

IV ● ORIENTAL STUDIES

UDC 87.01.45

Nadirova G.E.

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
E-mail: gulnad@mail.ru

Environment and Some Aspects of Religious Education

Abstract. The religious situation and religious beliefs in Kazakhstan are a dynamic, constantly changing phenomenon. They are reflected in numerous processes and actions, that we can observe every day and that require our study and reflection.

Islam in Kazakhstan is able to interact with the new realities and «challenges», and create new meanings and correct personal and social beliefs.

Religious education can contribute to the solution of today's social problems, such as environmental, act as a stimulus for the development of environmental awareness. Scientists and environmental activists all over the world have begun to develop educational strategies to revive the environmental teachings and practices of Islam. They participate in the formation of eco-ethics of Islam and the development of teaching materials for the introduction of eco-ethics in a rich educational environment of the Muslim world.

Key words: ecology, religious education, Islam, environment, mosque.

Introduction

The religious situation and religious beliefs in Kazakhstan are a dynamic phenomenon, changing constantly at formal and informal, individual level, that is reflected in numerous processes and actions, which we observe every day; and they require special study and reflection.

Religion is able to interact with the new realities, «challengers» as we often say, social and scientific processes, as well as create new meanings and correct personal and social beliefs.

Religion can contribute the solution of today's social problems, such as environmental, act as an incentive for the development of education, which «seeks to be faithful to the religious traditions, values and ethics of Islam, as well as display the transforming power of the faith»(1).

Muslims, who make up more than one-fifth of the world's population, are also concerned about the health and welfare of the Earth, like the rest of its inhabitants. The teachings of Islam do not contradict, but on the contrary, demonstrate the relevance of the use of traditional resources and institutions in addressing one of the biggest challenges facing humanity - the health of our planet.

Methods

At the end of the XX century, the term «sustainable development» became widespread, it refers to the socio-economic and environmental development, aimed at the reasonable satisfaction of human needs while improving the quality of life of present and future generations, peace-keeping, the careful use of the planet's resources and conservation environment.

As it turns out, sustainable development, and the environmentalism, social environmental movement that spread in the XX century in European countries, aimed at strengthening the protection of environmental measures, harmonious part of the religious consciousness, without breaking, but on the contrary, supporting the basic tenets and values religion. To think about the world and take care of its preservation are the duties of the believer.

Proper human perception of his position in the universe and the fair treatment of the outside world are of great importance for the formation of a Muslim identity.

Main body

Islam views the environment as a source of human livelihood, for which he is responsible. In

dozens of Quranic verses, there is a call to reflect on the natural phenomena, to study the relationship between living organisms and the environment. Every element in nature is connected with the other elements, and the man as one of the species is inextricably linked with the environment. The Quran points to the need to organize a rational interaction between man and nature, because only in this case, progressive development of society is possible

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْتَمِيزَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

He placed on the earth firm mountains, lest it should shake with you, and rivers and roads that you may go to the right path» (Sura 16, «Bees», verse 15).

Man has no right to destroy the world he did not create. Sharia laws limit the intervention in nature, protecting forests from destruction, sources of drinking water and the air - from pollution, and ecosystem - from the death and destruction.(2)

Careful attitude towards the environment is a part of Muslim culture. Muslim learns to love and protect nature from the moment that understands the meaning of the testimony of faith. As a child and learning the rules of the commission of prayer and atonement, he learns that it is necessary to treat the water sparingly, and impossible to profane sources and reservoirs. Availability of fresh water sources in the Qur'an is described as God's mercy:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا نَبِّئْ يَدِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا
لِيُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيِّتًا وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَامًا وَأَنَاسِي كَثِيرًا

« We send down from the sky pure and clean water, to revive dead land with it and drink numerous cattle and many people» (Sura 25 «Distinction», verses 48-49)

In many verses of the Quran, we find reference to one of the basic conditions for the existence of life on Earth - biological diversity.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ أَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ

«Do they not see how We have nurtured on earth the noble species?» (Sura 26, «The Poet», verse 7)

All animals, plants and microorganisms that inhabit our planet have a right to exist - not because they can be used for the benefit of man, be-

cause together they provide the harmony of God's creation:

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ

«We prostrated ground, place don't firm mountains and nurtured on it to the best of all sorts of things» (Sura 15, «Hijr», verse 19)

Environmental pollution and the depletion of our planet's resources are man-made, and therefore Islam sees the solution to these problems in a meaningful regulation of human activities, the formation of value-oriented ecological culture. In view of this, a special significance is the environmental education. Humanity must compensate their impact on the environment, and the Qur'an imposes on human responsibility for everything that happens to him and around him, including - for the restoration of its habitat (2).

Over the past three decades, the religious communities have intensified their activities in the field of environmental protection. People of faith quite logically assume the function of guardians of the Earth planet and the fighters for their well-being. It is in this context, that a relatively new phenomenon as ecotheology has appeared.

Ecotheology is a form of constructive theology that focuses on the relationship of religion and nature, especially in the light of environmental concerns. Ecotheology usually comes from the fact that there is a link between human religious / spiritual views and degradation of nature. The movement implements numerous religious and environmental projects around the world (3).

It is important to bear in mind that ecotheology seeks not only to identify known problems in the relationship between nature and religion, but also to identify possible solutions. This is particularly important, as many supporters and members of the movement say that only science and education are not sufficient to cause radical changes needed in our current environmental crisis.

Religion and environmentalism become a new interdisciplinary area among academic disciplines and religious studies, religious ethics, the sociology of religion and theology, among other things.

By 1990, many religious scholars, scientists initiated discussions and studies, they generated a significant amount of scientific literature with an analysis of the place of the nature of the various religious systems of the world. A landmark event was a series of ten conferences on religion and ecology, organized by Yale University professor Mary

Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, and held in the University Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard from 1996 to 1998.

In a series of conferences over 800 international scientists, religious leaders and environmentalists have participated. Conference papers were published in a series of ten books «World Religions and Ecology», one for each of the world's major religious traditions.

Based on these conferences later Tucker and Grim formed the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, that was instrumental in the creation of science in shaping environmental policy, as well as «greening» of religion. It continues to be the largest international multireligious project (4).

Active religious and environmental group was established in the American Academy of Religion in 1991, and a growing number of universities in North America and around the world now offer courses on religion and the environment. Recent studies in religion and ecology can be found in the peer-reviewed journal «Worldviews: world religions, culture, ecology» in reference works, such as encyclopedias.

Another landmark in the new field was the publication of «Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature» in 2005, edited by Bron Taylor. Taylor also headed the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, which was established in 2006 and began publishing a quarterly magazine for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture in 2007.

Interest arising in the Islamic community to the environment is reflected in the steady growth of «green» movement among Muslims worldwide. Based on eco-ethics of Islam, these «green» Muslims have launched eco-Islamic projects in cities in

Canada and England, to protect forests in the Philippines and Malaysia, and the coral reefs of Zanzibar.

Scientists and environmental activists have begun to develop educational strategies to revive the environmental teachings and practices of Islam. They participate in the formation of eco-ethics of Islam and the development of teaching materials for the introduction of eco-ethics in a rich educational environment of the Muslim world: traditional Islamic institutions, Islamic schools and universities, as well as in a variety of formal and informal training programs offered by educational bodies(1).

The mosque is one of the most visible symbols of Islam and served as a place of prayer and learning throughout Muslim history. It serves a multifaceted role in the life of a Muslim - and as a place of prayer and meditation, and as a center of religious learning and political debate, as well as a safe place to shelter. Some scholars emphasize the important role of mosques for eco-Islamic activities throughout the Muslim world as an educational center and a «perfectly appropriate places for holding information sessions and community discussions on environmental issues» (5).

Another opportunity to introduce environmental teachings of Islam through mosques is the construction and upkeep of the mosque. In this connection, it may be mentioned that in the historic university city of Cambridge eco-mosque is based, with natural light throughout the year, thanks to the huge light hatches in the dome. For heating and cooling, it is planned to use geothermal heat pumps, energy-saving technology and green roofs that will give near-zero carbon footprint (6). To spread environmental awareness mosques should play a key role as a tool of continuous education in the Muslim society.



The world's first eco-friendly mosque is constructed in Dubai

In the UK, in the framework of the project «Islam and civic education» (ICE) a training program for Muslim schools was developed, under which the lesson plans include theme titled «Islam and the Environment», as well as guidance for teachers, activities and follow-up work on various themes (7). The activities of international aid agencies and the development of «Muslim Hands» aimed at the development of environmental training programs for their schools around the world, combining the expertise of local professionals with innovative teaching materials on the protection of the environment. And in South Africa, the Muslim students take an active part in the annual ecological initiative to care the school environment, as well as participating in the national program of green schools, the annual Muslim school gardening competition which encourages schools and students to participate in tree-planting and support gardening in some municipalities (8).

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia are independent self-managing schools that are actively engaged in environmental Islamic activities practically participating in nature conservation: preserving rivers, buffer zones around sensitive areas. The project, which shows the shape of an «Islamic» eco-movement, can strengthen the environmental awareness in Indonesia, where the rural population is still largely dependent on natural resources to sustain their livelihoods (9).

Islam and Ecology Center was established at the University of Wales. It is assumed that based on the center initiative theological and legal handbooks, educational resources, training on practical environmental programs will be established, and the profile of eco-Islam on a global level will raise. However, the most famous was the eco-Islamic initiative in Zanzibar. Draft of environmental ethics that protects the maritime space and the environment of the island Misali, is a partnership between several international organizations, which resulted in the book-guide developed for the teacher of Islamic Environmental Education, it is used in religious schools in the teaching of environmental ethics of Muslims. The result exceeded all expectations (10).

Other learning opportunities, both formal and informal, such as conferences, lectures, workshops and seminars, voluntary movements, the media and social movements are also used by eco-activists of Islam. One of the main features, especially that of the Muslim communities in Western countries, is that their members have moved from strategy «Integration - just become a member of society» to the strategy of «Contribute - to become an active member of society.» In 2007, the British charity Islamic

organization convened a conference entitled «Healing the fragile Earth: Fulfilling our heavenly duty.» Leading scholars of the Muslim world are invited to attend such a conference to talk about the environmental mission of Islam. Digital and social media have widely reported environmental Islamist movement. EcoIslam Bulletin, now in its eighth edition, talks about all the latest developments and news concerning the Islamic environmental initiatives around the world. Blogs and Facebook pages are also playing a significant role in broadcasting information and raising awareness about the ecological role of Islam (11).

Islamic Foundation for Ecology and the Environment (IFEES) was created, and although the majority of eco-Islamic initiatives, for the most part, is still at the stage of the nominal environmental knowledge and awareness of environmental teachings of Islam, literacy increases.

As noted, the Muslim schools and universities, of course, perform an irreplaceable role in the preparation of environmentally conscious Muslims. Nevertheless, all these institutions to take their place in the revival of eco-ethics of Islam should be action-oriented and life-affirming spirituality, which are embodied in ecotheology with its holistic knowledge, to develop a framework and set forth goals and objectives of Islamic education in relation to the Environmental education.

The well-known eco-Islamic activist, Fazlun Khalid, says that while the educational activities are crucial to raise awareness about Islamic teachings related to the environment, education must be renovated, «to develop an understanding of the natural world and our place in it» (12). Growing eco-Islamic movement confirms that concern for the environment is a religious duty, an act of spiritual obedience, and requires measures to correct environmental policies.

It is necessary to expand the Islamic education to train socially active, ethically oriented and compassionate Muslims working for the common good, justice and well-being.

The introduction of modern social problems, such as environmental issues, can be an incentive for the transformation of religious education in Kazakhstan by implementing a holistic approach to knowledge, enhance the relevance of religious understanding of contemporary problems and the promotion of social activity of students by applying the teachings of Islam in their lives and the life of society. Living in justice to the people and the planet is necessary for every Muslim who accepts the mandate, in order to live as a trustee of Allah

on earth. This shows, in words and deeds that the educational space of Islam remains a vital resource for the modern environmental movement.

Conclusion

Environmental education is a part of the overall

education system. Religion can be, even has to be useful in solving the environmental crisis, consolidating the moral resources, successfully bringing the faithful beyond the selfishness and materialism, stressing the sanctity and order of nature, defining the place of humanity in it.

References

- 1 Najma Mohamed. - Islamic Education, Eco-ethics and Community. - Published online: 13 October 2013. - © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013.
- 2 www.e-minbar.com/islamovedenie/book-06/chapter-05
- 3 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>
- 4 www.fore.yale.edu
- 5 Foltz, R.C. 2005a. Introduction: The Environmental Crisis in the Muslim World. In Environmentalism in the Muslim World, ed. R.C. Foltz, vii-xiii. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- 6 www.islamrf.ru/news/world/w-news/28385
- 7 Islam & Citizenship Education (ICE) Project. 2009. Islam & Citizenship Education Project: Developing a Citizenship Curriculum for Madrasahs. Lesson Title: Islam and Environment. Key Stage 2: Lesson 16. <http://www.theiceproject.sdsa.net/trainingmaterials-key-stage-2> (accessed June 3, 2010)
- 8 Islamedia 2009/2010. Annual Student Magazine. Cape Town: Islamia College.
- 9 Mangunjaya, F. 2009. Indonesian Islamic School Revives Shari'ah Conservation Model. EcoIslam 6: 4. http://www.ifees.org.uk/newsletter_EcoIslam_Issue6.pdf (accessed August 18, 2009).
- 10 <http://eco-worldly.com/2008/04/10/green-fishing-according-to-islam>
- 11 <http://www.ifees.org.uk>
- 12 Fazlun Khalid. Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics, in Richard Foltz, ed., Environmentalism in the Muslim World, New York: Nova Science, 2005, pp. 87–111.