

FOREST STEWARDSHIP Deforestation Analyzed Islamecocratically in Canadian Ecopoetry

Inas Samy Abolfotoh
Damietta University, Egypt
email: enassami@du.edu.eg

Abstract

Deforestation is one of the current global hot issues. It has a complicated web of causes and effects. Besides, it requires intricate long-term solutions because many countries are involved. The present study presents an Islamecocratical reading of deforestation causes, effects, and solutions. The literary discussion is combined with religion and science through analyzing selected Canadian poems in reference to Islamic doctrines and scientific facts. The concept of forest stewardship is highlighted as a worldwide demand for handling this issue. Forest stewardship is definitely tied to other fundamental Islamecocratical principles like moderation; corruption prohibition; harm prevention; innateness; animism; the unity principle; heavenly balance; and divine judgment. These ethical pillars are supposed to guarantee the wished-for harmonious responsible relationship between humans and forests.

[Deforestasi merupakan salah satu isu penting global saat ini. Hal ini seperti jaring kompleksitas dari sebab dan akibat. Disamping itu, persoalan ini membutuhkan solusi jangka panjang karena melibatkan banyak negara. Artikel ini membahas pembacaan ekokritisme Islam pada sebab, akibat dan solusi dari deforestasi. Literasi diskusi adalah kombinasi agama dan sains melalui analisa puisi dari Kanada yang terkait dengan doktrin Islam dan fakta sains. Konsep pelestarian hutan menjadi sorotan yang lebih luas dalam mengatasi persoalan ini. Pelestarian hutan menjadi pengikat pasti dari prinsip dasar ekokritis Islam seperti: pencegahan korupsi, anti kekerasan,

pembawaan, animisme, kesatuan, keseimbangan, dan keadilan Tuhan. Pilar pilar etik inilah yang kira-kira menjamin hubungan harmonis antara manusia dan hutan.]

Key words: deforestation, Islamecocriticism, Canadian ecopoetry, forest stewardship

A. Introduction

Forests cover around 31 percent of the land surface. The Almighty God creates them for numberless functions. For instance, they serve biodiversity, release oxygen, and work as carbon sinks. In addition, they guarantee the continuity of water cycles and the stability of Earth climate. From their wild plants, humans satisfy their hunger and cure their diseases. Nevertheless, forested lands are mismanaged via over-exploitation for many anthropocentric purposes such as agriculture, pasture, logging, and urban expansion. These land uses offer considerable economic benefits to many individuals and countries, but they lead with many other factors to deforestation. An assessment of the New York Declaration on Forests (NYDF) launched at the 2014 UN climate summit demonstrates how it has failed to deliver on key pledges to half deforestation by 2020 and halt it by 2030.¹ What is worse is that deforestation continues at an alarming rate: “an area of tree cover the size of the United Kingdom was lost every year between 2014 and 2018.”²

Deforestation is primarily caused by lack of consideration to the value of forests along with a decline in mankind’s ethical handling of woodlands. Consequently, the current study tackles deforestation in Canadian ecopoetry from the point of view of “Islamecocriticism,” i.e. the integration of Islamic thought in ecocritical theory.³ Merging Islam in the arguments around deforestation has a valuable effect in altering

¹ Mark Kinver, “World losing battle against deforestation”, *BBC News* (12 Sep 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-49679883>, accessed 11 Nov 2019.

² *Ibid.*

³ Inas samy Abolfotoh, “Islamecocriticism: Green Islam Introduced to Ecocriticism”, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2021), p. 1371.

careless human behavior. To illustrate, Islam introduces a balanced ethical code to overcome current degradation of woodlands all over the world. The discussion assimilates the interests of humans and forests to reach a possible co-existence between both. Some Islamecocratical concepts are crucial for an appropriate appreciation of this issue.

The first concept in Islam for an appropriate management of forests is “stewardship.”⁴ “The world,” Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) believes, “is sweet and green (alluring) and verily Allah is going to install you as vicegerent in it so that He should see how you act.”⁵ The Hadith explains that humans are stewards who have a collective responsibility to protect their environment and that the Almighty God will eventually judge their actions. Stewardship is defined as “the responsible use (including conservation) of natural resources in a way that takes full and balanced account of the interests of society, future generations, and other species, as well as of private needs, and accepts significant answerability to society.”⁶ This understanding of stewardship compromises the instrumental value of forests with their intrinsic value. Therefore, stewardship is increasingly replacing the term “management” when it comes to the discourse of deforestation in particular as well as environmental conservation in general.⁷

Forest stewardship represents an ethical worldview for reconciling possible conflicts between international environmental law and international human rights law.⁸ To accomplish this task appropriately, it should be admitted that stewardship is theocentric and that its framework should be based on religion. Islamic stewardship stresses the responsibility of humans for Earth and its dwellers. The Almighty God creates the universe in a flawless order, and He commands humans

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1374.

⁵ Sahih Muslim, ‘The Book of Heart-Melting Traditions’, *Sunnah.com*, p. 6606, <https://sunnah.com/muslim/49>, accessed 1 May 2019.

⁶ Richard Worrell and Michael C. Appleby, “Stewardship of Natural Resources: Definition, Ethical and Practical Aspects”, *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, vol. 12, no. 3 (2000), p. 263.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁸ Miglena Rumenova Zhekova, “The Crossing Point between REDD and Indigenous Peoples’ Stewardship Rights: An Ethical Perspective”, Master thesis (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2010), p. 4.

to be responsible stewards through keeping it that way: “[D]o not do mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order.”⁹ Humans can enjoy Earth resources without corrupting them, and they should deliver them safe and sound to future generations. Humans who corrupt the Almighty God’s Creation will not escape His punishment.

Forest stewardship should be combined with a number of Islamecocritical key concepts that help humans be worthy trustees of Earth. For example, stewardship requires embracing moderation as opposed to over-consumption.¹⁰ The Almighty God “likes not *Al-Musrifûn* (those who waste by extravagance)”¹¹ According to Sumit Chakravarty, “development leads to overconsumption which is the basic underlying cause of deforestation”.¹² Consequently, moderation should not be regarded as a utopian virtue but as a lifestyle regardless of the scarcity or abundance of resources. Neglecting moderation and adopting a lifestyle based on over-consumption is tightly related to corruption which is prohibited in all Islamic texts.¹³ “[S]eek not mischief in the land. Verily, Allâh likes not the *Mufsidîn* (those who commit great crimes and sins, oppressors, tyrants, mischief-makers, corrupters)”¹⁴ Humans’ “abuse of any resource is prohibited as the juristic principle says ‘What leads to the prohibited is itself prohibited.’”¹⁵ If deforestation leads to corrupting Earth, which is a prohibited action, then deforestation is prohibited by analogy.

Stewardship fights over-consumption and bans corruption because both lead to harm. In Islam, harm prevention is a vital conception.¹⁶

⁹ Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad T. Al-Hilali (trans.), *The Noble Quran: Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur’an in the English Language* (Riyadh: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2011), v. 7: 56.

¹⁰ Abolfotoh, “Islamecocriticism”, p. 1378.

¹¹ Qur’an, 6: 141.

¹² Sumit Chakravarty et al., “Deforestation: Causes, Effects and Control Strategies”, in *Global Perspectives on Sustainable Forest Management*, ed. by Okia Clement Akais (London: IntechOpen, 2012), p. 11.

¹³ Abolfotoh, “Islamecocriticism”, p. 1379.

¹⁴ Qur’an, 28: 77.

¹⁵ Fatima Al-Banna, “Islam and Environment Protection”, *EcoMENA* (13 May 2020), <https://www.ecomena.org/islam-environment/>, accessed 1 May 2019.

¹⁶ Abolfotoh, “Islamecocriticism”, p. 1380.

Prophet Muhammad has ruled: “There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.”¹⁷ Muslim jurists have derived a number of branches out of this Prophetic maxim which should be put into consideration by decision makers concerning deforestation: “First, harm should be prevented by all possible means. If it takes place, harm should be eradicated. Its eradication should not be done by inflicting similar or greater harm. When deciding between two harmful actions, one should take the lesser harm. Evading harm is prior to gaining benefit. In case of conflict between public harm and individual harm, preventing public harm has the priority.”¹⁸

Forest stewardship should be further conceived in relation to the following Islamecocratical concepts: “innateness,” “animism,” and “the unity principle.”¹⁹ The Almighty God creates humans with a pure innateness to live in coherence with all creatures. This innateness is clear in children and requires to be tendered and fostered in adults for a healthy interaction between them and forests. Forests are animate beings because they have their own form of life, and they are in constant praise of their Creator. In light of animism in Islamic thought, violating their lives unwisely is a sin which leads to divine punishment. Humans, forests, and the entire universe are created by the Almighty God and thus are tied to One origin. The unity principle brings about sacredness to all creatures—human and non-human. This sacredness stems from the holiness of the Creator, and it stimulates responsible behavior toward other fellow creatures.

Heavenly balance and divine judgment are two final Islamecocratical concepts that should be present in the discussion of forest stewardship.²⁰ Deforestation harms the heavenly balance which requires humans’ constant attention to preserve it. The Almighty God informs mankind that “[h]e has set up the Balance” which organizes all Creation, then He rules: “[Y]ou may not transgress (due) balance” or “make the balance

¹⁷ Sunan Ibn Majah, “The Chapters on Rulings”, *Sunnah.com*, v. 2340, <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/13>, accessed 1 May 2019.

¹⁸ Abolfotoh, “Islamecocraticism”, p. 1381.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1381, 1377, 1388.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1382, 1388.

deficient.²¹ This ruling must be socially accepted because it activates sense of duty toward forests and their subtle heavenly balance. Failure to comply with this duty entails heavenly punishment. Divine judgment is crucial in this context: true believers are aware of the fact that they are rewarded for good deeds and punished for wrong ones. Deforestation is a wrong deed that leads to a short-term punishment in life (through direct and indirect impacts of forest loss) and a long-term one in afterlife. This is a moving force for behavioral reform because actions gone unpunished are further encouraged. Henceforth, humans should simulate divine judgment in relation to forest cover loss through laying rules and applying punishments. A concrete example is detected in Brazil: “The Brazilian government introduced laws through the Brazilian Institute for the Environmental and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA). The rules and laws implemented were to help prevent illegal cutting of trees by the citizens. The immense changes in the Brazilian policies played a very crucial role in reducing the level of deforestation in the country.”²² The handling of deforestation through forest stewardship which is attached to the afore-mentioned key principles of Islamecocratic theory provides fair measures that secure the safety of forests and the protection of human needs. Theocentrism, consequently, is necessary because curing anthropocentrism can never be accomplished via eco-centrism. The Canadian government shows a remarkable sensitivity to this fact through emphasizing that: “[e]fforts to reduce deforestation must... be balanced against other goals, such as expanding the economy, diversifying economic activities, and supporting community employment.”²³ As a result, the government has adopted “innovative practices such as integrated landscape management (ILM)” which means:

planning land uses over an entire landscape and encouraging different land users to work together. For instance, ILM has been used in Alberta to coordinate forest clearing with oil sands development, to ensure forest companies harvest timber from sites to be cleared for oil and gas, and to

²¹ Qur’an, 55:7-9.

²² Misbah Alghamdi, “Deforestation and the Islamic Stewardship Ethic”, Master Thesis (Rochester, NY: Rochester Institute of Technology, 2014), p. 21.

²³ Natural Resources Canada, “Deforestation in Canada. What are the facts?”, *Canadian Forest Service Science-Policy Notes* (2008), <https://cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/pubwarehouse/pdfs/28159.pdf>, accessed 1 May 2019.

prevent forest clearing for oil and gas development in newly replanted areas. British Columbia has also used ILM to encourage the various industries operating in forests to share roads rather than each building its own.”²⁴

The Canadian handling of deforestation represents an inspiring example of forest stewardship which demands employing brilliant minds with a sincere goodwill for change.

Deforestation is commonly analyzed considering four aspects: facts, causes, effects, and solutions. There is a heavy body of statistics and startling facts of deforestation which have become available to the common reader. Therefore, the study will focus on its causes, effects, and most significantly solutions. The causes are predominantly ethical and economic. Effects are traced in the entire ecosphere, and the suffering prevails all species including mankind. Solutions are linked to causes. Evading causes leads to solving woodlands’ withdrawal and reaching zero global deforestation rates. The poetic argument lays additional clarifications to these points.

The study’s central research question revolves around the ability of Islamic rulings to be used in the literary analysis of non-Islamic nature texts and to come up with a fruitful output to the topic under consideration. The success of this hypothesis indicates the validity of Islamecocratism for analyzing any eco-literary text because it is grounded in Islam which is a universal religion unrestricted by time or place. Thirteen Canadian poems are employed as a major resource for discussing deforestation along with a number of scientific and religious studies. The theoretical framework is based on Abolfotoh’s “Islamecocratism: Green Islam Introduced to Ecocriticism.” The argument is qualitative being concerned with literary criticism. Therefore, the research methodology is primarily analytical and descriptive. The theoretical tenets proposed by Abolfotoh are employed in analyzing the selected poems.

B. Causes of Forest Cover Loss

Deforestation is in the first place a human ethical flaw which manifests itself in extreme economic activities. Religion shapes the ethics of individuals. Hence, analyzing deforestation from an Islamic perspective

²⁴ *Ibid.*

clarifies moral imperfections and possible methods of reform. “Verily! We have made that which is on earth as an adornment for it, in order that We may test them (mankind) as to which of them are best in deeds.”²⁵ According to the verse, all that is on Earth, including its thick green forested lands, are an ethical test to humans. Success is certain through implementing forest stewardship which is based on divine rulings. Failure results from the marginalization of these rulings and the domination of whims. The following poetic excerpts shed light on some ethical flaws that lead to deforestation.

Clearing forests in Peter Trower’s “Goliath Country” is “driven/ by the hard ancient hunger” for forest resources.²⁶ This hunger, namely greed, is as ancient as humans’ existence on Earth, and it is concurrent with their daily activities. Without employing God-given wise reasoning, these activities become disastrous. In John Donlan’s “Muskrat,” the havoc in a “forest” “after the ice storm” is likened to a “disaster on a scale unmatched/except by daily human life, that maw/into which the wild vanishes.»²⁷ In the absence of moderation and with the domination of greed, daily human activities are metaphorically equaled to a huge black hole swallowing all what approaches it. This depiction is quite convincing in light of current degradation of each spot approached by humans. Lack of consideration to repercussions of anthropocentric manipulation of forests is a clear witness.

Moral flaws are further highlighted in Sharon Thesen’s “Axe Murderer.” In the poem, trees scream for help as they see the axe murderer “com[ing]/dragging his axe.”²⁸ “He drags it,” they explain, “because/he is so evil & stupid.”²⁹ When materialism governs pure innateness, humans become evil, stupid, and shortsighted. Viewing forests as a bundle of

²⁵ Qur’an, 18:7.

²⁶ Peter Trower, “Goliath Country”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 229.

²⁷ John Donlan, “Muskrat”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 314.

²⁸ Sharon Thesen, “Axe Murderer”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 333.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

resources for human welfare is the stupidest modern idea. “Chop chop, chop chop/goes the axe” “[s]o you can relax.”³⁰ Attributing the act of logging to the axe rather than the logger implies the absence of human wisdom and rightful reasoning. What is worse is that the chopping of trees is not driven by an urgent need for survival but for enjoying non-essentials that will make humans relax. Humans are currently relaxing in the shade of forest resources. However, they will pay for the near disasters which result from “[a]ll this [that] goes on/in the forest.”³¹

In Elizabeth Brewster’s “Alchemist,” stewardship is violated because of discarding divine ethics. “Man” is depicted as an “evil magician” and “[f]oolish enchanter.”³² The poet warns those evil humans from destroying the landscape and betraying the Almighty God’s trust by leaving future generations a broken Earth to satisfy their greed:

do not break
this great brown dish
with green edges
which has been in the family
all these years.
Where will you find another
to hold your children’s supper?³³

The lines introduce an original metaphor of Earth – the great brown dish – and forests – its green edges. According to the poem, all past generations had looked after forests until the generations of consumerism started undermining the balanced forestry system. The metaphorical illustration in the lines implies that there are no alternatives if this system is broken. Future generations will never enjoy a normal life if their life sustainers – forests – are gone. This entry to nature conservation

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Elizabeth Brewster, “Alchemist”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 199.

³³ *Ibid.*

is positive because it places the safety of nature and humanity in one agenda. Saving forests for future generations saves forests, too.

The maple tree in Peter Toorn's "Mountain Maple" knows with its ancient wisdom that its "roots pose a problem for" mankind.³⁴ However, it advises humans that they must "think twice about axing me down" "for no use" and "letting too many of us go."³⁵ The maple tree's plea to the human race is very significant. It does not object to cutting trees for satiating humans' necessities. What it objects to is destroying trees for no use or in a massive amount. Carelessness and over-consumption are two behavioral defects that pose real threats to trees. Moderation and sense of responsibility in forest stewardship eliminate these defects and help establish congruence between mankind and forests.

Greed, evil, stupidity, foolishness, carelessness, and over-consumption are instances of human flaws that resonate through many verses of the Noble Qur'an. For example, the Almighty God states: "And He gave you of all that you asked for, and if you count the Blessings of Allâh, never will you be able to count them. Verily, man is indeed an extreme wrong-doer, a disbeliever (an extreme ingrate who denies Allâh's Blessings by disbelief...)"³⁶ Humans in other verses of the Noble Qur'an are depicted as "ungrateful," "unjust...[.] and ignorant" beings who tend to "transgress" their surroundings.³⁷ These imperfections begin to surface and control humans' actions if they stray away from divine orders. Subsequently, the way is paved to the exploitation of forests in countless economic activities as will be illustrated in the coming poems.

"The Man Who Logged the West Ridge" in Tom Wayman's poem holding the same title is mainly motivated by the financial benefits of logging:

The money this man got
for taking away the West Ridge's trees

³⁴ Peter Toorn, "Mountain Maple", in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 320.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 320-1.

³⁶ Qur'an, 14: 34.

³⁷ Qur'an, 11: 9; 33: 72; 96: 6.

paid a crew, made payments on a truck
and a skidder, reduced a mortgage, bought food
and a new outboard
and was mailed off to the owner.³⁸

The force of the lines stems from their non-metaphorical handling of the issue to shake the reader into recognition. This technique along with the repetition of the conjunction “and” enable the reader to recognize the multiplicity of the economic returns of logging which outweigh the ecological value of the forest from the standpoint of the landowner and the logger. “Once the West Ridge was empty, the owner put the land up for sale.”³⁹ Many individuals will share the benefit, and the West Ridge will pay the price: “the fir and larch and pine / of the Ridge, its deer and coyote, /snails and hummingbirds, / were dollars for a brief time.”⁴⁰ According to the poem, the “absence” of the forest and its inhabitants equals “money.”⁴¹ The 2019 session of the UN Forest Forum affirms that “forests are under-valued, because it’s hard to put a clear monetary value on all of the positive contributions they make to the world. As a result, the true cost of deforestation and forest degradation is not taken into account” when clearing decisions are made.⁴² Therefore, the forest which takes a thousand years to grow is lost in only “eight weeks’ work.”⁴³

The landowner and the logger have exchanged the permanent for the temporal without the slightest regard to ecological consequences. The Ridge had been a permanent habitat for plants and animals. It had also played its ancient role in keeping the heavenly balance of Earth

³⁸ Tom Wayman, “The Man Who Logged the West Ridge”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 325.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁴² “Ensuring the ‘lungs of the planet’ keep us alive: 5 things you need to know about forests and the UN”, *UN News* (10 May 2019), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/05/1038291>, accessed 1 Sep 2019.

⁴³ Tom Wayman, “The Man Who Logged the West Ridge”, p. 326.

and its climate. Nevertheless, wildlife has “gone from... [the] Valley” for some dollars which will soon be spent, and the hunger for more will lead to more logging.⁴⁴ It is a vicious cycle consuming the planet due to utilitarianism which does not consider harm prevention and its multiple branches referred to earlier in the introduction. Many parties are seriously harmed: the forest, all species residing it, humans, and others. On that account, clearcutting, in view of forest stewardship, should not be a decision taken by individuals, but it should be planned by specialized global organizations with reference to harm prevention and fiqh of priorities. The word “fiqh” – an English transliteration of the Arabic word: **فقه** – refers to Muslim Scholars’ understanding of the divine law revealed in the Qur’an and the Sunnah (i.e., the sayings, traditions, and actions of Prophet Muhammad which emphasize and explain the verses of the Qur’an). According to fiqh of priorities, deciding among choices should be controlled by urgency, importance, short and long-term effects, as well as level of harm. The discourse of harm prevention and fiqh of priorities establish unbiased rules that can balance the necessities of humans against the requirements of forests based on scientific data and social demands.

Besides logging, slash and burn agriculture is a drastic reason for deforestation. It is estimated that “[a]griculture is the main driver of deforestation, but with differences in [the] geographic distribution of the importance of commercial versus subsistence agriculture,” reflecting “around 80% of deforestation worldwide.”⁴⁵ Charles Roberts in “The Clearing” refers to “[s]tumps, and harsh rocks, and prostrate trunks all charred, / And gnarled roots naked to the sun and rain.”⁴⁶ The cleared forest is described in dim images after being stripped off its tree cover. A paradox is established between the current bleak blackness of the burnt forest against the former dense greenness of its flora. The dead trees, the poem goes, “seem in their grim stillness to complain, / And by their

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁴⁵ Noriko Hosonuma et al., “An Assessment of Deforestation and Forest Degradation Drivers in Developing Countries”, *Environmental Research Letters*, vol. 7, no. 4 (2012), p. 5.

⁴⁶ Charles Roberts, “The Clearing”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 75.

plaint the evening peace is jarred.”⁴⁷ The lines draw another paradox that contradicts the evening stillness with the trees’ loud complaint which is heard only by caring stewards like the poet. Although the clearing will provide a new space for agriculture and will save food for people in this region for some years to come, the poet focuses on the tragic loss of the forest. The land is depicted as “ragged acres” by “fire and the axe” which are figuratively likened to cruel persons who “have scarred” its past beauty.⁴⁸ The “hillocks” are, likewise, “stripped and marred” for anthropocentric economic returns without considering consequent havoc.⁴⁹

The thematic development of the poem provokes the Islamecocratical concept of corruption prohibition. From an eco-centric point of view, cultivating forested lands is an act of corruption that disrupts their balance. This one-sided standpoint denies the right of humans to pursue their livelihood for survival. Therefore, an Islamic reading of this cause of deforestation entails a return to forest stewardship. This concept harmonizes the interests of forests and humans through seeking alternatives that consider evading corruption to both of them. This endeavor is classified by the United Nations as a key challenge to manage the ongoing increase in agricultural production, and improve food security, without reducing overall forest areas⁵⁰.

Prophet Muhammad has considered this challenge when he called for greening barren, neglected lands. He insisted on encouraging agricultural activities which sounds now as an appropriate way out for humans. He even made the cultivation of a lifeless land a direct reason for owning it: “He who cultivates land that does not belong to anybody is more rightful (to own it).”⁵¹ In addition, landowners are stimulated to cultivate their lands or allow their cultivation by others. In either case, the land should not be left uncultivated. The Prophet said: “Whoever has land should cultivate it himself or give it to his (Muslim) brother gratis;

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ “Ensuring the ‘lungs of the planet’ keep us alive”.

⁵¹ Sahih al-Bukhari, “Agriculture”, *Sunnah.com*, v. 528, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/41>, accessed 1 May 2019.

otherwise keep it uncultivated.”⁵² According to the Hadith, uncultivating the land is given as the last option for landowners. It should be remarked that Hadith literature falls in two categories. The first handles general Islamic jurisprudence and should be followed by all Muslims till the end of time. The other category is related to Prophet Muhammad as the head of the Islamic State who should provide rulings that were necessary for the conditions of his time. These rulings are passed to Muslims to follow optionally depending on their circumstances. The Ahadith under scrutiny are of the second kind. They can be applied according to the requirements of each country and each epoch. All in all, the Prophet’s emphasis on the importance of land cultivation goes hand in hand with the fact that the world economy is based on agriculture. Hence, cultivating the land provides various resources for individuals and industries. Simultaneously, agriculture should be practiced in the right places away from the lungs of the planet for slowing deforestation rates. It is an appropriate method to satisfy the needs of mankind without spoiling woodlands.

Logging and agricultural activities are not the only economic causes of forest cover loss. Many forests on the Earth surface are deforested for industrial purposes. “I am a dispossessed Ontario wood,” complains the wood in Robert Finch’s “Silverthorn Bush.”⁵³ An “enterprise has laughed my towers down,” it explains.⁵⁴ The personification in the line equals the enterprise to a contemptuous person who rejects the existence of the wood by laughing derisively. The satirical tone implies the underestimation of the wood if compared to the financial profit of commercial development. The trees in the same line are metaphorically likened to towers leveled for building an enterprise, instead. The word “enterprise” is indefinite to generalize the reference. The focus is on the lost wood for any enterprise; its type does not matter. The poet presents a dual vision of the wood and the enterprise. From an eco-centric stance, the enterprise is undervalued, while the wood is overvalued in pursuit of environmental interests. An anthropocentric consideration,

⁵² *Ibid.*, v. 533.

⁵³ Robert Finch, “Silverthorn Bush”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 128.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

on the other hand, devalues the forest and overvalues the enterprise in search of economic gains. Forest stewardship seeks the benefit of both via an ethical balanced evaluation of the issue with the implementation of corruption prohibition and harm prevention to the wood and the investors.

In addition to industrial activities, urban expansion which is accompanied by erecting roads and infrastructure for residents is a major factor of deforestation. The speaker in Elizabeth Philips' "Tales from the Green Revolution" tackles urban sprawl that leads to violating neighboring woodlands to cities. The speaker aspires to the forested land, but it is found only in "imagination."⁵⁵ S/he believes that "under the asphalt the land waits to renew itself."⁵⁶ "Imagining the buildings gone," one "can feel the living presence of the land."⁵⁷ The animism of forests is demonstrated in the lines through the expressions: "waits to renew itself" and "living presence." Forests are living entities whose life should never be undervalued or wasted. Forest stewards are guardians of living beings. Referring to flora, the Almighty God wonders: "Have they not observed things that Allâh has created: (how) their shadows incline to the right and to the left, making prostration unto Allâh."⁵⁸ The implied reference to the animism of plant life becomes explicit when the Almighty God states: "See you not that whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and **the trees**, and Ad-Dawâbb [moving (living) creatures, beasts], and many of mankind **prostrate themselves to Allah**"⁵⁹ (bold mine). Nonetheless, the living presence of the land in the poem is ignored, and it is buried underneath the city. The speaker is nostalgic for the forest which has "crumpled under the sleeping / weight of the city."⁶⁰ Unspoiled innateness drives him/her to despise the city: "the city doesn't

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Philips, "Tales from the Green Revolution", in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 424.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Qur'an, 16: 48.

⁵⁹ Qur'an, 22:18.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Philips, "Tales from the Green Revolution", p. 424.

count” because it is established on a more genuine and worthy entity.⁶¹

Studies reveal that deforestation causes are multiple and exceed those poetically discussed in the above-mentioned lines. Other economic causes include: fuel wood, timber, poverty and unemployment, black marketing, and livestock grazing.⁶² Mining is also an indirect cause for deforestation because the “construction of roads, railways, bridges, and airports opens up the land to development and brings increasing numbers of peoples to the forest frontier.”⁶³ The variety of the ethical and economic causes reveal the enormity of the problem because of the wide space of lands involved in this matter. Concurrently, multiplicity of causes leads to diversity of effects in various arenas.

C. Effects of Deforestation

Forests have “a number of active and so-called passive use values: economic, ecological, social, symbolic, spiritual and scientific values.»⁶⁴ Loss of forests means deprival of these benefits. The poetic discussion in this section is oriented on Toorn’s “Mountain Maple” and Trower’s “Goliath Country.” Instead of listing the jeremiadic threats of deforestation, Toorn employs a friendly rhapsodic listing of the benefits of trees. This technique is much more appealing to the reader. It can even be effective in a logical argument of forestland loss because the reader can place the benefits of trees side by side to the demerits caused by their loss. Feelings of deprival are so bitter and may lead to changing faulty attitudes. The use of the interrogative form in many lines arouses the reader’s thinking to find solutions to the expected total absence of trees.

The speaker is a maple tree; the listener the human race. The poet draws an inclusive image in which humans “lie around / with [their] head

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Muhammad Tariq and Riffat Aziz, “An Overview of Deforestation Causes and Its Environmental Hazards in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa”, *Journal of Natural Sciences Research*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2015), pp. 53–4.

⁶³ Chakravarty et al., “Deforestation: Causes, Effects and Control Strategies”, p. 9.

⁶⁴ Christian Gamborg, “Sustainability and Biodiversity: Ethical Perspectives on Forest Management”, PhD. Dissertation (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2001), p. 3.

in [its] lap.”⁶⁵ If one takes a photo beneath a tree and turns it upside down, his/her head will literally appear in the lap of the tree. This maternal image shows the care trees pay to humans without waiting for anything in return. The maple tree which has tended humanity from its cradle to adulthood enumerates its benefits: “try to remember / what you used to do on a scorching day / for some shade.”⁶⁶ The shade-giver also wonders: “how did you go about / for a salad without a spot of green?”⁶⁷

Through the marvelous phenomenon of photosynthesis, carbon dioxide; water; and light chemically mingle together and magically come up with outstanding vegetation which feeds man and beast. “And the earth We have spread out, . . . and caused to grow therein all kinds of things **in due proportion**. And We have **provided** therein **means of living, for you and for those whom you provide not** [moving (living) creatures, cattle, beasts, and other animals]”⁶⁸ (bold mine). The first verse refers to the heavenly balance of the forest ecosystem which is created in due proportion. Consequently, it may collapse with unwise human interference. The second verse affirms that the Almighty God has not created woodlands for humans only but for all creatures. The poem refers to this unflinching fact stated in the Noble Qur’an. “I am one of a kind that carry fruit” which “feed stoves by the boxful all winter long, / cover the tables with bloom in the spring,” the tree brags.⁶⁹ Trees are also food-providers to all other living species: “where my branches are, there are antlers too.”⁷⁰ The synecdoche in “antlers” implies that animals and all non-human species are reliant on trees to continue living. By removing the forest cover, humans deprive themselves and all creatures from food resources. With the loss of trees and other species dependent on them, humans’ existence on Earth is threatened.

The shade-giver and food-provider continues reminding mankind of its benefits in relation to the water cycle. Trees on Earth are water-suppliers. The maple tree explains how it “dish[es] out [water vapour] to

⁶⁵ Toorn, “Mountain Maple”, p. 320.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Qur’an, 15 :19-20.

⁶⁹ Toorn, “Mountain Maple”, pp. 320–1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

air in the sun.”⁷¹ “[T]he mineral [, namely water droplets,] sparkle in the dew,” then it evaporates and starts its journey up forming clouds.⁷² With rainfall, the Earth is nourished with fresh water. Humans drink, and the water cycle in their bodies begins thanks to trees. «I’m sweat on your skin,» the tree affirms.⁷³ Once the water returns to Earth, trees repeat the process over and over in endless cycles. Simultaneously, trees “store up [water] in each root / to go under ground on all winter long / and still come up with syrup in the spring.”⁷⁴ The roots’ water that does not participate directly in the water cycle is stored all winter waiting for its release in juicy fruits with spring blooming.

The reference to trees and vegetation in the Noble Qur’an is constantly entwined with water: “He it is Who sends down water (rain) from the sky;... / With it He causes to grow for you the crops, the olives, the date-palms, the grapes, and every kind of fruit. Verily! In this is indeed an evident proof and a manifest sign for people who give thought.”⁷⁵ In another chapter, the Almighty God states: “And We have sent down from the rainy clouds abundant water. / That We may produce therewith corn and vegetations, / And gardens of thick growth.”⁷⁶ Greeneries and water are inseparable. Therefore, deforestation has a dramatic effect “on the water cycle in nature. In southeast Asia, for instance, serious “impacts on hydrological functions of tropical forest clearance and conversion to other land uses” have been documented.⁷⁷ The global water cycle is disturbed because deforestation reduces the evaporative cooling that takes place both from soil and from plant life. This can result in increased soil erosion and runoff of rainfall, flooding, and sedimentation of rivers, lagoons, and reefs. In fact, the total ambient near surface humidity is drastically modified. Rainfall is no longer intercepted by the forest foliage to be recirculated to the atmosphere, but falls immediately to the ground to be

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁷⁵ Qur’an, 16: 10-11.

⁷⁶ Qur’an, 78: 14-16.

⁷⁷ L.A. Bruijnzeel, “Hydrological functions of tropical forests: not seeing the soil for the trees?”, *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, vol. 104, no. 1 (2004), p. 185.

transported, perhaps directly, to the ocean in runoff or else rapidly made inaccessible in the short term by it being contributed to the underground water table. Moreover, there are no longer the deep roots of the former forest trees to return it by transpiration to the atmosphere.⁷⁸

In the remaining part of the poem, the maple tree counts more and more blessings. It refers to its aesthetic value to humans: “And who is going to do the dancing/that I do—be all arms and legs moving/ but standing still.”⁷⁹ The lines allude to the ability of forests to stimulate the innate impulse in humans for beauty: “Is not He... Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water (rain) from the sky, whereby We cause to grow **wonderful gardens** full of **beauty and delight?**”⁸⁰ (bold mine). Concerning the uses of its wood, the tree states: “I make the matches, handles, and boxes.”⁸¹ “[Y]ou burn me,” the tree adds, for heat and fuel; “cut me” to expand your cities; “and bury me with” you in the casket.⁸² “On me,” i.e. paper, humans write the stories of lost forests with “bitter ink.”⁸³ Deforestation is a bitter reality because it turns out that trees reside within each human being. Trees are food, water, and air. After death, humans lose their bodies’ nutrients to the soil and back to trees. It is an infinite cyclical unity between two creatures who share equal sacredness for being the Creation of the same Holy Hand. Therefore, humans should invoke the guides of the Creator Who organizes the ethical relationship between them and woodlands via forest stewardship. Sense of unity and sacredness are two essential factors for meaningful stewardship.

Among the incurable effects of deforestation is habitat loss. It is a major catastrophe which leads to the extinction and near extinction of many creatures. “Forests especially those in the tropics serve as storehouses of biodiversity and consequently deforestation, fragmentation and degradation destroys [*sic*] the biodiversity as a whole

⁷⁸ “Deforestation”, *The Muslim Observer* (11 Jul 2013), <https://www.muslimobserver.com/deforestation/>, accessed 1 May 2019.

⁷⁹ Toorn, “Mountain Maple”, p. 321.

⁸⁰ Qur’an, 27:60.

⁸¹ Toorn, “Mountain Maple”, p. 321.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

and habitat for migratory species including the endangered ones.»⁸⁴ One of the species extremely affected by habitat loss in forests are birds. Trees are their homes, so “birds can be especially susceptible to extinction when they face habitat loss because they live in ecological niches, eating only a specific prey or making nests in specific trees.”⁸⁵

Trower’s “Goliath Country” depicts the anguish of birds for the destruction of their homes. “Birds,” the poem goes, “circle bewildered” “[c]awing puzzlement” “above this field of the fallen” trees.⁸⁶ Many humans see in cleared forests commercial benefit. The poem helps them see cleared lands from the point of view of the other, the non-human. Birds express their irredeemable disaster with heartbreaking expressions. They describe the fallen trees as “downed giants [that] lie silent.”⁸⁷ The birds see the area in “great havoc” due to “an enormous slaughtering.»⁸⁸ All these images of destruction happen because “[s]ome David has run amok / with a machinegun sling” to destroy the forest and create “a new void in the universe.”⁸⁹

The killers “come to remove the bodies” “in driven chariots.”⁹⁰ Trees are personified as dead persons, and chariots symbolize warfare. The two figures of speech are a follow-up image to the earlier cruel portrayal of the enormous slaughter. In this very moving moment,

[b]irds circle bewildered
like men long-travelled
who return to find their homes gone
and the town levelled.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Chakravarty et al., “Deforestation: Causes, Effects and Control Strategies”, p. 16.

⁸⁵ Sarah Gibbens, “These 8 Bird Species Have Disappeared This Decade”, *National Geographic* (9 May 2018), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/news-macaw-extinct-bird-species-deforestation>, accessed 1 May 2019.

⁸⁶ Trower, ‘Goliath Country’, p. 229.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

The destruction of birds' nests is compared to the destruction of humans' homes. The figurative parallelism touches the reader's conscience because the poet successfully makes him/her understand the birds' suffering through putting him/herself in the birds' place. This technique of suffering psychological simulation carried out by consistent personifications of trees and birds in the whole poem has been effective. It reveals that depriving birds from their natural habitats in forests is an act of corruption. It has been documented that deforestation "from unsustainable logging and agriculture will be the next extinction driver" for birds after hunting and trapping.⁹² Therefore, the Almighty God persistently warns humans against corrupting balanced ecosystems on Earth: "Eat and drink of that which Allâh has provided and do not act corruptly, making mischief on the earth."⁹³ Deforestation is a form of mischief because, in the poet's words, it "leav[es] a broken green silence— / an apocalypse of wood."⁹⁴ It does not only lead to the apocalyptic death of trees, but also the loss of numberless species which is implied in the word "silence." This is the silence of biodiversity due to the intrusion of humans in stable forest ecosystems.

The overcutting of forest cover has many other effects that directly disturb the wellbeing of the human race and the whole planet. For instance, forests "provide a home to around 1,6 billion people, who are relying on forest's benefits to live."⁹⁵ With their loss, those peoples are deprived of food, clothing, medicine, and shelter. Besides, deforestation leads to flooding, climatic changes, land sliding, land degradation, soil erosion, desertification, drought, and ice caps melting.⁹⁶ Such disruptions of «normal weather patterns» cause «crop failures» and «displacement of major vegetation regimes.»⁹⁷ These scientific data show that deforestation is a sin. The same conclusion is emphasized in the following Hadith : "If

⁹² Gibbens, "These 8 Bird Species Have Disappeared This Decade".

⁹³ Qur'an, 2: 60.

⁹⁴ Trower, "Goliath Country", p. 229.

⁹⁵ Alghamdi, "Deforestation and the Islamic Stewardship Ethic", p. 7.

⁹⁶ Tariq and Aziz, "An Overview of Deforestation Causes and Its Environmental Hazards in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa", pp. 52–3.

⁹⁷ Chakravarty et al., "Deforestation: Causes, Effects and Control Strategies", p. 15.

anyone cuts the lote-tree, Allah brings him headlong into Hell.»⁹⁸ When asked about the meaning of this tradition, Abu Dawud said: “It means that if anyone cuts uselessly, unjustly and without any right a lote-tree under the shade of which travellers and beasts take shelter, Allah will bring him into Hell headlong.”⁹⁹ Banning the cutting of lote-trees is ascribed to their great value in a barren desert. Forests were, are, and will be of great value to Earth. Therefore, the same ruling applies to deforestation by analogy.

D. Solutions for Forest Cover Gain

The first step on the ladder of solutions is hope. Humans must be sure that they can correct the broken image of forest deterioration. They are Earth trustees and stewards who are preferred upon all creatures to be responsible for it: “And indeed We have honored the Children of Adam, . . . and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment.”¹⁰⁰ The Almighty God gives them wise reasoning and bodily strength that can help them carry out their mission as stewards. Hence, humans must be as hopeful as the forest in Finch’s “Silverthorn Bush”:

The riddle is how disappearance puts
A dusty end to a green revery
Yet leaves me nourished by so many roots
That I shall never cease ceasing to be.¹⁰¹

Only the human race can solve this riddle. They are guilty of violating the lungs of Earth. Nevertheless, they can make up for this crime by nourishing the land with future growth so that Earth never ceases to be a green planet. The phrase “many roots” refers to origins, and it implies that the degraded forest will return to its original prolificacy. The word “revery” indicates that sacrifices and efforts must be exerted to

⁹⁸ Sunan Abi Dawud, “General Behavior (Kitab Al-Adab)”, *Sunnah.com*, v. 5220, <https://sunnah.com/abudawud/43>, accessed 1 May 2019.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Qur’an, 17:70.

¹⁰¹ Finch, “Silverthorn Bush”, p. 128.

restore the forest or else it will continue to be a mere dream in mankind's dull imagination.

One way for restoring forests is via reforestation: "the action of renewing forest cover (as by natural seeding or by the artificial planting of seeds or young trees)."¹⁰² In Roberts' "The Clearing," promising future floral growth resulting from natural reforestation is cheering the reader's soul and enforcing hope: "But here and there the waste is touched with cheer / Where spreads the fire-weed like a crimson flood / And venturous plumes of goldenrod appear."¹⁰³ The image of the "crimson flood" and the use of the verb "spread" imply the quick renewability of Earth if it is given an opportunity to turn "the waste" into a forest again. The words "cheer"/"appear" and "flood"/"goldenrod" are grouped by external and internal rhymes to demonstrate how cheer appears with a flood of goldenrod. In other words, scenes of fertility are capable of filling the human soul with happiness for the forest restoration. In addition, the inversion in "spreads the fire-weed" brings attention to floral outbursts on the once lifeless land. Natural regrowth and forest regeneration compensate for deforestation. Soon animals will return home, and the cut will be cured. Although this process sounds very simple on paper, it requires a lot of effort and self-restraint which are parts of the duty of dedicated forest stewards. Besides natural reforestation, intentional reforestation is an essential solution to deforestation. In Trower's "The Alders," this type of trees are depicted as "the reoccupiers" that can be planted "into skinned land"¹⁰⁴:

The alders are the forestfixers
 bandaging brown wounds
 with applegreen sashes—
 filling in for the fallen
 firs—

¹⁰² "Reforestation", *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reforestation>, accessed 1 May 2019.

¹⁰³ Roberts, "The Clearing", p. 75.

¹⁰⁴ Peter Trower, "The Alders", in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 230.

jostling up by the stumps
of grandfather cedars—¹⁰⁵

The animism of the forest is suggested in the metaphors that liken removing its green cover to skinning an animal and its stumps to brown wounds. Images of cure and possible recovery are understood from the metaphorical depictions of the alders as bandages and their applegreen leaves to sashes. The alders will help fix the soil after operations of heavy logging to protect it from erosion and desertification. The place will never return to its first form; there will be no firs or cedars. This idea is very important because humans should not think that it is fine to deforest then reforest. Reforestation is not the same as the original forest itself with its balanced biodiversity. It is a solution for deforestation, but it is not supposed to motivate additional clearing of woodlands. To illustrate, planting the alders in the poem represent a suitable solution to the cleared land, but still they are called “the reoccupiers” to indicate that they are alien to it. Their military occupation of the forest is emphasized when the poet likens them to “a bright upstart army / crowding the deadwood spaces.”¹⁰⁶

In addition to reforestation, afforestation – “the act or process of establishing a forest especially on land not previously forested”¹⁰⁷ – is a major counterbalance to deforestation. Afforestation can be employed to satisfy the needs of humans for forest products along with aiding forests in their other ecological rules by adding more green spaces to them. Afforestation, reforestation and general activities of planting are all reinforced in Islam. Prophet Muhammad said: “Never does a Muslim plant, or cultivate, but has reward for him for what the beasts eat, or the birds eat or anything else eats out of that.”¹⁰⁸ Planting is encouraged in the Hadith because it “is regarded in the classical Islamic tradition as an act of continuous charity, the most desirable sort of good

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ “Afforestation”, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/afforestation>, accessed 1 May 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Sahih Muslim, “The Book of MUSAQAH”, *Sunnah.com*, v. 3766, <https://sunnah.com/muslim/22>, accessed 1 May 2019.

deeds.”¹⁰⁹ By the same token, scientific data reveal that “[p]lanting trees outside forest areas will reduce pressure on forests for timber, fodder and fuelwood demands.”¹¹⁰ Reforestation and afforestation can be the contemporary readings of the Prophet’s encouragement of greening the Earth. Forested countries should conserve and restore degraded forests through reforestation. Other countries may share global efforts by the afforestation of deserts and barren lands.

“The Trees” by Roo Borson ends with a significant plea to humans: “Befriend them.”¹¹¹ The command is preceded by the cause: trees to Earth and its inhabitants are like “water” “to a mouth long closed on itself.”¹¹² The image highlights the intrinsic value of trees and calls for self and communal reform as urgent solutions. Nonetheless, any future behavioral reform in mankind’s eco-conscience to establish a stable forest stewardship should begin with children who enjoy an innate love of nature. This idea is tackled in Julie Bruck’s “Notice to Cut Tree.” Some trees are numbered in preparation for their cutting: “select trees / have numbers posted on their trunks.”¹¹³ The speaker has “grown attached to tree twenty-seven.”¹¹⁴ S/he is fond of nature, so s/he feels a great anguish for the cutting of this particular tree. The speaker has “one night left here” before the tree’s cutting.¹¹⁵ Indeed, it is the tree not the speaker which has one night left. Replacing the tree with the speaker in the subject position means that the spirit of the speaker will abandon the place with the removal of the tree. Both are attached, so the speaker spends the night in agony. By the “afternoon, [s/he] sit[s] on the front step” of his/

¹⁰⁹ Imam Shabir Ally, “Environment and Islam: Climate Change: A Call for Personal Changes”, *Whyislam.org* (15 Jan 2015), <https://www.whyislam.org/environment-and-islam/>, accessed 1 May 2019.

¹¹⁰ Chakravarty et al., “Deforestation: Causes, Effects and Control Strategies”, p. 19.

¹¹¹ Roo Borson, “The Trees”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 377.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Julie Bruck, “Notice to Cut Tree”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 407.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

her home and “say[s], *tree, tree*”¹¹⁶ (italics original). The speaker’s heart is broken for the tree, the poem affirms. The speaker and all other children are the future loggers, farmers, and consumers. Consequently, the power of the individual to effect dramatic changes must be considered in this context. Raising individuals from birth on appreciating the matchless values of forests will help future generations to accept the former plea of trees to befriend them and to become accountable stewards.

The final item on the list of solutions to deforestation is presenting a real image of exemplary forest stewards who embrace moderation and care in their daily interaction with forests; they are Indigenous peoples. Gregory Power’s “Bogwood” revolves around their “old custom” of cutting trees to get wood for warming in freezing winters.¹¹⁷ The speaker is mostly a member from an indigenous tribe which is understood from the phrase “old custom.” Moreover, the general appreciation of forests throughout the poem is a trademark of those peoples who consume but never violate. Although the thematic structure of the poem focuses on wood consumption, the mood is rhapsodic because there are no glimpses of over-exploitation. “December is the month for getting wood,” the speaker declares.¹¹⁸ He describes how he and his family/tribe “cut... [trees] into junks” so that “[o]ne bitter night we burned” them.¹¹⁹ Warmth “charmed those hours of rest, when we concerned/Ourselves with dreams.”¹²⁰ The poet celebrates the gifts of forests, particularly their wood which gives humans warmth to survive wintry nights. This is part of the divine wisdom for which trees are created. As long as they are used moderately, no loss will ensue.

Fire is one of the Almighty God’s sublime creatures. Referring to it in the Noble Qur’an, He states: “Then tell Me about the fire which you kindle / Is it you who made the tree thereof to grow, or are We the Grower?”¹²¹ The interrogation in the verses demands contemplating the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Gregory Power, “Bogwood”, in *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*, ed. by Nancy Holmes (Waterloo (Ont.): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), p. 150.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Qur’an*, 56:71-72.

awe-inspiring Creation of fire and trees and how they are interrelated . The speaker in the poem is taken by this contemplative moment as he marvels at the divine powers or what he calls the “enchanted law” which makes trees store the summer energy in their trunks to release it to humans in the winter when burnt.¹²² The tribe gathers around the fire:

Beyond its blue, transparent flame, we saw

The heat waves dancing in a parched July;

Its light transformed by some enchanted law,

Was hoarded sunlight from an age gone by.¹²³

Readers can decipher from this handling of woodcutting that causes of deforestation can be tackled positively if harm prevention and moderation are considered. These aspects are remarkably taken into account by Indigenous tribes. One of the findings of the study conducted by Jonah Busch and Kalifi Ferretti-Gallon for slowing deforestation is that “stronger enforcement of forest laws and policies supporting the continued management of forests by indigenous peoples have the potential to reduce deforestation.”¹²⁴ They presented “empirical evidence of a consistent association between the presence of indigenous peoples and lower rates of deforestation.”¹²⁵ In a nutshell, indigenous tribes embody ideal dwelling in nature, and they are a perfect model for the contemporaries to follow.

E. Concluding Remarks

Causes and effects of deforestation are various. Moreover, many countries of different economic, political, and social conditions stand responsible for it. Then, solutions are certainly interdisciplinary. The scientific, economic, political, and social angles should be mingled together for an appropriate evaluation of forest cover damage. These

¹²² Power, ‘Bogwood’, p. 150.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Jonah Busch and Kalifi Ferretti-Gallon, “What Drives Deforestation and What Stops It? A Meta-Analysis”, *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2017), p. 15.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

angles are summed up in the coming lines. As for science, funding scientific research dedicated to deforestation should have a priority and be promoted by international bodies fostering forests. The work of scientists from all over the globe should be collaborated, and further targeted studies are needed to find alternatives for land uses and industries based on forested lands. The contributions of scientific research and its accompanied recommendations are undoubtedly strong drivers for economic, political, and social reforms.

Concerning economic reforms, they are unavoidable for slowing forest loss rates. Simultaneously, the global economic value of industries responsible for deforestation can never be ignored. Hence, decisions taken to monitor deforestation should consider their interests. For example, switching to ecofriendly activities can be managed gradually along with presenting appropriate economic incentives to companies. Indeed, greening the world economy has already begun. According to the FTSE Russell report, the green economy in 2018 occupies “6% of the global stock market,” and “it has spread across companies of various size, nature, and geographical range.... Still, more work is required to keep the global economy on track.”¹²⁶ More work is the present necessity for rescuing forests. Companies dependent on forest resources must seek substitutes seriously. Ecofriendly products and green consumers should be encouraged, as well. In addition, welfare products based on forest resources should be banned, and the market demands should be observed. Commenting on the drivers of deforestation and desertification in China, Jeffrey Hays refers to an important incident: “When a herder was asked why he was grazing goats next to a sign that said ‘Protect vegetation, no grazing,’ he said, ‘The lands are too infertile to grow crops – herding is the only way for us to survive.’”¹²⁷ The sign protects nature and ignores humans’ essential right to gain their livelihood for survival, so the sign fails to accomplish its target. If the economic side of deforestation had been considered, the sign would have been effective. Poverty leads to

¹²⁶ “Green Economy Overtaking Fossil Fuel Industry - FTSE Russell Report”, *United Nations Climate Change* (8 Jun 2018), <https://unfccc.int/news/green-economy-overtaking-fossil-fuel-industry-ftse-russel-report>, accessed 1 May 2019.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey Hays, “Deforestation and Desertification in China”, *Facts and Details* (2012), <http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat10/sub66/item389.html>, accessed 1 May 2019.

deforestation in many countries. Saving forests by depriving the poor from woodlands' resources is not a good solution. Black markets, forest mafia, bribery, smugglers, illegal logging, etc. appear, and deforestation simply continues. Henceforth, establishing investments in developing countries to raise the living standards of their peoples away from forests is a noble endeavor that will reflect on the wellbeing of forests. In addition to the poor, indigenous peoples depend on forests for living. Taking measures or enforcing laws without considering their interests is not recommended. The Prophet said: "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself."¹²⁸ In light of the Hadith, decision makers should bear in mind the interests of their fellow humans when striking a balance between the needs of forests and the people dependent on them whether poor or indigenous. In relation to politics, national and international policy makers should consider varied degrees of decisions that range from forest resources' moderate consumption to forest conservation and sustainable development or banning exploitation at all until recovery. These decisions are supposed to be guided by the conditions of each country, the degree of damage done to forests, and a bundle of strict laws based on forest stewardship as depicted in Islamic moderate environmental jurisprudence. At a local level, worldwide forestry ministries should co-ordinate their efforts and share experiences: "O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another."¹²⁹ The Almighty God creates varied nations so that they complete one another. Monopolies of knowledge is against this divine wisdom. Each nation used to live in a separate bubble. The needle of nature degradation has burst bubbles, and the world unity becomes a necessity. All countries must feel involved and responsible; consequently, exchanging experiences and spreading knowledge is vital for reducing deforestation through wise policy.

At an international level, forests are currently protected by many global forestry policymaking organizations like the United Nations REDD Programme, the United Nations Forum on Forests, the Global

¹²⁸ Sahih al-Bukhari, 'Belief', *Sunnah.com*, v. 13, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/2>, accessed 1 May 2019.

¹²⁹ Qur'an, 49: 13.

Forest Coalition, Forest Stewardship Council, and others. Efforts are scattered among many organizations. The present degraded situation of forests requires one global organization to take the leadership. It should work on unifying all worthy efforts by both international organizations and national forestry ministries to face the devastation of woodlands. Co-operation among humans for noble causes is enforced in the Noble Qur'an: "Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwâ (virtue, righteousness and piety)"¹³⁰ Socially speaking, like all other environmental dilemmas, deforestation is oriented on ethics and communal attitudes. Religion, literature, and literary theory (grouped by Islamecocriticism) have a fundamental role in shaping the ethical social conscience of the world nations. Through the religious literary handling of deforestation, the society becomes alert to its many causes, drastic effects, and possible solutions. This awareness is reflected directly on economic and political attitudes. The Islamecocritical handling of forest cover loss provides necessary moral basics for re-harmonizing the relationship between humans and forests through forest stewardship. In addition, the moderate use of forest products and avoiding over-consumption are essential for sustainable forest management. Checking innateness concerning communities' handling of wooded areas should be, likewise, enforced. An unspoiled innateness rejects inflicting harm to animal and plant species dependent on forest ecosystems. Causing the extinction of some species because of invading their natural habitats is also detested as an act of corruption to the heavenly balance. A good innateness encourages humans to judge the needs of the society in relation to the wellbeing of the non-human. This non-human is an animate being praising its Creator. This non-human is sacred, and its existence should not be violated because it is related to a Holy origin. The Almighty God declares: "And We created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, for mere play."¹³¹ The verse delivers an implicit warning to those who underestimate the Almighty God's Creation by spoiling it. Therefore, divine judgment is an inevitable criterion in forest stewardship. Watching the Almighty God while handling forest resources enhances reform. "O you who believe! Answer Allah (by obeying Him) and (His) Messenger

¹³⁰ Qur'an, 5: 2.

¹³¹ Qur'an, 44: 38.

when he (صلي الله عليه وسلم) calls you to that which will give you life and know that Allâh comes in between a person and his heart.»¹³² Only the Almighty God can come between a person and the evil whims of his/her heart if this person obeys His commands and avoids His prohibitions. The verse emphasizes that the Islamic human-divine-nature decree in contrast to the common human-nature dichotomy is an ideal attitude to rescue forests.

The Islamecocratical eco-poetic analysis of deforestation demonstrates the selected poets' clear sensitivity and outstanding knowledge of its causes, effects, and solutions. Trower and Donlan, for example, refer to the greedy over-exploitation of forests in daily human activities as one of the ethical flaws that lead to woodlands' degradation. Moreover, Thesen and Brewster argue that inherent evil in human nature leads to stupid actions like logging to satisfy luxurious needs or depriving future generations from inheriting a balanced ecosphere. Carelessness and over-consumption are tackled by Toorn as two more disclaimed moral imperfections. All these flaws are condemned by Islam because they are key factors that augment forestland loss in multiple economic activities. Wayman, Roberts, Finch, and Philips enumerate these activities in their reference to logging, slash and burn agriculture, industrialization, and urban expansion. These various ethical and economic causes entail multiple effects. For instance, Toorn warns that humans' persistent violation of Earth's green cover will lead to their deprivation of its numberless benefits that sustain their very existence. As for Trower, he highlights the irredeemable consequences of habitat loss with the destruction of woodlands and its drastic effects on flora and fauna. Regarding solutions, the study adopts Finch's standpoint regarding the inevitability of holding on to hope to restore lost and degraded forests. Roberts and Trower suggest natural and intentional reforestation while Bruck emphasizes implanting a stable forest stewardship in children. Power believes that altering greedy attitudes is possible via following the example of indigenous peoples who embrace moderate practices that guarantee harm prevention. Unearthing these poets' deep environmental affiliations in light of Islamecocratical theory targets greening the reader's consciousness and strengthening motivations that can halt deforestation.

¹³² Qur'an, 8: 24.

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