

**DEALING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:  
PREPARING A FRAMEWORK FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, POLICY  
AND LAWS IN MALAYSIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Much has been said about the environment, nevertheless, much of the action has yet to be seen to materialize. Even, endeavours currently in implementation do not seem to promise any good results. Yet, all seem to agree that mankind is the main cause of the destruction and losses. Man comes and goes. The present laws and policies never caveat any progress or improvement. It is mooted in this paper that what is needed for the future is simply education. A good educational system will ensure that each individual, layman or professional, goes through the same process of receiving information and knowledge. In this paper, it is submitted that Islam lays a good foundation for teaching and learning about the environment. Man-made laws alone are insufficient to create consistent awareness and consciousness as far as a duty to take good care of the environment is concerned. Nature is a great gift*

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*from the Creator for mankind, yet, they never make any effort to realize this. Thus, the foundation must fix its pillars to the belief that protecting the environment is an act of faith.*

## INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic plural society and this paper was written with a clear understanding of the background of the population in Malaysia. The framework that has been promoted by this article apart from being universal, also proposes to establish a framework in the teaching of moral and religious values for Muslims and non-Muslims. The author also draws some universal values that could form basis for developing ethical values which would be suitable for all, irrespective of religion, jurisdiction, culture or race.

Environmental ethics deal with the question of the relationship between man and nature and how man should behave towards the environment and other living creatures. From this premise, the topic covers issues about education, management, policy as well as the law and how to translate these into practicality. Azizan Baharudin writes that environmental sciences and environmental ethics have now come under the purview of environmental education, in general, which is necessary for all sectors and levels in society aspiring towards sustainability which, incidentally, is an implicit feature of Malaysia's Vision 2020.<sup>1</sup>

In this article also, it is argued that the environmental management framework, which has its roots in education and derives its strength through governmental policies and laws, should be based on universal and *tawhidic*<sup>2</sup> approaches. With this, all persons must be able to realise that all their actions are within the knowledge and appraisal of Allah (*swt*). In this respect, non-Muslims have to realise that their religions also require them to be good and honest. On this basis, any human being will be answerable not only in this world but, more importantly, on the Day of Judgement. From the policy perspective, an integrated approach from

<sup>1</sup> Azizan Baharudin (Ed), *Environment and Development: ethical and educational considerations*, Institute for Policy Research, Kuala Lumpur (undated) p. xi.

<sup>2</sup> A concept that is rooted in faith.

pre-educational institutions to higher learning and it forms the main agenda for reform in any legal document.

## BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM

Malaysia is moving towards becoming a developed country in the year 2020. The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has, many a time, called for individual and collective approaches towards developing human capital. Certainly, human capital is to be the main focus resource and investment in the future. Unfortunately, while on one side, the people are enjoying and benefitting from the fruits of development and civilisation, on the other, values and ethics are declining. As a result, a major portion of the budget has been spent on finding solutions and overcoming problems arising from human misconduct such as corruption, misappropriation of money, abuse of power, drug addiction and a lot more. Allocation of funds has been reserved for the setting-up of rehabilitation centres, special schools, and more importantly, research and enforcement have been reviewed and improved from time to time to make them move intandem with the challenges. This includes measures taken to educate people to appreciate the value of religious and cultural elements for public awareness.<sup>3</sup> Falkenmark<sup>4</sup> notes that regardless of people's culture or religion, "spirituality and ethics are very important for influencing behaviour." Thus, it is proposed in this article to show that education in ethics, management and administration of the environment should reflect the universal values that are grounded in Islamic principles. Malaysia being a country that upholds Islam as the religion of the federation, the teaching of Islam should emphasize the wide perspective of Islamic principles which reflects Islam as a way of life. The teaching of Islam should no more be seen as merely a ritual and thus limited to teaching in mosques or during religious slots in school.

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<sup>3</sup> Naser I Faruqui, "Islam and Water Management, Overview and Principles," in Naser I Faruqui, Asit K Biswas Murad J Bino (Eds.), *Water Management in Islam*, United Nations University Press and MDC Publishers Sdn Bhd, pp. 1-32, at p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Falkenmark, M, *Wilful Neglect of Water: Pollution – A Major Barrier To Overcome*, Stockholm International Water Institute Waterfront, Stockholm, 1998.

## PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE PRESENT POLICY

There are media reports almost every day about the effect of irresponsible human acts varying from littering to the collapse of building. Of course, there are many possible causes of those acts ranging from men's attitudes, lack of legal enforcement to natural disasters. Nonetheless, it is generally thought that human neglect is the main cause. Malaysians will never forget the case of Highland Towers which collapsed in 1993.<sup>5</sup> This was a case which really reflected human misbehaviour, lack of professionalism, greed and the complacent attitude of those in authority.

The record does not end with the sad case of Highland Towers alone. Two more cases involving the same issue i.e. landslide and development of hilly areas also occurred in the same area a few years after the Highland Towers' incident. This shows how weak the administration and the enforcement were by those in authority.<sup>6</sup> Landslides, flashfloods, earthquakes, air and river pollution and intoxicating fumes are examples of the result of irresponsible human action. The problems go on. There is no assurance or guarantee provided by any party to assure that the same will not happen in the future. Does this occur due to lack of laws? Definitely not. Malaysia is quite advanced in terms of law and legislation. Unfortunately, we lack enforcement. It is common that action only comes after complaints. That's why we cannot simply dismiss the contribution of the media in ensuring good governance and enforcement of matters pertaining to the environment. Thus, it is now accepted that apart from stricter laws, education is the best way to solve the problems. On this basis, Islam has laid down some guidelines for preparing the framework as discussed below.

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<sup>5</sup> For more detailed facts, read, *Steven Phoa Cheng Loon & Ors v Highland Properties Sdn Bhd & Ors* [2000] 3 AMR 3567 (High Court).

<sup>6</sup> The latest Federal Court decision in the Highland Towers case ruled that the local authority are immune by virtue of Section 102 of the Local Authority Act 1976.

## PRE-REQUISITES FOR ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS FRAMEWORK

### 1. **Belief in Allah (*swt*) as a foundation for an environmental framework**

The concept of environment in Islam emanates from the idea that mankind, being God's best creation, is ordered to submit to Allah (*swt*) at all times and in all circumstances.<sup>7</sup> Moving on this premise, as a human being, it is part of the Muslim's duty to create Islamic surrounding. It is also part of his duty to preserve them. He is answerable to Allah (*swt*) for all his actions. It is generally accepted that law alone is insufficient to solve issues on the environment. In this respect, man is always blamed as the main cause of destruction. The law seems to be a toothless tool for certain people and for some, money can buy everything including enforcement officers. Thus, law is always resorted to as the last solution to problems. It is submitted that religious teaching emphasising the existence of God will lay the foundations to solve the problem. In a multiracial country like Malaysia, this concept is vital in order to initiate a common approach towards this issue. For the Muslims, the approach is considered part of the obligatory duty in their life. The emphasis on the presence of Allah (*swt*) as a Law Giver is an act of calling the people to realise that Islam as a way of life does not leave mankind without guidance. Instead, Islam provides solutions to all aspects of human life.

Without doubt, there are many ways of interpreting the *tawhidic* approach in the environmental domain. In this article, it is proposed that it should start with education. It shall be maintained that education is the most appropriate way of tackling environmental problems in addition to the law which should act as a supporting mechanism for tackling the issue. In this respect, one needs to realise that Allah (*swt*) is present to see and He witnesses and records whatever are the deeds of His creation. Therefore, a true faith or belief in Allah (*swt*) is vital. Again, this process requires a proper way of imparting knowledge. Its foundation is a good system of education based on efficient instrument capable of building awareness among the people. Following this, the schools management and teachers should be made aware of the objective so that they will

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<sup>7</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al An'am* (6):106.

strive to produce students who will practise their knowledge and undertsanding of environment.

The importance of having a correct understanding of Islam and a sincere belief in Allah (*swt*) is more pressing in the legal sphere. Any legal principles will carry no value without implementation. And any implementation of the law is useless and less effective if the people merely choose to follow it for the sake of others except Allah (*swt*). It is submitted that lack of belief in Allah (*swt*) is the main reason for problems such as double standard, hypocrisy and breach of trust. In schools for example, students follow the rules when there are teachers or disciplinary officers' in present. In the absence of these people, they ignore the rules. They fail to appreciate why laws are introduced. Similarly, the enforcement officers and the subjects alike are expected to practise a reasonable degree of trust and honesty. It is mooted in this article that only a true belief in Allah (*swt*) as not only the One and Only God that needs to be submitted to during prayers but also, as Islam teaches us, Allah (*swt*) is also the Guardian, the Protector and the Judge alike. He never sleeps and ever conscious of His creations and knows best what is obvious and what is hidden.

## **2. Allah (*swt*) as the real owner and protector, guardian who witnesses, adjudicates and reckons**

It is argued that the inability to recognise Allah (*swt*) as the Real Owner, and the Creator of this world has contributed to the lack of love to Allah (*swt*)'s creations including the earth and its contents.<sup>8</sup> Al Qur'an has emphasized many a time and in many places that this world belongs to Allah (*swt*) and its existence is for the benefit of Allah (*swt*)'s servants. Al Qur'an also mentions that Allah has created the world and its contents so that His Creations will enjoy them, utilise them and submit to Allah (*swt*) as their Creator. These verses indicate one common

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<sup>8</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Maidah* (5):17 "For to Allah belonged the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between."; *Al Maidah* (5):120 "To Allah doth belong the dominion of all heavens and the earth. And all that is therein, and it is He who has power over all things."; Al Qur'an, *Surah An Nur* (24):32: 42. See also Al Qur'an, *Surah Al An'am* (6):1; Al Qur'an, *Surah An Nisa'* (4):125.

message and affirm the interconnectedness of the teaching with natural order.

It is also noted that in all the above verses Allah (*swt*) asserts that He is the Creator who has created this world and everything inside it. With this creation, it serves as a form of enjoyment for mankind. Thus, it is man's duty to take good care of all of God's creations. Man is free to utilise as well to enjoy the *usufruct* (produce) in his own way guided by the law of Allah (*swt*). For this purpose, Allah (*swt*) selected leaders from mankind so that the leader will understand their immediate needs. Allah (*swt*) appointed Prophets and revealed the Books as a device to convey His message to mankind. Being the Creator, He knows what are the weaknesses of His people, thus He provided them with Prophets and Books as a guidance. The last Book, Al Qur'an *al Kareem* (the respected) exists and remains protected until the Day of the Judgement. Man is reminded a few times in Al Qur'an, to maximise his own mind and judgement in dealing with Allah (*swt*)'s creation on this earth. There are also many verses in Al Qur'an which indicate that Allah (*swt*) has created this world as an infrastructure for mankind.<sup>9</sup>

The verses emphasize the fact that Allah (*swt*) as the best planner created the hills and prepared them to be the backbone of the world. Unfortunately, due to men's greediness, they seek to develop land up to the maximum, forgetting the share of others and the future generation. As a result, lands, hills and mountains have been developed for the fulfilment of one's own needs disregarding other people's share. Similarly, the flora and fauna exist to provide a balanced ecology to the world. Again, unfortunately, men merely appreciate other creatures for their self benefit and interest and take no notice of the fact that all God's creations have a role to play in this world, thus, they need to be preserved.

When Allah (*swt*) mentions that all creations are created as infrastructure, man should realise that it is also his duty to ensure that the very purpose of God's creation must be preserved. Apart from enjoying the benefit, man shoulders the responsibility to maintain God's creation in the manner in which Allah (*swt*) has destined them to be. It must be upheld by all Muslims that it is sinful to purposely damage Allah (*swt*)'s creations or to neglect the duty to take care of Allah (*swt*)'s creations.

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<sup>9</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Luqman*: 20; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Jathiyah*: 12-13; Al Qur'an, *Surah Ibrahim*: 32-34.

### 3. The world and other creations are *amanah* (trust) from Allah

“ It is not a believer, he who cannot fulfill the trust of another ”  
(hadith)

Islamic teaching instills in every man the moral responsibility to manage this world in the best manner. Islam demands good management and transparency in all dealings. There should be no case of monopoly, exploitation of opportunity or abuse of power. Allah (*swt*) hates those who, when they are given a responsibility, misuse it. Men who truly uphold their belief (*tawheed*) should know that responsibility means (*amanah*) trust that comes from Allah (*swt*) thus demands good deeds and accountability. The principle pertaining to *amanah* establishes a tripartite relationship between the Creator, mankind and other creations. The relationship assigns responsibility to mankind who has agreed to shoulder it.<sup>10</sup> In his capacity as vicegerent, the human being is the trustee of the earth. Many verses of the Al Qur'an call for the protection of human beings,<sup>11</sup> plants,<sup>12</sup> water<sup>13</sup> and animals.<sup>14</sup>

### 4. Man enjoys exclusive but not absolute rights

To recall, Allah the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful has created this world and its contents for man to enjoy. Allah (*swt*) emphasizes the benefits and the purpose in many verses.<sup>15</sup> The benefits

<sup>10</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Ahzab* (33):72.

<sup>11</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Maidah*, (5):35; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Isra'* (17):33; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Baqarah* (2):190.

<sup>12</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Nazi'at* (79):31; Al Qur'an, *Surah 'Abasa* (80):23-24; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al An'am* (6):142.

<sup>13</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Anbiya'* (21):30; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Nahl* (16):65; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Rum* (30):24.

<sup>14</sup> Most of the authorities are from the *ahadith* of the Prophet. For examples, see Al Nasa'i, 7/207; See, *hadith* by Abu Dawud, No. 4129.

<sup>15</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Ghashiyah* (88):17; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Nahl* (16):66.



vary from living creatures like animals, plants, fruits, to other non living creatures like rocks, the earth, the sky etc. It is for man to enjoy all the beauties of His creation.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, Allah (*swt*) warns those who misuse or transgress in utilising the bounties.<sup>17</sup> In this respect, Allah (*swt*) through His Prophets provides clear guidelines. For example, there are *ahadith* of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) explaining about ethics of relieving oneself. One should not urinate in still water, a place to relieve oneself must be far away from public areas, should not be close to a place where men rest and take shelter or in the source of water. Islam provides training to develop habits. For example, it is a condition for the *‘ibadah* (ritual) that one who performs *haj* (pilgrimage, the sixth pillar of Islam) or *‘umrah* (small pilgrimage) is prohibited from killing living creatures. He should not kill or destroy or cut down plants or tree.<sup>18</sup> The teaching for the above condition is that no man is allowed to cut down any trees as he likes for no specific purpose. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) said that “Whoever cuts down a lute-tree,<sup>19</sup> Allah (Exalted and Almighty be He) would direct his head to Hell-fire.” All the above authorities remind us that “there is no moving creatures on earth nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book.”<sup>20</sup>

## PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS, POLICIES AND LAWS

### 1. To believe that preserving the environmental balance is a religious duty

It is always a misconception among the people that religion and other forms of human conduct are two different things or should be separated. There is always a fear that peoples who are religious-centred

<sup>16</sup> Al Qur’an, *Surah Al An‘am* (6):99; 141.

<sup>17</sup> Al Qur’an, *Surah Al-Fajr* (89):11-14; Al Qur’an, *Surah Saba’* (34):15-17.

<sup>18</sup> Al Qur’an, *Surah Al Nisa’* (5):95.

<sup>19</sup> Lute trees refers to a plant that grows in the desert, tolerates thirst, resists heat, people rests in its shade, eat its fruits when the travel across the desert, looking for pastures or grass or for other purposes.

<sup>20</sup> Al Qur’an, *Surah Al An‘am* (6):38.

will overlook the importance of life and its mundane matters. It is argued in this article that those views have, to a certain extent, contributed to the present problem of the environment. Though some may look at this argument as being too remote, it is maintained in this paper that the separation between religion and other parts of human activities would produce a member of society who cannot relate and appreciate the relationship between his presence and the world itself.

Therefore, the teaching of Islam upholds that Islam is a way of life and thus should be translated in all aspects of a human's life. Apart from the benefit of enjoying Allah's bounties, men are also promised by Allah rewards for their good deeds. The environment is part of it. Im<sup>2</sup>m Muslim reported on the authority of Jabir (May Allah be pleased with him), that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: "Never a Muslim plants a tree but he has the reward of charity for him; for what is eaten out of that is charity, what is stolen out of that is charity, none incurs a loss to him but it becomes a charity on his part until the Day of Resurrection."<sup>21</sup> In another hadith, it is also mentioned that when a Muslim plants or cultivates a crop, no bird, human being or animal eats from it without being accepted as a rewardable charity for him.<sup>22</sup> Clearly, the authorities illustrate that environmental responsibilities are part of the act of faith.

## 2. Man as vicegerent and trustee

As one of Allah (*swt*)'s creations, man should realise that Allah (*swt*) has created him for a purpose. Many verses in al Qur'an provide for that mission of Allah (*swt*).<sup>23</sup>

The word "*Istikhlaf*" according to *shara'* or the rule of *fiqh* is "to replace," to take care or to supervise or to monitor. Hence, based on this, Allah (*swt*) chooses men to be the *khalifah* or the vicegerent in

<sup>21</sup> *Hadith* reported by Muslim.

<sup>22</sup> Agreed upon from *hadith* of Anas, *Al-Lu'Lu' wa al Marjan*, No 1001.

<sup>23</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Nuur* (25):2; Al Qur'an, *Surah Yunus* (10):5; Al Qur'an, *Surah Hud* (11):61; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al An'am*: 16, Al Qur'an, *Surah Hud* (11):61; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Baqarah* (2):30; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Nuur* (24):55; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Sad* (38):26.

this world. Thus, men's creation is for the purpose of managing this world on trust from Allah (*swt*).<sup>24</sup>

Being Allah's (*swt*) vicegerent in this world, man is given the authority to rule and supervise all matters according to Allah's (*swt*) law. Islam teaches us that being Allah's (*swt*) vicegerent, men are authorised to manage this world as they like provided that they do not exceed the limit laid down by Allah (*swt*). Although, this world and its content belong to Allah (*swt*), mankind is given the right to develop and utilise all the resources to satisfy his needs. For this vision and mission man is always guided by Allah (*swt*) and His Prophet's (p.b.u.h) teachings on how to fulfil his duties.

Based on the premise that all things in this world belong to Allah (*swt*), therefore, it is important to understand that nature actually belongs to Allah (*swt*) and thus it becomes common property for all His creatures. Man's right to use the natural resources is only in the form of utilising or enjoying the usufruct i.e. man can use the property on the understanding that he will not damage, destroy or waste what has been put in his trust. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) once elaborated this by saying "The merit of utilization lies in the benefit it yields, in proportion to its harm."<sup>25</sup>

Given the foregoing, there is a pressing need for a reconsideration of our modes of thinking as well as behaviour towards the environment and pollution problems and the regulations from the Islamic perspectives. Therefore, the prospect of an Islamic environmental education moving from the premise of *tawheed* is desirable. It acts as an effective surveillance and controlling body in regulating our modes of behaviour within a sound environmental line of conduct and belief.

One of the bases of the teachings is to believe that Islam is all encompassing. This principle can be derived from the *kalimah taiyibah of Shahadah* which evidences the submission of oneself to Islam. When a man pronounces his witness of the existence of Allah and the proclamation starts with the negative indication of *La'ilaha'illa Allah Muhammad Rasulallah*, it means that a man denies the existence of

<sup>24</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Mulk* (67):2; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Baqarah* (2):30; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Jathiyah* (45):13; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Mulk* (67):15.

<sup>25</sup> *Hadith* reported by Tirmidhi.

any other gods but Allah (*swt*). His acts will develop a total submission to *Al Rab* i.e. the Creator of this Universe. A correct understanding of his relationship with his Creator is important. Based on that, any man or woman should develop the feeling of conscience and create an environment in which he or she will feel that Allah, the Creator and the Owner of all that she or he is enjoying is actually watching, counting and making a record of all his or her actions, deeds, intentions or even senses. It is also submitted that the ultimate belief in Allah (*swt*) alone would eventually develop the feelings of obedience and love for Allah (*swt*) and fear of Allah's (*swt*) punishment and help people to strive in the path of Allah (*swt*). Islam teaches us beyond rules and laws. It encompasses man's conscience and prescribes accountability to his Lord. Law is a mere tool but the goal statement depends on one's belief in God.

### 3. Accountability and judgement in the day of hereafter

A Muslim believes that life does not end with his death. Life continues and he will be answerable even after he dies. In fact, the real Day of Judgement commence from his life after death. Thus, this belief will make the Muslim realise his role as a human being who has duties towards his fellow men as well as his Creator. He will become a person who always regards his responsibility as a religious duty. He is accountable to Allah (*swt*) in this world and in the Hereafter. Performing the duties will no more be an act of achieving personal goals but rather a religious duty and a manifestation of faith. A good Muslim will never dare to do a mischievous act because it is an act that is against the commands of his Lord.

The belief in reward and punishment in the Hereafter is a pillar of the faith. The reward and penalty system is designed to induce good deeds rather than evil actions. Thus, Allah the Almighty has promised multiple rewards for one good deed while a bad deed will be counted as one only. God, as the owner of everything in the earth, is also the Supreme Manager who has the power to determine and change things according to His wishes. It is His promise that He will reward those who are faithful in spiritual and physical ways.<sup>26</sup> Muslims should never count the

<sup>26</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Shura* (42):26; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Nisa'* (4):145-147.

rewards of Allah (*swt*) in worldly things alone. However, the rewards may come either in today's life or the after life. In this world the rewards may appear in the form of happiness, peace of mind, a beautiful and healthy body, bounties and the notion of sustenance. While in the Hereafter, Muslims believe that Allah (*swt*) will put them in heaven to live happily ever after. Similarly, Muslims also believe that apart from a test from Allah (*swt*), natural disasters could also be a kind of punishment from Allah (*swt*) which carries the message that there are among His creation those who have transgressed Allah's (*swt*) rule. Nevertheless, the punishment shall not only affect the transgressor but also the non transgressor. Thus, all must make an effort to remind each other and this is translated in the concept of *amr ma'ruf nahy munkar* (to call for good deeds and depart evil acts) propagated by Islam. Islam never tolerates an individualistic attitude. Islam promotes nation and unity. The teaching of Islam transcends the physical boundaries and nations.

#### **4. Balance between public interest and private interest**

A Muslim is always reminded of his duties towards other Muslims, the *ummah* (the nation), his country and to his Creator. Every Muslim is asked to accomplish his role justly and is always reminded of the need to giving priority to public interest rather than himself or his individual interest. Thus, besides *ilm* or knowledge, man should have good management in administering his duties in this world. He should balance his needs individually as a human being and his role as the servant of Allah (*swt*) who holds the trust of serving the *ummah*. For example, man values the importance of the oil industry to the development of any nation nowadays. However, his personal objective should not override the needs of the nation for a clean and healthy environment. Therefore, the development should be carried out with careful research on the impact of the activities or the society. No development should be carried out if the benefit would only be enjoyed by the minority while the majority is left suffering from the bad impact of the development.

In exercising this balance, Islam suggests that the priority or importance of a thing can be determined based on five things i.e *Din* (religion), life, family, *aqal* (mind) and *mal* (property). The Muslim jurists have reached a consensus on the priority of interest of *al-din* in comparison to others since it represents the interest of the *ummah* as a

whole. The belief that Islam only confined to personal affairs would, to a certain extent produce an individualistic society. In the end, people tend to forget their roles in society.

In relation to the above, Islam emphasises the purpose of creation of the human being. Allah (*swt*) explains:

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Besides that, al Ghazali and al Shatibi have laid down the purpose of the law as two types i.e *dini* (religious) or the purposes of the Hereafter and *dunyawi* (worldly affairs) or purposes pertaining to this world.<sup>28</sup> Muslims are advised to reach a balance between the two, and under certain circumstances, the purpose of religion must be upheld.

The Muslim jurists have introduced various principles in order to uphold public interest. One of them is known as *al masalih al mursalah* which is based on the concept of *maslahah ʿammah* (public interest). According to S.Mahmassani,<sup>29</sup> three conditions are attached to the adoption of this principle; firstly, that the interest to be considered must relate to matters of transactions so that interests involved may be construed on the ground of reasons. The case should not be one relating to religious observances. Secondly, the interest should be in harmony with the spirit of the *Shariʿah* (Islamic injunctions). Thirdly, the interest should be essential and necessary and not for the sake of luxury. Thus, the rules pertaining to prohibition on littering is part of an effort on the basis of *maslahah ʿammah*.

## 5. Practice of *shura* or mutual consultation

*Shura* means consultation. Consultation in Islam means involving members of the society in all aspects of policy, management and accountability. If they face any conflict or are unsure of certain things,

<sup>27</sup> Al Qur'an, *Al Dhariyat* (51):52.

<sup>28</sup> Imran Ahsan Khan Nyzee, *Theories of Islamic Law, Islamic Publication, Islamabad*, 1994, p. 238.

<sup>29</sup> Mahmassani, S, *Falsafah al-Tashriʿ fi al-Islam*, Farhat J Ziadeh, (translator), 1987, Hizbi Publication, Malaysia, p. 88.

thus they should practice consultation or *shura* in order to reach to a majority opinion. With the process, all have agreed to be responsible for any good or bad impact out of the decision made by them collectively. There should be no issue of responsibility to be solely shouldered by certain persons when the decision was made based on consultation with the relevant experts in the field. Nowadays, the role of *shura* seems prevalent. Advanced technologies produce new inventions which sometimes go beyond the scope of the previous authorities. In this situation, the role of consultative bodies is to immediately provide answers to the problem. The *ummah* has, at the same time a duty to follow and adhere to any consultative decision reached by the bodies and the decision will stand as a guideline for Muslims as a whole, until it is overruled by a new decision made based on new evidences or facts.

## 6. Islam emphasises moral responsibility

Among the factors that preserve the Muslim's consciousness and prevent it from extinction are the Muslim's conscience and awareness of his responsibilities or shortcomings. Islam precribes that man's consciousness must mirror his belief in Allah. One submits to Allah (*swt*), the One and Only. Based on this premise, moral responsibility develops and grows in oneself. The feeling should stand on its own without any need for an external observer to monitor it. The feeling is internally injected through the flow of *iman* (faith) transcending and flowing into the heart from man's brain.

The principle of responsibility also differs from the principle of *khilafah*. For *khilafah*, the purpose for it develops man's moral responsibility for his role and for any decisions he makes in undertaking it.<sup>30</sup> By using his will and abilities to realize the purpose of his existence, the Muslim carries out his responsibility honestly and thus secures his place in the Hereafter. If he uses his will and ability for any purpose other than those for which they were created, for oppression and corruption, he will fail in his responsibility, violate the honour of his duties and defeat the purpose of his existence in this world.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, 1997, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, translated by Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo, IIIT, 1401, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, p. 76.

## 7. Islam promotes the concept of *ihsan*

It is reported in the *Forty Hadith*<sup>32</sup> that, as reported by Ibn ʿUmar, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was asked about what *ihsan* is? He answered, it means to worship as if you see Allah, and if you cannot feel that you can see Him, you must believe that Allah is watching you. In another *hadith*, the Prophet s.a.w provides examples about *ihsan*. The beloved Apostle (p.b.u.h.) said that God had prescribed doing what is beautiful (to your level best) for everything. For example, when one kills, one must kill beautifully, one should sharpen one's blade so that the victim is quickly relieved from pain.<sup>33</sup> In another *hadith* the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) emphasized *ihsan* and said that verily Allah has decreed that everything should be done in a good way<sup>34</sup> and Allah loves one who performs an act in perfect manner (*ihsan*).<sup>35</sup> In other words, the best key performance indicator for a Muslim is the the consciousness about the presence of Allah (*swt*) in his environment.

## 8. Islam promotes thrifty and abhor spendrift

Islam propagates moderation in all aspects of life. This is in line with the belief that life is a temporary shelter for all beings. The eternal life lies in the Hereafter. Thus, Islam promotes moderation and discourages greed. The belief in the day of judgement would minimise the feeling of selfish, obsessiveness and monopoly. Nevertheless, the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) wants his people to strive in all matters and pray for the best.

Each Muslim is an environmentalist. An environmentalist should propagate the minimum consumption of natural resources and maximum benefit for the people.<sup>36</sup> For example, Islam teaches us that one should

<sup>32</sup> <http://fortyhadith.iiu.edu.my/retrieved> on 16/May/2006.

<sup>33</sup> *Mishkat Al Masaabih*, vol.2 , p. 169.

<sup>34</sup> Reported by Muslim on the authority of Shaddad Ibn ʿAus.

<sup>35</sup> Reported by Al-Baihaqi in his Book "*Branches of Iman*," on the authority of ʿA'shah, *Sahih Al Jami' Al Saghir*, No. 1880.

<sup>36</sup> In a *hadith* the Prophet said "eat, drink, pay charity (*Sadaqah*), and wear clothes so long as neither extravagance nor pride is mixed up with it." Reported by Ahmad, Al Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, Al Hakim on th authority



be moderate even when taking ablution in a running streams.<sup>37</sup> The conscience must always be alert and the rules remain unless in a very exceptional circumstances. During the difficulties, Islam guides us to make decisions based on the objectives of the *Shari'ah* (*maqasid al shari'ah*) i.e. to protect religion, life, intellect, lineage and property.

There are two ways of looking of the problems. Some writers view that the present environmental crisis is caused by the human's evil acts, ignorance, individualistic and lack of consciousness of the importance of the environment and its contributions to human life and activities.

The other relates to the physical factors such as mismanagement, abuse of power, greediness and individualistic attitude. It is argued in this paper that both causes stand equally as the main contributors to environmental problems in this country as well as in the world in general. Although problems pertaining to the environment have been accepted as a universal issue, the awareness of these problems and its effects on the whole world is still poor especially in developing countries.

It is believed that the ecological imbalances that we are facing today occur due to the fact that some people use very scarce resources wastefully and forget to give the nature the opportunity to reproduce whatever has been taken out of it.<sup>38</sup> The laws of nature are based on its own rhythm thus it is our role to manage our business in accordance with the rhythm. Performing our tasks in line with the rules of nature is a virtue in Islam. It is part of the *'ibadah* to Allah (*swt*). Good deeds are highly regarded and repeatedly emphasized by Allah (*swt*) and His Prophets (p.b.u.h).<sup>39</sup>

There should be a balance between the love for nature and needs for the development for the people. The basis of this balance must come

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of Ibn 'Amr, and classified as Good, *Sahih Al Jami' Al Saghir*, No. 4505.

<sup>37</sup> See for example a hadith narrated by Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Ibn Habban and Al-Hakim that the Prophet (s.a.w) said that "There will be a people amongst this Ummah who will transgress in their supplication and ablution." In another hadith the Prophet said that "whoever increases [more than three times] he does injustice and wrong." hadith narrated by Muslim.

<sup>38</sup> Fazlun Khalid & Joanne O'Brien, *Islam and Ecology*, 1992, Cassel Publishers Ltd.

<sup>39</sup> Al Qur'an, *Ali 'Imran* (3): 104.

with knowledge. The knowledge must be based on obligation and love for the Creator. This is the first requirement in developing environmental awareness in Islam. To prepare an Islamic environment is very crucial so that each member of the community is aware of his duty to take care of the environment. Man must realize that he owes this duty to Allah (*swt*) and he will be answerable for any act against it in the Hereafter.

Islam permits development. Allah (*swt*) allows man to utilize whatever the creation of Allah (*swt*) in this earth. But at the same time Islam reminds us about the effects of greed and wastefulness. It is sinful to cause pollution in whatever manner. The teaching of Islam move from a commandment to ensure cleanliness and purification before a Muslim can fulfil his obligation towards Allah (*swt*). Before a Muslim can perform his five prayers, it is a condition for him to take his ablution. A Muslim's ablution is not acceptable by Allah (*swt*) unless and until he cleanses himself from any filthy thing. Islam also emphasises the importance of inner purification. Therefore, before any Muslim performs his *'ibadah* or submission to Allah (*swt*), he must clear his mind of any worldly matter or an unclean mind.

## **9. Pure and clean sources of income**

Any government has a duty to ensure that the people are paid and maintained using pure and clear sources of income. This means, the source of income must be acquired in a proper manner and identified sources. It is not sufficient that the source is legal but, it must also be morally and ethically acceptable. It requires transparent financial management. It should be based on a belief that clean resources will produce a healthy nation. Moral decadence and crimes might be rooted in the ill-gotten sources of income. Islam also believes that clean money will create a healthy mind and body. On the other hand, ill-gotten sources of income will affect the well-being of the people which could be seen in terms of happiness in life, peace of mind as well as healthy offspring. An ailing mind will hinder the person from thinking wisely, as a result, youngsters will turn to vandalism or crime as a way to react to their mayhem and confused state of mind. Sometimes, an act that goes against the rules will be their way to demonstrate their protest towards the people around them. Hence, the Islamic environment concept covers wider scope ranging from safe, clean and healthy surroundings, family, institutions as

well as the good governance of a state. In a nutshell, it should start from as simple as simple as identifying the source of food taken into the stomach up to the source of income disbursed by the government to its people.

## **10. *SIYASAH AL SHAR'IYYAH* is part of the laws and thus requires observation and adherence**

Many policies, laws and campaigns promoting for preservation of the environment have been implemented and introduced. The purpose of these policies and laws is for the betterment of the *ummah*. In this respect, Islam entrusts the leaders and managers to be responsible for ensuring good management of the environment. Thus, the job-scope works both ways i.e. top-down and bottom-up. The principle is that an employer has a duty to ensure that staff are well trained and qualified. The ruler is also entrusted to make sure that all duties are carried out by a good and qualified person. The commitment of these people towards establishing good laws and policies pertaining to the environment requires support from all walks of life. In this line of argument, the spirit of loving your country (*'asabiyyah*) is very much encouraged. It is also submitted that a *tawhidic* approach would internally instill the belief and sow a sense of responsibility in the people as to the importance of preserving the environment.

The environment, including the earth, its contents such as water, the sky, the trees, the hills and animals comprises social or communal goods. It is not a property of a person only but Allah has also ordained it as public property. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) has been reported to have said that Muslim shares in three things, pasture, water and fire (energy).<sup>40</sup> In this respect, it is submitted that a proper and clear policy pertaining to this is vital. Men need to be reminded and guided especially in matters pertaining to wealth and property. In the event of any conflict, public interest should always prevail against private interest.

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Abu Dawud, 3470.

## 11. Islam promotes good *Akhlaq* in all matters

*Akhlaq* (good behaviour) and good morals should form the basis of an Islamic environment. Good *akhlaq* emanates from a strong belief of faith and a deep understanding of moral and cultural values. Good *akhlaq* and good morals must be translated in practical life. It is not a concept that should be nicely kept in a book or displayed in a frame. It is a manifestation of a good understanding of Islam as a way of life. It also transpires from a proper understanding of the teaching of Al Qur'an and *Al Sunnah*. In respect of the environment, good *akhlaq* is a component of human capital. It profits last and has no end so long as the people understand and firmly hold to the belief in Allah and practise the teachings of Islam correctly. The concept of *akhlaq* was explained by the Prophet s.a.w in the *Forty Hadith* compiled by Imam Nawawi. Hadith No. 2<sup>41</sup> specifically reflects the wide concept of *akhlaq* in Islam. The values extend even to the process of killing or eating animal. Nevertheless, a Muslim is required to do good deeds. The expectation is certainly more and higher in the area of the environment that covers matters beyond individual needs alone. The communal interest takes priority and is a matter of prior concern.

## 12. Mischievous acts are prohibited

Allah (*swt*) has reminded us not to do mischief in this world.<sup>42</sup> *Fasad* or mischief literally means spoiling the natural order,<sup>43</sup> taking something unjustly and unfairly.<sup>44</sup> *Fasad* also refers to anything that spoils the proper functioning of current (natural) regulations of the terrestrial (world) regardless of whether it is based on the choice of certain people

<sup>41</sup> <http://fortyhadith.iiu.edu.my/> retrieved on 16/May/2006.

<sup>42</sup> In Al Qur'an, *Surah al Baqarah*:11 Allah says "Make not mischief on the earth"; Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Rum* (30): 41 Allah (*swt*) reminds us that "Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the deed) that the hands of men have earned, that (God) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from evil).

<sup>43</sup> Al Qur'an and Its Translation, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1997 (New Ed).

<sup>44</sup> Al Munjid, 1994, *Qamus al Munjid* (Retrieving Dictionary) 34<sup>th</sup> Ed., Dar al Mashareq, Beirut.

or not. *Fasad* creates imbalance in the pleasant life of a human.<sup>45</sup> It is also mentioned in the context of land and sea.<sup>46</sup> However, it is submitted that the notion of *fasad* encompasses other components of the ecosystem that exist in this world. Thus, any act which degrades, exploits or damages any environmental resources would constitute mischief and is cursed by Allah (*swt*). The right to use and enjoy the universe and the earth is only to the extent that they are needed by the human being and no more.<sup>47</sup> Muslims who commit mischief are regarded as sinners. Moreover, it is also considered as conduct that amounts to breaking God's covenant after it is ratified.<sup>48</sup>

There can be no exploitation, hoarding or monopoly of any resources without the culprit being cursed by Allah (*swt*) and promised suitable punishment in this earth and in the Hereafter.

## PROPOSED APPROACHES

### EDUCATION SYSTEM: CHANGE OF COURSE CONTENT AND APPROACHES

It is proposed that there should be proper a syllabus on the environment in schools with special emphasis on the religious aspects of the environment. The subject should cover all students from various backgrounds and religions. The true fact about Muslim and knowledge is that many Muslims are ignorant of their own teachings of Islam. Not many are aware that Islam calls for the protection of animals and plants.<sup>49</sup> Any religious teaching would agree that God is the real owner

<sup>45</sup> Tabtaba'i, M.H, 1973, *Al Mizan fi Tafsir al Qur'an* [The tempered interpretation of the Koran], vol.16, Al Alami Library, Beirut. In Hussein A. Amery (ed.), "Islam and the Environment" in Naser I Faruqui, Asit K Biswas, Murad J Bino, *Water Management in Islam*, United Nations University Press, pp. 39-48, 41.

<sup>46</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Al Rum* (30):41.

<sup>47</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah Ta Ha* (20):81.

<sup>48</sup> Al Qur'an, *Surah al Baqarah* (2):27.

<sup>49</sup> See Al Qur'an, *Surah Ali 'Imran* (3) 191, *Al An'am*:38; *Al Isra'*: 44. In *Mishkat al-Masabih*, vol. 1, p. 329, a prostitute was reported by the Prophet (s.a.w) as entering paradise for her virtues in providing drink for a thirsty dog.

of this world who witnesses all and all of God's creatures will be answerable for their misconduct. In this relation, therefore, all students will have the same opportunity to learn the basic foundations of environmental education either under the civics or moral subjects as well as religious subject. However, this paper will only address Islamic teaching as a basis for inculcating awareness among the Muslims of environmental problems in Malaysia.

The approach proposed for adoption is to fully utilise the moral and religious classes as a proper avenue for imparting awareness and education on environment. The syllabus must be planned so as to incorporate a new subject which lays the emphasis on God consciousness during every minute of life. The awareness would certainly solve many other disciplines and lack of ethical values in the workplace. Indirectly, the teaching will be able to create a thrust in one's life. It is a credit to the Muslim *ummah* when all the key players in the environment such as teachers, policy makers or legal persons knows how to play their role effectively within the scope of their jobs and responsibilities.

## **POLICY AND LAWS**

The policy maker, the legislator and the enforcement agencies must understand on the basic paradigm of the Islamic concept of environment. With that understanding, it should be clearly stipulated in a written form in whatever relevant and suitable format in the respective resources. It is suggested that the teaching and implementation should be translated and prepared in a well accepted universal forms i.e. the work ethics, the policy guidelines, the law, the procedures as well as the theme and motto in the workplace. The implementation certainly requires an integrated approach from all relevant parties and it will be made possible only by having one standard framework that shares one common understanding of the subject matter. Practically, the implementation should take place in an institution or society that upholds the basic paradigm of Islamic environment. In this respect, Islamic institutions, schools, government bodies and agencies, or any agencies can support the framework. Islamic law provides a basis of ethics in Islam. All acts are ethically categorised as obligatory, recommended, indifferent or permissible and reprehensible but not forbidden. This categorisation reflects the details of the Islamic law in dealing with ethics.

Islam is declared as the religion of the Federation.<sup>50</sup> There have been many discussion about the impact of this declaration on Malaysian citizen, Muslims and non-Muslims. It is important to understand that Islam should be the basis of all policies and laws and the rights of non Muslim should be determined in line with this provision. The non-Muslims should respect and accept any universal values of Islam unless proven to be contadictory to their religious teachings and the principles of human rights. In this article, it is submitted that the religious approach, which requires emphasis on the presence of God while imparting and educating people, is certainly a universal concept and should never contradict any religious value practised in this country.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the *tawhidic* or religious approach as repeatedly mentioned earlier, must be carried out through education and be sustained by legal means. As such, the effort should start with the change of mindset among the teachers, policy makers as well as leaders. Laws would certainly help to ensure that pigheaded people will not escape easily. The approach in teaching on the environment, which in most cases reminds people of the effect of going against the law and its penalty, should now focus more on man's duty towards his God and other human beings to ensure that everybody enjoys equal rights pertaining to the environment. Rights of the future people lie in the hands of the present leaders and policy makers. Thus a person who ignores the environment is not only committing a sin but also depriving others' rights to a clean and healthy life today and tomorrow.

It is proposed in this paper that the foundation of the education lies in a true belief in Allah (*swt*) and the right teachings of Islam. The education provides a balance between individual rights and public interest. Individually, man owes a duty to Allah and also to the public at large. Thus laws play a role to ensure that man fulfils his responsibilities honestly. It is necessary to have a uniform approach in law, policy and implementation for an effective environmental framework. Similarly, laws will also provide support to ensure that the results of the education systems are properly observed.

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Article 3 of the Federal Constitution.