



## LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY: AN ISLAMIC APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

*Ms. Parveen Gul*  
*Lecturer*  
*Department of Law*  
*University of Malakand*  
*Dir Lower, Chakdara - Pakistan*  
[parveengul28@gmail.com](mailto:parveengul28@gmail.com)

*Dr. Bahadar Ali*  
*Lecturer in Law*  
*Department of Law*  
*University of Malakand*  
*Malakand - Pakistan*  
[babakhail91@gmail.com](mailto:babakhail91@gmail.com)

*Mr. Arshad Nawaz Khan*  
*Assistant Professor*  
*School of Law*  
*Quaid-i-Azam University*  
*Islamabad - Pakistan*  
[ankhan@qau.edu.pk](mailto:ankhan@qau.edu.pk)

### Abstract

*This research paper explores a strong ethical basis of Islam for intergenerational environmental justice and highlights how the present generations protect the world for the benefit of future generation. It also examines, through an in-depth examination of Quranic verses and Hadiths, that how Islam provides a comprehensive framework for sustainable environmental practices with a special focus on connection between the teachings of Islam and want for intergenerational justice in environmental stewardship.*

**Keywords:** *Environmental Justice, Environmental Sustainability, Intergenerational Equity.*

### 1. Introduction

Islamic ethics strongly emphasize on the intergenerational environmental equity as it resonates with the basic principles of accountability and justice contained in the Islamic worldview. On the basis of the concept of *Amanah* or trusteeship, Islam underscores that humans are stewards on Earth who are responsible for protection of its resources for both the present and future generations (Green, 2013). *This ethical consideration is closely connected to the notion of intergenerational environmental equity which provides for the promotion of equitable sharing of assets and opportunities between present and future generations.* The basis of intergenerational



environmental justice becomes vital when we examine that how environmental management practices provided by Muslims are guided by their Islamic belief and dogmatic framework. It forms a foundation to understand the Islamic call to balance (Mizan) that promotes long term resource management and moderation. Thus, it is not only the duty of present generation to ensure their moral obligations, but also application of teachings of Islam which support an all-inclusive strategy for the protection of environment based on timeless ethical standards (Jalal, 2023).

## 2. Environmental Justice in Islam

The ecological perspective of Islam is based on principle of Khalifa that includes guardianship, trusteeship, and stewardship. Khalifa is based on the notion that individuals can benefit from natural resources of the earth as long as they use them responsibly, and do not damage the capability of future generation or society to take advantage of them (Jackson, 2023). As stated in Quran "...eat and drink but exceed not the bounds; surely, He does not love those who exceed the bounds" (The Quran 7: 32) and "do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for Allah certainly does not like the corruptors" (The Quran 28: 77). Undoubtedly, a contention can be made that Muslims bear a responsibility to address matters pertaining to the environment.

### i. Stewardships (*Khalifah*)

In the Islamic perspective, humans are regarded as stewards, known as "khalifah", who have been entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the Earth. The act of stewardship entails the duty to safeguard and conserve the natural environment (Faruqi, 2021). The Quran states, "*it is He who has made you successors (khalifah) upon the earth*" (The Quran 35: 39). Everything is subservient to Allah's will and omnipotence. However, humans are only a part of Allah's exclusive creation, which was designed to serve Him alone. "thus *We have made you trustees (khulafaa) on the earth after them, to see how you would act*" (The Quran 10: 14).

The responsibility of stewardship bestowed upon humanity by Allah serves as both a means of honoring and testing individuals. If individuals are granted the privilege of utilizing natural resources, they also bear the need to ensure their responsible and equitable utilization, thereby maintaining a state of balance and sustainability. Man does not possess anything, but rather exercises authority over the entrusted resources that Allah has made available to him (Zafar, 2021). This concept underscores the idea that humans bear the responsibility of being stewards charged with the preservation and management of the Earth and its resources.

### ii. Accountability (*Muraqabah*)

The Islamic faith espouses the belief that individuals bear responsibility for their acts, encompassing their conduct towards the environment (Ozdemir, 2020). The Quran mentions, "*so whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it*" (The Quran 99: 7-8). This underscores the significance of taking into account the environmental impacts of human behaviors and their repercussions in the future.



**iii. Compassion and Justice (*Adl*)**

Islam places a strong emphasis on having compassion for all of creation. The most well-known Hadith on environmental issues supports the Quranic teaching that humanity has been entrusted guardianship over nature, which states that, “*the earth is green and beautiful and Allah has appointed you his stewards over it*” (Sahih Muslim). This ideology promotes the notion that Muslims should approach environmental matters with kindness and justice, guaranteeing the equitable allocation of resources (Mudassar, 2023).

**iv. Prohibition of Extravagance and Waste (*Israf, Tabdhir*)**

Islam strictly prohibits extravagance and wastefulness (*Israf*). Moderation is encouraged in all aspects of life, including resource usage. The Quran emphasizes the need of avoiding excess and wastefulness (*Israf*) on numerous occasions. Believers are encouraged to spend their resources in a balanced and moderate manner, without excess. The Quran states, “*indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful*” (The Quran 17: 27). The adoption of sustainable practices and responsible consumption in order to minimize environmental damage and mitigate resource depletion is promoted by this principle (Salau, 2020).

**v. Equitable Distribution (*Qist*)**

Islam encourages an equitable distribution of natural resources. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “*the son of Adam has no better right than that he would have a house wherein he may live, a piece of cloth whereby he may hide his nakedness and a piece of bread and some water*” (Sunan Ibn Majah). This emphasizes the need of ensuring that all people have access to the basic essentials of life, such as clean air, water, and a healthy environment (Hasan, 2022).

**vi. Prohibition of Harm (*La Darar Wa La Dirar*)**

Islam forbids causing injury to oneself or others. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “*there should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm*” (Sunan Ibn Majah). This principle also applies to the environment, emphasizing the importance of avoiding activities that destroy nature and biodiversity (Shaham, 2020).

**vii. Conservation (*Hifz-al-Ma'arifah*)**

The preservation and safeguarding of resources is the idea behind *Hifz al-Ma'arifah*. Islam promotes protecting the natural resources, wildlife, and environment. The significance of environmental preservation was underscored by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), who forbade the felling of trees within the enemy's territory during warfare (Bsoul, Omer, Kucukalic, & Archbold, 2022). The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said that “*He who cuts a lote-tree (without justification), Allah will send him to Hellfire*” (Al-Tirmidhi: 5239). If the Islamic perspective on plants is that they have this status during times of conflict, then it stands to reason that in times of peace they “enjoy” a higher position.

**3. Environmental Ethics in Daily Life**

---



The incorporation of environmental ethics into Muslims' daily lives entails adopting lifestyle choices, consumption patterns, and communal practices that are consistent with Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship. Here are some ways Muslims can align their daily lives with Islamic environmental ethics principles:

**i. Conservation in routine life**

● **Water Conservation**

Water conservation holds significant importance in the Islamic faith. Muslim individuals are strongly encouraged to exercise prudence in their utilization of water, with the aim of preventing any unnecessary wastage throughout various practices such as ablutions, cleaning, and other routine tasks (Dargin, 2023). The significance of water conservation is equivalent to that of water-sharing. It is said that the prophet Mohammed (SAW) witnessed a man conducting the required pre-prayer ablution. Even though he was 'located on a flowing river', he urged him not to use excessive (Israf) amounts of water (Sunan Ibn Majah: 425).

● **Energy Conservation**

The practice of being conscious of energy consumption is in accordance with Islamic principles. Conserving energy by turning off lights and electrical gadgets when they are not in use, as well as utilizing energy-efficient equipment, aligns with the principle of avoiding excess. Not only does our way of life conflict with energy conservation, but it also conflicts with the spirituality, mental health, and physiology of humans as established by Allah. It's no surprise that a group of ailments known as 'Lifestyle Disease' have now been linked to this lifestyle change, including hypertension, sleeplessness, sadness, backache, amnesia, pessimism, and others (Rohmatulloh, Hasanah, Sahlani, & Zuhri, 2023). The Quran also mentions the natural activity cycle as, "And We have made (the night) for your sleep as a mean for rest, and have made day to seek your provisions" (Surah Al-Naba 78:9-11).

Islam's teachings so naturally align with the need to reduce daylight in order to increase energy efficiency. It is simple to shift the lifestyle of commuting to work, school, public transportation, daily housework, study, entertainment, and all other activities to early morning hours. This would save a significant amount of energy that would otherwise be used to power the infrastructure that supports nighttime culture. Not only does Islam promote early wakefulness and sleep, but most other religions do as well. A similar way of living that supports energy saving is heralded by the well-known proverb, 'Early to bed and early to rise make a man wise, wealthy and healthy'. By adopting a 'day light saving' or 'early to bed and early to rise' lifestyle, energy conservation can drastically lower the energy load. If everyone went to bed early, all human activity would cease, which would lessen the demand for nighttime lighting. But this can only happen if people heed the advice of Islam, which is beneficial for both energy conservation and overall wellness (Muszaffarsham, Kandar, & Husini, 2022).



## **ii. Sustainable Consumption**

### **• Ethical Choices in Food**

Islam encourages ethical choices in food consumption. Muslims are advised to avoid wastefulness in food and to consume halal (permissible) and tayyib (pure, wholesome) products (Aziz, Bakry, Habibi, & Armia, 2023). This statement is in accordance with the teachings of Allah SWT as stated in the Quran ‘O humanity! Eat from what is lawful and good on the earth, and do not follow Satan’s footsteps. He is truly your sworn enemy’ (Al-Baqarah: 168). This aligns with the principles of sustainability and responsible consumption.

### **• Avoidance of Excess and Extravagance**

Islamic teachings emphasize moderation and avoidance of excess. Muslims are encouraged to be mindful of their consumption habits, avoiding unnecessary extravagance and waste (Kalbasi & Amani, 2022).

## **iii. Waste Reduction and Recycling**

### **• Reducing Household Waste**

Islam encourages minimizing waste. Muslims can adopt practices such as recycling, composting, and reducing single-use items to contribute to environmental sustainability. According to Islamic law, every Muslim has a responsibility to preserve the environment, use resources wisely, abstain from various diseases, and commit acts of *tabdzir* and *israf*. Additionally, it is prohibited to leave trash where it can still be picked up and used for one’s own and other people’s interests (Achmad, 2022).

## **iv. Green Community Practices**

### **• Community Clean-Up Initiatives**

Islamic communities can organize clean-up campaigns to maintain the cleanliness and beauty of public spaces. The concept of cleanliness encompasses not just the physical realm but also encompasses the broader environmental context. Muslims are obligated to maintain cleanliness and purity in their surroundings. According to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), maintaining cleanliness is considered a fundamental aspect of one’s faith. In addition, he underscored the significance of maintaining cleanliness in one’s residence, eliminating any contaminants, and ensuring its orderliness (Javaid, 2023). This reflects the Islamic principle of respecting and caring for the environment.

## **v. Educational Initiatives**

### **• Promoting Environmental Awareness**

Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of knowledge. Muslim communities have the capacity to participate in educational endeavors aimed at enhancing knowledge regarding environmental concerns and fostering the adoption of sustainable practices within their constituents.



## 5. Conclusion

The intimate conversion between the fundamental ethical ethos of Islam and the precepts of intergenerational environmental equity is not only fundamental but quite consonant to modern values. Islam strongly emphasizes on stewardship or *khalifate* of human beings on this earth, thereby ensuring a rational resource management within the scope and purview of environmental justice. The concept of *amanah* or trusteeship underlines and at times significantly bound the inhabitants of earth to safeguard the environment for posterity. This is a fundamentally in consonance with ideating the canons of intergenerational environmental equity, thereby guaranteeing the well-being and opportunities to safe environment for future generations through its responsible handling.

Islam, being a complete code of life, also highlights the significance of maintaining a balance (*mizan*) in the interconnection of living entities across the natural eco system. The advocacy of these views regarding the equitable allocation of environmental benefits and drawbacks among different demographic groups are in line with the tenets of environmental equity. A more equitable and environmentally sustainable global society can be developed by incorporating these ideas into transnational environmental legislative frameworks and societal practices. This approach finely combines practical ideas about environmental security within moral and ethical capsules. This also demonstrates that how Islamic and religious beliefs can provide a solid ethical basis for addressing contemporary world environmental challenges.



## References

- . (Al-Baqarah: 168).
- . (Al-Tirmidhi: 5239).
- . (Sahih Muslim).
- . (Sunan Ibn Majah).
- . (Sunan Ibn Majah: 425).
- . (Surah Al-Naba 78:9-11).
- . (The Quarn 99: 7-8).
- . (The Quran 7: 32).
- . (The Quran 10: 14).
- . (The Quran 17: 27).
- . (The Quran 28: 77).
- . (The Quran 35: 39).
- Achmad, F. S. (2022). Waste management an Islamic perspective. *Journal of Advance Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7(4).
- Aziz, N. i., Bakry, N., Habibi, M., & Armia, M. S. (2023). The paradigm of modern food products and its relevance with the concept of food in the Quran. *Heliyon*, 9(11).
- Bsoul, L., Omer, A., Kucukalic, L., & Archbold, R. H. (2022). Islam's Perspective on Environmental Sustainability: A Conceptual Analysis. *Social Sciences*, 11(6), 228.
- Dargin, J. (2023). Water Conservation in Islamic Teachings. *EcoMENA*.
- Faruqui, S. (2021). Environmental Rights in Islam.
- Green, J. (2013). What Does Islam Say About Environmental Justice? *AIM Ahlulbayt Islamic Mission*.
- Hasan, H. (2022). Islam and Ecological Sustainability: An Exploration into Prophet's Perspective on Environment. *Social Science Journal for Advanced Research*, 2(6), 9-14.
- Jackson, E. (2023). Islamic Law and Climate Justice. *OpinioJuris*.
- Jalal, S. D. (2023). How Muslim Perspectives Affect Climate Justice. *Diplomatic Courier*.
- Javaid, R. M. M. (2023). Cleanliness is one of the fundamental teachings of Islam.
- Kalbasi, F., & Amani, M. (2022). Recognizing Extravagance Consumption and Avoiding Wastefulness Using Islamic Benchmarks in Nahj al-Balaghah. *International Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies*, 2(1).
- Mudassar, K. (2023). Social Justice in Islam: Striving for Equity and Fairness. *Al-Quran Classes*.
- Muszaffarsham, N. H., Kandar, M. Z., & Husini, E. M. (2022). Energy Efficiency Awareness and Practices Based on Islamic Perspectives. *Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners*, 20(2), 159-170.
- Ozdemir, I. (2020). What does Islam say about climate change and climate action? *Al-Jazeera*.
- Rohmatulloh, Hasanah, A., Sahlani, L., & Zuhri, M. T. (2023). Energy-Saving Triangle: Internalizing Islamic Ethical Values on Energy Saving in Integrative Learning. *Religions*, 14(10), 1284.
- Salau, S. (2020). Why Islam Forbids Extravagance, Waste. *The Guardians*.



- Shaham, R. (2020). Legal Maxims (qawa'id fiqhiyya) in Yusuf al-Qaradawi's Jurisprudence and Fatwas. *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 140(2).
- Zafar, S. (2021). Environmental Sustainability in Islam. *EcoMENA*.