



*Revelation and Science*  
Vol. 06, No. 02 (1438H/2016) 9-23

## An Essay on the Ethics of Islam towards Environmental Resources

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### Abstract

In this paper, we have discussed the Islamic attitudes towards the environmental resources and the importance of its protection and preservation for sustaining life on earth. The paper maintains the view that the today's outcry for environmental crisis is man-made. It is a consequence of humans' irresponsible, irrational and thoughtless development activities for material gains. The environmental problem is so acute and widespread today that it becomes virtually impossible to get rid of. It is now a global concern. The paper stresses that a true believer who realizes and imbeds into his or her behavior or attitudes with the fundamental values of Islam such as- the concept of divine unity, trusteeship or *amanah*, justice and the responsibility as taught by the holy *Qur'an* and the prophetic traditions will be morally and spiritually uplifted which in turn will prepare him/her to use environmental resources rationally and responsibly. Rational and responsible use of environmental resources is a gesture of mans' gratitude to Allah and His commands to ensure respects or honor towards the rights of other creatures which is essential to pave the way to maintain a state of balance in the environmental system. In other words, a true believer will abide by his/her creator to behave as a guardian of the earth, uphold His trust he/she is entrusted and behave not like a predator that can jeopardize the balance in the environment.

**Keyword:** *Morality Environment pollution, natural resources, Islamic worldview, trusteeship, justice, divine unity*

### Abstrak

Perbincangan sikap Islam terhadap sumber-sumber alam sekitar dan kepentingan perlindungan dan pemeliharaan untuk mengekalkan kehidupan di bumi telah dibincangkan dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini mengekalkan pandangan bahawa bantahan hari ini dilakukan untuk krisis alam sekitar merupakan buatan manusia. Ia adalah akibat daripada sifat manusia tidak bertanggungjawab, aktiviti pembangunan yang tidak rasional dan tanpa memikirkan impak dan hanya untuk keuntungan material. Pada hari ini masalah alam sekitar adalah begitu teruk dan meluas yang mengakibatkan ia menjadi hampir mustahil untuk menanganinya. Kini ia adalah satu kebimbangan global. Kajian ini menekankan bahawa seorang mukmin sejati yang menyedari dan menyemai ke dalam diri dan sikapnya dengan nilai-nilai asas Islam seperti konsep kesatuan ilahi, pengamanahan atau amanah, keadilan dan tanggungjawab seperti yang diajar oleh *al-Quran* dan tradisi kenabian akan dipamerkan dari segi moral dan rohani yang seterusnya akan membentuknya untuk menggunakan sumber-sumber alam sekitar secara rasional dan bertanggungjawab. Sifat rasional dan bertanggungjawab terhadap sumber alam sekitar merupakan tanda penghargaan manusia kepada Allah dan perintah-Nya untuk memastikan aspek atau penghormatan terhadap hak-hak makhluk lain juga penting untuk membuka jalan bagi mengekalkan keadaan keseimbangan dalam sistem alam sekitar. Dalam erti kata lain, seorang mukmin yang sebenar akan mematuhi pencipta untuk berkelakuan sebagai seorang penjaga bumi, menegakkan amanah-Nya setelah diberi kepercayaan dan tidak berkelakuan sebagai perosak yang boleh menjejaskan keseimbangan dalam alam sekitar.

**Kata kunci:** *Kerosakan alam sekitar, sumber alam semulajadi, pandangan Islam, keadilan, kesatuan Ilahi*

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### Introduction

The simplest meaning of the term environment is "surroundings". Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (Hornby, 1995) defines environment as, "the natural conditions (e.g. air, water and land) in which human beings, animals and plants live." The nature is further defined as "the whole universe and

every created, not artificial, thing” (Hornby, 1995). According to the Islamic belief, the universe is created by *Allah* (SWT) in which the earth (composed of air, water and land) is just a component of the whole systems. The creation of human beings, this earth and all other natural resources are a clear sign of *Allah*’s power, wisdom (*Hikmah*), majesty, and beneficence. Therefore, to understand environment from Islamic viewpoint, it is of utmost important to understand first the worldview that Islam holds. The foundational concept of worldview is how people view the world, how they interpret the world around us. In other words, it is an overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world. From religious viewpoint in general, worldview is a set of belief system or a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group of people, or a particular society. Worldview, thus, in its comprehensive sense, encompasses the notion of existence or non-existence of the Creator, the origins of the universe and of human life, the sources of morality and values and identifications of what is good or evil; how to live one’s life; the meaning, destiny and purpose of life and of death (Mynga, 2004).

There are many worldviews confronting people in the world today. As far as Islamic worldview is concerned it states that *Allah* is the sole creator of this universe. Human beings are created by *Allah* and sent them down on the earth which is endowed with natural resources for their benefits. Human beings are appointed as the earthly representative (*khalifah*) of *Allah* (s.w.t). The earth with all of its factors is placed in the hands of human beings as an *amanah* or trusteeship of *Allah* and is asked to fulfill their *amanah* in accordance to the Divine guidance. This implies the notion of accountability and responsibility of human beings for their behavior and activities towards other creatures of *Allah* for whose custody they (human) have promised to fulfill in this earth. In other words, it is a manifestation of humans’ relationship to the creatures and *Allah*. This relationship must be maintained in accordance with the Divine injunctions for the sake of attaining eternal peace in life in this world as well as life in the hereafter. The holy *Qur’an* states to this effect:

*“We created not the heavens and the earth and all between them but for just ends, and for a Term Appointed: But those who reject Faith turn away from that whereof they are warned”.* (The *Qur’an*, 46:3)

The Divine injunctions require human beings to take every effort and care to utilize the natural environment in a just way as the whole universe is arranged divinely

in a systematic and perfect manner and has been endowed with natural resources needed for humanity for sustaining their life in this world comfortably. There are more than 750 verses in the holy *Qur’an* that are related to the natural phenomena in general including the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, mountains, trees, waters, the cow, the bee, the ant and so on which are all placed by the careful plan of Divine and with a just purpose and all play their ordained roles. Each segment of the natural ecosystem is highly integrated to other in order to keep a perfect balance. There is no clash or imbalance in the system. The balance in the earth is, in fact, part of the balance of the whole universe in its all aspects. The notion of balance that exists in the environmental system is the most striking and justifiable features of Islamic perception towards the environment as the Holy *Qur’an* states to this effect:

*“And the earth We have spread out, set therein mountains firm and immovable and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance. And We have provided therein means of sustenance for you and for those whose sustenance you are not responsible”* (The *Qur’an*, 15: 19-20)

*“Verily all things We have created in proportion and measure”* (The *Qur’an*, 54:49)

Human beings are placed as the important factors in the whole system and all other segments are made subservient to them. Human beings have been granted privilege over other creatures and are commanded to play their respective role as guardians of the earth and its natural resources not as an absolute owner but as an *amanah* (trustee) from *Allah* and thus can utilize it for their own benefits in a just and proper way so as to fulfill their needs and wants. At the same time advice is given to develop in themselves awareness and understanding about the other creatures of Him as it also forms part of the ultimate trial for human beings in this world for their way to final destination in the hereafter. Therefore, Muslims in their way of life should seek to protect and preserve the natural ecosystem. By doing so they protect and respect *Allah*’s other creatures as well, which to pray and praise *Allah*’s glory as the Holy *Qur’an* states it explicitly:

*“The seven heavens and the earth, And all beings therein, Declare His glory: There is not a thing But celebrates His praise: And yet ye understand not How they declare His Glory! (The Qur’an 17:44, 59:24, 64:1).*

This is in essence, how Islam visualizes the relationship between environment and all its resources as an integrated part of the natural ecosystem which needs to be protected and preserved for sustaining life on earth and also to uphold justice through showing kindness towards other creatures of *Allah*.

The dynamic equilibrium in the relationship between human and the environment today is in a dire threat. This is due to the continuous degradation of environmental quality as a result of excessive and rapacious exploitation of natural resources by humanity towards material pursuits. The humanity has almost forgotten that their existence on earth is heavily dependent on the healthy surroundings they live in. Any corruption or disturbance in the natural balance of the universe is therefore susceptible to human welfare or peaceful living on earth. There are several types of environmental problems that the global community is facing today. Air pollution, water pollution, natural resource depletion and the global warming are of the major concern. Numerous books, articles and reports are available on this subject discussing the sources, effects, intensity of the problem and suggesting different ways through which the problem can be mitigated without jeopardizing sustainability in development efforts. Morgan (1993), Buchholz (1993), Goodstein (1995), and Mycock et al., (1995) are a few of the important books written earlier. There are many international organizations also regularly documenting and publishing reports on the environmental issues. Virtually all the literatures agree that most of the environmental problems are caused by the human development activities towards material affluences. They focused mostly on the development and use of environment friendly technology as a measure to curb the pollutants at the sources. In addition, they have also highlighted some other measures to deal with environmental crisis such as the imposition of ecological tax (called Eco tax), reduction of waste or garbage generation and so on. As far as Islamic perspective is concerned, Al-Faruqi (1992), Deen (1990), Deen (1997), Nasr (1997), Mahmud (1998) are few of the frequently cited studies. The conventional literature mostly stress on material aspects, while the Islamic literature stress on moral or spiritual aspects in dealing with environmental problems. The present paper is significant for contributing to the existence literature in two aspects. Firstly, it has tries to bring into light some examples of current environmental problems that arise largely as a result of humans' irrational and greedy pursuit of material gains and how and to what extent these problems adversely affecting life on earth. Secondly, the paper highlights the importance of four fundamental values of Islam (such as-believing in the

divine unity, *amanah* or trust, justice and responsibility) in enhancing humans' attitude or ethical behavior towards other creatures of Allah (SWT) which in turn can reduce environmental problems. The following section discusses the intensity of the environmental problems in general and the extent it affects the human as well as other creatures lives on earth. This is to highlight the point why protection and conservation of environmental resources is necessary.

### **The Intensity of the Problem**

Environmental pollution generally refers to polluting or dirtying or contaminating the natural resources by discharging substances that are harmful to living things. It occurs at a level when the natural environment becomes unable to dilute or absorb or destroy the pollutant substances or elements brought to it in an unnatural way without inflicting harm or damage to itself. One of the biggest challenges and problems that the human community facing today than ever before is the continuous deterioration of environmental system which has been posing a severe threat to the very existence of all life-forms on the planet. Overloading of toxic/poisonous substances in the air and water, widespread resource depletion and species extinction, global warming, climate change are all causing alarm in many quarters so much so that this has become a trend worldwide. Scientists, economists, philosophers, religious leaders and policy makers all are in debate over the causes and solutions of this environmental crisis.

It is now an established fact that irresponsible and irrational exploitations of natural resources by human beings in pursuit of increasing material gains are the major factors causing disturbance in the natural balance of the universe and more specifically in the earth's balance system. Excessive, irrational and greedy human activities have greatly corrupted the earth's equilibrium. The current state of the planet is in huge imbalance and is filled with pollution. The humanity today is behaving like deadly predators instead of being a steward of the earth; damaging the planet and demolishing its natural resources. In the name of development, humanity is approaching closer to environmental destruction to a point where it could be beyond repair.

The most dangerous form of major environmental problems (air, water and soil pollution; resource depletion, and global warming) is the air pollution problem as it has higher both local and global impact than other types of pollution. This is because poor or polluted air quality directly threatens the existence of humanity with ill health. It is in a sense that to survive, humanity has no other options but to interact with air in every second irrespective of whether the air is

polluted or clean. Constant inhaling of contaminated air can cause respiratory problems including heart problems and develop lung cancer which could lead to death. Air pollution is also associated with acid rain, global warming and ozone depletion. Acid rain has widespread implication of economic loss in terms of damages to forests, aquatic life, buildings and other materials, while global warming and ozone depletion cause severe panic not to a few place or few people, but to the global community as a whole. The resultant effect is believed to lead to global climate change and no one can escape from its effect. Global warming is a gradual increase in the overall temperature of the earth's atmosphere generally attributed to the greenhouse effect caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), and other pollutants. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, more than 95% of the global warming is caused by human (anthropogenic) activities, mainly through increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases. Air pollution including the global warming is the most intimate product of human's daily activities/practices such as transportation, electricity production, industrial process and urbanization (World Bank, 2016) as these activities require burning of huge amounts of fossil fuels (natural gas, oil, peat and coal) which emit pollutants in the atmosphere.

It is well documented that in the earlier stages (1930-1965) of uncontrolled development pursuit, most developed countries including the US, UK, Japan and majority of the western European countries experienced severe air pollution episodes (Mycock, et al., 1995). During these periods, a series of large-scale air pollution disasters occurred in which the most severe and widely quoted episode was the Greater London smog of December 1952 when the city was blanketed with severe air borne muck (sulphur dioxide from burnings of coal) caused an estimated 4,000 excess deaths than the normal for a five day period and much of the deaths were attributed primarily to respiratory diseases.

Human history has witnessed how heedless and greedy pursuit of economic/material gain caused huge loss of lives in the past (Mycock et al. 1995). Air pollution today is blamed to be the major cause of deadly diseases such as lung cancer, stroke, heart disease, skin cancer and chronic bronchitis/asthma. Acid rain, an impact of air pollution, can cause widespread damage to trees, streams, aquatic lives and many other valuable materials like building or historical monuments (Boubel et al. 1994 & Mackenzie, 1989). The damage has been valued in monetary terms as an economic cost to many nations (Goodstein, 1995). A study by Quah & Boon (2003)

estimated that economic cost of particulate air pollution on health in Singapore recorded US\$ 3,662 million which is 4.3% of Singapore Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1999. The per capita economic cost of particulate air pollution on health alone is US\$941. The study concludes that environmental damage must not be ignored in the pursuit of progress. Such environmental caused damages and the inflicted costs are well documented in the literature of environmental economics (Morgan, 1993). According to the recent report of WHO (2016), in 2010, economic cost of premature deaths from air pollution in 34 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was estimated about \$1.7 trillion. In 2012, 3.7 million premature deaths were recorded worldwide out of which 482,000 were due to heart attack, respiratory disease, strokes and lung cancer blamed to cause mainly by dirty air pollutants. Major sources of air pollutants were the transportation (27%) and industrial (52%) sectors. European Environmental Agency (EEA) reported that the total estimated health and environmental costs of air pollution from industrial facilities in Europe from 2008 to 2012 were Euro 329 billion to Euro 1,053 billion in terms of premature deaths, lost work days, hospital cost, damages to agriculture products and so on. The International Energy Agency (IEA) in its World Energy Outlook-2016 reported that air pollution today is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest threats to human deaths causing 6.5 million premature deaths a year globally in which 50% are from India and China alone. Scientists warned that the fatalities due to severe toxic pollutants in the air will continue to rise to cause premature deaths to million more a year by 2040 if drastic actions are not taken to limit the pollutants emission.

While many of the developed countries managed to reduce pollutants particularly after 1965 through spending billions of dollars, a lot of rapidly developing countries started to experience air with excessive poisonous substances in a bid to increase their economic well-being. India, china, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mexico, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Iran are few of the rapidly developing countries where most of the mega cities are considered unsuitable for living as the level of air pollution are found far above the WHO recommended safe level. According to WHO figures on 2,000 cities monitored globally, air pollution has been shown worsening in many countries. Of the worst 100, nearly 70 were in Asia and only a few in Europe or the US. 15 out of the 20 most polluted cities were in India and China, and the others were in Pakistan, Iran and Bangladesh. The pollutant levels in terms of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) which is considered to be the most harmful in that 20 cities ranging from 88 to 153 micrograms per cubic meter

which is far above the WHO safe level of 10 micrograms per cubic meter on annual mean concentration basis. According to World Development Indicator (World Bank, 2016), 99.9% of population living in areas in India and China are exposed to PM2.5 pollutants risk. In other words, less than 1% people live in air quality that is considered safe. On global average, less than 15% of the world population lives within the WHO standard of PM2.5. Of all of the pollutants, fine particulate matter (PM2.5 microgram per cubic meter) is considered to have the greatest effect on human health. It is associated with a broad spectrum of acute and chronic illness, such as lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cardiovascular diseases. Worldwide, it is estimated to cause about 16% of lung cancer deaths, 11% of COPD deaths, and more than 20% of ischemic heart disease and stroke.

With respect to water pollution, it is the contamination of water bodies (e.g. lakes, rivers, oceans, aquifers and groundwater). It occurs when pollutants are directly or indirectly discharged into water bodies without adequate treatment to remove harmful compounds. Water pollution affects plants and organisms living in these bodies of water. In almost all cases the effects cause damage not only to individual species and populations, but also to the natural biological communities.

Water is polluted by both natural as well as man-made activities. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, Tsunamis etc. are known as natural causes that can alter water and contaminate it. It also affects ecosystems that survive under water. Man-made causes are the effluent outfalls from factories, refineries; waste treatment plants etc. that emits fluids of varying quality directly into urban water supplies pollute the water quality. Use of chemicals fertilizers and pesticides in agricultural activities also cause ground water pollution. Apart from that, marine dumping and accidental oil spill also cause water pollution particularly the surface water.

Like air, water also is an indispensable part of life-supporting system. Water is life and it is used in almost every important human chores and processes. It is an important element in both domestic as well as industrial purposes. With about 70% of the earth's cover being water, it is undeniably becomes one of our greatest resources. Despite its immense beneficial uses, the water bodies are seriously infested with wastes ranging from floating plastic bags to chemical wastes. The abuse of lakes, ponds, oceans, rivers, reservoirs etc. can be considered as water pollution.

The most basic effect of water pollution is directly suffered by the organisms and vegetation that depend on or survive in water, including amphibians. On a human level, the effects of consuming contaminated

water can be realized through dysentery, diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid. According to WHO, globally every year, there are an estimated of 3–5 million cholera cases and 100,000–120,000 deaths due to cholera (WHO estimates that only 5–10% of cases are officially reported). According to WHO (2016) figures, some 780 million people (11 percent of the world's population) don't have access to safe drinking water. 15 million children under the age of five die each year because of diseases caused by drinking contaminated water. According to United Nation's Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), more than 3000 children die every day globally due to consumption of contaminated drinking water. On average, 250 million people worldwide succumbed to diseases related to water pollution. The report further estimates that, 3.2 million children under the age of five in developing nations die each year as a result of unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation. It is reported that an estimated 1000 children die every day in India due to drinking of polluted water. Industries particularly leather and chemical industries are the major contributors of water pollution and they are the emerging leading market economies. Urban sewage discharges billion tons of waste into lakes, rivers and oceans each year.

In Southeast Asia particularly in Indonesia, the total economic costs of hazardous air pollution resulting from human activities (e.g., forest fires, open burning, peat fires) in 2015 was estimated to be more than US \$16 billion (World Bank, 2016). This figure is more than double the damage and losses from the 2004 tsunami (which affected provinces in Indonesia and other countries), and equal to about 1.8% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This estimate includes losses to agriculture, forestry, transport, trade, industry, tourism, and other sectors. Some of these costs are direct damage and losses to crops, forests, houses and infrastructure, as well as the cost of responding to the fires. Many of the economic losses result from the disruption of air, land and sea travel due to the haze.

Malaysia has also been experiencing environmental problems in different forms particularly air and water pollution caused by irresponsible and greedy human activities. Frequent occurrence of smog in the name of haze testimonies this. However, haze episodes of 1997 and 2015 were among the worst cases when hundreds of people were reported to have suffered from various health problems particularly from respiratory/asthmatic problem. More recently, the case of bauxite extraction in Kuantan, Pahang, caused severe environmental problem around the areas and affected the health and the sources of livelihood of many people adversely. According to a report appeared in the daily

news portal (Muzliza, 2016a), that uncontrolled bauxite mining spills contaminated the shores and local rivers along Kuantan so much so that hundreds of fishes were found dead, forcing more than 100 fishermen to move further from their usual spot to catch fish. The red bauxite dust caused air to be unhealthy to inhale. The residents also complained of a rise of respiratory complication, coughing, fever and skin rashes (Muzliza, 2016b,c). These irrational and greedy human activities however blessed a few at the cost of discomfort and uneasiness of many around the area. Initially because of material gains, the authorities did not pay much attention, however, due to the severity of the problem, the authority finally was compelled to put suspension on extraction of bauxite until further notice. The natural resources and environmental minister acknowledged the intensity of the problem and gave Agence France Presse (2015) a government report stating the presence of high concentration of hazardous substances (aluminum, arsenic, mercury and manganese) in the water near bauxite mining areas and Kuantan (Agence France Presse).

In Malaysia, the level of fine particulate matter PM<sub>2.5</sub> in the air is also found above the WHO provided guidelines posing threat to health particularly those living near heavy traffic area which has greater chance to develop air pollutants related diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease, strokes and other respiratory complications as these areas concentrate higher pollutants. Industries, power plants, open burning practices and motor vehicles are identified as the main sources of air pollution. Since its independence in 1957, Malaysia placed top priority on economic growth in her development plans. Over the last few decades Malaysia has managed to achieve impressive progress in economic development. However this progress has been accompanied by an increased damage to the environment particularly the air quality. The increased pollutants in the air are attributed to the rising development activities including rapid industrialization, and urbanization, massive infrastructure activities, construction works, and the high degree of energy consumption. Motor vehicles are considered the major cause of air pollution in Malaysia and their contribution is increasing faster with the rapid expansion of motor vehicles fleet. It is reported that as at the end of 2014, 25.1 million motor vehicles were chocking the road as compared to 21.25 million in 2010. According to the Department of Statistics (2015) in Malaysia, the pollutants emitted by motor vehicles alone to the atmosphere in 2010 and 2014 were estimated to be 1.83 million and 2.09 million tons respectively. This constitutes an increase of 14.4% in 2014 from its 2010 level. Total pollutants emitted into

air by industrial, motor vehicles and power plants were estimated 2.56 million tons and 2.94 million tons respectively. Rapid urbanization has also ramification on air quality. Rapid urbanization reflects in increasing urban population migrates from rural areas with a view to look for better income and livelihood. The resulting effect is increased demand for housing and energy which in turn contributes more dust and particles in the air. In 1980, there were 34.2% urban population which increased to 62% in 2010 and 74.7% in 2015 respectively. According to WHO (2016), in 2013, 79.4% of the Malaysian population lives in unsafe air quality which was 66.6% in 1990.

With respect to water pollution, according to the Minister of Natural Resources & Environment in Malaysia (Bernama, 2016a), 43 out of 473 rivers monitored nationwide are polluted and the rest are slightly or not polluted. Waste water plants, industries and commercial premises are the main sources of water pollution. The effects of the water pollution can be realized in different ways through human health, economic costs, ecosystem and deaths of aquatic lives. If properly assessed in monetary terms, the health and economic costs of air pollution and water pollution effect may reveal the real intensity of the problem.

### **Conserving the Environment: A Need for Sustaining of Life**

To protect the environmental resources from destructive activities of mankind and to maintain a sustainable relationship between man and the environment, several measures are already placed into effect. Development and use of environment friendly technologies to filter out pollutant substances at the sources, introduction of Ecological tax (known as Ecotax), and recycling of wastes a few of the examples of important measures to manage environmental resources. In addition, regular campaigning in national as well international levels are also going on to create awareness of the environmental impacts of human activities. Despite such measures, environmental quality on average is still seen deteriorating. The basic reason is that material incentive is gaining more priority than the moral aspect which in turn resulting in disrespect towards the right of other creators. In other words, moral values /awareness which arise from inner part are lacking in the action plan of environmental management strategies. In view of this, it is interesting to observe that many people in the west today are pointing their fingers to integrate religious teachings in understanding and tackling the environmental crisis into perspective. Many people now view this crisis and its magnitude from the moral and spiritual crisis of the human beings rather than merely the result of economic, political and social factors (Tucker & Grim

1998). Suggestions are also advanced to reexamine environmental crisis in light of religious teachings believing the fact that teachings of religion can shape the people's attitudes toward nature in both conscious and subconscious ways. Religion can provide basic interpretations about the existence of the Creator, creation of human beings and other creatures, duties of human beings to other human and their relationship with natures and the final destinations where human beings has to go.

In his grievance in the face of continuous degradation of environment, Thomas Berry (Berry, 1988) remarked that human beings have become autistic in their interaction with the natural world so much so that they are unable to value the life and the beauty of the nature as they are locked to their own egocentric perspective and shortsighted needs to overcome which they need to rethink of the myth of progress and of humanity's role in the evolutionary process. He aptly pointed out that it is necessary for a comprehensive reevaluation of human-earth relations, examination of worldviews and ethics among the world's religions if the human is to continue as a viable species on an increasingly degraded planet. Deen (1997) commented that today, the world is dominated with cultural worldview of materialism, selfishness, and greed which removed the humanity from the recognition of their dependency on nature in such a fashion that they no longer realize who they are as earthlings, and they no longer see the earth as sacred but only as an 'object which is measured by meters and valued by dollars. Deen (1997) further goes on commenting in his concern about the human beings' excessive exploitation of the environmental resources in the process of beautifying their livelihood on the earth, that the Mother earth has been made by humanity as their building plots and high-rise towers climbed to take the virginity of nature.

Deen (1997) stressed that the relationship between humankind and the environment is considered as the part of social existence which is based on the fact that everything on earth is created by *Allah* (SWT) and they all worship the same *Allah*. This worship is a manifestation of actual action which can be practiced by all the creatures of the earth sharing the planet with the human race as 'people or earth communities (*The Qur'an* 6:38) in which human beings are bestowed with ultimate responsibility from their Lord (*Allah*) for safeguarding the welfare of other citizens of this global environment as they are made the most favored (*Asraful makhhlukat*) creation of *Allah*. Animal life, bird life, plant life, water bodies, inanimate objects, and other creations are made subservient to humans for their benefits and not for exploitations. Therefore, the human's duty is to deal with these as a loving and caring friend abiding by the notion of complete

stability and unity in the laws of the universe. It is *Allah* the creator who has the sole power to interfere with or change this system and its laws, which are based on justice. Human beings are just a part of the whole system upon which they are very much dependent for their very existence on this planet. Therefore, they must also operate justly in the share over which they are given power and control with *Allah's* trusteeship and responsibility of looking after the earth for their own cause and not to create violence on it. Working against the natural laws of the universe can result in havoc, calamities and destruction that we may face in the environment and in fact that what we are facing today.

Beside the standpoint of a need for balance in ecosystem as mentioned above, there are many terms appeared in the Holy *Qur'an* which directly and indirectly indicates the need for protection and conservation of environmental resources. The following section of this paper looks into some of the key terms that are closely related to the human treatment of the environmental problems of the contemporary world.

#### **Corruption or Mischief (*fasad*)**

Corruption or mischief is one of the forms of vices that can lead to environmental problem. There are evidences from the *Qur'an* that indirectly prohibit mankind from corrupting the environment or unnecessarily destroying the natural resources. '*Fasad*' is one of the important relevant terms appeared in the Holy *Qur'an* at least 50 times with different connotations such as disorder, mischief, corruption, breach of law (whether natural, moral or social law) and so on. As far as natural environment is concerned the term *fasad* which appeared in the following verses bear significance. Allah (s.w.t.) says:

*"But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief."* (*The Qur'an*, 28:77).

*"Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the need) that the hands of men have earned, that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)".* (*The Qur'an*, 30:41)

*"Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good".* (*The Qur'an* 7:56)

*“When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But Allah loveth not mischief.” (The Qur’an 2:205)*

From the term, *fasad*, cited above in the verses of the holy *Qur’an*, it is obvious that although the *Qur’an* does not mention the word ‘environment’ explicitly *per se* but it does provide clear indication about the significance and the need for maintaining environmental balance on the planet. The *Qur’an* has acknowledged the need of human beings to lead them a comfortable life on the earth and therefore it has encouraged humanity to work hard to earn their livelihood (from the resources bestowed) in a just means and to exploit natural resources carefully so that their action does not create any troubles to other creatures and the indispensable life-sustaining system of the environment in which they are destined to live. In other words, injustice to others in pursuing our own benefit is strictly forbidden. *The Qur’an* reminds the humanity about their power on other creatures as stewardship (*khalifa*) or caretaker. Misuse of such power is corruption/mischief which can disrupt the state of balance in the ecosystem. *The Qur’an* elsewhere warned humanity the severe consequence of such mischief in any forms (*The Qur’an* 7:103). Islam condemns corruption in every form; be it at the personal, social or national level as it disrupts the social environment from its natural state. It includes misusing or abusing the natural elements in the environment; wastage of any kind, be it water, food or wealth. Islam has given clear importance to human life, its relationship with property and wealth of an individual or group and the environment.

The *shari’ah* does not put any strict restriction on human beings in developing their economic lot but it does encourage on the quality of living standard which definitely requires maintaining a healthy environment. For this reason, development of knowledge is important which is persistently urged in Islamic teachings to acquire. However, the necessity of economic progress has its own limits that should not be transgressed at a greater cost. The real objective of human progress or development does not reflect merely in the pursuit of economic progress through accumulation of wealth alone in its material sense but in the improvement of the quality of life of people in all aspects in a sustainable way which requires a greater attention to the preservation and protection of environmental system while running after increasing the economic pie in its true sense.

### **Extravagance/Wastefulness**

Extravagance or wastefulness is another type of evils that contribute to damaging environment. Extravagance (Mir, 1987) or in its Arabic synonym *Israf* or *tabdhir* is used in the holy *Qur’an* which means “to overdo or commit an excess or waste. *The Qur’an* says:

*“...eat and drink, but waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters (The Qur’an, 7:31).*

*“It is He Who produceth gardens, with trellises and without, and dates, and tilth with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety): eat of their fruit in their season, but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loveth not the wasters (The Qur’an 6:141).*

The core messages from the above verses are to utilize the natural resources [Allah’s bounties] necessary to sustain life and refrain from thoughtless, uncontrolled and irresponsible approach to consumption of natural resources. This sort of consumption attitudes inevitably lead to wastefulness and extravagance which are prohibited. Therefore, to maintain balance in the ecosystem and to show respect to Allah, the creator of all the bounties, consumption behavior must be controlled and limited.

In terms of consumption ethics, man is advised to follow moderation (*qasd*) which is neither to be extravagance nor niggardliness. *The Qur’an* says:

*“Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute.” (The Qur’an 17:29).*

*“Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes) (The Qur’an 25:67).*

Moderation is regarded as one of the most important characteristics of Islam. A believer is asked to bear this ethical feature of moderation in all aspects of his life including his use of natural resources. It is probably how Islam views the human nature and the meaning of life. Islam discourages luxurious and lavish living and encourages balanced consumption which in turn reduce the extra pressure on the environmental resources. Luxurious life styles required production of huge amounts of goods which in turn produces unwanted wastage and hence the extra pressure on the earth which normally achieved at the expenses of



others. The existence of luxury consumption is also an expression of social injustice, as few can afford luxurious items at the expense of the deprived masses of people. The pursuit of such luxurious life style may lead to indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources which in turn disrupts natural balances and thus may cause unpredictable havoc in various forms such cyclone, el-Nino, tsunami and so on. The holy *Qur'an* says:

*"When We decide to destroy a population, We (first) send a definite order to those among them who are given the good things of this life and yet transgress; so that the word is proved true against them: then (it is) We destroy them utterly."* (The *Qur'an*, 17:16).

Similarly, the word *Tabdhir* carries the meaning in the sense of "to be extravagant with one's wealth" but probably adds the connotation of wantonness. Therefore, if *israf* is excess, *tabdhir* is sheer and wanton waste. Extravagance or wastage of resources arise out of unjust exploitation of *Allah's* blessings are condemned. Needless and wasteful consumer packaging tends to unnecessarily fill up landfills and in fact mismanagement of such landfills cause a grave threat to the environment. Consumer waste is thus regarded as one of the most destructive causes of pollution today. Such consumption behavior is condemned in the Holy *Qur'an* beautifully as it states:

*"And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer: But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones; and the Evil One is to his Lord (himself) ungrateful"* (The *Qur'an* 17:26-27).

Muslims have been enjoined against all sorts of waste and not to create disorder in the system against their Lord wishes.

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and the rightly guided caliphs were the perfect example of moderation as highlighted in Akhtar (1996). The Prophet (S.A.W) advised his followers to spend within their means, neither to be too lavish as to make themselves destitute nor to hold back their wealth from those who had a claim on their resources. In other word, consumerism is discouraged for its inherent destructive natures. In the today's grave concern about the causes of destruction of environmental system, uncontrolled consumerism is one of them.

It is generally acknowledged that waste generation is influenced by economic development, degree of industrialization and urbanization, public habits and also local climate. The higher the economic development and rate of urbanization, the greater the

amount of solid waste produced. Income level and urbanization are highly correlated and as disposable incomes and living standards increase, consumption of goods and services correspondingly increases, as does the amount of waste generated. Urban residents produce about twice as much waste as their rural counterparts. According to the latest available data of World Bank, in 2012, total 2.6 trillion pounds of wastes were generated globally in which 44% are by OECD countries followed by East Asia Pacific 21%, Latin America 12% and 23% by the rest of the world. Vast majority of the wastes (59%) go to landfills and 13% - 33% are dumped. In terms of food alone, the report highlights that in 2012, American threw out roughly 35 mill tons out of total 130.8 mill tons waste generated. This was 20% more than the year 2000. Approximately, one-third of food (1.3 billion tons) produced globally go waste which is worth RM 4.4 trillion. In Malaysia, according to Department of Statistics (DOS), in 2005, each Malaysian generated 0.8 kg/day waste which increased to 1.1 kg/day in 2012. Overall, Malaysian produce an average of 30,000 tons of waste every day out of which just a few percent (2 – 5%) is recycled and the vast majority of it goes to landfills and dumping which create tremendous land and air pollution problem. The DOS further reported that over the year from 2003 to 2013, the municipal solid waste in Malaysia increased more than 91% in which rapid urbanization is the main cause and the urban dwellers were the largest contributor. It is reported recently (Bernama, 2016b) that out of total waste each day Malaysian produces, 15,000 tons are of food alone out of which 3000 tons still fit for consumption. The food waste however increases by 15 to 20% during festive seasons. Globally when millions of tons of food are wasted (used and unused), according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO-2015, p.8) estimates, some 795 million people of the 7.3 billion people in the world are suffering from inadequate food to lead a healthy active life which is about one in nine people on earth.

### **Cleanliness**

One of the most striking and distinctive characteristics of a Muslims is cleanliness. Its importance is leveled even as one of the fundamentals of belief. Both the holy *Qur'an* and the prophetic *hadith* have highlighted its necessity in human life. There are many verses in the holy *Qur'an* that emphasize on the need of purity or cleanliness in different forms. For example the holy *Qur'an* says:

*"...For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean"* (The *Qur'an* 2:222).

“O ye who believe! when ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body...” (The Qur’an 5:6).

“...And thy garments keep free from stain! And all abomination shun!” (The Qur’an 74:1-5).

In the above verses, the holy Qur’an places great emphasis on the physical aspects of cleanliness such as body and cloths. In the last verse by demanding ‘abomination’ is shunned, The Qur’an underlying the moral and spiritual cleanliness. It is of highly importance to observe here that the first condition of the obligatory prayers (which are the foundation of Islam) is purification or cleanliness. Cleanliness is a form of behavior that is loved and commended by Allah. The principle of cleanliness of the physical and spiritual aspects forms the important essence of Islam. There are many traditions of the prophet that also encourage people to observe cleanliness. In one Hadith, the prophet says:

“Cleanliness/purity is half of faith” (Sahih Muslim, No. 223, Book 2)

Since purification is the precondition of prayers, it is like half of prayer. In another hadith, the Prophet states, among other things that Allah likes are goodness, cleanliness, and generosity. This hadith ends with a request by the Prophet (s.a.w) asking Muslims to clean their courtyards as highlighted by Al-Qaradawi (2013). Although, the Qur’anic verses and the prophetic sayings highlighted above did not explicitly mention the phrase, ‘environmental purity’ in its modern sense, it provides just a principle in its narrower sense but it could fairly be extended to broader cleanliness to encompass the notion from body to common surroundings which may reflect an act of generosity towards the environment resources. Indeed, if cleanliness is something good, then it should be reflected everywhere. Thus, personal cleanliness in particular and the clean environment (air, water and soil) in general in which a person lives are greatly emphasized in Islam for a better and prosperous life.

### Attitudes of Islamic Ethics Towards The Basic Elements of The Environment System

There are three basic elements of the environment such as: water, air and land (includes plants, soil, and other animals and species). These are the elements which in turn form the basic requirements for living beings survival on the planet. This means all factors of the universe are interdependent. There are numerous

verses scattered all over the holy Qur’an which refer to these Divine gifts for survival of the earth’s community. Islamic positions towards the basic elements (Roquib, 1992) of the environment are precisely discussed as below:

### Water

Water occupies high regards in Islam. The Arabic word ‘maa’ (water) is used in the Qur’an about 60 times to mean different uses of it. Water is introduced in the holy Qur’an as the origin and source of life. The Qur’an says:

“...And we made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” (The Qur’an, 21:30).

“And Allah has created every animal from water: of them there are some that creep on their bellies; some that walk on two legs; and some that walk on four” (The Qur’an 24:45).

“It is He Who has created man from water” (The Qur’an, 25: 54).

Plants, animals, and man all depend on water for their existence and for the continuation of their lives in one way or other. The Qur’an indicates the vital role of water for sustaining life on the planet and its need to produce goods. The Qur’an says:

“...And We send down pure water from the sky” (The Qur’an, 25:48).

“And we sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith Fruits for your sustenance” (The Qur’an, 2:22)

Sustaining healthy life requires clean water without which hazard may cause to all life on the planet and in the waters. Water pollution causes dangerous threat to human life, marine bodies, trees and vegetations. As such, the preservation of clean water for the use of mankind, animal life, birdlife, and vegetation is an important form of worship which gains the pleasure of Allah the Exalted. One of the important objectives (maqasid) of shari’ah is to protect life. Pollution of water by throwing excessive pollutants into the waterways or to the ocean by any means be it from industry, factory, sewerage or marine dumping that may cause troubles for sustaining life is forbidden and condemned in Islam.

### Air or Atmosphere

Air is another life supporting elements of the environment system. To stay healthy every living being, be it human, plant, animal or any other species needs fresh or pure air. As far as human body is

concerned, it must constantly get supply of fresh air into blood for normal circulation. The daily average intake of a person is at least 35 lbs. of air, which is six times as much as the food and drink normally consumed by him in the same period. It is scientifically and medically proven that excessive impurities in the air pose great threat to living as well as non-living things in various ways. Nearly all terrestrial creatures are utterly dependent on the air they breathe. The air also has other functions which may be less apparent to man but which Allah (swt) has created for definite purposes, as we have been made aware of by the Glorious *Qur'an*-such as the vitally important role of the winds for example in pollination and others. The holy *Qur'an* says:

*"And we send the fecundating(fertilizing) winds, then cause the rain to descend from the sky, therewith providing you with water (in abundance), though ye are not the guardians of its stores. "* (Qur'an 15:22).

*"And it is He Who send the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy, and We send down pure water from the sky,"* (The Qur'an 25:48).

*"And He it is Who sends the winds as tidings heralding His grace: until when they have raised a heavy-laden cloud (with rain), We drive it to a dead land and cause the rain to descend upon it, and thereby bring forth fruits of every kind...."* (Qur'an 7:57).

Air is the property of Allah the Exalted. If it was held from us for a few minutes, we would suffocate. Hence, contaminating the air with excessive pollutants in the form of gases, smoke or particles is a clear encroachment on natural bounties, and poses a great threat to the life of mankind and all other living things (including trees, vegetations and fishes) which is tantamount to injustice. Causing harms to others in any form is prohibited in Islam.

### Land or Earth

Like air and water, the land or earth is essential for the perpetuation of our lives and the lives of other creatures. The appearance of the word earth some 485 times in the holy *Qur'an* as a whole indicates its significance. It is portrayed as being offered for man's convenience as Allah declares in the *Qur'an*:

*"It is He Who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures."* (The Qur'an 55:10).

*"And Allah has made the earth for you as a carpet (spread out), that ye may go about therein, in spacious roads.'" (The Qur'an 71:19-20).*

Allah has appointed us the vicegerent on this earth and made the land a source of sustenance and livelihood for us and other living creatures as the Glorious *Qur'an* states it to this effect in the following verses:

*"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."* (The Qur'an 7: 10).

*"Have We not made the earth (as a place) to draw together. The living and the dead. And made therein mountains standing firm, lofty (in stature); and provided for you sweet water (and wholesome)?to drink."* (The Qur'an 77:25-27).

*"And the earth, moreover, hath He extended (to a wide expanse); He draweth out therefrom its moisture (water) and its pasture; And the mountains hath He firmly fixed; For use and convenience to you and your cattle"* (The Qur'an 79:30-33).

*"And the earth We have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance. And We have provided therein means of subsistence for you and for those for whose [moving (living) creatures, cattle, beasts, and other animals] sustenance ye are not responsible"* (The Qur'an 15:19-20).

*"A Sign for them is the earth that is dead: We do give it life, and produce grain therefrom, of which ye do eat. And We produce therein orchard with date-palms and vines, and We cause springs to gush forth therein"* (The Qur'an 36: 33-35).

Therefore, as a trustee or the one who hold the *amanah* of this earth, it is of our utmost responsibility to utilize the land or earth carefully so as to maintain it as the source of sustenance and livelihood. In the process of development activities such as constructions, farming, grazing, forestry and mining, we must avoid any practices that may cause its degradation and pollution of the soil by excessive use of fertilizers or poisonous chemicals that are detrimental to health. Causing the degradation of the gift of Allah, upon which so many forms of life depend, is to deny His tremendous favors. Any act that leads to earth's destruction or degradation leads necessarily to the destruction and degradation of life on earth which contravenes the *shari'ah* maqasid of protecting life as well. We are held responsible for treating the earth with due respect as a place of worship, and keeping it pure

and undefiled. Land must not be used as a free commodity for unjust exploitation but with proper care for the sake of our own long term benefits.

### Trees and Animals

Trees and animals as living resources are of enormous benefit for preserving environment. These beings including others are made partners of human beings in existence on this earth. Without the existence of trees and animals neither man nor other species could survive in the earth. Allah (swt) has not made any of His creatures worthless. By virtue of their unique function of producing food from the energy of the sun, trees constitute the basic source of sustenance for animal and human lives on earth. Trees also enrich the soil and protect it from erosion by wind and water. Trees moderate the climate by absorbing greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide, and produce the oxygen which we breathe. Trees are also of immense value as medicines, oils, perfumes, waxes, fibers, timber, and fuel. Probably because of these, the word "tree" is mentioned 27 times in the holy *Qur'an* so as to grow awareness of the importance of their existence in the ecological system.

Animals in turn provide sustenance for trees, for one another, and for man. Their dung and their bodies enrich the soil and the seas. They contribute to the atmosphere by respiration and by their movements and migrations contribute to the distribution of plants. They provide food for one another and provide mankind with leather, hair and wool, medicines and perfumes, and means of conveyance, as well as meat, milk, and honey. Animals are given prominent places in the *Qur'an*. They are the key members of the eco-system. A number of Surah's in the holy *Qur'an* bear animals' names such as-al-Baqara (the Cow); al-Nahl (the Bee); al-Anqabut (The Spider); al-Naml (The Ant); al-An'am (The Cattle) and so on. One of the striking expressions uses in the *Qur'an* about the animal is that they are a "community". Allah considers them living societies exactly like mankind as the Glorious *Qur'an* says:

*"There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you" (The Qur'an 6:38).*

There are numerous hadith in which the Prophet (s.a.w) gave due importance of protecting and caring of other creatures as important resources of the environment. For example, it is narrated by Abdullah bin Amr el-Aas that the Apostle of Allah said:

*"Allah will have mercy on them that are merciful. Show compassion to those on earth, and He Who is in heaven will show compassion to you." (Abu Daud and Tirmizi).*

Abu-Hurayrah (r.a) narrated that the Prophet (s.a.w), when asked by the people, O Messenger of Allah, is there a reward in doing good to animals? He replied:

*"There is a reward in doing good to every beast alive as charity." (Al-Bukhari, Hadith No: 322).*

The Hadith concluded that a good deed done to a beast is as good as doing good to a human being; while an act of cruelty to a beast is as bad as an act of cruelty to human beings and that: 'Kindness to animals was promised by rewards in Life Hereafter.'

The importance of planting trees could be further realized from the Hadith as narrated by Anas (r.a) that the Prophet (s.a.w) declared:

*"If any Muslim plants a tree (under which people seek shade or shelter from the sun) or sows a field, and a human, bird or animal eats from it, it shall be reckoned as charity from him." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).*

Islam prohibits cutting or destructing trees and plants that provide valuable shelter to humans or animals, and encouraged people to protect and increase plants for the great reward associated with that as acts of worshipping Allah. The Prophet (s.a.w) said:

*"He who cuts a lote-tree (without justification), God will send him to Hellfire". (Al-Tirmidhi, no. 5239).*

The underlying aim of this prohibition could well be understood as prevention of the destruction of valuable habitat that forms part of the healthy environment. The essence follows from the above Hadith is that the cutting down of trees without strong and legitimate reasons (Justification) is a violation of the bounties of Allah, and encroaching on the beauty of the environment which Allah has created for our good life. With regards to planting of trees, the most impressive Hadith is:

*"If you have a sapling, if you have the time, be certain to plant it, even if Doomsday starts to break forth."*

In fact it is quite astonishing that even in the situation of the end of the world; the Prophet (s.a.w) recommends planting of trees which clearly manifests Islam's attitudes and awareness towards preserving environment as due respect and responsibilities to other creatures.

Islam emphasizes all measures for the survival and perpetuation of all other creatures so that they can fully perform the functions they are assigned to for the good of mankind and all other creatures in balanced manner.

### Islam's teaching: promotes preservation or corruption of the environment?

The attitudes of Islam towards environmental resources are basically erected on four principles which are: Unity of *Allah*, guardianship or *amanah*, justice and responsibility. The attitude or behavior of a true believer must be shaped with these fundamental values as taught by the holy *Qur'an*. Believing in the unity of *Allah* is to bear the testimony that there is no God but *Allah*. It means surrendering oneself completely to the will and commandments of *Allah*, acknowledging and accepting wholeheartedly that *Allah* (swt) is the sole creator of this universe. He has created everything for the service of mankind. Everything in the creation is assigned as a trust (*amanah*) to man from *Allah* (swt) as His vicegerent (*khalifah*) on earth. *Amanah* defines man's rights and responsibilities in relation to all the other humans and his environment and the rest of God's creation. *Allah* (swt) has given us everything as a trust and asked to manage them properly according to the laws and rules revealed by *Allah* (swt). The question will be asked in the Day of Judgment whether the bounties given to us were managed properly or not. The *Qur'an* says:

*"Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the bounties"* (The *Qur'an* 102:8).

*Amanah* or trust and *Iman* or faith originate from the same *arabic* root which encompasses trust, faithfulness, responsibility, honesty, integrity and so on. *Amanah* binds individuals with society which in turn requires the establishment of justice in the society. The term *amanah* appears six times in the holy *Qur'an* in which the *Qur'an* declares twice that believers are "truthful to their trusts (*amanah*) and to their pledges" (The *Qur'an* 23:8 and 70:32). It is regarded by the prophet (s.a.w) as a sign of Faith while breaching it is hypocrisy. Thus *amanah* clearly prepares believers morally and spiritually to be serious, responsible and accountable to him/herself as well as to the others.

*Allah* has designed and placed everything therein in beautiful and balanced way. *Allah* says:

*"Or, Who has made the earth firm to live in; made rivers in its midst; set thereon mountains immovable; and made a separating bar between the two bodies of flowing water? (can there be another) god besides Allah? Nay, most of them know not"* (The *Qur'an* 27:61).

*"The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed; And the herbs and the trees - both (alike) prostrate in adoration. And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice), In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance"* (The *Qur'an* 55:5-8).

*"Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order"* (The *Qur'an* 7:56).

All the resources created are given for human utilization as a steward (*Amanah*) in this earth as the *Qur'an* declares:

*"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."* (The *Qur'an* 2:29).

*"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth."* (The *Qur'an* 45:13).

Humans are asked to utilize the resources with utmost care for their own benefit and warned not to transgress the limit so that it may disturb the state of equilibrium of the whole system and cause harm or injustice to others. Islam treats the environment as the bounties of *Allah* for all humanity and creation of corruption or misuse of it is termed as wicked which *Allah* does not like. As such, a true believer who recognizes *Allah* as the sole creator and his position of guardianship on this earth as to establish *Allah's* law and administer justice, he will never tend to behave irrationally and selfishly. If he recognizes *Allah* as the supreme power and pay heed to His messages that he is invested with special status and responsibility as a trustee on this earth in which 'nature' is placed as a divine trust, he will use natural resources in a responsible way. In other words, he will not follow consumption-driven life style but the moderation in all aspects of his life a decent way of life style advocated in the holy *Qur'an*. He will not violate the limits or disrespects the rights of other creatures; he will respect or honor the balance in utilizing the bounties of *Allah*. In short, if we surrender ourselves to the divine unity, recognize our role as a trustee, show fair justice and our responsibilities towards other creatures as a divine trust; we will be the promoter of environmental resources and not the corrupters.

### Concluding Remarks

Islam neither merely a name of religion nor provides just a book containing a set of religious sermons. It is a divinely guided system that provides necessary principles for a comprehensive life that encompasses all aspects of knowledge be it social, economic, scientific, aeronautical or political. *Qur'an* and *Hadith* are the two prime sources that contain directly or indirectly principles related to all branches of knowledge. Human beings are urged to extract the

knowledge from the sources and make proper use of it for the management of the earth's affairs that may lead to better and comfortable life. However, caution is being placed against indulging in any activities that may cause disruption in the natures' balance system while exploiting the bounties of *Allah* (swt) in the process of making the livelihood better. Causing irresponsible damage to natural system is not only destroying amenities in healthy living environment but it is posing a serious threat to the existence of life on the earth which is clearly against the basic objectives of *Shari'ah*.

Islamic teaching encourages human beings to improve their economic wellbeing through utilization of natural resources but at the same time it also discourages strongly not to cause excessive damage to the resources which may jeopardize the basic objective of overall human development. Islamic principle in using the resources, did not put any restriction or raise any objection as it is clearly given for human's benefit but what Islam requires is that to make use of it with the sense of good cares, trusteeship, responsibility and justice so that human action does not bring their own destruction by transgressing the balance of the natural system as architected perfectly by *Allah* (swt). Trade-off exercise is needed to have a balance between economic progress and sound environmental policy, a sustainable development approach that is an urgent demand from all quarters around the world today. Islamic attitude towards the treatment of environment is thus a reflection of upholding justice and fairness as all the elements that form the environment is not created without purpose and meaninglessly but all play a vital and supporting role to each other in one or other way to keep the system in balance. In fact, they have been created for man as their essential partners in existence on the earth, and as such they deserve to be treated fairly. Human beings are appointed as the stewardship of the earth and hence the duty and responsibility to protect and manage the earth's affairs are basically on human beings. In other words, by protecting and preserving the environmental elements human beings fulfill their obligation of trusteeship (*amanah*) of *Allah* the burden of which no other creatures was ready to accept except the human beings which is spelled out in the Holy *Qur'an*:

*"We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; He was indeed unjust and foolish."* (*The Qur'an* 33: 72).

By protecting and preserving balance in ecosystem human beings can keep themselves away from being endangered and can uphold the relationship with the

rest of the creatures through upholding the concept of justice (*adl*) and kindness (*ihsan*) over material or economic gains as *Allah* says:

*"Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin."* (*The Qur'an* 16:90).

Above all, the Holy *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the prophet (s.a.w) motivate men of understanding and intellect to benefit from the vast wealth of natures and not to waste or misuse the natural gifts in any way; since man is the supreme creation of *Allah* in the earth and all the rest of creation is for the service of humanity. As opposed to the conventional concept of success that lies in maximizing of self-material benefits or gains; Islamic ethics stresses on maximizing spiritual heights through complete submission to *Allah* in order to achieve success in this world and in the hereafter. For any deviation of humankind's submission including stewardship of the earth gifted as a privilege is tantamount to betraying with *Allah's* command of upholding justice and responsibility towards the earth's community. The humanity will have to bear the cost of resulting effect and be held accountable and answerable to Almighty *Allah* (swt) in the Day of Judgment.

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#### Article History

Received: 30-06-2016

Accepted: 9-12-2016