

Islam's attitude toward nature

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Abstract

The main question of the present study is what Islam's attitude and recommendations are in the biodiversity conservation issue and the way to interact. This paper deal with major theories of Anthropocentrism, Eco-Centrism, and Biome-Centrism. While reviewing Holy Quran and exploring Islamic literature using keywords like nature, trees, animals, conservation, organisms, diversity, oceans, earth, mountains I found that Islam has a positive attitude and many recommendations toward the moral and intrinsic value of the other beings. The difference between the Islamic view and other theories toward the natural environment is that they equate the intrinsic value of man with other beings, while in Islam, human is distinguished from other beings since he has an intellect and has accepted the providence and guardianship of God. Human seizure in nature must be done with responsibility and commitment. The Islamic view is in line with the comprehensive intermediate theory of the environment, and the statement that humans and animals have the same intrinsic value and respect, and that the intrinsic value of life-capable beings cannot be graded, is not acceptable in Islam. Islam has very restricted rules toward nature conservation and recommends that human protect habitats, animals, and overall biodiversity.

Keywords: Islam, Nature, Environment, Eco-centered theories, Biome-centered theories

Introduction

The several-thousand-year-old history of human life can be divided into two periods by the criteria and indicators of "sustainable consumption": A. the "Age of Sustainable Consumption Patterns" is a several-thousand-year-old period from cave-dwelling to industrialization, in which human seizure in the environment did not cause irreparable damage and relatively benefited in a sustainable and better manner. B. The "era of unstable consumption patterns", namely the era of industrialization of human societies to the present day, which, despite the flourishing of knowledge, achieving the superb power of technology, rapid turnover of information and capital, unfortunately, has had some negative effects like discharge, destruction, pollution and instability. (Mozaffari, 1389). Since the second half of the 1960s, human beings

have been aware of the threatening signs of their new scientific and technical advances, and have concluded that it is not only nuclear weapons that threaten the life of the planet but also the unstable production and consumption patterns are very dangerous. In the short experience of combining unstable consumption patterns with technology, rapid and hazardous environmental damages have been occurred, often depriving both nature of restoration opportunities and endangering life of humans and other creatures.

These damages led to ecological crises and caused irreparable damages, becoming a serious threat to human societies. These questions have, therefore, become the subject of much research that what the root cause of the ecological crisis is and how we should interact with nature. In addition to presenting normative theories about the correct way to interact with nature, different intellectual systems have also raised questions about intrinsic value. This has led to different value orientations, each of which is the basis for different approaches to ecological ethics. Some of the most important value orientations are human-centered theory, bio-centered theory and ecosystem-centered theory (Abedi Sarvestani, 1386). Concerning the origins of ecological crises, some have argued that the ecological crisis is rooted in religious doctrines. Lynn White (1907-1987) Professor of History at the University of California in 1967 wrote an article entitled "Our Ecological Historical Rooting", in which he considered the root cause of the ecological and environmental crisis in the Jewish-Christian thought that man should rule nature (a group of Authors, 1386). This theory that ecological crises are originated from spiritual and religious crises, made the researchers, in recent years, study Abrahamic religions for resolving environmental crises.

In contrast, Patrick Doubles criticized White's claim that considers Christianity's attitude to nature as boundless domination on the ecosystem, wrote: Jewish-Christian attitude is a kind of "morality of sovereignty" and a religious heritage over nature, which commands the modesty, and not arrogance, towards God. He considered no role for religious doctrines in the emergence of environmental crisis and decay, and he identified all the roots of environmental crisis in the economic, social, and political factors influencing modern science and economics, which eventually led to the establishment of liberal and global Christian destruction. In his belief, these governments, in the absence of valuable religious teachings, have provided the grounds for the excessive and indiscriminate exploitation of biosphere resources (A group of authors, 1386). Studies show that examining the relevance of religious doctrines to ecological issues has a long history. For example, Allameh Majlesi has devoted two volumes of the books of Bihar al-Anwār to the traditions in the field of environment. However, in recent decades, this issue has been seriously considered by scholars and thinkers. Some of the books in this field are Bio-Environmental Ethics by Louis Poyman, Environmental Ethics by John Benson, Islam and the Environment written by Ayatollah Jawādī Āmulī, Principles of Environmental Education in Islam by Sadiq Asghari, Islam and Environment by Isa Valayee, and Ethics and Environment by Kavus Sayyid Imami. Articles such as "The Ethical-Ecological Theory of Islam with Emphasis on the Views of Professor Mesbah Yazdī" by Mahmoud Fathali and "Humanism in the Environmental Territory with Emphasis on Islamic Attitude" by Mohsen Jawādī (A group of authors, 1389) some authors have also searched on this issue.

With this in mind, the main issue of the present study is what the relationship between religious doctrine and the environment is and the religious doctrines are compatible to which of these three doctrines about human interaction with nature. Accordingly, this article first reviews and criticizes the three theories; then the question is that the religious teachings are closest to which of them. In this study, data have been collected by the library study method. In addition, the three approaches on how human interacts with nature have been studied with the descriptive and comparative method and have been adapted with the verses of the Quran.

Anthropocentrism

The Anthropocentric approach is the most well-known orientation in ecological ethics. This view is derived from traditional ethics. According to it, among natural beings, only human is worthy or intrinsically valuable, and other beings are not worthy of moral consideration. Proponents of this approach are themselves divided into two groups:

Theory of Human Gene

In this theory, the human gene is a necessary and sufficient condition for moral value. In the words of Noonan, the criterion of humanity is a very universal one, that is, if you were born of humanistic parents, then you are human. (Mary, *Moral Status, A Companion to Applied Ethics*, p. 441). Because, according to this view, the criterion of moral value is the human gene, the infant, the child, the disabled, the insane, and even the embryo have the same moral value in the womb because they have the human gene (Rukn al-Dini, nd: p. 30). Lin Wight attributes this approach to Jewish-Christian thinking that says: human beings must rule over nature and nature is merely a source of exploitation. (Louie, 1384: v. 1, p. 65)

Theory of Moral Agent

According to the theory of moral agent, the criterion of moral value and intrinsic value in the human being is his intellect. The most important reason presented for human beings in such an exceptional situation is human rationality, which allows them to behave as they wish to other seemingly senseless species and creatures. This view is attributed to the German philosopher, Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant says: we have nothing to do with animals because they lack reason and intelligence. Animals are merely a means to an end, and they are to serve human beings. In his view, if some duties are conceived in cases of immoral animals and human beings these duties are indirectly related to man and for preserving his interests (Kant, 1369: v. 1, p. 83). According to Kant's distinction between value and dignity, what is dignified has intrinsic value and moral value; but what is of relative value is merely a tool and an instrument for human service and of no intrinsic value. So it has no moral value and right.

Eco-Centrism

Eco-Centrism is a skeptical, egotistical view to the existence of any supernatural being (Islami, Dabiri and Alizadeh, 1386: p. 212). This approach has been evolved with the advancement of knowledge in the biological sciences. Eco-Centrism opposes the approach of human ethical interaction with nature and the environment, which derives from the traditional ethics of the West and the Church, according to which man is not part of nature but is separate and out of it, usually its external master or controller. Some proponents of the Eco-Centrism view believe that the ecological crisis that afflicts today's humans is caused by religious schools such as Christianity. Eco-Centrism can be seen as the first step, in which human goes beyond themselves and wishes to accept intrinsic value in other beings. In this approach, it is claimed that animals with lower and different degrees possess rational attributes such as subjective marking, problem-solving, utilizing different tools, fundamental behavior with others, the ability to feel himself and to know himself (Louis, 1384: P. 147; Bernard Rowlin, nd). Bernard Rowlin believes that both humans and animals are sentient beings. Therefore, they have moral values and rights and are respected as a result. He argues that other natural systems that are not sentient also lack respect and moral value (Louis, 1384: 147). Singer also believes that sentient beings have intrinsic value. (Singer, 1386: p. 151). Singer and Reagan believe that achieving the status of ethical value depends on the validity of this position. This validity is what makes a creature worthy of the moral and ethical value that, in Singer's view, is being sensitive and intelligent, and in Reagan's view: benefiting the experience of life. According to this approach, the moral value goes to the limit of animals that have such validity as human beings. (Louie, 1384: pp. 163 and 164)

Biome-Centrism

Some see the value orientation of Biome-Centrism as narrow-minded for environmental protection, saying that there is a need for a holistic approach in which environmental protection is based on natural processes. In the holistic ecosystem ethical approach, the moral value of all beings - living or inanimate such as trees and rocks is emphasized. In this kind of ecological ethics, humans are not superior to others; they are only part of a larger whole, i.e. nature. It is on this basis that the American philosopher Paul Taylor puts forward the concept of expanded society and the concept of the expanded self. In Taylor's idea, the idea of a unified society plays a central role, by which the notion that natural beings have a common origin and are interdependent with one another, reaches to a moral commitment manifested in respect for nature. The notion of "community" on the one hand combines the idea of interdependence and on the other, commitment and mutual care. For Ness, being one with nature means becoming part of a larger being. The key to

recognizing the larger self, than the smaller self, is the idea of 'Identification'. Man becomes larger when he sees himself in harmony with nature. (Benson, 1382: pp. 294-300)

Reviewing and Criticizing the Anthropocentrism Theory

1. One of the most important reasons for anthropocentrism is human rationality, which allows him to behave in any way to other seemingly senseless species and creatures. This belief in the immobility of matter and the lack of inherent insights and values in non-human beings give humans the right to acquit themselves of the damage they cause to the biome. The consequence of anthropocentrism is the disengagement of man from the responsibility that man has for preserving the inherent values of nature. (Aminzadeh, 1381: pp. 97-106)
2. According to Lin Wight et al. this view has gained its validity from the Church (the Bible) and the influence of the Greeks and Aristotle on the West and Christianity, and this can be a strong reason for this view. This is a personal view that Aristotle has a specific view of nature and creatures and there are other views contrary to this idea. So his opinion cannot be a general view authorized for everyone.
3. Regarding Bible, there is no room for its validity, given the ups and downs and the multiplicity of the Bible. In addition, the necessity to accept this approach of the Bible is the acceptance of conflict in the Abrahamic religions; while the scriptures and the Abrahamic religions have no conflict with each other.
4. This saying that man is a wise and rational being, and therefore has moral value and right, is accepted by all, but why other beings do not have this status? What is the problem if other creatures have ethical values and human beings, as the best creature, have the right to exploit them while preserving their worth and dignity.

Review and critique of Eco-Centrism theory

1. This approach is a positive step in disregarding the traditional Western view namely Anthropocentrism, as it pushes the subject of value and morality beyond the boundary of human beings and goes up to the animal boundary, but in practice, because man has a capitalist thought, he acts in a way that destroys everything for his own maximum profit and accumulation of capital (Foster, 1383); like socialist ideas, in which people like Saint Simon and Pirrudy rejected any exploitation between humans and nature, but during the Cold War, the Socialists as competing with capitalism damaged to the environment. (Fahimi and Mashhadi, 1388)
2. It is not acceptable to say that humans and animals have the same intrinsic value and respect and that the intrinsic value of living creatures cannot be graded, since it is unlikely that even proponents of this approach will adhere to it.
3. According to Singer's theory that every sentient being has moral value and respect, human life will face many problems among these beings; since moral conflicts increase to the point that it is very difficult for humans to make decisions. For example, since this approach requires respect for all beings, the question arises as to what is the human duty to insidious creatures such as mosquitoes, flies, mice, and beetles.
4. Another problem of this theory is that sensitivity and sensibility are considered to be moral values, while sensitivity is an existential value, not an ethical one, such as reason, which is an existential value, not an ethical one.
5. Reagan cites the reason for the moral value of animals as being "prone to live." If the gift of life is meant to have the potential to continue living and enjoy what is needed and one deserves it, then there is no difference between animals and other beings because all beings, even plants, have the potential to survive. The aptitude of life is something beyond the perception and emotion of the being; that is, the being without the perception and emotion can also be susceptible to life.

A Review and Critique of Biome-Centrism Theory

Biome-Centrism relies on Taylor's theory. This theory has three basic axes:

- Every living being has the ultimate goal and purpose of life.
- Every living being sought its good in its way.
- Every living being has the same intrinsic value as others, and the intrinsic value of a man is no more than the intrinsic value of other living beings.

The scope of this theory is much broader than that of Eco-Centrism since it encompasses all living beings.

The disadvantages of this view are as follows:

1. If Taylor means "society" as a minimalist concept, it is acceptable because it has no meaning other than interdependence; but if one considers the maximal concept of society, it implies conditions in which most living creatures will not even potentially members of society because of those conditions that are:

- A. Mutual recognition of each member toward each other,
- B. The existence of common interests that members work together to achieve,
- C. Mutual recognition of each other's rights

Under these circumstances, it is doubtful that even all human beings can be assumed to be one community, let alone all beings as "one community". Of course, we can say that all human beings can see each other as potential members of society.

2. Another disadvantage of this view is the lack of attention to detail. If the suspicious matter of the creatures is taken into account, considering their being sensate, while enjoying their dignity and status, they can be given priority and necessity on a case-by-case basis.

Investigating the Islamic View

To understand which perspective is closer to Islam, the traditions and jurisprudential books will be examined in a comparative view to the religious teachings of the Qur'an,; but since the second and third theories are the same and the third theory is the completed form of the second theory, the comparative study of these two theories will be done with religious teachings. So here two possibilities are mentioned: A Biome-Centrism View and Anthropocentrism View or Environmental Value-Oriented View.

One possibility is that Islam endorses the holistic view. To prove this possibility, there is some evidence from the Qur'an and the Islamic jurisprudence that Islam has a comprehensive, inclusive, and valuable view to the whole world, both the human world and the inhuman world. Some evidence of this possibility is as follows:

A. In the Quranic worldview, the elements of nature and man are not separated and have an inseparable identity. The world has the identity of "From Him" (إنا لله) and "Towards Him" (إنا إليه راجعون). In this sense, all existence is not in the possession of man to make any conquest, but the environment and man are two elements along with each other which depend on each other for a living. Both are evolving towards Him, and each has intrinsic value in itself.

B. Qur'an prohibits man from corruption on earth and environmental destruction is one of the most prominent examples of corruption on earth because, as commentators have said, the Qur'an's definition about the corruption on earth is perpetrating cruelty and oppression by unethical behaviors of the human being (Zamakhsharī, 1407 AH: v. 3, p. 413), which disrupts the current orderly and competent system in

the world. Corruption is either caused by human mismanagement like war or the result of human upheaval on earth like widespread drought and diseases.

C. Another example is that hunting for fun is forbidden in Islam. It is permissible to hunt in Islamic jurisprudence only if it is to integrate and meet the subsistence needs. In a hadith, Zurarah asks Imam Sadiq (AS): How is the prayer of a hunter who has gone hunting for fun? Imam Sadiq (AS) says: Since he went hunting for fun, his prayer is not short (his journey is sin) (Hur Āmulī, 1403 AH: v. 5. part 8, hadith 2.) The result is that the above Qur'anic and jurisprudential evidence shows that nature and human beings share the same value and that no one's value is dependent on the others' value. Therefore, the theory of environmental or anthropomorphic valuation is not in line with this view, and the Islamic view is in line with the holistic ecological theory. (Fathali, 1390: p. 102)

Anthropocentrism View or Environmental Value-Oriented View

Another possibility is that Islam has a value-oriented view of the environment, in the sense that all the things God has created have been for human beings to meet their needs and exploit them. Based on this view, the natural environment is a means of serving humanity. Evidence that supports this claim is:

A. Numerous verses in the Qur'an suggest that nature has been created for human creation:

It is He who has created all that is on the earth for you. He then created the heavens, so he arranged them in the order of the seven heavens, and he knew everything (Baqarah: 29). The word «لام» in the phrase «خَلَقَ لَكُمْ» is a profit one- in the sense that all that is on earth is at the service of man and that the originality of the permissibility is deduced; namely at first glance man has the authenticity to seizure in all nature; in addition, the authenticity of the subscription is understood, that is, natural gifts do not belong to a particular person, and they are all equally shared. This initial sharing is prioritized in the traditions and hadiths, with rulings such as Tahjir, Hayāt, and Īhyā, and no one has the advantage over the other. In the general sense, man has the right to conquer nature. (Sadiqi Tehrani, 1405-1407). According to Allameh Tabataba'i, regarding the hierarchy of being, the creatures that are in the material world each have privileges toward those lower than them. Humans have been distinguished from other beings by the gift of reason and have been allowed by God to conquer and dominate the inferior ranks. (Tabataba'ei, 1402)

B. According to the Qur'anic verses, man has the right to conquer nature and dominate it. The Qur'an cites examples of all kinds of domination, including:

Conquer nature for the use of nutrition: (The same God who made the earth a comforting place for you and created paths there and sent water from the sky with which We created various kinds of plants (from the dark soil). Eat both yourself and your livestock. Certainly therein are clear signs for the wise. (Tā Hā: 53 & 54). (And he is the one who calmed the sea to eat fresh flesh from it.) (Nahl: 14)

Hiring the nature to cover: (Of the cattle are some for burden and some for meat: eat what Allah hath provided for you, and follow not the footsteps of Satan: for he is to you an avowed enemy.)(An'ām: 142)

Hiring for Transport and Food: (It is Allah Who made cattle for you, that ye may use some for riding and some for food)(Ghāfir: 79). (It is Allah Who has subjected the sea to you, that ships may sail through it by His command, that ye may seek of His bounty, and that ye may be grateful.)(Jāthiyah: 12)

Recruitment for the accommodation: (It is Allah Who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet for you; and made for you, out of the skins of animals,(tents for)dwellings, which ye find so light (and handy) when ye travel and when ye stop(in your travels); and out of their wool, and their soft fibers(between wool and hair), and their hair, rich stuff and articles of convenience(to serve you)for a time.)(Nahl: 80). Recruitment for Guidance: (It is He Who made the stars (as beacons) for you, that ye may guide yourselves, with their help, through the dark spaces of land and sea: We detail Our Signs for people who know.)(An'ām: 97)

Islamic traditions and the Quranic verses attribute the right to conquer in nature due to the existence of two endowments of reason and authority that have made man superior to other beings. Abdullah bin Sinan quotes Imam Sadiq (AS) was asked about human superiority over angels. He said: God put the intellect in the angels without lust, and put the lust in the cattle without reason and put both of them in the children of Adam. But one whose intellect prevails over his lust is certainly better than the angels, and the one whose lust prevails over his intellect must be worse than the cattle. (Saduq, nd: v. 1, p. 4)

Although there is some doubt on the authenticity of the above hadith, some have considered its sanad correct and have not doubted its attribution to the infallible Imam. (Majlisi, 1406)

According to Allameh Tabataba'i, another element of human excellence is his total authority to accept the divine will and to obey his commandments, among God's creatures man is merely capable of obeying divine commandments and adorning his divine ethics. (Tabataba'i, 1402). According to this evidence, man's relation to nature is conquered if he maintains his existential value and is faithful to God, meaning that he can do everything he wants. (Jawādī Āmulī, 1386: p. 168)

A comparative study of the Islamic view with three mentioned views

Although in Islam, human beings are given dignity over many beings, and the world is subjugated to them, but this human being is not an irresponsible human being. He, as the divine caliph, must bear the burden of the divine trust he has accepted. Whereas in contemporary human-centered thinking, man is considered to replace God on earth. The word caliphate of God, which has been prescribed for man, requires the caliph to characterize his actions and behavior as attributes of divine action, otherwise, he has not fulfilled the condition of trust and the caliphate. Man is the virtual owner of the earth and how to take possession of this virtual property has been mentioned in reforming the earth and avoiding corruption. Several verses in the Holy Qur'an warn man against corruption in the earth and command him to reform it. How to develop the earth is the same as following the laws of the universe because man as a small world is physically and spiritually part of the great world and as a result, his activities with the system ruling on nature is a fundamental factor in his better life and will avoid him from destruction and corruption in nature. Such thinking does not seek insane and destructive domination over nature, but on the contrary, recommends and encourages its proper and balanced use. (Aminzadeh, 1381: 105) The result is that the above Qur'anic and jurisprudential evidence show that nature and man have equal value and the value of one does not depend on the other. Therefore, the theory of the value of environment or human-centeredness as a tool is not consistent with this view; and the view of Islam is consistent with the comprehensive intermediate theory of the environment (Fath Ali, 1390: p. 102). Considering that the ecological view believes that every living thing has the same intrinsic value as others and that the intrinsic value of a man is not more than the intrinsic value of other living beings, this view is in conflict with Islam because in Islam man has a higher intrinsic value than other creatures. This statement of the bio-centric view that human beings and animals have the same intrinsic value and respect and the intrinsic value of living beings is not gradable is not acceptable in Islam.

Conclusion

The industrialization of human societies has, unfortunately, had negative effects such as discharge, destruction, pollution, and instability, despite the flourishing of knowledge, the achievement to the power of superb technology, the rapid turnover of information and capital. These damages turned into an ecological crisis that formed the question of what the root cause of the environmental crisis is and how we should interact with nature. There are three general and important points of view in this regard: Anthropocentrism theory, Eco-Centrism theory, and Biome-Centrism theory. In this study, the Islamic view has been adapted to these theories to find out which one is more in harmony with them. According to the anthropocentric view, among the creatures, it is only human that is intrinsically valuable and that he has no moral commitment to other beings. Eco-Centrism theory holds that every living thing, such as man, is

intrinsically valuable and must have a moral commitment to it. In Biome-Centrism theory, all creatures, whether animate or inanimate, like plants and animals, have moral value.

Some of the verses of the Qur'an and traditions are close to the Anthropocentric view, while others are in harmony with the bio-centered view; Human beings have been distinguished from other creatures and allowed to conquer the environment for the benefit of the intellect and the acceptance of the Divine Providence and Guardianship; but this permission does not deny the inherent value of other beings and does not mean that human being is absolute; but human interaction with the environment is responsive, committed and responsible. The difference between the view of Islam and other views is in the type of attitude towards man and nature. In the view of Islam, man is the caliph of God, so he is different from other creatures and is allowed to possess, and on the other hand, this permission to possess is not absolute and Islamic laws limit this possession to certain limits. The view of Islam is in line with the comprehensive intermediate theory of the environment and does not consider man as having absolute authority and does not give nature equal or more value than a man.

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