

## Environmental Stewardship in Islam: Addressing Climate Change and Conservation in Lahore

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### Abstract

Environmental stewardship is a fundamental principle in Islam, rooted in the belief that humans are caretakers (khalifah) of the Earth, responsible for maintaining the balance (mizan) established by Allah. This article explores how these Islamic teachings can be applied to address climate change and promote conservation efforts in Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest city. Lahore faces significant environmental challenges, including air pollution, water scarcity, and deforestation, which are exacerbated by rapid urbanization and industrialization. By integrating Islamic principles with contemporary environmental strategies, there is potential to foster a sustainable approach to urban development. The article highlights key Quranic verses and Hadiths that emphasize the importance of protecting the environment, conserving resources, and ensuring the well-being of all creation. It also discusses the role of local religious leaders and communities in promoting environmental awareness and action. Case studies of successful conservation initiatives in Lahore, such as tree plantation drives and water conservation programs, are examined to demonstrate how Islamic values can be practically applied to modern environmental challenges. Ultimately, the article argues that by embracing the ethical and spiritual dimensions of environmental stewardship in Islam, citizens and policymakers in Lahore can address the city's ecological crises more effectively. This approach not only aligns with religious obligations but also supports Pakistan's broader goals for

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sustainable development and climate resilience.

**Keywords:** Islamic environmental ethics, climate change, conservation, Pakistan, Khilafah, Amanah, Islamic finance, sustainability, environmental stewardship, green investments.

### **Introduction**

Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship, viewing the natural world as a trust (amanah) from God, for which humanity is responsible. This sense of responsibility extends to all aspects of the environment, from the preservation of natural resources to the prevention of harm to living creatures. In the context of modern challenges, such as climate change, these principles gain renewed significance, particularly in urban centers like Lahore, Pakistan.

Lahore, a city known for its vibrant culture and rich history, faces pressing environmental issues, including air pollution, deforestation, and water scarcity. The impacts of climate change, coupled with rapid urbanization, have exacerbated these challenges, making sustainable practices more critical than ever. Addressing these issues through the lens of Islamic environmental ethics offers a unique perspective, one that not only aligns with religious values but also promotes a balanced and sustainable approach to urban living.

This article explores how the principles of environmental stewardship in Islam can guide efforts to mitigate climate change and promote conservation in Lahore. By drawing on Islamic teachings and examining local initiatives, it aims to highlight the role that faith-based approaches can play in fostering a more sustainable and resilient city.

Pakistan is facing two serious threats, glaciers melting due to an increase in temperature in the north and rising seawater levels in the south, according to the research of Asif Inam, head of the National Institute of Oceanography, Karachi. Many parts of the Malir region have been submerged while Thatta and Badin in Sindh will be underwater by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

Thousands of families have migrated because of problems related to drought, floods, and other climatic changes, while many families are fighting for survival in disaster areas because of lack of financial resources.

According to the estimates from the United Nations, the population of Pakistan may have exceeded 300 million by 2050. The climate threats to this growing country can be gauged from melting glaciers like Paso, the Chinese gateway, where ice 20 years ago was now largely bare.

In 2015, experts informed Pakistan's Senate Committee on Science and Technology that in the coming decades, temperature may increase by three to five degrees in the north and south of Pakistan, which may result in a disaster. However the government of this country has not considered expert warnings. Unpredictable rains, floods, droughts, landslides, earthquakes, alarming reductions in groundwater levels, and melting glaciers are clear signs of climate change, but the problem that the world has identified as bigger than terrorism is this. But what is not being discussed in Pakistan is the national tragedy of this country. Tackling climate issues necessitates a holistic approach that considers social, economic, and environmental factors and caters to current and future needs.<sup>2</sup>

The effects of natural changes are minor, but human intervention in the natural systems of the universe is causing significant climate changes. As a result, the temperature of the earth increases, and seasons and other environmental changes occur.<sup>3</sup>

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The current increase in global temperature is the highest in history and is mainly due to human intervention. To understand climate change, we need to understand the layers of the atmosphere, ozone, and green matter, as well as the terms and importance of greenhouse gases<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Islamic prospectus on climate:**

The effects of natural changes are minor, but human intervention in the natural systems of the universe is causing significant climate changes. Almighty God has built a protective wall around our earth, i.e., the air sphere, and this protective wall (Kurra Hawai) is the guarantee of the life of creatures living on earth. The importance of this air sphere has been described in many verses of the Holy Quran.

Allah says:

جَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَحْفُوظًا - وَهُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهَا مُعْرِضُونَ<sup>5</sup>

We have made the sky a safe roof and these are the people who turn away from its signs".

In another place it is said: Allah says:

وَ حَفِظْنَاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ<sup>6</sup>

We have protected him from every devil.

Just as God Almighty built it to protect creatures living on earth from demons, the air sphere also protects creatures on earth from harmful rays and gases. The divine decree is as follows:

لَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَ زَيَّنَّاهَا لِلنَّاظِرِينَ<sup>7</sup>

We have built many fortresses in the sky, beautifying them for the beholders.

We adorned the sky with the sun, moon, and stars so that those who ponder may argue with it about the Oneness of Allah and the Creator and know that Allah is the Creator of all things. Buruj(بُرُوج) refers to strong regions in which each region is separated from another region by a stable border. This sphere of air that goes for several hundreds of miles is not many. The first layer, which is seven miles above the earth, is called the troposphere, the next one is called the stratosphere, which does not have air circulation, and the third and most important layer is the mesosphere. It is said that this layer is crucial because it contains "ozone" gases. The fourth layer is called the thermosphere. It blocks harmful gases and rays from the atmosphere and the sun. This sphere of air acts as a protective wall and covers -

The main reason for this is that we are ignorant of Islam's commands regarding the environment

The number of Qur'anic verses related to the universe, nature, and natural environment is greater than the number of verses related to divine commands and religious beliefs. Of the Qur'anic verses, 750 exhort believers to contemplate the power of God, study the relationship between all living things and their surroundings, and maintain balance and proportion among God's creation. Forests are created for humans so that we can enjoy them while living in moral realm.

The Quran emphasizes the creation of heavens and earth by Allah and the appointment humans as stewards. Verses such as the Quran highlight signs in nature for those who reflect, urging believers to contemplate the beauty and balance of the natural world.

Islam stresses the equitable distribution of water resources.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ<sup>8</sup>

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Mischief appeared in drought and drought because of the evils that people earned by their hands so that Allah would make them taste some of their deeds so that they would desist. According to the Qur'anic teaching, environmental science is related to economics at this time, and the modern age needs scholars who encourage Muslims to acquire modern education and wisdom and persuade them to solve the environmental problems of the present time with their power of pen. About 200 verses in the Holy Quran are related to the environment. Water, earth, air, living and dead creatures, trees and stones, mountains, sea, and all the wonders of the world have been discussed which testify to the perfect power of Allah.

صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ<sup>9</sup>

That is 'the design of Allah, Who has perfected everything. Surely He is All-Aware of what you do.

"Environment" is an integral part of human beings the caliph of the earth humans are responsible for the rights and wrongs of all earthly creatures. Because Allah Almighty has made man the best of creation and he has consciousness and feelings and he has been blessed with wealth like intellect. From the earth to the air, from the desert to the sea, all the blessings and treasures of God have been created for mankind:

Man's extravagant behavior with natural treasures and their unrestricted use is a form of corruption on earth, which is strictly prohibited by the Qur'an.

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا<sup>10</sup>

Do not spread corruption in the land after it has been set in order.

To change the system of nature, to create distortions in it, to violate the arrangement and order that Allah Almighty has made for the cleanliness of the human environment, peace, and security, peace, and tranquility is the name of 'corruption'.

The corruption prohibited in the mentioned verse is not only religious, moral, and social corruption. Rather, the deterioration and disruption of the physical system of the universe are included in it. Keeping the environment safe from all kinds of pollution and harmful elements is required by the Shariah. And these objectives are also included in the Shariah.<sup>11</sup> Allah created all things of his majesty in a way that humans could subjugate them and benefit from them. Humans will be at peace as long as they maintain their environment naturally because the changes in the ecosystem is tantamount to tampering with the laws of nature. These change makers are rebellious because the first rebellious Satan attempted this. Allah says:

إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ۖ إِلَّا إِنْتَأْ-وَ إِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا لَّعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَ قَالَ لَا تَخَذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا وَ لَأُضِلَّهُمْ وَ لَأَمْنِيَنَّهُمْ وَ لَأَمُرَّهُمْ فَلَيَكْبِتُنَّ أَذَانُ الْأَنْعَامِ وَ لَأَمُرَّهُمْ فَلَيَكْفُرُنَّ بِحَلْقِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَ مَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَاءً مُبِينًا<sup>12</sup>

Those who worship other than God are only women, and they call on Satan the rebellious. On whom God has cursed (from God), he said, "I will take a fixed portion (of wealth by making vows to other than God) from your servants." And I will lead them astray and give them hope and teach them that the ears of animals should be torn off and (also) say that they should change the forms that God has made, and whoever turns away from God and takes Satan as a friend. He was at a clear disadvantage.

Prophetic traditions emphasize the importance of preserving resources and avoiding waste. For instance, Prophet Muhammad reportedly said, "The world is sweet and green (alluring)

and verily Allah is going to install you as vicegerent in it to see how you act " It is narrated from the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that he said:

"اتَّقُوا الْمَلَأَيْنِ الثَّلَاثَةِ: الْبَرَازَ فِي الْمَوَارِدِ، وَقَارِعَةَ الطَّرِيقِ، وَالظِّلَّ." <sup>13</sup>

Avoid the three cursed things: Avoid urinating and defecating in the passenger landing area, on public roads, and in shade.

Trees also play a key role in keeping the environment clean. Planting trees is the Sunnah of the Prophet. There is a command to plant trees in blessed hadiths. It was even said that "when the Hour of Judgment comes and there is a plant or a seed in hand, then it must be planted in the ground to grow."

Thus, many things that create density in the environment have been placed by nature itself in the human and animal body, such as urine, excrement, filth from dead bodies, etc.; But modern industrial and mechanized developments have significantly increased the causes of environmental pollution, waste emitted from factories, gases emitted from air conditioners and refrigerators, and increased traffic based on diesel and petrol fuels. All these things give man the gift of comfort and convenience as well as extraordinary and imperceptible air and atmospheric density.

Numbers of hadiths encourage conservation, moderation and care for animals and plants.

In Islamic teachings, the environment is considered a sacred trust between Allah and human, with humans designated as the custodians of the earth.<sup>14</sup>

The concept of Khilafah highlights the role of humans as custodians of the Earth, charged with sustainably managing its resources. Emphasizing that the Earth and its resources are a trust from Allah, imposing upon humans an obligation to fulfill this trust by safeguarding the environment and ensuring its well-being for future generations.

Stewardship emphasizes the duty to care for and protect the earth while advocating for environmental protection and sustainable practices.<sup>15</sup>

Community responsibility entails collective action and cooperation among individuals, communities, and nations to reduce environmental impacts and adapt to climate change. When it comes to waste, land erosion, water pollution, wildlife destruction, and unhealthy pollution, Muslim countries are no better than the rest of the industrialized world. They not only violate the principles of a healthy environment but also poison the environment by importing and using inappropriate technology and other anti-environmental measures that pose threats to human survival. Many Muslim countries are on the brink of environmental threats.

Plantations are the only option man has to deal with these severe challenges facing the earth, and increasing the number of trees can be the only effective weapon against.<sup>16</sup>

Trees are naturally carbon-sucking machines that store carbon dioxide from all air, absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and store it, thus reducing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.<sup>17</sup>

### **Climate Change and Environmental Challenges in Lahore**

Lahore, Pakistan's cultural capital, faces significant environmental challenges that reflect broader issues of climate change. As one of the most populous cities in the country, Lahore struggles with air pollution, waste management, deforestation, and water scarcity—all of which contribute to a deteriorating environment and escalating health risks for its residents.

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**Air Pollution:****Overview:**

Lahore consistently ranks among the world's most polluted cities. The city's air quality, particularly in winter, often exceeds hazardous levels due to vehicle emissions, industrial pollutants, and the burning of crop stubble in surrounding areas.<sup>18</sup>

**Impact:**

This air pollution leads to serious health issues, including respiratory problems, heart diseases, and premature deaths. The thick smog also disrupts daily life, reducing visibility and affecting transportation.<sup>19</sup>

**Waste Management:****Overview:**

Lahore generates a massive amount of solid waste, much of which is not properly managed. Open dumping, inadequate recycling, and inefficient waste collection systems contribute to environmental degradation.<sup>20</sup>

**Impact:**

Poor waste management leads to clogged drains, urban flooding, and contamination of water bodies. The resulting pollution harms biodiversity and public health.<sup>21</sup>

**Deforestation and Loss of Green Spaces:****Overview:**

Rapid urbanization in Lahore has led to significant deforestation and a reduction in green spaces. Parks, gardens, and natural habitats are being replaced by concrete structures, exacerbating the urban heat island effect.<sup>22</sup>

**Impact:**

The loss of trees and green areas diminishes the city's ability to absorb carbon dioxide, leading to higher temperatures, reduced air quality, and less biodiversity. This also increases the city's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

**Water Scarcity and Pollution:****Overview:**

Lahore faces a growing water crisis, with depleting groundwater levels and contaminated water supplies. Industrial effluents and untreated sewage are major contributors to water pollution.<sup>23</sup>

**Impact:**

The scarcity of clean water threatens agriculture, industry, and daily life. Contaminated water sources lead to waterborne diseases, further stressing public health systems.<sup>24</sup>

**Islamic Perspective on Environmental Stewardship**

Islam places a strong emphasis on the protection of the environment, considering it a form of worship and a responsibility entrusted to humanity by God (Allah). The principles of Khilafah (stewardship), Mizan (balance), and Israf (avoiding wastefulness) guide Muslims to care for the earth and all living beings. Addressing the environmental challenges in Lahore through these principles not only aligns with Islamic teachings but also offers a pathway to sustainable living and climate resilience.

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### **Addressing the Challenges**

By incorporating Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship, such as reducing waste, planting trees, and advocating for justice in the use of resources, the people of Lahore can work towards mitigating climate change impacts.<sup>25</sup>

Initiatives like community-driven tree plantation, improved waste management systems, and water conservation projects can be inspired by Islamic values, fostering a sustainable future for the city.

This section of your article can highlight both the environmental challenges specific to Lahore and the Islamic approach to addressing them, providing a clear connection between faith and environmental action.

### **Community Engagement and Education**

#### **Islamic Perspective on Community Responsibility:**

Islam emphasizes the concept of *Khilafah* (stewardship) which implies that humans are caretakers of the Earth. This responsibility extends to actively engaging in environmental preservation and educating others about it.<sup>26</sup>

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of taking care of the environment and not causing harm. This principle can inspire community-driven initiatives in Lahore.

#### **Local Environmental Challenges:**

Lahore, like many other cities, faces environmental issues such as air pollution, water scarcity, and waste management problems.<sup>27</sup>

Community engagement is crucial in addressing these issues. Understanding the local context helps in tailoring educational programs that address specific environmental concerns relevant to the residents of Lahore.

#### **Educational Programs in Mosques and Schools:**

Incorporate environmental education into religious teachings and school curriculums. Mosques and Islamic schools can play a significant role by integrating environmental stewardship into sermons and lessons.<sup>28</sup>

This can include discussions on the importance of conservation, practical tips for reducing waste, and the significance of sustainable living as per Islamic teachings.

#### **Community Clean-Up Initiatives:**

Organize and promote community clean-up drives. These initiatives can be aligned with Islamic values of cleanliness and purity. Engaging local communities in such activities fosters a sense of responsibility and collective effort towards a cleaner environment.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Partnerships with Local Organizations:**

Collaborate with environmental NGOs and local government bodies to enhance the impact of community projects. Partnerships can help in mobilizing resources, expertise, and additional support for larger-scale conservation efforts.<sup>30</sup>

#### **Awareness Campaigns and Workshops:**

Conduct workshops and awareness campaigns focusing on the intersection of Islamic teachings and environmental conservation.<sup>31</sup>

These can cover topics such as sustainable practices, the ethical treatment of animals, and the importance of conserving natural resources. Utilize various media platforms, including social

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media, to reach a wider audience.

**Green Spaces and Urban Gardens:**

Promote the creation and maintenance of green spaces and urban gardens within Lahore. Islam encourages the planting of trees and the cultivation of land. Initiatives like community gardens or tree-planting events can be organized to reflect these teachings and improve urban environments.<sup>32</sup>

**Involvement of Religious Leaders:**

Engage religious leaders to speak on the importance of environmental stewardship from an Islamic perspective. Their influence can be pivotal in inspiring and motivating community members to take active roles in conservation efforts.<sup>33</sup>

By emphasizing these points, you can illustrate how integrating Islamic principles with community engagement and education can effectively address environmental challenges in Lahore, fostering a culture of stewardship and sustainable living.

**Conclusion**

This article explores the principles of environmental stewardship in Islam and their application to addressing climate change and promoting conservation in Lahore, Pakistan. It begins by outlining the core Islamic teachings on the environment, including the concept of **Khilafah** (stewardship) and the ethical obligation to protect and preserve natural resources. It emphasizes the Quranic injunctions and Hadiths that advocate for sustainable living and respect for the environment.

The article then examines the current environmental challenges faced by Lahore, such as air pollution, water scarcity, and urbanization. It discusses how Islamic principles can guide local initiatives and policies aimed at mitigating these issues. Key examples include the promotion of green spaces, sustainable waste management, and community-driven conservation efforts. Finally, the article highlights successful case studies and projects in Lahore that align with Islamic values of environmental responsibility. It advocates for a holistic approach, integrating religious teachings with modern environmental strategies to foster a more sustainable future for the city.

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