EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Man is born with endless wishes and desires in his self "He knows no bounds for his cravings, God has put in his nature impatience and longing for more and more, his heart and mind always looks for something new to be satiated".

The Quran does not discard human emotions and desires. It encourages him instead by urging him to enjoy all what is available in the heavens and the earth.

“And He has subjected to you, as from Him, All that is in the heavens And on earth: behold, In that are signs indeed for those who reflect”

(Quran, XLV: 13)

“And He has bestowed under your service the night, the day, the sun and the moon”.

(Quran, XVI: 12)

“It is He Who hath created for you All things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens, For He gave order and perfection To the seven firmaments; And of all things He hath perfect knowledge”.

(Quran, II: 29)

Islamic economic philosophy calls upon its advocates and adherents to investigate and discover advantages as well disadvantages of everything deposited in the earth and get to know how to benefit from what are advantageous. Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) himself was very pragmatic in this context. He exhorted his

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1 Dr. Zakir Hussain Khan, Maashiyat: Maqsad-w-Minhaj, p. 70.
companions to utilize the natural resources to the maximum. Once he came upon a dead goat which had been given by someone as gift to the slave girl of one of the Prophet’s wives Maimunah, and asked the owner to make use of its skin. Upon this the people referred to the fact that the goat was dead which was considered Haram. The Prophet (S.A.W.) clarified that what was forbidden was only to eat it.\(^2\)

It is abundantly clear from Islamic perspective that the entire system of the universe has been designed to serve the man, who has been fully equipped with the capability to benefit from the economic deposits in the world.

"It is Allah who created you in the state of weakness and then turned this weakness into power".

(Quran, XXX: 54)

"It Is We Who created Them, and We have made Their joints strong; But, when We will, We can substitute the like of them by a complete change".

(Quran, LXXVI:28)

In the verses quoted above and other Ayah conveying the same message, obviously, refers to the physical and intellectual capabilities and aptitudes which enable man to think, plan, initiate and continually act and accomplish his task.

\(^2\) Sahih al-Bukhari, *Kitab al-Zakat*
Does the Quran, after having explained the significance of the internal and external resources, ask of man to escape the world as far as possible, and suspend the power of thought and action to the extent of its total ruin?

There is no denying the fact that the Quran declares the entire resources available either within or without man as his life-asset. It describes gold, silver, farm, live-stock, means of transportation as assets of worldly life:

"They are all assets for the worldly life"

(Quran, III:14)

Undoubtedly, man is living his life on the earth only by exploiting and utilizing the divine-gifts. Adam, while being commissioned to the earth, was told in no uncertain terms:

"And for you in the dwelling place in the earth and asset until an appointed time".

(Quran, II:36)

Does it not mean that complete arrangements have been made to let man utilize earthly resources until he dies. The Quranic mention of labour, capital, organization, planning, natural laws responsible for production is to drive the message home that the world and its resources are not simply to be looked at or to be discarded but to be utilized fully:
Eat of the things which God hath provided for you, Lawful and good; but fear God, in Whom ye believe.

(Quran, V:88)

And we gave you the shade of clouds And sent down to you Manna and quails, saying: "Eat of the good things We have provided for you:" (But they rebelled); To Us they did no harm, But they harmed their own souls.

(Quran, ii:57)

Those, who, having been influenced by some deviationists' teachings, hesitated to enjoy the worldly things, were persuaded very kindly:

O ye people! Eat of what is on earth, Lawful and good; And do not follow The footsteps of the Evil One, For he is to you An avowed enemy.

(Quran, ii:168)

At some places where the Quran mentions wind, cloud, rain standing crops, beautiful flowers, spacious gardens, grain loaded stalks, and says approvingly.

As sustenance for (God's) Servants; - And We give (new) life Therewith to land that is Dead: thus will be The Resurrection.

(Quran, L: 11)

The Quran which is full of this message, has not only allowed the human needs to be satisfied by available resources but also encouraged the man to whole heartedly benefit from the items meant
for decoration and beautification. Those still suspicious in their outlook were asked in a tone tinged with warning.

*Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of God, Which He hath produced for His servants, And the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do we explain the signs in detail for those who understand*  

(Quran, VII:32)

Man is told that certain things are meant to satisfy his needs and certain others serve as means of beautification, decoration and embellishment. Commenting on various means of transportation the Quran states:

*And they carry your heavy loads to lands that ye could not (otherwise) reach except with Souls distressed: for your Lord Is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful.*  

(Quran, XVI:7)

Every morning and evening witness a beautiful scene of cattle-herds going to and coming from their pastures. The Quran points out to its aesthetic aspect:

*And ye have a sense of pride and beauty in them As ye drive them home in the evening, and as ye lead them to pasture in the morning*  

(Quran, XVI:6)
Man enjoys the beauty of means of transportation. Likewise, he loves to have fascinating outfits. The Quran says while referring to this attitude:

\[\text{O ye children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness, - That is the best. Such are among the signs of God, that they May receive admonition!} \]

(Quran, VII:26)

Undoubtedly, the Quran is not a reference book for economics but it does take note of unnatural ideas related to economic aspects of human life incorporated in religion and vehemently condemns them as anti-human.

Man is equipped with intellectual power, which can sufficiently help him handle the physical and natural resources. He does not actually need any guidance in this field through revelation. But the Quran seeks to rectify his approach of indifference, pessimism and apathy and lead him to get fully involved in the process of earning livelihood, emphasizing on the significance of economic activities.

Wealth-generating process requires its participants to use their physical and intellectual labour. The Quran articulates this general principle too:

\[\text{“That man can have nothing but what he strives for”}.\]

(Quran, LIII: 39)
There is a general perception of this Ayah, that it refers to the result of human life in the hereafter. It is not confined to the Akhirah only. There is also from in this Ayah for the fruits of human labour in this world. The Quran clarifies the matter thus:

And in no wise covet those things in which God hath bestowed his gifts more freely on some of you than on others; to men is allotted what they earn, And to women what they earn: But ask God of His bounty. For God hath full knowledge of all things.

(Quran, IV: 32)

What is clear from this Ayah is that the amount and nature of the result is solely based on the amount and nature of labour man puts in. Instead of using allegorical language the Quran unequivocally put the message of involvement in the process of wealth-production:

"And don't forget your share in the world."

(Quran, XXVIII:77)

These are the general instructions in the Quran. Now, some specific references to the means of production, as found in the Quran, will be dealt with briefly.

**Mines and Minerals:**

Besides animals and vegetation man also utilizes mineral deposits to produce wealth. He uses the surface of the earth for growing crops and developing gardens, on the one hand, and builds
houses, roads, shops and factories, on the other. For building all these things he applies soil, clay, stones and lime etc. all taken from the earth itself.

Beneath the surface of the earth is deposited another means of wealth production, namely, minerals. Sea-bed also provides for man a number of other sources of income such as pearls, sponges etc.

The Quran mentions the use of mineral deposits beneath the earth. In the story of Sulaiman (Peace be upon him) it says:

"And we flowed for him the fountain of coal tar."
(Quran, XXXIV:12)

The Quran also mentions iron being extracted from beneath the earth:

"And we sent down iron in which there is very much energy and also many benefits for mankind"
(Quran, LVII:25)

There are Hadith encouraging people to benefit from the hidden wealth in the earth. It is reported, on the authority of Hazrat Aishah that the Prophet (S.A.W) said:

"Seek sustenance in the hidden deposits of the earth."³

Some Sahabah had adopted the profession of miner. They were experts. Harith b. Abi al - Harith al-Azadi has said that his father was very much knowledgeable of metals and minerals.⁴

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³ Al-Tibrani. And also Kanz al-Ummal, p. 210, vol II
⁴ Abu Obayd al-Qasim, Kitab al-Amwal (Urdu translation by Abdul Rahman, Tahir Surati), Idara Tahqeeqat Islami, Islamabad, p 505
Deposits In the Sea-Bed:

Man loves wealth so much that he even risks his life to dive deep into the ocean to lay his hands on the source of pearls. The Quran appreciates this act of man:

For to anything which We Have willed, We but say The Word, "Be, and it is.

(Quran, XVI:14)

At another place:

"And he produces in the (oceans) pearl and coral"

(Quran, LV:22)

"And the two oceans don't merge into each other . One of them is sweet and refreshing and thirst - quenching and the other is salty and bitter. And you get from each of them fresh edible meat and also explore ornament which you use".

(Quran, XXXV:12)

Many Sahabah and Tabi'in practiced sea diving to find out pearls and corals. Ibn 'Aun reports that a leather bag full of pearls which had been smuggled in without entry tax having been paid, was confiscated and brought to the official concerned Abu al - Mulayh who on the advice of the governor Hajjaj levied tax on the wealth, amounting to one fifth of the total weight.5

Human exploitation of the divine-gifts embedded in the earth is rising momentum day by day. Man has succeeded in controlling

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5 Abu Obayd al-Qasim, Kitab al-Amwal(Urdu translation by Abdul Rahman, Tahir Surati), Idara Tahqeeqat Islami, Islamabad, p. 515
vapour, clouds water falls and wind-waves to his benefit. Though the foundations of exploiting sun-heat, ocean-tide scores of minerals hundreds of plant roots and atomic energy have already been laid but the pace is slow and much more requires to be done.

Indeed the explanation of the heavenly book, al-Quran will remain incomplete until its economy-related instructions are fully and concretely implemented.

**Water:**

Historians describe water as the most ancient means or source of production. A Hadith also support the idea:

"Prophets before me had the occupation of hunting".

The Quran too mentions clearly the economic advantages of hunting land and sea animals:

"For you was allowed hunting eating of the sea - animals. This is useful for you and the wayfarers."

(Quran, V 96)

There is also mention of the source of income in various Ahadith. A Companion once sought the Prophet's help to resolve his problem of not participating in prayers in congregation due to his involvement in his profession of hunting. The Prophet (S A W) appreciated his occupation by referring to it as the favorite job of

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\(^\text{[1]}\) Al-Tabri *Tafsir* vol VII p 39

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previous messengers of Allah and consoled him explaining that prayers in congregation is for those who remain in the city.\(^7\)

The Quran encourages people to benefit from the resources for food in the sea:

"It is He who subjugated the sea for you so that you enjoy fresh meat acquired from it".

\((\text{Quran, XVI:14})\)

There are traditions referring to fishing by the Sahabah as well as Tabi’in. Yunus b. Obaid reports that ‘Umar b. Abdul Aziz wrote to his governor in Oman not to levy tax on fish worth below two hundred Dirhams.\(^8\)

Today with the growth of human population, the significance of marine-food is increasingly felt. Man, who is inhabiting only one fourth of the earth, is rightly expected to benefit more and more in future from the marine resources. A US professor opines that the more the population and thereby more demand of resources for food the greater the significance of the sea food and other items from the ocean-bed in our national life.\(^9\)

**Stock - Breeding:**

Live - stockbreeding is another source of income providing man with meat, skin, bone, hair and milk for various uses on the one hand

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\(^8\) Abu Obayd al-Qasim, *op.cit.*, p. 515

and serving him as means of transportation and conveyance. The Quran mentions at many places the advantages of cattle:

"And verily there is for you a lesson in the cattle's. We provide you what is in their belly between dung and blood - pure milk, delicious for consumers".

(Quran, XXIII:21)

The same statement is repeated in more detail at a different place:

"It is Allah who created for you cattle's, some of them for transportation and some other for eating. And there are also many other benefits in them so that you fulfil requirements you have in your hearts. And you are also led to ride on them and in the ship"

(Quran, XL:24)

The Quran also mentions agricultural uses of animals:

He said: "He says: a heifer Not trained to till the soil or water the fields; sound and without blemish." They said: "Now hast thou brought the truly." Then they offered Her in sacrifice, But not with good-will

(Quran, II:1)

See they not that it is We Who have created For them - among the things Which our hands have fashioned - Cattle, which are under Their dominion?; And that We have Subjected them to their (use)? Of them some do carry them And some they eat; And they have (other) profits From them (besides), and they Get (milk) to drink, Will they not then Be grateful?

(Quran, XXXVI:23)
The Quran makes it crystal clear that all the animals have been created for man who has the responsibility to use them for their benefit.

The Prophet (S.A.W.) once advised Umm hani bt Abi Talib to rear goats as there was much growth in that occupation. Like wise other Sahabah were also encouraged by him to start-cattle-breeding. On one occasion the Prophet is reported to have said to his people: "Breed live - stocks as they grow every morning and evening". Instructions are also available on horse - breeding:

"The Prophet said: "Horse is a source of the good until the last Day of the world".

Islam does not attach any sanctity to any animals which has all been created for the use of man who, however, has been told by the Prophet (S.A.W.) not to treat his cattle in a harsh manner. Al-Bukhari, in his al-Jami al-Sahih, quotes a famous Hadith according to which the Prophet (S.A.W.) witnessed a woman who had treated her cat very harshly being punished in hell-fire. Al-Bukhari reports another tradition which refers to a person being forgiven for his sins due to his kind act of quenching the thirst of a dog.

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10 Ibn Majah, Sunan, 'Bab ittikhaz al-Mashiyah'
11 Kanz al-Ummal, vol II, p 199
12 Ibid p 119
13 Al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Jihad, Muslim Abu Daud, Sunan
14 Al Bukhari, op cit.
It is a general concept regarding the significance of bird-meat as natural human diet being a discovery of modern medicine. The Quran mentions this as one of the foods in paradise.

And the flesh of fowls, Any that they may desire.
(Quran, LVI:27)

Vegetation:

Like stock-breeding crop-cultivation and horticulture are also important sources of food and income.

While inviting humankind to reflect on the divine - signs scattered every where on the earth the Quran refers most of the time to the moving clouds, undulating crops, breath-taking expanse of greens fruits - yielding trees and many more related matters.

See ye the seed that ye sow in the ground? Is it ye that cause it to grow, or are We the Cause?
(Quran, LVI:27)

There are great numbers of Ayat dealing with the same matter in the Quran which suggest that the Quran came down first on the people whose main occupation was farming and plantation.

Allah has put in the earth such a capability that despite thousands of years of its continuous use its productivity and arability not only remains unexhausted but also at times stands enhanced.

The earth is a source of both habitation and cultivation.
It is we who have placed you with authority on earth, and provided you therein with means for the fulfillment of your life. Small are the thanks that ye give!

(Quran, VII.10)

What is abundantly clear from these verses is that the more the exploitation of the earth the more the sustenance for mankind.

Many Sahabah were involved in large scale farming. For example historians mention a large vine-orchard owned by Amr b. Al-As at a valley called “Wahat” three-miles away from Taif.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{15}\) Yaqt, *Mujam al-Buldan*, vol IV, p 143 Topic Wahat