

Climate Of Change



It's never too late to make amends, says

MAULANA

WAHIDUDDIN,

close on the heels of the recently concluded UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at Cancun, Mexico

News of ecological disruptions pours in from all over the world almost every day. Sometimes, we hear that glaciers and polar ice caps are melting or that the oceans and seas are turning into cesspools. Several studies show that air, water and land have all become polluted. A *Quranic* verse from the chapter entitled *Al-Rum* (The Romans), says: "Corruption appeared on land and sea due to manmade evils." (30:41). When the *Quran* predicted this, it also gave us the solution. It says: "Do not corrupt the Earth after it has been set in order" (7:56). The verse refers to the Creation Plan of God, but we appear to be trying to live our lives counter to this Plan and it is no longer sustainable.

Natural Balance

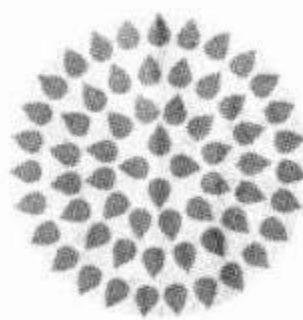
According to the *Quran*, God created Adam as the first man and settled him in Paradise where he was well provided for. He could enjoy it all — except a forbidden tree, which he was asked not to touch. The first man succumbed to temptation and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. This led to his being ousted from Paradise; he was sent to earth. That tree symbolised greed. God had said all of man's needs would be catered to. However, that did not include providing for man's greed. This was the first lesson given to man.

God now settled man on earth and there too, provided all that was required. There is everything on earth — air, water, and food, beautiful environs, everything. In pre-industrial times, lifestyles were simple. Once the industrial revolution happened and we began to produce things on a large scale, everything changed. Competition and the desire for profits as well as a yearning for more and more acquisitions led to senseless exploitation of natural resources. The balance was disturbed. Luxurious lifestyles became the aspiration of most, even if they were unsustainable. According to a Hadith, the Prophet of Islam once said: "Don't live in luxury... because a luxurious life is not the life of true believers."

A life of luxury is not sustainable

as the world was not created for this purpose. Sustainable living would entail keeping consumption in line with one's needs, and not greed. Hence M K Gandhi famously said: "Simple living and high thinking."

I use the word 'greed' in an extended sense. There are several kinds of greed — for money, power and for material goods. Some people want more and more political power; they resort to muscle power to realise their ambition. God created everything in the right proportion. Carbon emissions are nothing new; it's just that prompted by greed, we tend to overdo it. Earlier whatever CO₂ was emitted was absorbed by the trees and the oceans. With industrialisation and extensive manufacturing of goods,



GREEN SPIRIT

CAR POOLS COULD BE ONE WAY OF CONTRIBUTING TO REDUCTION OF POLLUTION. IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR PEOPLE TO REALISE THE PROBLEM; WE MUST TAKE NECESSARY ACTION TO HELP ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM

CO₂ emissions have risen so high that the existing trees and oceans are reaching saturation levels and are unable to absorb the excess.

It's Never Too Late

We cannot create a new world to cater to our greed, so we must either change our lifestyle or face the consequences. Prophet Muhammad said: "Never pollute air and never pollute water."

When God created the world, all was in equilibrium, but the whole equation has now turned upside down.

Now it's time to think deeply and begin changing the way we look at Creation and how we have treated it. Patchwork solutions will fail to address the problems at hand.

I have adopted a lifestyle that is very simple. I am not saying everyone should adopt such a lifestyle, but at least one can try. For example, we can use a small car instead of a big one or if one must have a large car, car pools could be one way of contributing to reduction of pollution. It is not enough for people to realise the problem; we must take the necessary action to help alleviate the problem.

Starry, Starry Nights

In addition to statistics and studies, we get to read alarmist reports on the environment. One such is a media report quoting a scientist who says we have just 12 years to live. I don't know

how accurate the scientist's calculation is, but clearly, time is ticking away. There may be a few more centuries to go, but things are changing so rapidly every day that we cannot afford to lose more time.

I read in an article recently that 95 per cent of the water in our oceans is polluted. How can we survive in such a situation? Soon the day will come when we shall be quoting lines from *The Ancient Mariner*: "Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink."

In my childhood, I remember, the skies were very clear and the stars shone bright; the night sky was completely star-studded. Today, that is not the case — the atmosphere is so heavy with pollution that barely a few stars are visible. To bring back those starry nights, we need to reduce pollution. Moreover, adopting a simpler lifestyle would bring several other benefits that improve quality of life, reduce stress and bring contentment. Small, individual changes can indeed bring big results. ■