

Man and Nature: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

The topic on man and nature has always been discussed over the centuries and has earned the attention of many scholars of diverse fields of specializations. As an appreciation to the great contribution of nature to human survival, some have equated it to God. Since the two are synonymous to them, so they worship nature alongside God. Others thought nature to be an obstacle to human life and hence needs to be conquered and prevailed upon. In the light of these two extreme positions, this paper intends to investigate the relationship between man and nature from the Islamic perspective. Apart from that, this paper would like to find out as to why the Muslim community is not paying due attention to conservation and preservation of nature at a time when there is a serious call made by others to stop the ongoing environmental degradation that is happening all over the world. It is hoped that an investigation of this nature would bring to light as to what should be the ideal relationship of man with nature from the Islamic perspective.

Keywords: Man, Nature, Islamic Perspective, the Covenant, forbidden approach towards nature

Introduction

Though many authorities in Islam have discussed the topic on man and nature, this qualitative study would like to tackle the issues related to the two from an unconventional approach. This study not only discusses the ideal relationship between man and nature as emphasized in teachings of Islam, but also tries to explore and investigate the underlying factors as to why present day Muslims pay less or no attention towards preservation and conservation of nature. Upon identifying the reasons as to why Muslims show negligence in taking care of nature, the researcher would also like to put forward some suggestions to remedy the prevalent attitude among Muslims with regard to nature.

Status of Man in Islam

Among all creations in the heaven and earth, only man has been bestowed with many distinctive qualities. As the recipient of these distinctive qualities from Allah the Almighty, man is placed on the highest pedestal in the hierarchy of creations. Some of these distinctive features are; man has been created in the best of forms (al-Qur'ān, al-Tīn: 1-4), provided with the creative intelligence (al-Qur'ān, al-Baqarah: 31-34), given the power of speech and freedom of choice (al-Qur'ān, al-Rahmān:4; al-Insān:3). Due to the fact that man has been endowed with such noble qualities or for some other reasons only known to the Creator, man has been chosen to be His Khalifah (vicegerent) on earth. Apart from that, man has been further honoured in his stature and position when Allah made all things created in the heaven and earth to be of service

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to Him. (al-Qur'ān, al-Jāthiyah: 13; al-Isrā':70)¹. Having stated the status enjoyed by man in the Qur'ān, the following will be an elaboration on the preceding points highlighted on Man:

The Concept of Man in ISLAM

The Islamic concept on man is a comprehensive and all-encompassing one. According to the Islamic concept, among all creations in the heaven and earth, only man stands on the highest pinnacle to be called as the best creation of Allah the Almighty. It has been mentioned in the Qur'an that God has created man in the most beautiful and excellent manner:

"We have indeed created man in the best of moulds" (al-Qur'ān, al-Tīn: 4).²

This exalted position and stature makes man superior to angels and other luminous creations like the sun, moon, stars, etc. The greatness of man has been further explained in the following verse:

"We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours above a great part of our creation" (al-Qur'ān, al-Isrā':70).

Having achieved a noble position in the sight of Allah does not guarantee man to be in that position forever. As explained in Sūrah al-Tīn, verse: 5, man will fall from the honored position given by Allah when he transgresses the limits set by Allah. As such, achieving the honor or disgrace in the sight of Allah, is a choice left to man to decide.

Apart from being the best creation, man in the Qur'ān has been addressed as Allah's vicegerent on earth (Khalifatullāh). This esteemed position was conferred to man in spite of the protest and remonstrance that came from the angels on the eve of his creation. The exact dialogue that took place between Allah and the angels explains clearly as to why the angels protested, can be well understood by going through this verse from Sūrah al-Baqarah:

"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth. They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?-whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (names)?" He said: "I know what ye know not" (al-Baqarah: 30).

The exegesis on the above verse explains that the angels foresaw some negative attitudes of man, while Allah, the All Wise saw many of the positive things that man is capable of performing on earth. As such, Allah granted man with many gifts that will enable him to carry out his duties well as being Allah's vicegerent. Among the gifts that man acquired from Allah were, authority, freedom of action, intelligence, etc. In giving his comments on how man should use these God given gifts, Afzalur Rahman (1988) explains:

"He was to be totally independent and autonomous in his sphere of work on the earth and would be well-equipped with knowledge so that he could discover the secrets of the Universe through study, research and experience, learn to explain the forces of nature for his benefit, and gain mastery over them according to his own requirements and plan".³

The title Khalifah places man in an honored position to be Allah's deputy; administrator; representative, etc. on earth. His this position gives him power and

authority to rule, manage and preserve the earth. Al-Maududi, in his commentary of the Qur'ān, explains that man's status as Khalifah (pl. Khalā'if and Khulafā') of Allah does not make him the master of the universe, but only as a deputy who is allowed to exercise the delegated powers given to him by Allah the all Supreme. He further expounds that the office to vicegerency can be used by man in two ways: to either abuse the power and authority for the spread of evil and injustice or to use them for things that are good for humanity.⁴

In Islam, man is born with the fiṭrah (primordial nature). Al-fiṭrah in the Arabic language renders several different meanings that reveal the many positive and interesting dimensions of human nature. One meaning to the word al-fiṭrah explains that man comes to this world without any stain of sin. This Islamic concept of al-fiṭrah rejects the doctrine of the "Original Sin" as espoused in Christianity. The other meaning of al-fiṭrah as stated in the Holy Qur'ān explains that naturally man has been born as a believer in Allah the Almighty (al-Qur'ān, al-Rūm: 30).

Further exploration into the topic on man in the Qur'ān reveals that he has a dual nature; body and spirit (rūḥ). The Qur'ān explains that after creating Adam (PBUH), Allah breathed into him His spirit: "*Behold! Thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to create man, from sounding clay form mud moulded into shape; 'When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him'*" (al-Qur'ān, al-Ḥijr: 28-29). As such, all human beings who are the progeny of Adam (PBUH) are made up of two elements; the physical body, which represents clay, is mortal, and the rūḥ, or the spirit, which is immortal that leaves the body upon death of an individual.

Man, who has been made the most honored creation of Allah, is also entrusted with the amānah (trust) from Allah; "*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*" (al-Qur'ān, al-Aḥzāb:72). The word amānah in the Qur'ān has diverse meanings. It can be referred to reason, intellect or the faculty of volition.⁵ Another nuance of of amānah is the power and authority given to man through the office of vicegerency. Last but not, amānah could also mean the sum total of all the decrees, commands ('amr) and prohibitions (nahy) present in the Sharī'ah.⁶

Another aspect of man, which is contained within the Islamic concept of human nature, is that, man has been given the mīthāq (covenant). Through this covenant, humanity as a whole has accepted Allah to be their Lord and Cherisher while they were in the form of spirits in 'ālam al-arwāḥ (in the realm of the spirits). This contract between man and his Lord has been made long before he was born into this world. The Holy Qur'ān explains about this contract in Sūrah al A'rāf:

"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 Judgement: 'Of this we were never mindful'" (al-Qur'ān, al-A'rāf: 172).

According to Afzalur Rahman (1988), through this covenant, Allah has imbued in the heart of every human being the knowledge that He is Allah the One and the Only Lord that deserves to be worshipped. The content of this covenant is retained in the subconscious mind of man as potentiality that can be brought to consciousness. Factors

like type of education, social environment, etc. could never totally efface or tarnish the covenant, but the least they could do is to pervert and prevent the covenant from coming to the conscious part of the human being. In addition to this, Rahman also believes that in spite of the perversion and prevention caused by wrong education and negative social influences, the covenant as a potential lays embedded in the subconscious mind of man and it will emerge to reality in response to the positive external factors. Some of these factors that have always invited and called humanity to the remembrance of the covenant were the prophets, heavenly Books, inviters to the Truth from among the followers of the prophets, good social environment, proper and correct education, etc.⁷

Man being the vicegerent of Allah was also elevated in his stature and position when he was taught *al-asmā'* (attributes of Allah/ the beautiful names of Allah) by God Almighty Himself. The reference to this, man as the recipient of 'the names' has been stated in the following verse:

"And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: "Tell Me the names of these if ye are right." They said: Glory to Three: of knowledge we have none, save what Thou has taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom" (al-Qur'ān, al-Baqarah: 31-32).

As a result of Allah teaching *al-asmā'* to Adam, Adam and his progeny are able to achieve the status of being the most knowledgeable of all creations in the heavens and earth. Muslim scholars differ in their opinion with regard to the exact meaning of *al-asmā'* mentioned in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, verse 31. In giving his comment on the view of early Muslim scholars on *al-asmā'*, this is what Abdullah Yusuf Ali says:

*"The names of things: "according to commentators means the inner nature and qualities of things, and things here would include feelings. The particular qualities of feelings which were outside the nature of angels were put by Allah into the nature of man. Man was thus able to love and understand love, and thus plan and initiate, as becomes the office of vicegerent"*⁸

According to Langgulung, *al-asmā'* mentioned in verse 31 of *al-Baqarah* refers to *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā* (the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah) mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. He further expounds that these beautiful names represent the attributes of Allah given to man as potentials that need to be developed and actualized in the life of an individual Muslim. By doing so, the individual will be able to fulfill and perform his duties and obligations that will turn out to be *'ibādah* (acts of worship done in seeking the good pleasure of Allah).⁹

Whatever the meaning deduced from the word *al-asmā'*, one fact that is clearly related to human nature is that man has been exalted in his potential and knowledge compared to what has been given to the angels. With regard to the knowledge given to the angels and man, Zafar Afaq Ansari's (1992) opinion reflects the point that *al-asmā'* means an immense and unlimited potential of knowledge. He further asserts that the knowledge given to the angels is limited and specific, while man is bestowed not only with knowledge but also the capacity to generate new knowledge.¹⁰

Another thing that needs to be highlighted here is the statement made by the angels in *al-Baqarah*, verse 31. This verse reveals the humble acceptance of the angels of their limited knowledge compared to that equipped and possessed by man. It also reveals that their protest and undermining of man's strength and potentials on the eve of his creation were mistaken. Moreover, man compared to the angels, has the freedom of choice to react and respond to the many of the biological, psychological and sociological (environmental) demands of his mundane life. In his choice, man can be either good or evil; a righteous or a perverted transgressor towards what has been instructed in the Holy Qur'ān. This has been stated in the Holy Qur'ān: "*We showed him the way; whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)*" (*al-Qurā'n, al-Insān: 3*). A similar statement on the freedom of choice has also been mentioned in *Sūrah al-Balad*, verses 8-10: "*Have We not given him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and shown him the two highways (of good and evil)*". Besides man, the other creation of Allah which is a 'rational' being and enjoys the freedom of choice is the jinn (genie). However, the freedom enjoyed by the jinn is limited compared to man.¹¹

The final aspect of man in Islam is that, he is forgetful. In the Holy Qur'an, one can read the forgetful nature of man in the story of Adam (PBUH). As the father of humanity, he ate the fruit of the forbidden tree together with his companion Ḥawwā (PBUH) while he was in the garden of paradise. This incident has been mentioned in *Sūrah Ṭāhā*, verse 115, "*We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot: and We found on his part no firm resolve*". This nature of being forgetful is a trait that has been inherited by Adam's progeny.¹²

In concluding the preceding discussion on human nature from the Islamic perspective, it can be said that man shares some of his basic characteristics with animals and he also inherits some attributes found in the angels and also some of Allah's attributes. Man in his desire for food, sex, anger, greed and rivalry etc. resembles the animals. While being interested in singing the praises of God and in performing other meritorious acts of devotion he resembles the angels, and finally in showing love, care, kindness, sympathy, empathy and etc. man emulates some of the godly attributes of God Almighty. The laxity on the part of man in developing and in actualizing the angelic and godly attributes in him, make him go steep and deep in his animal nature. Due to this, he becomes a perverted transgressor and goes beyond all limits set by Allah in the Qur'ān. On the contrary, when man develops and actualizes the angelic and godly attributes he becomes an angelic as well as a godly individual who qualifies himself or herself in gaining Allah's good pleasure. It has been envisioned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth that such an individual will taste happiness in this world and an everlasting felicity in the hereafter.¹³

Universe, Nature & Environment:

At many times, one finds terms like universe, nature and environment have been used interchangeably. Though this terms sound synonymous, there exist some differences in their usage. What we mean as universe is the description that includes matter and energy, galaxies and the space in between the galaxies. It also means Mother Nature with all its inhabitants; human beings, flora and fauna.¹⁴ On the other hand, nature means the material world that surrounds man. Nature is also understood as the natural world that exists without man and civilization. Further explanation on nature paints a

picture of the natural world with elements like mountains, trees, animals, etc. Another way of looking at nature is the universe with all its phenomena.¹⁵ While environment is more commonly referred to things: living and non-living that surround an organism or group of organisms.¹⁶ In comparing the three terms, one can draw out a conclusion that the universe is larger in scale, while nature takes the next position in terms of magnitude and finally environment means the immediate surrounding that is around us. Among the three, environment is a more localized situation and smaller in size compared to the other two.

Man's Relationship with Nature

In Islam, man as the khalifah of Allah, has to bind a good relationship with God, his Self, fellow human beings (Muslims and non-Muslims) and also with nature. With regard to his relationship with nature, man has to develop a friendly co-existence with the flora and fauna. It is believed that man's friendly co-existence with nature will eventually lead man to reap the goodness that comes from nature. For his caring and loving attitude towards nature, it will reward him with water, oxygen, flowers, fruits, natural resources and different kinds of food resources. According to Islam, nature is a gift of Allah. It has been created for the benefit of man. While others outside Islam may entertain the idea that nature is something that needs to be conquered as though it is an enemy, Muslims think differently. To Muslims, nature should be admired and appreciated for its beauty and splendor. In the holy Qur'an, there exist many verses that call man to explore the secrets of nature. The whole idea of God calling humankind to investigate and understand the laws of nature is only for a noble reason. It is expected that such discoveries of God's handiwork in nature will enable man to be humble and thankful to God for His bounties given onto man. To enlighten further on nature as a gift of God and on how man should relate to nature, below here are some references from the holy script of the Muslims:

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, - there are indeed Signs for men of understanding (al-Qur'an, Āli 'Imrān: 190).

Do they not look at the Camels, how they are made? And at the Sky, how it is raised high? And at Mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the Earth, how it is spread out? (al-Qur'an, al-Ghāshiyah:17-20).

The Sun and the Moon follow courses (exactly) computed. (al-Qur'an, al-Raḥmān:5).

O you assembly of Jinns and men! If it be you can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass you! Not without anything shall you be able to pass! (al-Qur'an, al-Raḥmān: 33).

And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice), in order that you may not transgress (due) balance. (al-Qur'an, al-Raḥmān: 8-9).

He has let free the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together. Between them is a Barrier which they do not transgress.(al-Qur'an, al-Raḥmān: 19-20).

Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you (use) all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure,(both) seen and unseen? (al-Qur'an, Luqman: 20).

See they not that it is We Who have created for them- among the things which Our hands have fashioned-Cattle, which are under their dominion? And that We have subjected to

them to their (use)? Of them some do carry them and some they eat. (al-Qur'ān, Yāsīn:71-73).

Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joint together (as one unit of creation), before We clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe? And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with them, and We have made therein broad highways (between mountains) for them to pass through: that they may receive Guidance. And We have made the heavens as a canopy well-guarded: yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)! It is He who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon: all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course. (al-Qur'ān, al-Anbiyā:30-33).

Forbidden Approach towards Nature

From ancient to modern times, there exist communities in the world that worship nature and elements or objects found in nature; like the sun, mountain, moon, snake, elephant, etc. To them, nature equates to God or the manifestation of God Himself. This approach to God and man relationship has its foundation in the philosophical teaching of Pantheism. As a way of life, this philosophy has its origin in Neo-Platonism, which preaches mystical ideas on the existence of God, man and the universe. One of the famous maxim of Pantheism says, “God is everything and everything is God”. This statement has gained acceptance in many religions and cultures of the world. The pantheists believe that everything in the universe is the manifestation of God. In modern times, in the West, some aspects of Pantheism have attracted great number of adherents towards its doctrine, namely Spinoza (1632-1677), Bruno (1548-1600) and Hegel (1770-1831).¹⁷ Contrary to the Pantheists concept which says, “God is everything and everything is God”, Islam preaches that “Everything is God’s”. As such, Muslims are forbidden to worship nature or the objects found in it. In Islam, the act of revering and worshipping nature and objects in nature tantamount to Shirk (the act of associating partners with God). According to the Qur’an, Shirk is the most grievous sin among all sins.¹⁸ We are further told in the Qur’an that God is prepared to forgive all other sins except *Shirk*.¹⁹ Rather than committing *Shirk* by worshipping nature, the ideal thing for a Muslim to do, is to praise God for the beauty and splendor he witnesses in the universe, nature and environment.

Explore the Universe, Nature and Environment

The Qur’an asks the Muslim community to explore nature and the universe in the hope that man will understand the patterns and laws by which God has created all celestial and terrestrial bodies. Upon discovering God’s wonders and creativity in nature and universe, man should feel humbled and submit himself to be the commandments of God. Religious reformer Muhammad Iqbal (1879-1938) was very much in favour with the idea Muslims interacting with nature through the means of scientific approach. To him, in order for man to progress spiritually he must look into the Qur’an as the ‘revealed book’ from God and the universe as the ‘open book’ of God. Iqbal is of the view that science in many ways is not opposed to the religious teachings of Islam. Furthermore, he believed that the scientific facts and findings could complement religion in strengthening one’s faith. Iqbal highlighted this point in the Reconstruction (1996) when he said:

In our observation of nature, we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego; and this is only another form of worship.²⁰ The scientific observer of nature is a kind of mystic seeker in the act of prayer.²¹

In his poems, Iqbal called upon the *Ummah* to utilize science to improve their lives by extracting the bounties that God has provided for them in the material world. In his opinion, man must use science and technology to bring out the hidden potentials from the belly of earth to be utilized for his spiritual development:

Science is an instrument for the preservation of Life.

Science is a means of invigorating the Self.

Science and art are servants of Life.²²

Iqbal further called the Muslims to embrace a positive attitude towards learning and the use of science and scientific research methods. He also highlighted the point that the message brought by the Prophet is very much in harmony with the scientific revolution that was taking place during the early twentieth century. With regard to the relationship between man and nature, Iqbal feels that the calling of man to conquer the material world is not a call meant for man to behave as a tyrant who recklessly plunders the riches and wealth found in the belly of the earth. What he really meant is that, man should use his God-given intelligence in a just and systematic manner in managing the resources available in the physical world to attain his spiritual nearness with God. In order not to be misguided by his sense-perception in witnessing the bounties found in the physical world, man needs to be guided by his inner spiritual dimension to be just and fair in his manner and conduct. Guarded and guided by such principles, man will utilize the wealth found in the world not only for himself but also to be divided and shared with fellow human-beings. The exact words of Iqbal (1996) on this matter are:

The naturalism of the Qur'an is only recognition of the fact that man is related to nature, and this relation, in view of its possibility as a means of controlling her forces, must be exploited not in the interest of unrighteous desire for domination, but in the nobler interests of a free upward movement of spiritual life. In the interest of securing a complete vision of Reality, therefore, sense-perception must be supplemented by the perception of what the Qur'an describes as *Fuad* or *Qalb*, i.e. heart²³

Some Damage and Destruction Done to Nature

The world we live today has categorically gone through various changes caused by modernization, industrialization, colonization and now globalization. The face of the earth is constantly changing at a rapid scale due to pollution of all kinds. Pollution on land, in sea, in the forest, in the mountains, in space and elsewhere has caused danger to human beings, wildlife and marine life. The main culprit in causing the pollution and degradation to the quality of human life and the flora and fauna is man himself. Man in his greed for riches and dominance has caused great destruction to his living conditions. The Qur'an has also highlighted the evil and selfish desires of man that has caused pollution and environmental degradation:

“Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of [the deed] 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]”

Enlist below here are some of the pollutions caused by man:

1. Air pollution- is mainly caused by emission of toxic gases into the air. Such toxic gases can cause adverse reaction to the human body, animals and plants.²⁴
2. Water pollution- rivers and the oceans around the globe experience this form of pollution. Harmful chemicals discharged into the rivers by the factories will find their way to the open sea. This form of pollution will harm the corals and other marine lives. Not only that, such chemicals can cause harmful effects to the human body when man consumes seafood that comes from the polluted rivers and seas. Besides that, the quality of water we use for our daily needs are no longer of good quality.²⁵
3. 'Slash and Burn' results in haze in many parts of the world. This is the easiest way by which farmers clear the forest for cultivation. Farmers also carry out such burnings after harvesting their crops.²⁶
4. Deforestation- Is the uncontrolled logging that takes place in a particular area of the forest. Hundreds of trees are cleared at one time in a same area, leaving the land barren. When heavy rain comes pouring, it will be difficult for the soil to hold water in such great quantity. As a result of this, there happens landslide, mudslide, and other forms of destructions. Sometime it can even lead to the loss of human lives. In many cases, illegal logging takes place without the knowledge and approval of the local authorities. Illegal logging is rampant in many parts of Asia and in the Amazon forest.²⁷
5. Global Warming- Unpredictable weather conditions, melting of the ice at the poles, etc.²⁸
6. Acid Rain- due to the chemical released in the air and water. The chemicals are evaporated alongside with water to form clouds which later fall as rain. As this rain is toxic in nature, it will cause erosion, pollute lakes, harm human beings, vegetation and animals.²⁹
7. Modern Warfare- Is horrible and horrendous. By exploding of all sorts of sophisticated bombs in the battlefields, man releases radioactive particles into the air. These radioactive particles which are suspended in the air will stay there forever till eternity. With the changing of the wind direction, the radioactive particles travel to all parts of the world, even to those regions which are free from war. Basically, there are no countries safe from these suspended radioactive particles which cause cancer and other serious health problems for man.³⁰ The following quotation explains clearly the environmental damage caused by war:

Wars are devastating on the environment. Often, as in the gulf war, millions of tons of crude oil are dumped into the ocean..... Military vehicles burn millions of gallons of fuel and dump millions of tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere. There is no real way to measure the exact

amount pollution caused by war, but in general, it is safe to say that war is bad for everyone and everything.³¹

Besides the above, the late President John F. Kennedy has also highlighted the dangers of war when he delivered his speech at the United Nations on September 25, 1961. Kennedy said:

“Mankind must put an end to war - or war will put an end to mankind”³²

Conservation and Preservation of Nature

Looking into the Western countries of today, one would observe that there is a change in their mental attitude towards preserving nature. It has been said by many authorities that the people in the West have changed after witnessing the devastating effects of the two world wars. The death toll of millions who were killed and the magnitude of the damages caused to the infrastructure and environment of the countries involved in war has brought change in their philosophy of life. Ever since the end of the Second World War till to the present time the masses in the West started to demonstrate a greater level of consciousness towards taking care of nature, environment, human and animal lives.³³ In their effort to preserve human lives and nature they have come up with many movements and organizations; like the Greenpeace³⁴, National Geographic Society,³⁵ Nature Conservancy³⁶, Wildlife Conservation Society³⁷, hundreds of antiwar organizations³⁸, etc. The emergence of all these organizations is based on their philosophy of life which is ‘here and now’, and live life to the fullest. Moreover, they also want to preserve the flora and fauna for the generations of people that would come after their time. The other factor that makes their preservation program a success is the availability of funds, knowledge and technology. Although the masses and organizations in the West are working towards global peace and a better world, there exist small group of policy-makers, warmongers and the war industry that work against the aspiration of the masses. Due to this selfish group, we still witness small scale of war taking place in many parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East.³⁹

Scenario in the East

Contrary to the scenario in the West, many countries in the East, particularly the Muslim countries, have failed to demonstrate a passionate attitude towards preservation and conservation of nature. The Muslims societies living in the East either pay little or no attention as to why they have to care for nature and the environment. There could be more than one factor which causes them not to pay heed to the call of preserving and conservation of the flora and fauna. The following will be some of the reasons as to why Muslims lack the passion and compassion towards nature:

Ignorance/Negligence

They do not realize that there exist serious environmental problems that need their participation with the rest of the world.

Poverty

This situation keeps the Muslim masses in many parts of the world preoccupied with the issue related to the survival of their families and never allow them to think of other global issues, particularly the ones related to the environment and nature.

War and crisis

Many Muslim countries are preoccupied with sectarian wars, war on terror and wars imposed on them by others. Sad to say, this situation has made some of their citizens to go wandering as refugees into foreign territories. Under such a condition, those Muslims who are affected by the war, they would not be there psychologically thinking about the care for the flora and fauna, as they will be preoccupied with their own survival.

Attitude towards life

A fraction of the Muslim society feels that life on earth is only transitory. As such, they give more importance to their preparation for the life in the hereafter. In the actual fact, Islam calls for a balanced lifestyle to be maintained between the life in this world and in the preparation for the afterlife.

Natural World is gift from Allah

Since nature is created for the benefit of mankind, they want to exploit the wealth of resources available in the natural world without considering the moral and ethical issues pertaining to how they have to deal with nature and the environment.

Consumer Mentality

Muslims are overly dependent on others with regard to information and research works on the flora and fauna. They just want to purchase the knowledge and documentary movies on flora and fauna produced by others.

Suggestion for Improvement

It is our humble suggestion that oil rich Muslim countries in the Middle East should set up funds for nature and environmental studies. The materialization of such funds can be of a great help to Muslim scientists and researchers to explore, investigate and document the mysteries found in nature. Furthermore, this type of research can even lead the researchers into producing documentary movies of good quality on the universe, wildlife and marine creatures. The love for nature and environment should be inculcated right from the preschool and elementary levels in order to see a dramatic change in their mental attitude in years to come. Schools in the Muslim world should provide students with good facilities to conduct research related the natural world. Universities in the Muslim world should create many more faculties and departments offering programs in the areas of man and nature, environmental studies related to preservation and conservation of nature and natural resources. By offering such programs, it will enable the Muslim students to discover the mysteries of nature and their role as the vicegerents of God as mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted that man and nature are inseparable. As such, man must take the proactive measures to maintain his good relationship with nature. Regardless, we live in the East or West; all of us should pay attention to the issues related to preservation and conservation of nature. Unless and until we learn to develop a friendly co-existence with nature, unpredictable weather conditions, melting of the ice at the poles and all other calamities such as landslides, mudslides, etc. will be something imminent in our lives. Many of the tragedies that happen to humanity that relate to the natural world are mainly triggered by human beings themselves. Environmental studies

should be given due consideration in many Muslim countries, particularly of those involved in the oil and gas industries. Oil producing countries should also look for alternative energy resources which are eco-friendly. Ecology in the countries involved in the mining, oil and gas industries should be constantly monitored so that they do not pose a threat human life. World leaders and citizens of the world should work towards a global peace eradicating all uncalled wars on this planet. Schools and learning institutions should teach and propagate the philosophy of universal brotherhood. These institutions should teach the young minds on the important of the preservation and conservation of nature. Besides that, they should be taught the importance of creating a better world than what we have today. The main ingredients for developing a better world will be to avoid war, terrorism and racism, and to promote the attitudes of loving, caring and sharing.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Human Nature: A Comparative Study between Western and Islamic Psychology*, (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, 2011), p.83
- ² English translation of this verse and the other verses occurring in this paper are those of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989)
- ³ Afzalur Rahman, Muhammad: Encyclopedia of Seerah. Vol. 6,(London: Seerah Foundation,1988),p.1
- ⁴ Sayyid Abu A'la Al-Maududi, *The meaning of the Qur'an*,Vol.1 (7th edition), (Lahore: Islamic Publication (PVT) Limited, 1992), pp.66-68
- ⁵ Muhammad Asad, *The message of the Qur'an*, (Notes no. 87-89), (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), pp.653
- ⁶ Afzalur Rahman, Muhammad: Encyclopedia of Seerah. Vol. 6, (London: Seerah Foundation, 1988),pp.15-16
- ⁷ Ibid, pp.9-10
- ⁸ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Ibid., 1989,Note no. 48, 1989, p.24
- ⁹ Hasan Langgulung, *Manusia dan Pendidikan: Suatu Analisis Psikologi dan Pendidikan*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Pustaka Al-Husna,1986), pp.263-264
- ¹⁰ Zafar Afaq Ansari (ed). 'Qur'anic concepts of human psyche', (Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought, Pakistan,1992), pp.1-14
- ¹¹ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Contribution of Iqbal's Dynamic Personality Theory to Islamic Psychology: A Contrastive Analysis with Freud and Selected Mainstream Western Psychology*,(Kuala Lumpur: IIUM,2011),p.83.
- ¹² Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Iqbal's theory of personality: a contrastive analysis with freud*, (Saarbrucken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013), p.94
- ¹³ Ibid, Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, 2013, pp.361-364
- ¹⁴ (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/universe>), retrieved on the 24th Feb, 2015
- ¹⁵ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/nature>), retrieved on the 24th Feb, 2015
- ¹⁶ <http://ecological-problems.blogspot.com/2008/08/environment-definition-and-meaning.html>), retrieved on the 24th Feb,2015
- ¹⁷ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Iqbal's theory of Personality: a contrastive analysis with Freud*, (Saarbrucken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013) p.34
- ¹⁸ See (Surah Luqman:13)

¹⁹ See (Surah Al-Nisa: 38)

²⁰ Muhammad Iqbal, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1996), p.45

²¹ Muhammad Iqbal, *Ibid*, 1996, p.73.

²² Muhammad Iqbal, *The secrets of the self (Asrar-i-Khudi)*,(Renold A. Nicholson, Trans.),(Lahore: SH. Muhammad Ashraf, 1983),1983, p.26.

²³ Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.12

²⁴ <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/pollution-overview/>), retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015

²⁵ (<http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/156920/>), retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015

²⁶(<http://geography.about.com/od/urbaneconomicgeography/a/slashburn.htm>), retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015

²⁷(http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/deforestation-overview/?rptregcta=reg_free_np&rptreg_campaign=2015012_invitation_ro_all#),Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015

²⁸ (<http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/>),Retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015

²⁹<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/acid-rain-overview/>),Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015

³⁰ (<http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5544>), retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015

³¹(<http://www.lenntech.com/environmental-effects-war.htm>),Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015

³²(<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/118124-mankind-must-put-an-end-to-war---or-war>),Retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015

³³ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Op. Cit.*, 2013, p.17

³⁴ (<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/>),Retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015

³⁵ (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/about/>),Retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015

³⁶ (<http://www.nature.org/>), retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015

³⁷ (<http://www.wcs.org/>), retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015

³⁸(<http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/summary.asp?object=Organization&category=9>), retrieved on the 25th Feb, 2015

³⁹ (<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/01/big-money-behind-war-military-industrial-complex-20141473026736533.html>), retrieved on the 25th Feb., 2015