

Global Warming and Islam

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"Corruption has appeared on land and in the sea because of the evil which men's hands have done." – Al Quran 30:41

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An international panel of 25,000 scientists, who belonged to 130 countries, was formed under the aegis of the United Nations, the greatest international institution in the world. Headquartered at Paris, this panel was formed to investigate the causes of climate change. It completed its research and submitted a report to the United Nations. This sensational report was covered at length by the media, and was published in detail by the *Times of India* on February 3, 2007, titled 'Warning Signs'. I think it would have been more appropriate to call it 'Warning Signs of Doomsday.'

In the context of recent deliberations by scientists from all over the world on this subject, the *Times of India*, published a report on May 18, 2007, titled 'By 2050 the Earth Will be Arid and Empty.' According to this

report, a well known scientist, James Lovelock, observed in the light of scientific information, that by 2050, a major part of the land surface would have become dry. This would pose a serious threat to the lives of all living beings. We have reached the beginning of the end, from which point people will start dying one by one, eventually putting an end to all life on earth. “We are on the edge of the greatest die-off humanity has ever seen. We will be lucky if 20 of us survive what is coming.” (p 22)

A letter on this subject, written by Sir Isaac Newton, the famous British scientist in 1704, was recently displayed in a museum at Jerusalem. In this he wrote that the present world would come to an end in 2060. This was reported on the front page of the *Times of India*, June 18, 2007, under the heading, ‘Newton Saw End of the World in 2060.’

Man-made Global Warming

Sir Isaac Newton (d. 1727) had made this observation on the basis of a mathematical calculation based in turn on the classical laws of gravity and motion. This estimate appeared to be so strange that people took it as showing a superstitious side to Newton's life. This letter was first shown to the public in 1969, when Jerusalem's Hebrew University displayed it in an exhibition called 'Newton's Secrets'.

What Newton had observed by mathematical calculation regarding the end of the world has now become a known fact in science. The climate change taking place as a result of global warming in modern times has brought scientists to the conclusion that by 2010 the life support system will be so disturbed that most probably all kinds of life will come to an end on earth by 2050.

The earth is a unique planet in the vast Universe. It provides in an exceptional manner everything that is required to support life. As such, it has enabled human beings to inhabit it and develop civilizations. But according to the Quran, this state of affairs is not going to last forever. A time will come when the earth will lose all its greenery and its vegetation and it will become an arid waste. This will happen some time before Doomsday. According to the Quran:

“We have adorned the earth with attractive things, so that We may test mankind as to which one is best in conduct. But We will surely reduce all that is on it to a barren waste.” (18:7-8).

In the first quarter of the 7th century A.D. when this verse was revealed in the Quran, it was a very distant prediction. However, the scientific

observations made about the earth tell us that this destined end of the earth has begun already. Recent satellite observations of the earth from space tell us that the water system on our planet has been seriously disturbed and that the earth is fast heading towards its end.

This is what the Quran means by a “barren waste”. We learn from the Quran and Hadith that the present world is not an eternal world. A time will come when this world will be wound up and replaced by another world which will be eternal.

There are such signs in the present world as lead scientists to conclude that the end of history has come very close. Now, through purely scientific surveys, the revelation has been confirmed that the world has, in reality, reached the last stage of its existence. Those signs predicted in the Quran and Hadith have been underscored by scientific studies.

A verse, revealed in the Quran 1400 years ago, states:

‘Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what men’s hands have wrought’. (30:41).

The report of this panel seems to be an interpretation of this Quranic verse.

The main heading of this report is ‘Global warming is man-made’. In the light of this report we can explain the Quranic verse which says that: man-made corruption has spread on land and sea. This report also tells us that the atmosphere of the earth has now heated up to a degree far higher than that of the pre-industrial age. The level of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will soon be doubled.

This report also tells us that because of this heat, the polar ice and the glaciers on the mountains are continuously melting. As we all

know, there are huge ice caps at both the north and south poles. These are vast reservoirs of fresh water; but they are now melting at an alarming rate. Also there are huge, mountain-top glaciers, — gigantic storehouses of drinking water — which, as a consequence of global warming, are likewise rapidly melting and their stored water is draining off into the oceans through the rivers.

Due to this, the level of water in the seas is rising. It is feared that in the near future this will rise by as much as one metre and there will be the risk of the coastal areas being submerged. On the other hand, the non-coastal areas will suffer from an intolerable water shortage.

The report further tells us that the dangerous changes occurring in our world are resulting in irreversible damage. That is, there is no remedy for this process.

The report also tells us that, as a result of these changes, the earth will be hit by draughts, which will seriously affect the life support system. All these occurrences are a direct result of human activities. According to the report, “We are endangering all species on earth; we are endangering the future of the human race.”

What is happening is not simply a matter of climate change. It is, in fact, a warning by the Creator. It is an intimation in advance of something which is going to take place in the very near future. It is meant to bring man to his senses, so that he may reform himself and save himself from God’s chastisement.

God provided for all kinds of necessary things in this world, but these things were not meant to be luxuries. They were meant, rather, to be merely facilities. For the truth is that God made this world purely as a preparatory ground, and man was required to build in it a heavenly

personality, so that he might inhabit the next eternal world of Paradise. But man mistook those things provided by his Maker to be luxuries and, instead of preparing himself for paradise, he began building a 'paradise' in this world itself.

God continued to send warnings of different kinds, but man could not be brought to his senses. In this way, he forfeited the justification, in the eyes of God, to stay in this world for a further period of time. Apparently, now the time has come when this world should be terminated and man should be brought to book and be held accountable on the Day of Judgement.

Final Reckoning

The Quran and Hadith have clearly predicted the occurrence of this great event. From the Islamic viewpoint, God had made this world for a limited period of time. Now those signs

have appeared which tell us that this limited period of time is reaching its end. From the Quran and Hadith we also learn that, before the end of the world, a last call will be given so that the human beings inhabiting this world finally come to know that they have to stand before the Creator of this world for the final reckoning, and that thereafter there will be either eternal heaven or eternal hell.

This call before Doomsday or Qiamah is not going to be performed miraculously. Rather it will be performed through the process of 'cause and effect'. Now the opportunities for this final call have fully come into existence. What is required is for people to rise and fully avail of these opportunities and give a call for the acceptance of the divine message throughout the world.

The Angel Israfil, who holds the trumpet, is perhaps waiting for this final call. According

to the hadith, the greatest call of the divine message will take place before the end of the world, and all the opportunities for it to be made have been created for it by God. Now the only thing which is required is to utilize these opportunities and perform this great task.

Global warming leading to the end of the world is no simple matter. It is directly linked with divine law. The present world was not given to man by way of right or reward, nor was it something he acquired accidentally. No indeed! He was placed here for the purpose of being tested. After the completion of the test period, man will lose any justification to live in this world. This is just like being in an examination hall. The candidate is allowed to come to the hall for a limited period of time to take the test. The moment this time is up, he has to hand in his paper — whether he has completed it or not — and leave the room. The same is

true of man's stay in this world, only on a larger and more complex scale.

Global Communication of the Word of God

As we learn from the Quran, God has repeatedly sent His messengers to mankind. They communicated the divine message to man, but when their addressees refused to accept their message, in spite of it being fully communicated, they were destroyed. This happened all too frequently in the past.

However, in former times, the communication of the message could take place only locally, that is why only the people of a specific area were destroyed for their refusal to accept it. Now, owing to modern progress and development, the communication of the divine message is taking place at the global level. That is why, if people refuse to accept it, the destruction that will follow will be on a universal

scale. This is called Qiamah or Doomsday. Qiamah is the universal application of the same principle which was applied at a local level.

According to a hadith, a time will come when the word of God will reach all homes, big or small, in all parts of the world.

This communication of the word of God will certainly take place according to the law of cause and effect. The facilities for this to happen did not exist in the past. Now modern communications are fully at our disposal. Now it is quite possible to use print, electronic and the multi-media to spread the divine message all over the world.

The Signs of Doomsday

A number of traditions tell us that as Doomsday approaches, many signs will appear. The report of the climate change shows that all the signs

have already appeared. These signs are multifarious, but we shall describe only a few of them here.

1. According to a hadith, “When the Qiamah approaches, the sun will come closer to man.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, vol. VI, p 3) As a result of this, great heat will be generated on earth. This hadith tells us exactly what we have been told in the report.

The sun coming closer does not mean that the distance of the sun and the earth will become less, for in such a case life on earth would immediately come to an end. This coming closer, in fact, is symbolic of the heat of the sun becoming more intense, thereby raising the temperature.

2. What will happen to man when the sun’s heat increases? This has been expressed thus in the hadith: “The people will be

sweating. Some will sweat till their ankles, some till their knees others till their waist and yet others till their faces. (*Mishkat al Masabih*, Hadith no. 5540)

(The Arabic word *araq* in this tradition, which is used to mean sweat, literally means ‘squeezed water’. Sweat is called *araq* because it squeezes [or oozes] out of the human body. That is why the wine which is squeezed out of grapes is also called *araq*)

This tradition, in fact, symbolically tells us that during the last days, when the sun’s heat will increase and the glaciers of ice and the ice sheets at the polar caps of the Arctic and Antarctica will start melting, then the sea level will rise. As a result, the coastal settlements will be submerged in sea water. Some areas will be totally submerged, while others will be less affected, depending upon the altitude of the land mass affected.

3. Similarly according to a hadith, ‘smoke will rise before Doomsday which will fill the east and the west.’ (Al Qurtubi, vol. 16, p. 131).

This tradition clearly refers to the modern phenomenon of smog produced by air pollution.

This kind of air pollution did not exist in ancient times. No one could even conceive of such a thing. This tradition surely is a prediction of this modern phenomenon which is a product of industrial activity.

4. Similarly, we have been told of another sign to appear before the Qiamah. “Soon a mountain of gold will appear in the Euphrates River. When people learn about it, they will rush to take possession of it. Those who are near it will say that if they allow others to take it, they will take all of it. Then there will be a war to take control of it. In that

war about ninety percent of the people will be killed. (*Sahih Muslim*, Chapter *Kitab al Fitān*, vol. 18, p 19)

In this tradition it is very clear that what is meant here is petroleum, which is currently referred to as ‘liquid gold’. This liquid gold has appeared in the Euphrates as well as in the Middle East. Many wars have been fought for this industrial treasure and are still being fought — leading to great destruction.

5. According to another tradition, the Prophet Muhammad observed: ‘No home, big or small, will be left in the world, where God’s word would not have entered’. (*Musnad Ahmad*, *Mishkat al Masabih*, Hadith no. 42).

This tradition also tells us of a sign of the Qiamah. In ancient times, it was just not possible for the word of God to enter all homes.

It has become possible only today with modern communications having come into existence, albeit after the appearance of the signs of the Qiamah. The entering of the word of God into every home is, in fact, a sign of the approach of the Qiamah. Today through television, the internet and other means of communication, the divine message has reached all homes. Today, Islam is in the news everywhere, but its image has become totally distorted. The publicity Islam has received has been largely negative.

The need of the hour is the conversion of that image into a positive one. This is an ongoing process all over the world, for the negative image has aroused curiosity among people globally to know Islam as it really is. People want to study the Quran and learn about Islam. In this way, about fifty percent of the work has already been done. And the remaining fifty

percent is being undertaken. I am sure that soon this process will reach its culmination. This will mean that the Qiamah has come very close — the Qiamah about which we had been warned by the prophets.

Three Blasts

From the hadith we learn that three blasts (*nafakhat*) will be sounded before the Qiamah. The first will sound an alarm, the second will be the death blow and the third will be the announcement of the resurrection.

In my view, the sounding of the alarm is nothing but the warning signs in the nature of the first blast, revealed by the scientific surveys and expressed in scientific language. The second blast will be the death blow when all people will die and the third blast will herald the resurrection when all human beings will be raised up and brought before their Creator.

The Quran has this to say:

‘The Hour of Resurrection will certainly come. There is no doubt about it.’ (40:59).

There is no doubt about the coming of the Qiamah. The signs tell us that now the time has come very close. Now it is the last hour when man may seek forgiveness from God and rush to seek refuge in God’s mercy.

Ignoring the Signs

A verse of the Quran reads: “Many are the Signs in heaven and on earth, yet they pass them by, and they give no heed to them.” (12:105)

This verse shows that such signs have continued to be shown by God throughout human history as may remind man of his limitations and draw his attention to the fact that he cannot build a successful life for himself without God’s guidance. But man, by ignoring

these signs, does not learn any lessons from them and fails to be rightly guided.

For the last 5000 years, the great minds of the world have been endeavouring to arrive at the truth through philosophic pursuits, but after a long struggle, all that they have learned is that the discipline of philosophy is wholly inadequate to lead man to any certain destination.

After the emergence of modern science, man thought that he could discover the truth by scientific methods. Finally, he has come to the conclusion that scientific methods can lead man only to a knowledge of things, it cannot lead man to the knowledge of truth.

For the last several thousand years, man believed that he could arrive at the truth by employing spiritual methods. It was believed that man's heart was a reservoir of reality. And

by concentrating on the heart, truth could be discovered. But, finally, it was proved that the heart was only a means of circulating blood. It was not a treasure house of truths and realities.

Similarly, on seeing the progress of modern civilization, it was hoped that the journey of civilization would finally lead man to a perfect world, but the problem of global warming has shown that the present world has almost reached its end. It has not been possible, here in this world, to bring the much sought-after ideal civilization to its peak.

Such signs, both in nature and in history appear continually. It seems that the period—the time span set for the present world by its Creator, has now expired and the time has come for this temporary world to be terminated, so that it may be replaced by the eternal world of the hereafter. These words of the Quran are

indicative of this reality.

“On that day We shall roll up the heavens as a writer rolls up his scrolls. As We originated the first creation, so shall We bring it forth again. It is a promise (binding upon) Us. Truly We shall fulfill it.” (21:104)

Only One Chance

Now the time has finally come for man to awaken, to take lessons from the signs in nature and in history, and plan his life in a way that avails him in his post-death period. One who loses this opportunity should know that another such opportunity is not going to come again.

Man has been given only one chance to build his future. It is now up to him whether he utilizes it or loses it forever. Those who make use of this chance have eternal paradise in store for them, while those who fail to make use of this

chance, will have a fate such as is described in the Bible:

“And they will be cast into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gashing of teeth for all eternity.” (Matthew 13:42)

Warning Signs of Doomsday

In the first week of June 2007 a conference of the G-8 nations was held in Berlin, Germany, in which the heads of the developed countries participated. The main issue on its agenda was global warming; but, even after lengthy discussions, no programme could be finalized to address this concern. *The Times of India*, New Delhi of June 10, 2007, published a report of this meeting titled:

“Too broke to save the world.”

Given this state of affairs, it is the responsibility of the representatives of all religions to apprise

the people of this great danger. They must tell people that the last chance to prepare themselves for the final reckoning is coming to an end. Now, with no further delay, they must rouse themselves and lead their lives in accordance with the divine plan.

But all religious leaders, including Muslim leaders, are waiting for the advent of someone who will come mysteriously and who will, by some miraculous power, perform this task. But this is the greatest misunderstanding. The truth is that no mysterious personality is going to come. What is coming, at an ever-accelerating pace, is *Qiyamat*, Doomsday. When this day comes, no concessions will be made to anyone. All will be treated alike.

The Greatest Witness

Sahih Muslim, one of the most authentic books of Hadith, tells us that the Prophet told his

companions that during the last days a believer from the Muslim community would rise and put an end to the greatest ordeal (*fitna*). This would be done by giving proofs and arguments. This event, in its reality, would be so great that the Prophet observed, “In the eyes of God, this would be the greatest witness in the entire human history”. (*Kitab al Fitan*, Sahih Muslim).

The present state of affairs tells us that that time has already come when certain people shall arise and perform this role. This tradition, along with other such traditions, in fact, indicate the opportunity of spreading God’s word that must be availed of before Doomsday strikes. People must rush to perform this role. Waiting for the arrival of some individual to discharge this role or claiming to be that person, are both equally wrong.

Thus this greatest witness (to mankind) is related to the greatest of possibilities, rather than to any feat performed by one individual. This tradition means that, during the last days, there will appear very great opportunities by availing of which it will become possible to perform the greatest role of spreading the divine message ever performed.

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Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a spiritual scholar, who has adopted peace as the mission of his life. Well known for his balanced views, he has been actively involved, for decades, in promoting peace and spirituality in order to usher in an era of global peace and unity. In 2001, he founded *CPS International—Centre for Peace and Spirituality*. CPS is a non-profit, non-political organization that promotes the culture of peace through mind-based spirituality and undertakes inter-faith dialogue.

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The United Nations panel of 25,000 scientists from 130 countries submitted a detailed report on global warming, which was published in the Times of India on February 3, 2007, titled 'Warning Signs'. According to me, the more appropriate title for it would have been, 'Warning Signs of Doomsday' as both Quranic revelation and science now confirm that the end of history, in reality, has come very close. From the Islamic viewpoint, God had made this world for a limited period of time for a test. Now those signs have appeared which tell us that this limited period of time is reaching its end. Now the time has finally come for man to awaken, to take lessons from the signs in nature and in history, and plan his life in a way that avails him in his post-death period. One who loses this opportunity should know that another such opportunity is not going to come again.