

Light Pollution And Its Sharia'h Perspective In The Light Of Quran And Sunnah

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Abstract

There are many words in the Holy Qur'an which are used for light and darkness. Then these words are used for specific meanings in certain places. And the commentators have interpreted them according to the occasion. In the present era, light pollution is becoming a major problem in various forms. In order to overcome this problem, in the light of the above-mentioned words of the Holy Qur'an, their various meanings and justifications, including the practices of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), the Islamic position on this issue and its solution will be examined. This issue is also important because it has not been addressed in the proposed context.

Keywords: Light, Pollution, crime, darkness, day, Night.

Definitions of light pollution:

“Light pollution is the presence of unwanted, inappropriate, or excessive artificial lighting In a descriptive sense.”¹

“when artificial outdoor lighting becomes inefficient, annoying, and unnecessary, it is known as light pollution.”²

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_pollution

Retrieved on: 09-03-2022

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2627884/>

Retrieved on: 09-03-2022

Light pollution is the presence of undesirable, inappropriate, or excessive amounts of artificial light. These effects can be found as a problem at all levels of our societies, affecting every level, from the individual to the community level, from an unwanted flashing light on the consumer product to the community level. As when a new urban development affects existing communities. Through its poorly planned street lighting.

Although light contamination can be present throughout the day, its effects increase at night as opposed to in the dark. About 83% of the world's people live under light polluted skies and 23% of the world's land area is affected by lightning. The area affected by artificial light is constantly increasing. One of the major side effects of urbanization is that light pollution is responsible for compromising health, disrupting the ecosystem, and degrading the aesthetic environment.

Light pollution is otherwise the presence of human artificial light in dark conditions. The term is commonly used for the outdoor environment and the surrounding environment, but it is also used for indoor artificial lighting. The negative consequences are numerous; some of them may not be known yet. Light pollution competes with starlight in the night sky for urban dwellers, interferes with astronomical observatories, and, like any other form of pollution, disrupts the ecosystem and has a negative impact on health.

Light pollution is a side effect of industrial civilization. There are many sources of light pollutions which include: advertising, outdoor lighting, sports places, More populated areas, interior and exterior lighting, street lights, cell phone light, etc.

People began to be aware about the harmfulness of light pollution from second half of the 19th century; efforts started to combat from 1950s and 'International Dark Sky Association' (IDA) was established in 1980s.³

There are many countries which has the world's most light polluted skies including Singapore, Kuwait, Qatar, and UAE, while Africa has the dimmest skies.⁴

Increasing light and crimes

According to different researches it is not necessary that increasing external light prevents crime or accidents. We may feel safe but in fact we are not safe due to this reason and it cost a lot.

Researchers surveyed 62 locations in England and Wales and found that turning off or dimming the lights did not increase crime or accidents.

According to study, if the hazards are carefully considered, local authorities can safely reduce street lighting, saving both cost and energy, without adversely affecting traffic collisions and crime on the roads.⁵

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_pollution

Retrieved on: 09-03-2022

⁴ <https://www.science.org/content/article/nighttime-light-pollution-covers-nearly-80-globe>

Retrieved on: 31-03-2022

⁵ The effect of reduced street lighting on road casualties and crime in England and Wales: controlled interrupted time series analysis,

Rebecca Steinbach,1 Chloe Perkins,2 Lisa Tompson,3 Shane Johnson,3

Having too many lights at night does not mean that they will reduce crime; so many studies tell us that too much light does not reduce crime. Too much of it reduces our safety. However, appropriate lighting should be used at night where it is needed. Most property related crimes are committed in broad daylight, while vandalism and graffiti can be committed at night.⁶

Different meanings of light(نور):

"Light is that which is manifest in itself and manifested, that is, that which manifests itself and reveals to others as well."⁷

"The word "نور" is used for knowledge, faith and righteous deeds."⁸

Allah Almighty says in Holy Quran:

﴿يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا﴾⁹

“The day when the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believe, :Wait for us, so that we may have a share from your light. It will be said (to them) , : Go back to your rear, and search for light.”

Elsewhere in Surah Hadid, Allah Almighty says:

﴿... وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ...﴾¹⁰

“.....And will make for you a light whereby you will walk.....”

From these blessed verses it is clear that word 'نور' refers to the light by which the path can be seen and it is possible to walk on it. However, in the present era, the amount of artificial light has increased to such an extent that it hinders the migration of birds and causes them to go astray, due to which millions of birds get injured or die during these migrations. They are going they get entangled in skyscrapers and communication towers. In North America alone, the number of birds killed in collisions is estimated at between 98 million to one billion annually. The US Fish and

Ben Armstrong,1 Judith Green,4 Chris Grundy,1 Paul Wilkinson,1 Phil Edwards2,
Journal of Epidemiol and Community Health, Volume 69, issue 11,
PP: 1121,1122,1123,July 29, 2015, UK

⁶ <https://www.darksky.org/light-pollution/lighting-crime-and-safety/>

Retrieved on: 09-03-2022

⁷ Thanvi, Ashraf Ali, Molana, Ashraf ul Tafasir, V.3, P: 122, Idara Taleefat E Ashrafia, Multan, Pakistan, 1425ھ

⁸ Raghieb Asfahani, Imam, Mufrada Tul Quran, V. 2, P. 654, Lahore, Pakistan

⁹ Hadid:13

¹⁰ Ibid: 28

Wildlife Service estimates that 5-50 million birds die each year from collisions with communication towers.¹¹

The difference between 'نور' and 'ضياء'

Allah says in surah Younis:

"..هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَ الْقَمَرَ نُورًا"¹²

“He is the One who has made the sun a glow, and the moon a light...”

Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani while explaining the above verse writes:

“According to some, 'Noor' is more common than 'Zia', 'Zia' refers to the special light which is more brighter..... Since the spread of sunlight is high, it is interpreted as 'Zia'.¹³

Occasions for use of bright and dim lights

From the translation and interpretation of the blessed verse it is clear that very bright light is needed during the day and not at night. So Allah created the sun for the day and the moon for the night, and kept the light of the moon dim, cool and low for the night. But when man rebelled against this natural system, he turned night into day, the consequences of which he and other creatures have to suffer.

The meanings of darkness:

"Darkness" means the disappearance of light, its plural is darknesses. ¹⁴

In the Holy Qur'an, the evil deeds of the disbelievers are likened to darkness.¹⁵

Advantages and disadvantages of 'darkness'

Allah says in Surah An'aam:

"قُلْ مَنْ يُنَجِّبِكُمْ مِنْ ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُونَهُ تَضَرُّعًا وَ خُفْيَةً لَئِنْ أَنْجَبْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ"

¹¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2627884/>

Retrieved on: 09-03-2022

¹² Younis:5

¹³ Usmani, Shabbir Ahmad, Molana, Tafweer E Usmani, V. 2, P: 63, Darul Ishaat, Karachi, Pakistan, 2007ھ1428/ء

¹⁴ Raghieb Asfahani, Imam, Mufrada Tul Quran, V. 2, P. 653, Lahore, Pakistan

¹⁵ Al Noor: 40

“Say, :Who is the one who delivers you from the darkness of the land and the sea when you supplicate Him in humility and in low tones (promising): - If He delivers us from this, we shall truly become grateful.”¹⁶

This blessed verse shows that in some cases darkness causes fear or harm and it is necessary to try to remove it. But if it goes in the wrong direction, that is, too much light, it will also be a cause of blame.

Meaning and use of 'نار':

In many places in the Holy Qur'an, the word 'Naar' is used for the fire of Hell and it indicates intense heat and burning ever where. There are many benefits to burning it, including the acquisition of light. That light can be obtained by lighting a lamp or a candle or by lighting a bonfire.

The first form is more common because the cost of lighting a fire is such that it costs money, effort, and waste of fuel. Therefore, in modern times, if modern means of obtaining lights are used improperly, it cannot be justified at all. Table lamps can be said to be a modern form of this old form of lamp or candle but due to ignorance it is not used commonly.

The purposes of creating 'day' and 'night':

The Holy Qur'an reveals the following purposes of day and night birth:

Allah has made the night to rest and the day to work.¹⁷

The night has been made an apparel (and in it) the sleep the cause of rest and the day the cause of getting up again (for work).¹⁸

The day is made to seek the bounty and grace of Allah.¹⁹

The same objectives have been stated in the Holy Qur'an in various other places, which clearly show that artificially turning night into day is not a desirable thing at all. Thousands of years have passed before the revelation of the Holy Qur'an to humanity but these declarations in the Holy Qur'an are telling the purposes of day and night on a clear and everlasting basis. That is, these aims will not change till the Day of Resurrection. And wherever this Qur'anic principle is deviated from, it will be harmful.

Harmfulness of sleep deprivation in humans and animals

¹⁶ Al-An'am:63

¹⁷ Younis: 67

¹⁸ Al-Furqan:47

¹⁹ Al-Qasas: 73

The extent to which sleep deprivation is harmful to both humans and animals can be guessed from the following quote:

"Without enough sleep, humans are susceptible to changes in mood, impaired memory, illness, and even death. These risks are true for many animals as well, such as rats. Rats that are sleep-deprived quickly lose weight and develop infections. After just a few weeks without proper sleep, rats die.²⁰"

Most animals need rest or sleep just like humans.²¹

Use of law of nature about 'day' and 'night'

Therefore, most of the animals, birds, etc. are still using day and night under the law of nature for the same purposes mentioned in the Qur'an, but man rebelled against this law and became a victim of various problems.

Artificially exceeding the natural amount of 'day' and 'night'.

In the Holy Qur'an, the prolongation of day and night has been described as a calamity and man has been asked to tell: If Allah makes you prolong the night or the day till the day of resurrection, then who is besides Allah? Which brings you back to light or night?²²

Now, if a person turns night into day without any reason, it is as if he has taken upon himself the same calamity that is being warned in the Qur'an. That is, it is not a good practice to exceed the natural amount of day or night.

Status of wasteful spending in Islam

Allah says in Holy Quran:

"اَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ"

"Eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant."²³

²⁰ Alexa Fry, The connection between human and animal sleep, Sleep Foundation,

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/animals-and-sleep/connection-between-human-and-animal-sleep#:~:text=Present%20In%20Animals%3F,Do%20animals%20sleep%3F,that%20regulates%20sleep%20and%20wakefulness.>

Retrieved on: 30-03-2022

²¹ Ibid

²² Al-Qasas: 71,72

²³ Al-A'raf: 31

This blessed verse shows that there is no room for wasteful spending in Islam and excessive use of lights will also come under this commandment and will certainly be considered illegal. This order will include all types of lighting waste.

Worships of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at home and cave of ‘Hira’

Even the encouragement to worship in the light is not found in narrations of Muhammad (PBUH), but it is proven that the Prophet (peace be upon him) offered prayers in the dark in his house.²⁴

In the cave of Hira, when Muhammad (PBUH) used to go for worship, there might be no light in that place, but Allah Almighty revealed the first revelation there.

The hadith also encourages one to go to bed early, saying that it is better to avoid using too much light at night and that timely and proper use of daylight reduces the need for light at night.

Conclusion

We may conclude that a closer look at the Holy Qur'an and narrations of Holy Prophet (PBUH) reveals that the use of lights exceedingly can in no way be justified and can be a combination of many defects including light pollution.

²⁴ Bukhari, Bab ul Salat Alal Firash, Hadith No. 382, Maktaba Darul Salam, Riaz,2004