

Qur'ānic Discourse on Addressing Environmental Degradation

by

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ABSTRACT

Environmental degradation is one of most urgent environmental issues that need to be addressed for it increases the vulnerability of the societies it affects and contributes to the scarcity of resources. The researchers believe that technological solutions alone that we name as environmental friendly technologies, and that are extremely important, do not address the root causes of underlying political, social, and economic factors of environmental degradation. There is a need to perceive this matter from a holistic world view and reflect on the Divine guidance that provides solutions for mankind's problem. As for Islamic literature, the Qur'ān is of much reliable resource to derive principles on how to abate and control environmental degradation successfully. The discourse will focus on the following sub-headings: Allah as *al-Khāliq* (Creator/Originator), *Rab* (Sustainer), and *al-Muḥīṭ* (Encompasses all things), and Harmonious Relationship of Man with Nature.

Keywords: Environment, Degradation, Qur'ānic perspective, Man and Nature.

Naturally, our physical environment changes from time to time. Along with this state, the inhabitants have ability to adapt to these changes. However, tolerance range of all creatures is not the same and exposure to environmental conditions at the limit of a certain organism's tolerance range can cause environmental pressure. In the past, environmental impact of human activities was small enough for the natural environment to recover and regenerate on its own. However, after the World War II, the environmental impact has grown rapidly and steadily to a point where our socio-economic activities have far exceeded the regenerative capacities of Earth's ecosystem. This trend has caused worldwide environmental degradation (Anjaneyulu Y, 2004, vii).

Hughes reviews that human exploitation of the natural world increased on an unprecedented scale in the period between the last decade of the nineteenth century and the 1960s. He observes that deforestation was the most visible human activities that gave major impacts on earth's ecosystem. Among the six continents of the globe, Americas and Australia had experienced the highest percentage losses of deforestation, as greatly as Asia lost the largest extent of its forests. This phenomenon has caused a serious declined of biodiversity in the forest which is one of the main issues in environmental degradation (Hughes 2001, 141-143).

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Environmental degradation is a noun that refers to a reduction in the quality of environment, for instance, air pollution is one kind of degradation of clean air. According to Nicholson environmental degradation as a concept is associated to the ecological concept of “carrying capacity.” Carrying capacity is the ability of an environment to sustain the resource demands of a species or a community without losing its ability to regenerate the resource. Degradation usually means that carrying capacity is reduced by some natural or human phenomenon (Nicholson <jrscience.wcp.muohio.edu/downloads/Lecture_9-11-02.doc>). The researchers prefer to cite a comprehensive connotation of environmental degradation from the United Nations Statistics Division, which reads, “environmental degradation is the deterioration in environmental quality from ambient concentrations of pollutants and other activities and processes such as improper land use and natural disaster”. In other words, environmental degradation refers to pollution which means concentration of things or energy at a wrong place, at a wrong time, and in a wrong quantity.

The other kinds of environmental degradation are rapid depletion of fresh water, fertile soil, and biodiversity, pollution of land, water, and atmosphere; and in ruthless deforestation and overfishing. These problems of environmental degradation have undermined the global food security, increased health risks, and are responsible for current and future economic loss. Environmental risks factors are also seriously affecting human health include unsafe water, the lack of sanitation, hunger, urban air pollution, and exposure to toxic chemicals (Nielson 2006). These serious threats have triggered scores of responses from the world religions to have discourse on developing framework and action plan to resolve this matter accordingly. As for Islam, it has clear paradigm and vision concerning environmental issues whatsoever. From an Islamic point of view, knowledge and perception of the nature should be grasped far beyond the physical observation. Islam raises humankind to seek knowledge about the creations and Creator of this universe from the very beginning of the first revelation (*Sūrah al-‘Alaq* (96): 1-5) to the Prophet Muhammad *s.a.w.* The Prophet *s.a.w* encourages us to contemplate on the creations of nature in addition of reflecting to the meanings of *āyāt al-kawniyyah* in the Qur’ān. Indeed, they represent significant wisdom and ‘signs’ to know and realize the Ultimate Truth of the One and only God.

Pertaining to the rise of environmental degradation problems, it is vital to reflect on the Divine guidance that provides solutions for mankind’s problem whatsoever. For this purpose, the researchers will explore the Qur’ānic perspective on environmental themes and illustrate the following sub-headings: Allah as *al-Khāliq* (Creator/Originator), *Rab* (Sustainer), and *al-Muḥīṭ* (Encompasses all things), and Harmonious Relationship of Man with Nature.

Allah as *al-Khāliq* (Creator/Originator), *Rab* (Sustainer), and *al-Muḥīṭ* (Encompasses all things)

The Islamic understanding of environmental concern indeed has its roots in the Qur’ān. Although there is no specific word or *āyah* in the Qur’ān that directly refers to the terminological usage of environment in its modern connotation, it repeatedly deals with various dimensions of the universe, as Allah (*s.w.t*) says:

- (1) “Say: Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things.” (*Sūrah al-‘Ankabūt*, 29: 20)
- (2) “Then let man look at his food (and how We provide it). For that We pour forth water in abundance, and We split the Earth in fragments, and produce there in corns, and grapes and nutritious plants, and olives and dates, and enclosed gardens, dense with lofty trees, and fruits and fodder, for use and convenience to you and your cattle.” (*Sūrah ‘Abasa*, 80: 24-32)
- (3) “But to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: And He it is that Encompasseth all things.” (*Sūrah al-Nisā’* 4: 126)

The above Qur’ānic *āyāt* present a holistic worldview of environmental concern that based on a sound *tawhidic* principle. People are invited to reflect on the signs of Allah around them. Davud Ayduz affirms that there is no holy scripture which illustrates to man his surroundings, nature, and the universe as a whole, as much as the Qur’ān does. The Qur’ān has, time and again, mentioned how and why the universe was created, and a wide range of other general facts about beings as well. It seems that due to such verses in the Qur’ān, ecological consciousness makes its way into Muslim scholars’ minds right from the very beginning of the Qur’ān’s revelation itself. The Prophet *s.a.w* who interpreted the Qur’ān from all angles enjoins upon his followers to be sensitive to the environmental conditions. He has invited man throughout his sayings and deeds to respect, protect, conserve and care for plants and animals, earth, water, fire, and air. This has proven him to be a pioneer of environmentalism that advocates environmental protection, conservation, resource management and sustainable use.

The Qur’ān employs the perfect order of the universe not only as the proof of God’s existence but also His unity, which is known as the “cosmological evidence of God’s existence” in the philosophy of Islamic theology (Ozdemir, <[http://www.nur.org/en/islam/nurlibrary/An Islamic Perspective of Environmenta](http://www.nur.org/en/islam/nurlibrary/An%20Islamic%20Perspective%20of%20Environmenta%20I%20Ethics%20469)
l Ethics 469). From the Qur’ānic narrations of the Prophet Ibrahim *a.s* deed, who was constantly contemplating on environmental components such as the sun, the moon, and the stars, in order to seek the Ultimate Truth of the One and only God, we may derive lesson that everything in nature is a ‘sign’ (*āyah*) of God. Allah *s.w.t* relates this event in the Qur’ān, “So also did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might have certitude. When the night covered him over, he saw a star: he said: “This is my Lord.” But when it set, he said: “I love not those that set.” When he saw the moon rising in splendour, He said: “his is my Lord.” but when the moon set he said: “Unless my Lord guide me I shall surely be among those who go astray When he saw the sun rising in (splendour) he said: “This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all).” But when the sun set he said: “O my people! I am free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah. “For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, toward Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah.” Indeed, natural phenomena are Divine inspiration that at all times calls upon mankind to read and observe the perpetual change of the winds, the alteration of the day and night, the clouds, the starry heavens and the planets swimming through infinite space. Allah *s.w.t* says in the Qur’ān, “Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He

gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth (here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise.” (*Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2):65). Therefore, studying nature is an important way of studying God wisdom in creating this universe.

It is evident that the Qur’ān highlights man as the central theme of God’s creation. The Qur’ān clearly reveals in the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad *s.a.w* that Allah *s.w.t* is the Creator who creates and sustains humans’ life. Allah *s.w.t* says, “Proclaim! (or Read) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created (*khalaqa*). Created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood” (*Sūrah al-‘Alaq* (96): 1-2). This *āyah* highlights the Qur’ānic worldview that manifesting God’s supremacy to create human being from a leech like clot (*‘alaqa*). Although this *āyah* simply gives short description of human’s creation, it has predominantly emphasized the *tawhidic* concept on understanding man’s origin. It also implies that man is the central theme and an honoured (*Sūrah al-Isrā’*(17): 70) creature among God’s creation. This can be identified when Allah *s.w.t* pronounces that man has capability to read, i.e. to acquire knowledge. According to Zein and his co-authors, even though man is God’s best creations, man has weaknesses as well, like desires, passions, and potential to go astray when he gets manipulated and tempted by the *satan*. This temptation is the root cause of corruption on earth (Zein 2008).

The Qur’ān enlightens its paradigm on human nature by illustrating the story of Adam *a.s* as the origin of man’s creation. Allah *s.w.t* expressed His will to the angels about creating a human being who would be the best of all His creatures and assigned him the role as *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on the earth. The Qur’ān also illustrates that man by nature is a believer of God (Muslim) who submits himself to the Wills of Allah *s.w.t*. From the time of his existence, man knows his Lord and testifies that Allah *s.w.t* is the Almighty God that creates him, nevertheless he becomes negligence, ignorant and forget this very first covenant between him and his God. Indeed, this trait of forgetfulness might cause man to be disobedient and inclined to do injustice (*zulm*). Allah *s.w.t* says in the Qur’ān, “When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): “Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?”- They said: “Yea! We do testify!” (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: “Of this we were never mindful.” (*Sūrah al-A ‘Rāf* (7): 172).

Indeed, it is not difficult to grasp the emphasis that the Qur’ān gives to nature in order to prove the existence of Allah *s.w.t* and His majesty. The Qur’ān invites the pagan Arabs, firstly, to have an idea about God’s existence and His presence through whatever He creates; and secondly, to have a moral feeling of obligation towards a transcendental being, God. For example, Allah *s.w.t* says in the Qur’an, “Do they not look at the camels, how they are made? And at the sky, how it is raised high? And at the mountains how they are fixed firm? And at the earth, how it is spread out?” (*Sūrah al-Ghāsyiah* (88): 17-19) In this verse, the Qur’ān speaks repeatedly of grazing livestock like camel rather than other animals that might exist in other areas. The reason is that the Qur’ān wants to attract the attention of the addressed people to the animals that present in their daily surrounding in order to make use of them, and be grateful to the bounties of Allah *s.w.t*. In short, Islam teaches man to view Allah *s.w.t* as the One and only Creator and possessor of nature and universe at large. Allah

s.w.t proclaims this statement in the first line of the first verse in the Qur’ān, “Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds” (*Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* (1): 2) and the last verse (*Sūrah al-Nās* (114): 1-3), “Say: I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of Mankind, The King (or Ruler) of Mankind, The God (or judge) of Mankind.”

The *tawhidic* approach of Islam entails that everything that exists between the earth and the skies are creations of Allah, “To Allah belongs the East and the West; whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah’s countenance. For Allah is All-Embracing All-Knowing”. (*Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2): 115) Allah is the Creator (*Khāliq*) and Sustainer (*Rab*) and all others are creations (*makhlūq*). God also describes Himself as *al-Muḥīṭ*, Who encompasses everything and knows all that happens in this universe, big or small, apparent or hidden as the Qur’ān states, “But to God belongs all things in the heavens and on the earth, And He it is who encompasseth (*al-Muḥīṭ*) all things.” Indeed! It is He that doth encompass all things!” (*Sūrah al-Nisā*’ (4): 126) According to al-Ṭabarī, the term *al-Muḥīṭ* in *Sūrah al-Nisā*’, 126, describes God’s attribute of knowing or fully aware of every single good thing or bad deed that His servants do, which is all of them is not hiding from His knowledge by any means (Al-Ṭabarī 2001, vol.5, 346). Al-Zuḥaylī explains that, “this *āyah* connotes the meaning that Allah *s.w.t* is the Creator Who possesses the whole universe and all its creations (Al-Zuḥaylī 2003, vol.5, 289). The authors of Tafsīr al-Jalālayn describe the previous Qur’ānic *āyah* (*Sūrah al-Nisā*’:126) means, “To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth, as possessions, creatures and servants; and God is ever the Encompasser of all things, in knowledge and power, that is, He is ever possessed of such attributes.” (Al-Suyūṭī & Al-Maḥallī, 2007). Sayyid Quṭb as well associates the meaning of “He encompasses everything” (*muḥīṭ*), with His knowledge and power. He argues that for man who realizes that “everything belongs to Him, subject to His power and under His watchful eye”, will have a strong motivation to acknowledge Allah *s.w.t* as the only God in the universe and submits to His ruling faithfully (Quṭb, 2001, vol.3, 271).

For Seyyed Hossein Nasr the meaning of *al-Muḥīṭ* is described as follows, “Allah *s.w.t* Himself is the Ultimate environment which surrounds and encompasses man.” He clarifies that, “man is immersed in the Divine *Muḥīṭ* and is only unaware of it because of his own forgetfulness and negligence (*ghaflah*) and the presence of natural environment as an ambience permeated by the Divine Presence of that Reality which alone is the ultimate “Environment”.” To him, seeing God everywhere and being fully aware of the divine environment that surrounds and permeates both the world of nature and ambience of humanity strengthens humankind’s moral dimension and motivate them to act accordingly with a strong sense of moral responsibility. He affirms that “to remember God as *al-Muḥīṭ* is to remain aware of the sacred quality of nature, the reality of natural phenomena as signs (*āyāt*) of God”(Nasr 1997).

Harmonious Relationship of Man with Nature

The researchers believe that part of the solutions to address environmental degradation issues is to establish harmonious relationship between man and nature. In order to understand this connection, the researchers will highlight some significant impacts of environmental degradation posed by the human population. One of the phenomena that has become more accelerating in recent decade is the issue of immigrants and refugees who are forced to flee their home country or region as a result of war, civil strife, and environmental degradation.

The United Nations estimates the number of refugees who flee to escape poor environmental conditions at 25 million per year and possibly many more. For example, in the 1990s, the millions of refugees who fled Rwanda following the genocide there inadvertently destroyed large areas of forest while trying to obtain fuel wood, food, and shelter to stay alive once they reached the Democratic Republic of Congo. The movement of refugees often causes environmental problems in the receiving region as these desperate victims try to eke out an existence with no livelihood and with no cultural or economic attachment to the land or incentive to conserve its resources (Withgott & Brennan 2008).

Another instance of human factor that has been considered to cause threat on environment is the rapid growth of human population. At this time, 7 billion people live on this earth. Population growth in developing countries is leading the global population figure. Most of the growth is occurring in poverty-stricken developing nations that are less equipped to deal with it. At present, while China works to slow its population growth, India on the other hand is on course to exceed China as the world's most populous nation (Withgott & Brennan 2008). Anjaneyulu mentions the key factors that contribute to the problems of environmental degradation in developing countries are over population, poverty, and pollution. The rich developed countries on the contrary have a small population with high rates of per capita resource use which resulting environmental degradation through high levels of pollution and resource depletion (Anjaneyulu Y 2004). Kandula claims that United States of America which has only a third of India's population has a far greater impact on environment due to the affluent lifestyles of people. Though they are not many in number, they consume considerable resources and produce considerable pollution and waste. United States of America for example, uses about 25 per cent of the world's processed mineral. (Chokkar et al. 2004)

Paul Ehrlich and John Holdren, a professor of environmental policy at Harvard University, advocate that population is one of several factors that affect the environment. They find that the population increased intensifies impact on the environment as more individuals take up space, use resources, and generate waste. In other words, their opinion suggests that increased population deplete more resources, stress social system, and degrade the natural environment. It is a fact that just as population is rising, so is consumption, and some environmental scientists have calculated that human population now are already living beyond the planet's means to support them sustainably (Withgott, & Brennan, 2008).

The above state of affairs deliberates the pattern of how human population gives impacts on environmental degradation. Pertaining to this matter, the Qur'ān has revealed that Allah *s.w.t* says, "Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) 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)" (*Sūrah al-Rūm* (30): 41). From the Qur'ānic description, we find that Allah *s.w.t* has entrusted mankind to be His *khalīfah* on this earth. For this purpose, nature and its components are made subservient to man. It is God's blessings to make everything in this world being subservient to humans' needs. Along with that authority and privilege, man has a big responsibility towards managing these bounties and exercises his role properly. Numerous verses of the Qur'ān establish that Allah's bounties and favors upon humankind are countless and unending (*Sūrah al-Rahmān* (55): 1-78). Men and women as Allah's vicegerents were endowed with intellects and with knowledge, along with the capacity to differentiate and choose between good and evil. Every human being is inculcated with the potential for both virtue and God-consciousness (*taqwā*) and evil and disobedience (*fujūr*).

The challenging assignment of stewardship and vicegerency (*istikhlāf*) on the earth was combined with the light of Divine guidance (*hidayah*), clearly making out the road to success and salvation (*Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2):38-39). Thus, man has obligation to use the faculties of seeing, hearing and learning to discover, think, reflect, discern, judge, resolve and then act righteously (Hasan 2009).

In order to understand relationship of man and nature in the light of the Qur'ānic perspective, we should make reference to the Qur'ānic *āyāt* that deliberates on major components of the environment. In this article, the researchers will focus to discuss Qur'ānic instructions on dealing with animals and plants issues. These days, many people have come to realize and recognize the importance that nature, and its biological diversity has had upon them and the need to maintain it. Yet, there have some people who are greedy enough to exploit natural resources without limit and their self-indulgence lead to exploit animals and plants until affected the precarious balance in nature.

Animals are accorded special regard in Islam. Allah considers them living societies exactly like mankind. Allah *s.w.t* conveys this message in the Holy Qur'ān that each species is an *ummah* that has their own structure of organization, "There is not an animal (that lives) on earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but forms part of communities like you." (*Sūrah al-An'ām* (6): 38). The story of the great flood which has occurred during the time of the Prophet *Nūh a.s* brings to light the Qur'ānic perspective on the significance act of preserving animals' entity as much as the life of believers at that time. Allah *s.w.t* gives command to the Prophet *Nūh a.s* to bring along on the Ark both male and female animals, "At length, behold! There came Our command, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth! We said: "Embark therein, of each kind two, male and female..." (*Sūrah Hūd* (11): 40). This *āyah* indicates that preservation of animal species and their regeneration are of paramount concerned in Islam.

These days, men have transgressed Allah's rules over animals for their own justification. In Africa for example, the bushmeat trade (the forest and shrub land in Africa is often referred to as 'the bush', thus wildlife and the meat derived from that wildlife is locally called 'bushmeat') is generating hundreds of million dollars. The same state of affairs happened in Malaysia too. Wildlife authorities raided ten restaurants in Kahang, Johor for involving in exotic foods business that serves more than 300kg meat of several wildlife species. The items seized were 152 water monitor lizards, 8 large flying foxes, 11.35kg of wild boar meat and 4.5kg of deer meat. (7 August, 2007, [http://www.wwf.org.my/media and information/newsroom main/?4240](http://www.wwf.org.my/media_and_information/newsroom_main/?4240)) Another consequence of over-hunting wildlife for bushmeat is the loss of predators such as leopard, golden cats, large snakes and birds of prey that depend on them for food. This loss gives impact for seed dispersing animals that play a key role in determining tree composition and distribution, which is in the long run, may possibly lead to loss of many plant species, altering both the structure and function of the forest and potentially causing irreversible ecological effects (e.g., carbon sequestration) globally. In fact, short-term economic benefits derived from the commercial bushmeat trade today, is able to cause vulnerable long-term socio economic impact to future generations. These phenomena give alerts to our mind to grasp the meaning of Divine messages in the Qur'ān concerning to *halal* and *harām* (16:115, 6:145, 5:3, 2:173) meats that are permissible to be taken. One of the noteworthy points that we may derive from this ruling is recognizing the function of feeding relationships between

predator and prey that is very important for the cycle of energy flows in an ecosystem. Islam also emphasizes the importance of maintaining a harmonious balance in environmental components under the concept of *al-mīzān*. Based on this concept, Allah has given to all His creatures their own assigned roles. Therefore, if entity of this natural operating system is disturbed, it will cause disorder to the functional units of ecosystem itself. In short, no organisms including animal can live apart from its environment or from interacting with their species.

Allah *s.w.t* states visibly in the Qur'ān that He has subjected His whole creation including animals to men, "And cattle He has created for you (men): from them ye derive warmth, and numerous benefits, and of their (meat) ye eat. And ye have a sense of pride and beauty in them as ye drive them home in the evening, and as ye lead them forth to pasture in the morning. And they carry your heavy loads to lands that ye could not (otherwise) reach except with souls distressed: for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful. And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show; and He has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge." (*Sūrah al-Naḥl* (16): 5-8) These *āyāt* describes three main functions of animals, to carry loads or means of conveyance, to warm for garments and to feed men. Furthermore, these domestic animals give pleasure to their master while looking at them when they are brought home or driven out to pasture. Thus it seems to have also been God's intention to create animals for the aesthetic enjoyment of men. All of these benefits exemplify God's concern for humanity. There are also passages in the Qur'ān referring to animal products like pure milk from the belly of animals (16:66, 23:21, 36:73), skins (16:80), fresh meat of fish (16: 14), and the healing power of honey (16: 69). In short, animals benefit man in many ways and stand as proof (40: 80-81) of God's benevolence toward man.

Every single thing in creation glorifies and praises God. Out of the many verses on this attribute, we may refer to the following *āyah*, "Seest thou not that it is Allah Whose praises all beings in the heavens and on earth do celebrate, and the birds (of the air) with wings outspread? Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise. And Allah knows well all that they do." (*Sūrah al-Nūr* (24): 41) In another occasion, Allah *s.w.t* mentions in the Qur'ān that whenever Prophet Dāwūd *a.s* praises and adores His Glory, the hill and the bird used to join him along, "it was Our power that made the hills and the birds celebrate Our praises with David...". Nevertheless, it is human's ignorance that prevents them from understanding metaphysical attribute like this. Allah *s.w.t* asserts firmly in the Qur'ān, "The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory..." (*Sūrah al-Isrā'*(17): 44). Hence, killing animals unnecessarily is against the Qur'ānic teachings. It is not only reducing the number of creations that adore Allah but also causing disorder for them to function in harmony with God's law.

Indeed there are many Qur'ānic verses that indicating to a panoramic view of the earth landscape. Allah *s.w.t* expresses visibly in the Qur'ān, "We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs). To be observed and commemorated by every devotee turning (to Allah). And We send down from the sky rain charged with blessing, and We produce therewith gardens and grain for harvests; and tall (and stately) palm-trees, with shoots of fruit-stalks piled one over another. As sustenance for (Allah's) Servants..." (*Sūrah Qāf* (50): 7-10). Furthermore, the

Qur'ān repeatedly draws our attention to the fact that even plants and trees are living beings, by pointing out that they too have been created in pairs as male and female. Like human beings and animals, plants have reproductive functions as well to keep their species going. Allah *s.w.t* states in the Qur'ān, "He Who has made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels); and has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced divers pairs of plants each separate from the others" (*Sūrah Tāha* (20): 53).

Plants are also essential as food resources for both men and animals. Allah *s.w.t* elucidates this fact in the following Qur'ānic verses, "Then let man look at his food, (and how We provide it): For that We pour forth water in abundance, And We split the earth in fragments, and produce therein corn, and grapes and nutritious plants, and olives and dates, and enclosed gardens, dense with lofty trees, and fruits and fodder,- For use and convenience to you and your cattle" (*Sūrah 'Abasa* (80): 24-32). These *āyāt* relates on how Allah *s.w.t* creates plants, vegetations, crops, gardens, fruits from the earth by irrigating it with rain water, springs, and flowing streams to sustain human and animals' life. In addition to their importance as sustenance, plants enrich the soil and protect it from erosion by wind and water. They conserve the water by detaining its runoff. Otherwise, the water cycle gets disturbed and can cause floods and droughts. Plants function is to moderate the climate and produce the oxygen which we breathe. They are also of immense value for medicines, oils, perfumes, waxes, fibres, timber, and fuel. Allah *s.w.t* discloses the Qur'ānic *āyāt* that indicate the importance of a tree as one of the energy resources, "See ye the fire which ye kindle? Is it ye who grow the tree which feeds the fire, or do We grow it? We have made it a memorial (of Our handiwork), and an article of comfort and convenience for the denizens of deserts." (*Sūrah al-Wāqī'ah* (56): 71-73). We may also find that the Qur'ān underlines the significance element of 'green' in plant, as Allah *s.w.t* says in another place, "The same Who produces for you fire out of the green tree, when behold! Ye kindle therewith (your own fires)!" (*Sūrah Yā Sīn* (36):80) These Qur'ānic *āyāt* reveal that the green tree as a source of fire that provides the essential energy supply for human usage. However, when they get dry, they easily catch fire and then contribute relatively more to the phenomenon of global warming for the green lush wooded area are a huge sink for CO₂. (Ansari & Oseni 2012)

In modern time, trees are being depleted at a very fast rate. One of the most worrying factors today is the massive destruction of the rainforest of the world is affecting the biodiversity adversely. Half of our medicines are derived from plants. By destroying the rainforest, we will never know what useful plants we may have lost. The area of the world's tropical rainforest that is being destroyed in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America is estimated at about 14-20 million hectares every year. Even in Europe, which has a total forest area of 141 million hectares, 50 million have been damaged by acid rain. Forests are being cut for timber or to provide extra land for cultivation. Large areas are being cleared to be turned into pastures for cattle in order to export their meat to meet the demand of countries. It is only the trunks of trees that can be used as timber; their twigs and debris are left to rot, releasing carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere. (Masri 1992) Trees are cut down indiscriminately by logging companies, to fulfil the demands of the wood market. The cutting down of trees for lumber that is used for building materials, furniture, and paper products have a major impact on forest life. Forests are cleared to accommodate expanding urban areas. This results in loss of forest area and massive deforestation. As a consequence, it does not give a chance to the local wildlife and trees to regenerate and sustain themselves.

Efforts are being made by all means to revert this trend. Tropical countries have a time bound programme to manage their forests on the basis of the principles for sustainable management of forests developed by the International Tropical Timber Organization. But the target seems to be far. This is because of lack of political will of developed countries; they are not extending necessary help to tropical country sufficiently. Some of the forest rich countries also do not have sufficient political will for transforming the idea of Sustainable Management of Forests into practice because exploration and exploitation of their forest are directly related to their economies. Forests are a significant source of their income. Some others have enough political will but due to lack of sufficient resources and experts, they are unable to meet the requirement. (Ansari & Jamal 2001)

In brief, man's right over nature are rights of sustainable use based on moderation, balance, and conservation. Nature's right over man, on the other hand, are that it be safe from every misuse, mistreatment, and destruction. Greed, extravagance, and waste are considered a tyranny against nature and a transgression of those rights. The Qur'ān insists on keeping the balance in environmental components by emphasizing the qualitative and quantitative balance that Allah *s.w.t* has ordained in the natural world. This aspect reveals the interdependence and connections between each component as well as relationships of the components to the whole universe. Allah *s.w.t* expresses in the Qur'ān "Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure" (*Sūrah al-Qamar* (54): 49) and in another verse Allah *s.w.t* affirms this fact; "and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance" (*Sūrah al-Hijr* (15): 19). Indeed, all parts of the natural world, with its biological diversity have a value to each other and to the total global system over and above their value to mankind.

Conclusion

As a concluding remark, we have to appreciate the bounties of fertile land, fresh green trees, plentiful benefit of domestic animals and many more that Allah *s.w.t* grants to us in the form of "trust". It is our responsibility to use these natural resources in the most beneficial way. The so-called modern principles of sustainable development, ecological balance, conservation of flora and fauna, and intergenerational equity are indeed in accordance to the Qur'ānic teachings that instruct mankind to have a total harmony with natural world. This value is clearly rooted from the *tawhidic* worldview of Allah *s.w.t* as *al-Khāliq* (Creator/Originator), *Rab* (Sustainer), and *al-Muḥīṭ* (Encompasses all things). In short, the Qur'ān demonstrates that to maintain a harmonious living of mankind and natural world is to sustain environmental components from all kinds of degradation factors that comes from harmful activities of human pursuits.

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