



Original Research Article

## Environment in Islamic Resources in the Conservation of Water Resources and its Application in Iran

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### ABSTRACT

Environmental issues have become a critical concern in the modern world, with water resources being one of the most vital elements for sustaining life and ecosystems. Water's indispensable role in supporting human life, nurturing plants, and fostering the growth of all living beings has long been recognized by scientists and emphasized in various cultural and religious contexts. In Islam, water holds significant importance, as highlighted in the Holy Quran, where it is described as the source of life for all creatures. This underscores the necessity of protecting and managing water resources responsibly. The article titled "Environment in Islamic Sources in the Protection of Water Resources and Its Application in Iran" adopts a descriptive-analytical approach to explore the integration of environmental rights within Islamic teachings, specifically concerning water conservation. It also examines Iran's stance on this issue, reflecting on its alignment with Islamic principles. Furthermore, the article proposes practical solutions to enhance water resource management, emphasizing the importance of combining religious guidance with modern environmental strategies to address contemporary challenges effectively.

**Keywords:** Islam, Environment, Water resources, Laws of Iran.

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## Introduction

Water, often described as the essence of life, represents one of the most precious, indispensable, and irreplaceable resources on our planet [1]. It is a fundamental component that sustains all forms of life, making it central to the survival and well-being of both humans and ecosystems. Its importance transcends geographical borders, cultural identities, and historical epochs, serving as the lifeblood of civilizations throughout history [2]. From ancient agricultural societies reliant on rivers like the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates to modern metropolises sustained by complex water systems, water has always been the cornerstone of human progress and development. It is the foundation upon which agriculture thrives, industries operate, and ecosystems flourish. Yet, despite its unparalleled significance, the world today faces an escalating global water crisis that poses one of the most formidable challenges of the 21st century [3]. This crisis is driven by a confluence of factors, including rapid population growth that increases demand for water, accelerating urbanization that strains local water supplies, industrial expansion that contaminates natural water sources, and the far-reaching impacts of climate change that disrupt water cycles and exacerbate scarcity [4]. Compounding these issues is the widespread mismanagement of water resources, which often leads to overextraction, pollution, and inequitable distribution. As a result, nations across the globe are struggling to address the dual imperative of ensuring universal access to clean, safe water while simultaneously safeguarding this finite resource for future generations [5]. Against this backdrop, the exploration of cultural, religious, and ethical frameworks as tools for promoting water conservation has gained significant momentum. Among the myriad religious traditions that emphasize environmental stewardship, Islam stands out as a holistic and comprehensive guide that seamlessly integrates spiritual principles with practical responsibilities toward nature. The teachings of Islam are deeply rooted in the values of balance, moderation, and accountability—principles that resonate profoundly with the ethos of environmental sustainability [6]. Water occupies a sacred and exalted position in Islamic teachings, symbolizing purity, sustenance, and divine mercy. The Quran, Islam's holy book, along with the Hadith—the recorded sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)—abounds with references to the pivotal role of water in creation and the ethical obligations tied to its use [7]. These teachings emphasize not only the spiritual significance of water but also underscore its practical importance as a shared resource that must be conserved and distributed equitably among all living beings. For instance, Islam encourages moderation in water usage,

even in acts of worship such as ablution, where wastefulness is discouraged despite the sacred nature of the act. Furthermore, Islamic principles advocate for protecting water sources from contamination and ensuring that they remain accessible to all members of society, reflecting a profound commitment to justice and environmental stewardship [8]. By drawing on these timeless teachings, communities can cultivate a deeper sense of responsibility toward water conservation while fostering a more harmonious relationship with nature. In an era where the global water crisis threatens to undermine human well-being and ecological balance, such ethical and spiritual frameworks offer invaluable insights into how humanity can navigate this pressing challenge with wisdom and compassion [9].

Iran, a nation renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, diverse climate zones, and an unparalleled cultural heritage that spans millennia, has long grappled with the pressing issue of water scarcity. Its geographical makeup, dominated by vast stretches of arid and semi-arid regions, has historically necessitated the development of ingenious water management systems to support both agricultural productivity and urban sustenance. Among these innovations, the qanat system stands out as a remarkable feat of ancient engineering—underground aqueducts designed to transport groundwater over long distances to irrigate fields and supply communities with life-sustaining water [10]. This system, which embodies the wisdom of past generations, has played a pivotal role in shaping Iran's thriving civilizations over centuries. However, in more recent decades, the country's water crisis has deepened due to a combination of factors, including unsustainable consumption patterns, overextraction of groundwater reserves, inefficient agricultural irrigation techniques, rapid urbanization, population growth, and the mounting impacts of climate change. These challenges have led to alarming consequences such as depleted aquifers, desertification, reduced agricultural output, and social tensions over access to water resources [11]. As Iran stands at a critical juncture in addressing its escalating water challenges, there is growing recognition of the need for innovative and culturally resonant solutions that align with both environmental sustainability and societal values. One promising avenue lies in the integration of Islamic principles into contemporary water management strategies. The deeply rooted Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship and resource conservation offer a moral and ethical framework that can guide modern approaches to sustainable water use [11]. Central to Islamic thought is the concept of humans as stewards (khalifa) of the Earth, entrusted by God

with the responsibility to protect and preserve its resources for future generations. The Quran and Hadith—the foundational texts of Islam—abound with verses and sayings that emphasize the importance of moderation, gratitude for natural resources, and equitable distribution of water. For instance, the Quran highlights water as a divine blessing and a vital source of life: "And We have made from water every living thing" (21:30). Similarly, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have advocated for water conservation even in situations of abundance, urging his followers to avoid wastefulness during ablution rituals [12]. These teachings underscore the intrinsic value of water and the moral imperative to use it responsibly. In addition to scriptural guidance, historical practices within Muslim communities provide valuable insights into sustainable resource management. Throughout history, Islamic societies have developed innovative systems for water governance that balance individual needs with communal responsibilities. Traditional models such as *hima* (protected areas) and *waqf* (endowments) have been employed to manage natural resources sustainably while ensuring their equitable distribution. In Iran's context, these principles can be revisited and adapted to address contemporary challenges [13]. For example, the concept of *waqf* could be applied to establish community-managed water resources or fund initiatives aimed at restoring damaged ecosystems. Similarly, reviving traditional irrigation practices that prioritize efficiency and equity could complement modern technological advancements in water management. To translate these timeless principles into actionable strategies, it is essential to consider Iran's unique environmental and socio-economic context. The country's diverse climate zones—from the lush Caspian region in the north to the arid deserts in the south—require tailored solutions that account for local conditions [14]. Moreover, addressing water scarcity in Iran entails navigating complex socio-political dynamics, including tensions between rural and urban areas over resource allocation and the economic pressures faced by farmers reliant on water-intensive crops. Integrating Islamic teachings into policy frameworks could help foster a sense of shared responsibility among stakeholders while promoting ethical decision-making at all levels. For instance, public awareness campaigns rooted in Islamic values could encourage citizens to adopt water-saving behaviors in their daily lives. At the same time, policymakers could draw on Islamic principles to design regulations that prioritize sustainability over short-term gains. Furthermore, a holistic approach to Iran's water crisis would involve leveraging modern science and technology alongside traditional knowledge and cultural values [15]. Advances in fields such

as remote sensing, desalination, and wastewater recycling hold immense potential for enhancing water availability and efficiency. By combining these innovations with the ethical guidance provided by Islamic teachings, Iran can develop integrated solutions that address both the technical and moral dimensions of its water challenges. International collaboration and knowledge exchange with other countries facing similar issues could also enrich Iran's efforts to build resilience against future water-related crises [16]. In conclusion, Iran's struggle with water scarcity presents an opportunity to rethink how ancient wisdom and modern innovation can converge to create sustainable solutions. By exploring the intersection of Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship and practical applications in water management, Iran can draw on its rich cultural heritage to address contemporary challenges. The Quranic emphasis on moderation, equity, and gratitude for natural resources offers timeless lessons that resonate deeply with the principles of sustainable development [16]. Coupled with historical practices from Muslim communities and tailored strategies that reflect Iran's unique context, these teachings can inspire a transformative approach to water governance. As Iran embarks on this journey toward sustainability, it has the potential not only to alleviate its own water crisis but also to serve as a model for other nations seeking culturally grounded solutions to global environmental challenges.

### **The Sacredness of Water in Islamic Teachings**

In Islam, water holds a profound and multifaceted significance, being regarded as both a divine gift and a tangible manifestation of God's infinite mercy and benevolence. The Quran, the holy book of Islam, frequently underscores the central role of water in the natural order, presenting it as a remarkable sign of divine creation and an essential source of life for all living beings. One of the most striking references to water is found in Surah Al-Anbiya (21:30), where Allah declares: *"And We made from water every living thing [17]. Then will they not believe?"* This powerful verse serves as a reminder of the indispensable role water plays in sustaining life on Earth, urging believers to reflect deeply on its significance as a testament to God's wisdom and creative power. It invites humanity to recognize water not merely as a physical necessity but as a sacred element intricately woven into the fabric of existence. Beyond its physical importance, water occupies a central place in Islamic rituals and acts of worship, symbolizing both purity and spiritual renewal. The practice of ablution (wudu), a ritual purification performed before the five

daily prayers, involves the careful use of clean water to wash specific parts of the body, such as the hands, face, and feet [18]. This act not only underscores the hygienic importance of water but also imbues it with profound spiritual value, as it prepares the believer to stand in prayer before God in a state of physical and spiritual cleanliness. Similarly, ghusl, or full-body purification, is required in certain circumstances, such as after marital relations or menstruation, to restore ritual purity. These practices instill in Muslims an enduring sense of reverence for water, teaching them to approach it with mindfulness, gratitude, and respect. The ethical dimensions of water usage are further elaborated upon in the Hadith literature, which preserves the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Prophet consistently emphasized moderation and discouraged wastefulness in all aspects of life, including the consumption of water. In one particularly well-known Hadith, he advised: *"Do not waste water, even if you perform ablution on the banks of a flowing river."* This timeless teaching conveys a powerful message about the importance of conserving water, regardless of how abundant or accessible it may seem [18]. By promoting moderation and discouraging excess, Islamic teachings encourage believers to adopt responsible and conscientious attitudes toward this vital resource. The emphasis on conservation also reflects broader Islamic principles of environmental stewardship and care for God's creation, reminding Muslims that they are entrusted with the Earth as its caretakers. Through these teachings, Islam fosters a holistic understanding of water as a precious resource that sustains life, purifies the body and soul, and serves as a constant reminder of God's mercy and provision. The reverence for water in Islam thus transcends its physical properties, elevating it to a symbol of spiritual purity, ethical responsibility, and divine grace. By reflecting on the Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions that highlight its significance, Muslims are encouraged to cultivate gratitude for this indispensable gift and to use it wisely and equitably in their daily lives [19].

### **Environmental Stewardship in Islam**

The concept of environmental stewardship is profoundly rooted in the ethical and spiritual framework of Islamic teachings, offering a comprehensive perspective on humanity's relationship with the natural world. Central to this worldview is the Quranic designation of humans as *\*khalifah\**—a term that signifies stewards or trustees of the Earth, entrusted by Allah with the sacred duty of caring for and preserving His creation [20]. This responsibility is not

limited to a single domain but encompasses all facets of the environment, including land, air, and water. The Quran explicitly highlights the importance of this stewardship by emphasizing resource conservation and sustainable practices. For instance, Surah Al-A'raf (7:31) offers a timeless admonition: "Eat and drink but waste not by extravagance, certainly He (Allah) likes not Al-Musrifun (those who waste by extravagance)." This verse conveys a profound ethical principle—moderation in consumption—urging believers to avoid wastefulness and adopt mindful habits that align with the divine mandate of sustainability [20]. In addition to moderation, Islamic teachings place a significant emphasis on balance and harmony in all interactions with the environment. The concept of *mizan* (balance) is a recurring theme in the Quran, serving as a cornerstone of environmental ethics. Surah Ar-Rahman (55:7-9) beautifully articulates this principle: "And He has raised the heaven and imposed the balance that you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance." These verses underscore the importance of maintaining equilibrium within the natural order, warning against actions that could disrupt ecological systems or degrade the planet's delicate harmony. By adhering to this divine guidance, humanity is called upon to act as conscientious guardians, ensuring that their activities do not lead to environmental degradation or imbalance. Moreover, Islamic teachings extend beyond individual responsibility to encompass broader social and communal obligations [20]. The principles of social justice and equitable resource distribution are deeply embedded in Islam's ethical framework. Water, as one of the most vital resources for life, is regarded as a shared blessing that must be accessible to all members of society without discrimination. This notion is reinforced by a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who stated: "Muslims have common share in three things: grass (pasture), water, and fire (fuel)." This profound teaching underscores the communal nature of essential resources like water, emphasizing that they are not commodities to be monopolized but blessings to be shared equitably. It also highlights the ethical obligation to ensure fair access to these resources, particularly for vulnerable populations who may face barriers to their availability.

Islamic environmental ethics further advocate for a sense of humility and reverence toward nature, recognizing it as a manifestation of Allah's creative power and wisdom. The Quran frequently draws attention to the signs of God's presence in the natural world, encouraging

believers to reflect on its beauty and intricacy. This perspective fosters a sense of awe and gratitude that inspires responsible behavior toward the environment. Additionally, Islamic traditions include numerous practical guidelines for environmental protection, such as planting trees, preserving wildlife, and avoiding pollution [21]. These actions are not only seen as acts of worship but also as ways to fulfill one's role as a steward of the Earth. In essence, the Islamic approach to environmental stewardship is holistic, integrating spiritual, ethical, and practical dimensions. It calls for moderation in consumption, respect for balance in nature, equitable sharing of resources, and active efforts to protect and nurture the environment. By embracing these principles, individuals and communities can contribute to a more sustainable and just world, fulfilling their divine mandate as caretakers of Allah's creation.

### **Traditional Water Management Practices in Islamic History**

Throughout the rich and diverse history of Islamic civilization, communities have consistently demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and resourcefulness in managing water resources, guided by the ethical and spiritual principles of Islam. Water, being a vital and sacred element in Islamic teachings, holds immense significance in both daily life and religious practices, inspiring Muslims to develop systems that ensure its sustainable use and equitable distribution [22]. One particularly notable innovation is the qanat system, an ancient and sophisticated method of extracting groundwater through a network of gently sloping underground tunnels. This ingenious system, believed to have originated in Persia, became a cornerstone of water management across vast regions, including the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. Qanats provided a reliable and sustainable source of water for agricultural purposes, domestic needs, and even urban centers, often supporting entire communities in arid and semi-arid climates where surface water was scarce or seasonal [23]. The design and operation of qanats reflect core Islamic values such as moderation, efficiency, and the equitable sharing of resources. By minimizing water wastage and ensuring that all community members had access to this precious resource, the qanat system embodied the principle of *\*adl\** (justice) as emphasized in Islamic teachings. Beyond technological advancements like qanats, Islamic societies also institutionalized water management through ethical practices such as the establishment of *\*waqf\** (charitable endowments). These endowments were created by Muslim rulers, wealthy individuals, and philanthropists who sought to contribute to the public good by dedicating funds or properties for

projects that benefited society at large. A significant portion of *\*waqf\** funds was allocated to initiatives aimed at improving access to clean water, including the construction of wells, reservoirs, cisterns, aqueducts, and irrigation systems [24]. These projects not only addressed immediate needs but also ensured long-term sustainability by providing vital infrastructure for future generations. The establishment of *\*waqf\** for water-related purposes exemplifies the spirit of generosity (*\*karam\**) and social responsibility (*\*mas'ooliyyah\**) that Islam encourages among its followers. Such philanthropic efforts were often motivated by the belief that providing water—a basic necessity for all living beings—is among the most virtuous acts one can perform. Moreover, these initiatives fostered a sense of community solidarity and mutual care, reinforcing the interconnectedness of individuals within society. Together, innovations like qanats and the institution of *\*waqf\** illustrate how Islamic principles have historically guided the development of water management systems that prioritize sustainability, equity, and compassion. These practices serve as enduring examples of how faith-inspired ethics can inform practical solutions to some of humanity's most pressing challenges while promoting harmony between people and their environment [25].

### **Iran's Water Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities**

Iran's geographical location and climatic conditions place it in a precarious position when it comes to water resources, making it one of the countries most vulnerable to water scarcity in the world. Situated in a region where arid and semi-arid zones dominate, Iran experiences an average annual rainfall that is significantly lower than the global average, leaving much of its territory parched and dependent on limited water sources [26]. This already challenging situation is further aggravated by the country's overreliance on groundwater extraction, a practice that has caused alarming levels of aquifer depletion. The excessive withdrawal of groundwater has led to severe consequences such as land subsidence, where the ground sinks due to the emptying of underground water reserves, and desertification, which transforms once-productive lands into barren deserts. Compounding these issues is the inefficiency of irrigation systems used in agriculture, a sector that consumes over 90% of Iran's total water resources. The outdated and wasteful irrigation methods lead to significant water losses, reducing the availability of water for other essential uses and putting immense pressure on the overall water supply [26]. The challenges do not end there. Climate change has emerged as a formidable force, exacerbating

Iran's water crisis through rising temperatures, reduced precipitation, and an increase in the frequency and intensity of droughts. These climatic shifts have disrupted traditional water availability patterns, making it even harder to manage the already scarce resources effectively. Urbanization and industrialization, while contributing to economic growth, have also played a role in worsening the situation by polluting and degrading freshwater sources. The expansion of cities and industries often comes at the expense of natural ecosystems, further straining Iran's fragile water reserves. Rivers, lakes, and groundwater systems are increasingly contaminated with industrial waste, agricultural runoff, and untreated urban sewage, diminishing both the quality and quantity of usable water [25].

Despite these daunting challenges, Iran possesses a rich cultural and religious heritage that could serve as a guiding light in addressing its water crisis. Islamic teachings, deeply embedded in Iranian society, emphasize principles of conservation, moderation, and environmental stewardship. These values offer valuable ethical insights that can complement technical solutions to water management. For instance, Islamic teachings advocate for the responsible use of natural resources, discouraging wastefulness and promoting equitable distribution. By integrating these principles into modern water management strategies, Iran has the potential to develop holistic approaches that address both the technical and moral dimensions of its water challenges. To move forward, Iran can draw upon its historical knowledge of sustainable water practices. For centuries, Iranians have relied on ingenious systems like qanats—underground channels that transport water from aquifers to arid regions without significant evaporation losses. Reviving and modernizing such traditional methods could help mitigate some of the current inefficiencies in water use. Additionally, investing in advanced technologies for irrigation, wastewater recycling, and desalination could provide much-needed relief to stressed water systems. Public awareness campaigns rooted in cultural and religious values could also play a crucial role in fostering a sense of responsibility among citizens to conserve water. Ultimately, addressing Iran's water crisis will require a multifaceted approach that combines scientific innovation with cultural wisdom. By leveraging its unique heritage alongside modern advancements, Iran can pave the way for sustainable water management practices that not only meet immediate needs but also secure the well-being of future generations.

### **Applying Islamic Principles to Water Conservation in Iran**

To effectively integrate Islamic principles into modern water management practices in Iran, several steps can be taken:

1. **Public Awareness Campaigns**: Educational initiatives can raise awareness about Islamic teachings on water conservation among communities. By highlighting Quranic verses and Hadiths that emphasize moderation and responsibility toward water resources, these campaigns can inspire behavioral change at individual and collective levels.
2. **Reviving Traditional Practices**: Revitalizing ancient systems such as qanats can provide sustainable solutions for irrigation and groundwater management. Efforts should focus on restoring these systems while incorporating modern technologies to enhance their efficiency.
3. **Promoting Equitable Access**: Policies should prioritize equitable distribution of water resources in line with Islamic principles of social justice. This includes ensuring access to clean drinking water for marginalized communities and addressing disparities between urban and rural areas.
4. **Incorporating Religious Leaders**: Religious leaders can play a pivotal role in promoting environmental ethics within their congregations. By delivering sermons on the importance of water conservation from an Islamic perspective, they can foster a sense of collective responsibility among believers.
5. **Policy Integration**: Policymakers should incorporate Islamic values into national water management strategies. This includes enacting regulations that discourage wasteful practices, promote efficient irrigation methods, and protect natural ecosystems.
6. **Community-Based Initiatives**: Grassroots movements inspired by Islamic ethics can empower local communities to take ownership of their water resources. Collaborative efforts such as community-led monitoring programs and conservation projects can enhance resilience against water scarcity.

## Conclusion

The intersection of Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship with the contemporary challenges facing the world today, particularly the issue of water scarcity in Iran, opens up a profound and unique avenue for addressing some of the most pressing environmental crises of our time. Water, as one of the most vital resources for life on Earth, holds a special place in Islamic tradition, where it is revered as a sacred gift from Allah and a symbol of purity, sustenance, and divine mercy. This deep spiritual connection to water provides a foundation for fostering a sense of responsibility and respect toward its use and management. By drawing upon the timeless principles enshrined in Islamic teachings—such as the concepts of tawhid (the oneness of God and interconnectedness of all creation), khalifah (humankind's role as stewards or caretakers of the Earth), and mizan (the balance and harmony inherent in nature)—Iran has the opportunity to craft innovative and sustainable solutions that not only address its modern challenges but also resonate deeply with its cultural, spiritual, and historical identity.

The integration of these ethical and spiritual values into technical and scientific approaches to resource management can lead to more holistic and effective strategies for combating water scarcity. For instance, Islamic principles emphasize moderation, conservation, and avoiding wastefulness (*israf*), which can serve as guiding tenets for policies aimed at reducing water consumption, improving irrigation practices, and promoting efficient water usage in both urban and rural areas. Furthermore, the Quran and Hadith encourage equitable distribution of resources, highlighting the importance of ensuring that access to water is fair and just for all members of society, including marginalized and underserved communities. This ethical framework can inspire policies that prioritize inclusivity and social justice in addressing water-related challenges. In addition to shaping practical solutions, Islamic teachings can play a pivotal role in fostering a deeper emotional and spiritual connection between individuals and their environment. By viewing nature as a trust (*amana*) from Allah, believers are reminded of their duty to protect and preserve it for future generations. This perspective encourages a shift away from exploitative attitudes toward natural resources and instead promotes a sense of gratitude, humility, and mindfulness in their use. Such values can be instrumental in cultivating a culture of sustainability that extends beyond governmental policies and technological innovations to encompass individual behaviors, community practices, and societal norms. As humanity

confronts an increasingly uncertain future marked by climate change, dwindling natural resources, and environmental degradation, revisiting religious frameworks such as Islam offers valuable insights and guidance for navigating these challenges. The teachings of Islam provide not only practical directives but also a source of hope, inspiration, and moral clarity in the shared endeavor to protect Earth's most precious resources. In the case of Iran, where water scarcity poses a significant threat to agriculture, public health, and economic stability, leveraging Islamic principles can serve as a unifying force that bridges the gap between tradition and modernity. By aligning sustainable development efforts with the ethical imperatives of Islamic teachings, Iran can set an example for other nations facing similar challenges. This approach demonstrates that addressing environmental issues is not merely a technical or scientific endeavor but also a deeply moral and spiritual undertaking that requires collective action, empathy, and a commitment to safeguarding the planet for generations to come. In this sense, Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship stand as a beacon of hope—a reminder that through faith, wisdom, and collaboration, humanity has the potential to create a more harmonious and sustainable world where both people and nature can thrive together in balance.

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