MASS MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS: ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

During the past 50 years, our planet has undergone dramatic changes in pollution, population and the pressures that humanity puts on its natural resources. Our environmental problems are largely traceable to rapid population growth which is putting severe stress on the earth's natural resources. This is compounded by scientific and technological development coupled with industrial growth. Many parts of the global system are at the perils of myriad of environmental problems - a situation that is increasingly becoming more challenging to human continued survival. In Africa, the problems of drought, ecology and the environment have had a very deleterious effect on people, thus making acute an already delicate situation. It is estimated that in sub-Saharan Africa alone, close to 156 million people will be adversely affected by famine, for example, in 2015 if a serious intervention on environmental problems is not engineered. This paper examines the problems of environment and ecological deterioration from an Islamic mass media of communication perspective. It argues that the Universe, with all that is in it - the stars and planets, sun and moon, the light and darkness, water and earth, plants, animals and human beings - are created by Allah/God. It is, therefore, imperative that they are treated with the respect that is due to Allah's creatures. The destruction of these things, the paper insists, constitutes a confrontation with the Divine purpose and a wicked act of oppression, for all the creatures and products of the natural world have their own share of, and input into, the universal whole and the ecological beauty and balance. The question of environmental misgovernance, insecurity, degradation, conservation and management has gradually come to dominate the centre-stage in development fora during the four decades after the United Nations Conference on the human environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. The paper notes that the visible consequences of human activity on the environment have made it evident that continued environmental welfare can no longer be taken for granted. The paper analyses the solutions provided by Islamic Religion and way of life to make the environment more secure, better, safer, cleaner and greener. It also submits that deliberate and concrete action needs to be taken to conserve, renew and maintain a healthy environment which ensures sustainable development and is suitable for human existence. The paper concludes that protecting the environment is not an option for the government and the governed, but it is an imperative that must be placed at the centre of economic and political-decision making. If we fail to protect the environment properly, we could at best make life unbearable for millions of people and other species, and at worst terminate our existence.

INTRODUCTION

The environment remains the most important heritage of mankind responsible for the sustenance of life and life forms on our planet. In other words, a safe, clean and green environment translates to healthy living and prosperity while a problematic populated environment will lead at

some point in time to destruction of human life and forms. Adewumi, (2004): noted that it is imperative that all stakeholders in the society must continually fight for the preservation of the environment and proper management of our ecosystem in the interest of our society.

Our environment is the greatest gift to mankind. This word environment is to many synonymous with air, land, water, plants and animals, while the scientists see the environment as consisting of both living organisms and their physical surroundings such as water, soil and air (Akiyode, 2004).

In various cultures of the world, there were/are controls in every community on how to tackle environmental problems. However, effective communication, public education, efficacious public enlightenment, proper environmental enforcement procedures, indefatigable environmental agencies, integrated management, governmental and intergovernmental approaches, private sector participation and environmental education have been lacking. This paper contends that in addition to the utility of mass media of communication in the resolution of environmental problems, there are effective Islamic Religious communication solutions to the chronic and seemingly insurmountable problems of the environment.

Statement of Research Problem

Tella, (2009) states that elements of our environment include weather, climate, vegetation, rainfall, pressure, temperature, humidity, wind etc. He argues, however, that we are depleting and degrading our air, land, water and all the resources they contain in a reckless manner. Our attitude in destroying the earth's vegetation cover to meet our needs for food, housing, furniture and other purposes does not help matter. Trees, which naturally consume some of these gasses causing heat trapping, are felled or burnt without being replaced. Therefore, the earth is experiencing a steady rise in temperature precipitating the major environmental problem of global warming which causes changes in the condition of our climate.

The high temperature causes the melting of the ice cap, rising of the sea level, flooding of the coastal settlements, with the attendant destruction of lives and properties among other negative consequences. This is the problem.

> The harsh truth is that sub-Saharan Africa today faces *a* crisis of unprecedented proportions. The physical environment is deteriorating. Per capita production of food grains is falling. Population growth rates are the highest in the world and rising. National economies are in disarray. And international assistance in real terms is moving downward (MacNamara, 1985).

This observation from Robert MacNamara, former President of the World Bank, indicates that the African continent is going through a crisis of major proportions. The economic, social, political, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious problems in Africa have been worsened by comparable problems of drought, ecology and the environment. The human dimensions of this are incalculable. (Frank and Chasin, 1980). In 1974, *12* countries were affected by drought; in 1979, 27 Countries, and in 1984, 36 countries. In Ethiopia and Somalia, millions of People were

reported to have died, and in Burkina Fasso, Sudan, Niger, Mali and Senegal, many have perished. And recently, in Cairo, 541 people were reported to have died and thousands of people rendered homeless by earthquake (London: *The Independent, Monday* 19, Oct. 1992, p.12).

It is not only the drought that is the problem; Africa also faces problems of the agrarian and ecological systems. All through the continent, there is evidence of dwindling forests, eroding soils and desertification. In certain areas, the ecological system has suffered to such an extent that it is unable to support plant and animal life. In nearly every African country, there are reported cases of the loss of forest cover. Reports from Mauritania, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Kenya all tell the same story of increasing deforestation of the continent. It is estimated that in West Africa, the coastal forests are disappearing at the rate of 5 per cent per year. The Coute De'voire (Formerly Ivory Coast) which once boasted of 30 million hectares of tropical forest is now left with only 4.5 million. (Timberlake, 1985).Whereas African cities before European conquests, envisaged a harmonious and interdependent relationship between nature, gods, plants, animals and man in their environmental creations, which reflected the environmental wisdom of the people (Sandbach, 1980). Thus, Hull (1976) concluded that before colonization:

> community layouts mirrored the laws of nature and the forces of philosophical thought. So humane were African towns and cities that they were regarded by their inhabitants as the concrete expressions of their inner thoughts about man, nature and the cosmos (Hull, 1976).

Clarke, (1972) an American traveller to the Yorubaland between 1854 and 1858, noted with admiration, the beauty of the Yoruba country and the aesthetic setting of towns and villages which contrast the present disorderly arrangement of urban structures. Yoruba towns, he pointed out, exhibited remarkable regularity in street layout. In addition, the use of appropriate shade tree, the artistic setting of neighbourhoods within the natural relief environment combined with general environmental tidiness formed a part of urban management practice and community planning ideology (Clarke, 1972).

The natural countryside, the mountains, the gardens, the blue sky, the glittering rivers, the flora and landforms of Nigeria, West Africa and Africa were the subject of poetic, romantic writings by European explorers. From their own accounts, such *'exotic'* landscape provided a relaxing, stimulating setting, and promoted overall psychological well-being or comfort at various stages of the difficult tension-filled journeys undertaken by them (Gwynn, 1934).

Flooding, desertification, intensive earth heat, shortage of water and famine among others are the manifested effects of environmental problems and climate change that have all challenged human existence in several parts of the World. These have caused the global system a destruction of magnitude strength that put to question the issue of sustainable development. In January 2011, incidences of flooding in Australia, Brazil and South Africa caused unimaginable loss of lives and properties that were estimated to about US$ 600 billion. Apart from these countries, many other countries especially the coastal States including Nigeria are threatened by severe flooding due to ocean surge. Similarly, about 15 million hectares of land are prone to desertification in sub-Saharan Africa alone, with aggressive expansion of deserts to areas that were formerly

known to be green regions mostly in Nigeria, Central Africa Republic, Mali and Burkina Faso among others. Even the Amazonian resource that is of global heritage in Southern America is on annual decline of about 5%. More worrisome is the increase in earth heat that has resulted in provoking earth crusts in many parts of the world, which have caused severe earthquakes with devastating effects. Most recently, earthquake in some parts of the world including Haiti did not only reduce countries to rumbles, but also imposed economic, health and even political pressure on the countries hailing economy.

Many scientists have argued that the problem of tropical countries is caused by inherent factors in the environment. Some have said it is the primitive technology that is manually driven. Some have also attributed it to adoption of western technologies that are inappropriate for development in the tropical setting. Some believe it is due to lack of ability to generate reliable and sustainable source of energy. Some insist it is bad management of the economy. Some have even sworn that it is poor management by technocrats and political office holders. Are all these true?

What then can we do to ensure that people still show concern for environmental protection and care about the aesthetic qualities of the environment? How do we ensure that such African rich heritage in environmental management is maintained? In what ways can we support the efforts of various Environmental Sanitation Task Forces, the Horticultural Societies, the Conservation Foundations and the activities of other spirited public campaign aimed at preserving our animal/plant species and solving environmental, problems? This paper attempts to provide answers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In examining mass media of communication and environmental problems: Islamic religious communication solutions perspectives, we employ as our theoretical framework a combination of political communication, cybernetics, communication approach, political ecology and Islamic communication paradigm. Cybernetics is the science of control and communication system (Miller, Deutsch, Charlesworth 1967).

This means that our analysis will be made on the basis of communication and control system. This framework is borrowed from Karl Deutsch (1966) who developed it to focus on communication processes as the central aspect of polities.

See fig 1
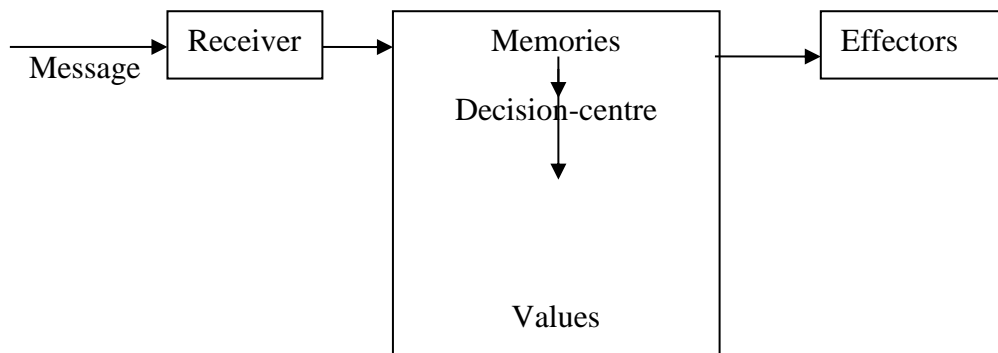
Receptors 'capture' political information in the form of messages, the data in those messages are processed so that the decision-centre, drawing on its memories (e.g. files or other records of its own past decisions) and its values (preferences for certain outcomes rather than others), can take a decision which is then communicated to effectors, which in turn translate the communicated decisions into actions. These processes are again linked by feedback loops.

The term 'communication' refers to a body of basic concepts underlying several contemporary approaches to human behavior including the interaction of nation-states (North, 1967). This term may be used in both a narrow or specific and a wider or general sense depending on its use or application by a student of natural or social sciences.

As used by a mathematician, like Weaver (1959) it "includes all the procedures by which one mind may affect another" Another writer belonging to the same discipline, while developing his theory of messages, used the word 'cybernetics' which he derived from the Greek word *Kubernetes* meaning in English 'steersman' the same word from which 'governor' derives.

Used in a wider sense, the term 'communication' involves not only oral speech, but all human behavior. In an even broader sense, as it is used in this paper, it may be used with reference to the ways in which the physical environment excites signals in the central nervous system-together with the ways in which the human being operates upon the physical environment. In these terms the organism and the environment form a single system: the organism affects the environment and the environment affects the organism (Ashby, 1960).

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Certain trends today seem to challenge world leaders as far as environmental problems are concerned. Even the Earth Summits held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992 and 2012 have not done much to help the situation. The trends in question have to do with species, fisheries, rainforests, mega-cities, ozone-Layer, Global warming, climate change, transport, nuclear power, war and refugees, as well as the earth's population to mention just a few.

These trends have serious implications for Africa in particular, and for the world in general. First, Africa, already stricken by drought and a host of other environmental problems, could suffer even more. Secondly, the current business as usual scenarios for energy use and population could make it very difficult for homo sapiens (the so-called wise ones) to stay on Earth for even a fraction of the 63 million years that the small-brained dinosaurs managed. Thirdly, much environmental damage is either irreversible over inestimable numbers of years. We are incapable of putting lost ozone back into the atmosphere or recreating extinct species. How long would it take to restore soil or tropical rainforest losses.

Fourthly, the trends for many environmental issues such as ozone depletion, acid rain, climate change and rainforest destruction also take decades to identify and reverse. Furthermore, successful action on the most serious environmental threats is more complex without global agreements between the rich and poor countries of the world, a daunting political task requiring strong national action and innovative global diplomacy.

Finally, eco-hazards are often unpredictable - the size of the first measured ozone hole was significantly bigger than scientists had predicted. This means that we must pursue a proactive policy of limiting the impact of synthetic chemicals and other potential environmental insults, rather than the reactive policy of loading such things into the biosphere and waiting to see what happens.

A key condition for a successful proactive policy is the public's right to know about what we are exposing their communities and planet Earth to. Such freedom of access to environmental information, communication and data would help to identify early signs of environmental or human harm and to provide the public with a full picture of the implications for environmental pollution of industry's activities. This is where communication of information on environment comes in.

There are several reasons why it is of utmost importance for social scientists, natural scientists, environmentalists, communication researchers, media practitioners, religious leaders, traditional rulers, stakeholders, policy-makers, government functionaries in the legislative, executive and judicial arms of government, farmers, traders and other members of the society including all agencies of socialization to raise public awareness about existing environmental problems. The agencies include the family, the mass media, the schools, the government, the peer groups etc.

First, many decisions which have to be made today involve some aspects of the environment. All these decisions in some way affect people and most of them involve making judgements and balancing the positive and negative effects of the environmental action. It is, thus, important to educate the people on cost-benefit analysis of issues to avoid any conflicts.

Secondly, if the general population acquires adequate knowledge and understanding of environmental issues, problems and solutions they can be better involved in decision-making, in-put and out-put functions and the universality of other functions in all socio-politico-economic systems. These are interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication, political socialization, rule-making, rule-application and rule-adjudication to mention just a few. It is important to mention that national, state, local and international communities should be involved in this communication enterprise of environmental issues.

Thirdly, there is a real danger of society becoming divided into a minority of people who have some knowledge and understanding of environmental issues and the majority of people who perceive the environment as being there for man/woman to exploit to meet his/her basic needs.

This perception may lead to aparthy towards measures to conserve the environment and further environmental degradation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The real work of mobilizing the population in each country to appreciate the seriousness of the environmental problems and to create in them an awareness and appreciation of their specific role in environmental management, governance, security and preservation certainly goes beyond the major earth summits held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992 and 2012 (Boafo, 1993).

Within the African region, attention has been called to a number of major issues of environmental concern and the need for action to save the environment from further destruction.

According to available information from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), some of these issues are: (1) deforestation and desertification which exacerbate the problem of food production, drought and depletion of energy sources (2) fresh water resources that are severely endangered by poverty, population growth, and poor agricultural practices; (3) dumping of industrial, toxic and human wastes, oil pollution and sea erosion; (4) indiscriminate and unbridled exploitation of natural resources; and (5) increasing use of toxic chemicals and hazardous waste that contaminate food, land and air.

Ecology has been variously defined as "the study of interrelationships between the forms of life and the environment in the biosphere" (Adamson, 1971); and "the study of the interrelationships of organisms with their environments and each other" *(Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 1975). Modern ecology is further said to be "focussed on the concept of the ecosystem, a functional unit consisting of interacting organisms and all aspects of the environment in any specific area" *(Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 1975).

Common to all these definitions is the concept of relationships - of interactions of one kind or another.

"Man, the dominant organism on earth, has stood apart from the interaction of living things; yet, as he is discovering, he is inextricably tied to his environment The air he breathes, the water he drinks, the food he consumes, and the products he uses and throws away bind him to the functions of local and global ecosystems" *(Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1975).*

Today humanity is faced with environmental problems which have grown to become what the InterAction Council (IAC) has described as:

> an ecological crisis of many dimensions ... characterised by a depletion of the ozone layer, a substantial accumulation of greenhouse gases inducing climate change; accelerating degradation of air, land and water quality; accumulation of industrial and household wastes; depletion of the earth's natural resource base and loss of biodiversity (IAC, 1990).

Major Environmental Issues in Africa

The decline of productive resources is rapidly emerging as a major threat to economic prospects in most developing countries whose economies are many times more dependent than those of industrialised countries on their soils, water, fisheries, forests and minerals (Speth, 1990). Many of these developing countries are found in Africa, including 29 out of the 42 countries classified as least-developed (ECA, 1991). Factors contributing to the continent's generally poor economic status include the persistent decline of economic production per capita in the 1980s; the dependence of Africa's agriculture on rainfall and rudimentary technology; the dependence of African industry on imports of capital, skilled labour, technology and spare parts; and the

scarcity of indigenous entrepreneurial and management skills (ECA, 1991, Sheriffdeen Tella, 2014). The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) states, with reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, that no other region more tragically suffers the vicious cycle of poverty leading to environmental degradation which in turn leads to even more poverty (WCED, 1987). The continent's major environmental problems include land degradation, desertification and depletion of forest reserves. All of these are related to increasing population pressure; as Sharp and Kone have observed:

> With more than 600 million people, Africa today is not over-populated in terms of absolute numbers. But nevertheless there are two critical problems. People and the resources which could support them are unevenly distributed between countries and between rural and urban areas, often leading to excessive pressure on the most fragile environments. And secondly, population numbers are growing at a dizzy rate - at approximately 3 percent annually, faster than anywhere else in the world (Sharp and Kone, 1992).

Water resources are another critical aspect of the problem. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 40% of the population has access to safe water supplies, though in many low-income countries the share is much lower; the rest have to risk water-holes or rivers that are often contaminated. Eighty percent of illness is attributed to polluted water or poor sanitation, and may account for as much as half of infant mortality (Sharp and Kone, 1992).

What is Islam?

Islam, is not just a religion, but a way of life that encompasses the entire gamut of the economic, judicial, political and cultural lives of its *Umma* (faithful); hence its definition as 'total submission to the will of Allah (God) as revealed by the prophetic message of Muhammad' (Danjibo, no date). The totality of Islamic regulation of the lives of Muslims is comprehensibly captured by Olayiwola (1988:227), who notes that:

"Islam does not admit a narrow view of religion by restricting it within the limits of worship, specific rituals and spiritual beliefs. In its precise meaning, Islam is not only a religion; it is also a way of life that regulates all the aspects of life on the scale of the individual and the nation. Islam is a social order, philosophy of life, a system of economic rules and government. Islam clearly establishes man's duties and rights in all relationships - a clear system of worship, civil rights, laws of marriage and divorce, inheritance, code of behaviour, laws of economy, laws of governance, laws of war and peace, of buying and selling and laws of relations and co-existence with one another, parents, children, relatives, neighbours, guests, Muslims, non-Muslims and brethren" (Olayiwola, 1974, 1984, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013).

To assert that the African continent is today in the grip of deep social, economic and political crisis is to state the obvious. Less well-known, perhaps, is that close to half the population of the

continent is Muslim and that Islam is expanding rapidly into new areas such as Southern Africa. Many African Muslims, including those in position of public influence, *are* actively seeking Islamic solutions to the crises which confront their societies. They are intent upon ensuring that Islamic principles should play an increasingly influential role in the public future of African societies. They are seeking not only to transform Islamic institutions in order that they become more relevant to contemporary needs but also to imbue non-Islamic institutions with Islamic principles. (Brenner, L. et. al., 1988).

The Role of Communication Media

Laymen and media experts alike agree that the media have a role to play in addressing the ecological crisis facing countries in Africa and elsewhere. They see the mass media as a means of information dissemination for environmental education. The optimism embedded in the general statements on the role of the media contrasts with the more cautious approach of communication researchers who accompany their affirmation of media roles with warnings about their limitations.

The particular target group concerned is a factor in determining the extent of the mass media's effectiveness. Hansen (1990), for example, cites researchers whose findings show that people who are most active on environmental issues do not often obtain their information from the mass media. Further evidence suggests that media influence on attitudes is greater for key decision-makers than it is for the general public. Hansen also expresses doubts on the ability of the mass media to seriously challenge policy because of their integration into established authorities and the latter's definitions of environmental issues and priority areas. Abraham *et. al* (1990) identify a "bandwagon" approach to media coverage of environmental issues which is characterised by motivations deriving from a "competition-driven delivery system" where decisions on media content are dictated by responsiveness to market demands rather than by concern to generate awareness or educate about a particular issue. They contrast this with "public education" and "critical public education" approaches, favouring the latter but pointing out that, to be successful, this approach must use forms of media other than news (such as drama and game shows) and be buttressed by the efforts of educational institutions.

Lowe and Morrison (1984) observe that the "mass media have fostered rather than undermined environmental protest, and will continue to do so as long as the environment is taken to be a politically neutral area relating to the quality of life rather than its organisation." In India, reasons put forward by one researcher to explain state-owned television's failure to respond effectively to the challenge to educate on controversial aspects of the environment include the low priority accorded the environment, an unwillingness to air controversial programmes on the environment and the Environmental Secretary's lack of aggressive use of television to promote environmental awareness (Ninan, 1990). Other problems identified by other scholars include the lack of appropriate opportunities and resources to back up media messages with positive environmental measures (Uche, 1990); the remoteness of environmental issues from people's immediate self interest; and the need to target the audience in a way which is more amenable to Interpersonal communication (Ansah. 1991).

From the above, it is evident that neither is the role of the media - especially the mass media - clear-cut nor is its effectiveness automatic. The type of environmental issues; ownership of the media; availability of resources for action; and support from other communication forms and education all come into play. The source of the particular environmental problem could also be a factor; according to Uche (1990), media reporting of the dumping in Nigeria of toxic waste from Italy was a factor in determining governmental action including the passing of legislation on the problem.

Islamic Religious Communication Solutions to Environmental Problems

Islam puts into place a number of preventive measures to safeguard the environment. For instance, in times of war or peace as well as during the season of pilgrimage, Muslims are not allowed to cut down or damage trees. *Abu-Bakr,* the first Caliph, also instructed his officer *Usama* before embarking upon an expedition not to slay sheep, cows or camels except for food (Alawiye, 2002). Not only should we not destroy our environment, we should also seek to improve it.

There are numerous *hadiths* concerning tree planting. Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be on Him) said that anyone who plants a tree under which people seek shade or shelter from the sun will have his reward with Allah. He also said,

> "When a Muslim plants a plant or cultivates a crop, no bird or human being eats from it without its being accounted as a (rewardable) charity for him". The implication of these *ahadith* is that the reward of the person who plants a tree or a crop continues as long as the produce of this tree or crop is eaten or used.

It is a question of scale and of the acceleration of events that has/have brought the world to the lamentable state in which its air, earth and water are poisoned. Environmental problems can no more be understood than can any other human or societal problem without using intelligence, imagination and breadth of vision.

And to a Muslim, breadth of vision is unthinkable without the divine dimension which, in its turn, can hardly be grasped without revealed guidance – in Islam, the Last Revelation which is contained in the Qur'an.

Muslims know they must not harm the world that Allah has made for them and they must not be so beguiled by it that they forget their role, their ultimate self-interest and their Lord and Sustainer.

Allah's Creation

Allah tells us that it was not for nothing that He created the things in the universe, including the plants, the animals and the physical environment (Qur'an 21:16). And while we in our human pride may exclude animals or mammals from our view of what is important, Allah the Creator of all, says they have a role as we do:

> *There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being*
> *that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like*
> *you ...* Qur'an 6:36. Yusuf Ali's English Translation

It is, therefore, imperative that they are treated with the respect that is due to Allah's creatures. The destruction of these things constitutes a confrontation with the Divine purpose and a wicked act of oppression, for all the creatures and products of the natural world have their own share of, and input into, the universal whole and the ecological beauty and balance.

The plant world and its products are among Allah's bounteous mercies and should also be treated with due respect (Qur'an 55:10-13) and protected from destruction and undue pollution. Allah's creation of beautiful things around us is made more meaningful and relevant to us by our corresponding sense of the appreciation of beauty, which is also a Divine blessing:

> *And the things on this earth which He has*
> *multiplied in varying colours (and qualities): verily*
> *in this is a Sign for men who celebrate the praises*
> *of Allah (in gratitude).*
> Qur'an 16:13. Yusuf Ali's English Translation

Commenting on the values of some of the components of the universe for man, the great theologian al-Ghazali says:

> Allah has placed in the mountains, clouds, seas and
> rains so many blessings for mankind that we cannot
> count them. ...

He further observes:

> The whole of the universe is as though one human
> body: the individual components of it are like the
> various parts of the human body, relating to, and co-
> operating with, one another as do the parts of the
> human body   *(al-Ihya)*

Destruction of Allah's Creation

Therefore, only the wicked, arrogant and evil would go about destroying 'tilth and progeny, 'crop and cattle', doing mischief and spreading corruption while he uses his rhetorical power to deceive others:

> *And when he turneth away (from thee) his effort in*
> *the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy*
> *the crops and the cattle; and Allah loveth not*
> *mischief.*
> Qur'an 2:204-205 Muhammad Pickthall English
> Translation,

The Prophet said:

> Whoever kills a sparrow for nothing (should know that) it will cry aloud to Allah on the Day of Resurrection saying, 'O my Lord, so-and-so killed me for nothing; he killed me for no good reason.
> Hadith: an-Nasai'i

Allah's creation is *'all set in order'*. His wrath will descend on anyone who upsets that order to introduce evil or mischief into it (Qur'an 7:56).

There is nothing in Islam that would command adherence to any mass movement for a cleaner environment unless that movement had a spiritual awareness as its basis. But neither would membership be forbidden automatically by its not being specifically Muslim. Moreover the individual has to do his own striving in accordance with the sacred Law:

> ... *No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another...*
> Qur'an 6:164. Yusuf Ali's English Translation

The case for membership would have to be judged according to the movement's nature, motives, actions and achievements. But if membership actually and consistently distracted the individual from his duty as a Muslim - from the five daily Prayers, for example - or involved him in dubious politics to the neglect of his family, he would have to reject it.

In the Islamic perspective, a weapon against all evils - including those of the modern world - is the worship of Allah and intelligent holding to the Divine Law and the virtues of balance, moderation, objectivity, probity and love of one's neighbour. That Islam has survived despite wicked rulers, internecine strife and attack from external forces, is proof of its inner strength. It ensures a consciously spiritual component within a world that is, on the whole, abandoning the religious viewpoint for that of egoism.

Allah's Mercies

The plants, fruits and their products are of Allah's bounteous mercies and should therefore be so treated, Allah says:-
Surah 55, Ayahs 10-13

> "It is He who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures: therein is fruit and date-palms, producing spathes (enclosing dates); also corn, with (its) leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet-smelling plants. Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny." Yusuf Ali's English Translation

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The environment is a vital part of the biosphere and the survival of mankind is hinged on the efficient management of environmental challenges in order to sustain the delicate balance of the

ecosystem. Within the global space, agitations by environmentalist to preserve the environment have brought to the front burner the need for conservation and sustainability of the environment. To achieve these lofty goals, research has shown that cultivating a mutually enduring partnership between the people and the government allows for a more broad based policy formulation platform and an all-inclusive implementation of such policies.

Man owes it as a duty to humanity and divinity to perpetually preserve his environment. In point of fact, the traditional African man and woman, no matter their political, ideological, religious, ethnic, tribal, economic, social or other inclinations, have always seen the environment as a divine gift. This may partly explain why some traditional Africans allegedly worshipped aspects of the environment, including the sun, the moon, the land, the sea, some trees and some animals (Nwosu, 1993).

Beyond these divine perspectives, the African man and woman have always placed high premium on the environment and all it offers because they see it as the key sources of survival on earth. For example, the Africans with their triple heritage have always been aware of the fact they depend on the land for agricultural or farm produce, the forest for meat, the sea for fish and water and the atmosphere for air.

Our environment provides us with the life support mechanism, and if we refuse to protect it, our future and that of the unborn generation may be doomed. From the Islamic religious communication perspective, the creation of the universe and the balance set by Allah are all clear in the overall ecological system of the earth, in which every animal, plant, mineral and human being plays its part in supporting the others. All are parts of Allah's plan and nobody is allowed to disrupt this plan through any mischief on earth. It is the duty of everybody to blow the whistle on those who attempt to destroy the environment, and to put pressure on those who have the power to protect it.

A Muslim will not distinguish action to counter environmental pollution from questions of morality and worship as all are guided by the same Divine Law. Knowing that one should not take substances that harm the body, such as alcohol, drugs or unclean food, s/he will desist from them spontaneously without needing an official campaign. In the same way s/ he will prefer lead-free petrol and other products which help protect the environment. If s/he thinks about the significance of the Divine Names such as 'the veiler' *(as-Sattar)* and the 'All-Pardoning' *(al-Ghaffar)* who covers over ugliness as the skin clothes the human body, s/he will not wish to see or read anything that presents all repulsiveness - moral and environmental - in the name of realism.

The following recommendations are made:

1. Mosques, churches, universities, all agencies of socialization, the schools, the mass media, the governments, the families, the peer groups, private sectors etc. have a critical role to play in addressing the crushing environmental problems of the society.
2. Regular information dissemination, public education and enlightenment and up-to-date sources of information and effective communication about environmental problems and issues are of paramount importance.

3. The utilization of the mother tongue in every country should be encouraged as a medium of instruction in schools and mass education mobilization centres to supplement and complement the efforts of the mass media of Communication – Radio, Television, Newspapers, Ora media etc to facilitate sharing, addressing and promoting information concerning environmental issues, problems and degradation.
4. Environmental information should be deposited in places frequented by specific user groups and indigenous people and traditional communities and urban and rural areas should be encouraged to participate in the provision and dissemination of environmental information and in decision-making.
5. Specialized training for disseminators of environmental information is crucial.
6. The adoption of community based approaches to public education and enlightenment through culturally relevant social groups, voluntary associations, pressure groups, professional unions, political parties and occupational organizations regarding the environment must be encouraged.
7. The goals and objectives of the National Policy on the environment in all countries of the world should be effectively implemented, funded and enforced.
8. Cooperation at local, state, national, international and intergovernmental levels as well as with other countries international, regional organizations/ agencies should be encouraged and vigorously pursed to achieve optimal utilization of trans-boundary natural resources and effective prevention or abatement of trans-boundary environmental problems and pollution.
9. Environmental education and integrated waste management enlightenment through the use of leaflets circulation, billboards, signages, jingles, cartoons, prints and electronic media, radio, television, drama, magazines, social media etc.
10. The public must be effectively informed about environmental issues, problems, dangers, challenges, crises, waste management laws, enactments, practices, technologies, effect of non-compliance etc. the public should also be made aware of the legal implications and consequences of not obeying environmental laws, rules and regulations.

11.   There is the need for:

(a) Constant review of the existing public policy framework on the environment, as well as review of environmental laws, rules, regulations, sanitation programmes and waste management strategies/modus operandi/modus Vivendi.
(b) Capacity building and training of environmental officers and adequate funding of environmental agencies.
(c) Regular quality researches, aimed at solving environmental problems, promoting sustainable environmental development and ensuring that every person enjoys a healthier, safer, better, cleaner and greener environment to study, work, trade and live.

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