith is described the situation beautifully.

Hazrat Muaaz bin Jabbal narrates that at the occasion of Tabuk the Prophet along with his army, thirty thousand warriors reached at a spring of Tabuk. The water of spring dripping in drops. We collected the water from there in pot which we presented to the prophet. The Prophet washed his blessed face and hand s with this water. The water from which the prophet washed his blessed face and hands was poured in the spring and it starting sprouting. The prophet said to Muaz bin Jabbal that he would see many orchards growing at that there

and its each and every inch will become cultivated. His prediction came true only after a few years and the entire land became lush green with waving crops.¹²

Even Islam don't like to waste water. In a hadith Prophet P.B.U.H prohibited to waste water even during ablution.

Contribution in Agricultural and Gardening Affairs:

As the prophet P.B.U.H solved the water problems, now he also focused on the problem of agriculture and gardening.

The Ansar said to the Prophet "Distribute the date palm trees between us and our emigrant brothers." He replied, "No." The Ansar said (to the emigrants), "Look after the trees (water and watch them) and share the fruits with us." The emigrants said, "We listen and obey."¹³

There is also a hadith that shows the importance to planting a tree or sows seeds for garden.

Narrated Anas bin Malik: Allah's Apostle said, "There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him."¹⁴

According to following hadith it is prohibited to cut Lote tree;

"He who cuts a lote-tree [without justification], Allah will send him to Hellfire."¹⁵

So, because the lote-tree grows in the desert and it is very important for this barren area that has scarce vegetation. Now point should be noted that if the life of one tree is secured in Islam, then what would be the opinion of Islam towards destroying millions of trees as a result of humans directly acting upon nature. Similarly, not appreciated destroying trees or plants even in a war without any severe reason. As a hadith mentioned in At-Tirmizi, about the city Makka sanctity.

Sa'eed bin AbI Sa'eed AlMaqburi narrated: "Abü Shuraib Al-'Adawi said that when 'Arnr bin Sa'eed was sending troops to Makkah, he said to him: 'O Amir! Allow me to tell you what the Messenger of Allah said on the day following the Conquest of Makkah. My ears heard it, my heart understood it thoroughly, and with my own eyes, I saw the Prophet when he - after glorifying and praising Allah - said: "Indeed Allah, the Most High, made Makkah a sanctuary, it was not made a sanctuary by

the people. So, it is not lawful for a man who believes in Allah and the Last Day to shed blood it, nor to cut down its trees.¹⁶

Hazrat Muhammad Prophet P.B.U.H also draw the attention of Muslims towards cultivation of barren lands for horticulture and better field.

The Prophet said, "He who cultivates land that does not belong to anybody is more rightful (to own it)." 'Urwa said, "Umar gave the same verdict in his Caliphate."¹⁷

According to the following Hadith, this is approved that if economically benefits expected regarding landscaping and human's well-being then a contract can be sign with your rival too.

Narrated Ibn 'Umar: Umar expelled the Jews and the Christians from Hijaz. When Allah's Apostle had conquered Khaibar, he wanted to expel the Jews from it as its land became the property of Allah, His Apostle, and the Muslims. Allah's Apostle intended to expel the Jews but they requested him to let them stay there on the condition that they would do the labor and get half of the fruits. Allah's Apostle told them, "We will let you stay on thus condition, as long as we wish." So, they (i.e. Jews) kept on living there until 'Umar forced them to go towards Taima' and Ariha'.¹⁸

He P.B.U.H also forbidden to stop use of excess water; the detail is giving below;

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, "Do not withhold the superfluous water, for that will prevent people from grazing their cattle."¹⁹

According to Islamic rule if someone find any treasure in his land, he should give one fifth of this land to the government because government this is the duty of state to care about landscape. If state will give the full right to owner, chances for misuse the treasure may be increase.

if somebody finds a treasure in his land, he has to give one-fifth of it to the Government."²⁰

After spreading the Islamic ideology in Persia and other countries, new landscaping ideas are introduced.

After the arrival of Islam in Persia in 8th century C.E., the Persians invented the water wheel, to raise water for irrigation, utilizing fast moving river water or oxen or sometimes ostriches. This was how the ancient gardens of Baghdad and Samarra came into being.²¹

Cleanliness of the Land

Protecting the land from pollution is indicated in the many hadiths that encourage people to keep it clean. One hadith state, among other things, that Allah likes goodness, cleanliness, and generosity. The hadith ends with a request by the Prophet [S.A.W] asking Muslims to clean their courtyards.

Narrated Salih bin Abi Hassan:

"I heard Sa'eed bin Musayyab saying: 'Indeed Allah is Tayyib (good) and he loves Tayyib (what is good), and He is Nazif (clean) and He loves cleanliness, He is Karim (kind) and He loves kindness, He is Jawad (generous) and He loves generosity. So clean' - I think he said - 'your courtyards, and do not resemble the Jews.'" He said: "I mentioned that to Muhajir bin Mismar, and he said: "Amir bin Sa'd [bin Abi Waqqas] narrated it to me from his father from the Prophet (ﷺ), similarly, except that he did not say: "Clean your courtyards."²²

Islam fully promotes the practice of cleanliness. The following hadith described very beautifully that Cleanliness is the half of faith.

Abu Malik at-Ash'ari reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Cleanliness is half of faith and al-Hamdu Lillah (Praise be to Allah) fills the scale, and Subhan Allah (Glory be to Allah) and al-Hamdu Lillah (Praise be to Allah) fill up what is between the heavens and the earth, and prayer is a light, and charity is proof (of one's faith) and endurance is a brightness and the Holy Qur'an is a proof on your behalf or against you. All men go out early in the morning and sell themselves, thereby setting themselves free or destroying themselves.²³

According to Islam if a person removes a hurdle from a path, this is considered as a charity or an extraordinary good deed.

"Removing hazardous objects from the road is an act of charity."²⁴

Arts & Culture in Islamic Landscaping:

The Holy Qur'an announced that human beings are the vicegerents of the earth. The word "Khalifa" predicts that humans are the responsible to protect environment. The behavior of Human beings is directly influence on the

ecosystem, that's why they are considered as a best controller of ecology by Islam. Muhammad Akram Rana stated that

The protection, conservation, and development of the environment and natural resources is a religious obligation to which all Muslims must adhere. Do good as God has done good to you, and avoid corruption in whatever form on earth, since God despises corruptors.²⁵

MD Abu Sayem highlighted the complete relation of the world "Khalifa and Abd". He said if a man declares as a vicegerent in Quran but other side he claimed as a slave too. He stated It as,

Humans are not only khalīfahs of God but also servants or slaves ('ibād, pl. of 'abd) of God.⁴⁰ When we interpret khalīfah as the highest dignity of humans, we should articulate it with the Qur'ānic term 'abd Allāh which refers to the servant of God. The concept of khalīfah indicates a magnified status of humans over God's creatures while the concept of 'abd reminds them that, in principle, their identity is of the servant of God. Though humans are granted a privilege as khalīfah, it is restricted in many ways. Humans are not the lords of the natural world; they are inseparable parts of it like other creatures. Being conscious of this fact, humans should treat justly non-human creatures. As humble servants ('ibād) of God, humans should perform their duties and responsibilities towards God and His creatures with God-gifted mental faculties and physical abilities.²⁶

After declaration of the human status of "Khalifa and Abd", it clearly shows the duty of man over earth that he has to manage everything on earth very carefully. If a Muslim want to work on Art to create aesthetic approach of land, he should find moderation in every matter. Islam not supported the modern art that is focusing to reveal the figure of humans and animals. Islamic role related to art is in architecture, calligraphy and pottery.

The symbol of Islamic civilization is the Holy Kabaa, the stability of which symbolizes the permanent and immutable character of Islam.²⁷

After mentioning the main master piece of Islamic architecture, there is another beautiful mosque "Masjid-e- Nabvi. That mosque built by the last Prophet P.B.U.H. Islamic architectural work has a great impact on world history but this is also truth that Islam is not promoting paintings, sculpting and modeling. The base

of an Islamic art stands on the theory of “Unity of God”. Idolatry and sculpture are totally against the Islamic Faith.

Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah stated about the Islamic art that,

The first minbar (pulpit) in the mosque. Which was prepared for the Prophet, was decorated with two balls, like pomegranates, and the two little grand-children of the Prophet enjoyed playing with them. This was the beginning of wood-carving. Later on, copies of the Quran were illuminated in colour, and the greatest care was taken in their binding. In short, Islam never forbids artistic progress. The only break put in is the one against the representation of animal (including human) figures.²⁸

But this is also the fact that Allah loves beauty and appreciated the things that are presented in a good manner. The following hadith is describing the idea beautifully;

Jabir reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Verily, Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty. He loves the loftiest of affairs and disapproves of pettiness.”²⁹

Dr. Hamidullah stated in his book that;

“The Quran itself (24:36) recommended grandeur in the construction of mosques. The Prophet’s Mosque at Madinah, the Dome of Rocks at Jerusalem, the Sulaimaniyeh mosque at Istanbul.”³⁰

At the end Dr. Hamidullah concluded that;

In short, in the realm of art, Muslims have made worthy contribution, avoiding its harmful features, developing its aesthetic aspects, and inventing things quite new to it.³¹

In an Islamic art work, whether it be down from architecture, painting, literature, or any other field, each part or element is combined by repetition or symmetry with other like or similar elements. there is no attempt to rob a unit of its separate existence. there is no attempt to make it grow organically out of that which went before and in turn give birth to a new whole of inseparable parts. Repetition and symmetry check such integration and evolution and help establish that feeling of never-ending pattern demanded by the culture's aesthetic conscience. The arabesque in Islamic art the structural characteristics of Islamic art are not confined to a negative rejection of development.³²

Transforming behaviors of Humans Regarding Landscaping

Ethically negative transforming of behaviors is also not acceptable in Islam. Especially those behaviors that are causing to change the beauty of nature. For instance, promoting the idea of homosexuality and the wrong concept of equality prevailing by the Feminist. Islam supports only those behaviors that are imposing the best impacts on Cultural Landscape. Because according to Quran there is a different verse that totally condemns the act of homosexuality.

Above mentioned behaviors are not appreciated in Islam. Because these actions are directly destroying the natural and cultural landscape. Because this behavior indirectly causes the transformation of an environment of society. Because it is against the natural phenomenon and stopped a family system while a family plays an important role to enhance Landscaping ideas. Without a family system this is hard to explore healthy and bright mind. Who can be trained or master minds to maintain the nature beauty. Besides that, all negative behaviors, like wastage and misuse of things all are banned in Islam. Islam teaching supports the idea of moderation in every matter. Islam not merely emphasizes to clean lands from garbage but also focused to keep clean souls of humans internally. Because internal beauty of humans enhances the real beauty of lands.

Because of this the Qur'ānic terms *isrāf*⁶² and *tabdhīr*⁶³ are also related to environmental degradation. The word *isrāf* refers to wasteful consumption while the word *tabdhīr* means squandering.⁶⁴ Present environmental problems are also a result of such bad human practices. In many developed countries including some Muslim states (especially Arab states of Persian Gulf), people are over consuming natural resources. In many ways, people are wasting foods, even during cultivation, harvesting, and processing,⁶⁵ which indicates that humans are not free from extravagance. Since natural resources are not unlimited nor are they the monopoly of any rich nation, everyone should be very responsible and self-constraint while utilizing them as commodity or foodstuffs. Under no circumstance, misusing and abusing should be accepted. These bad practices must be brought to a tight control and accountability.³³

Conclusion

After study of Quran and Sunnah it is clearly concluded that Islam always supports the idea of moderation & balancing regarding every matter of life. It draws the human attention towards the aesthetic sense of landscape, but also focusing to humans' internal beauty. Because according to Islam humans are vicegerent of Allah on the Earth. They are very responsible to secure their environment from all bad behaviors. The Holy Quran and Sunnah emphasized to

protect and enhance the beauty of earth. The Last Prophet P.B.U.H sorted out all problems related to Landscape. Like as contributions to control water deficiency, presentation from water wastage, solved agricultural problems, encouragement towards planting and garden, participation in building religious architectural monuments, cleanliness of land and especially grooming of human's behaviors. In short Islam promoting the idea of landscaping and sustainable development. It also opens the doors for accepting challenges regarding new transformations in the landscapes.

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33. MD Abu Sayem, Islam and Environmental Ethics: A Qur’ānic Approach, p 170