# Intellectual Discourse

# *Intellectual Discourse*

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*Intellectual Discourse* is abstracted in *SCOPUS, ProQuest, International Political Science Abstracts, Peace Research Abstracts Journal, Muslim World Book Review, Bibliography of Asian Studies, Index Islamicus, Religious and Theological Abstracts, ATLA Religion Database, MyCite, ISC* and *EBSCO*.

# Intellectual Discourse
## Vol. 32, No. 1, 2024

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# Transliteration Table: Consonants

| Arabic | Roman | | Arabic | Roman |
|--------|-------|---|--------|-------|
| ب | b | | ط | ṭ |
| ت | t | | ظ | ẓ |
| ث | th | | ع | ʻ |
| ج | j | | غ | gh |
| ح | ḥ | | ف | f |
| خ | kh | | ق | q |
| د | d | | ك | k |
| ذ | dh | | ل | l |
| ر | r | | م | m |
| ز | z | | ن | n |
| س | s | | ه | h |
| ش | sh | | و | w |
| ص | ṣ | | ء | ʼ |
| ض | ḍ | | ي | y |

# Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

| Arabic | Roman | | Arabic | Roman |
|--------|-------|---|--------|-------|
| ◌َ | a | | ◌َا، ◌َى | an |
| ◌ُ | u | | ◌ُّو | un |
| ◌ِ | i | | ◌ِّي | in |
| ◌َا، ◌ٰ، ◌َى، | ā | | ◌َوْ | aw |
| ◌ُو | ū | | ◌َيْ | ay |
| ◌ِي | ī | | ◌ُّو | uww, ū (in final position) |
| | | | ◌ِّي | iyy, ī (in final position) |

*Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: http://rotas.iium.edu.my*

# Averting the Existential Threat of the Planet: Islamic Environmental Ethics to Address the Contemporary Environmental Crisis

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**Md. Saidul Islam**\*\*

**Abstract:** This research paper explores Islamic Environmental Ethics (IEE), emphasising collective human responsibilities to manage environmental resources and protect the universe from functional degradation. It provides an overview of Islam and modern environmental discourse, aiming to offer a holistic perspective on IEE that encompasses Islamic faith, Islamic religious law, and Islamic ethics. The study is significant as it provides a moral framework and responsibility for humans to avert the existential threat to our planet. Focusing on a comprehensive methodological approach, it addresses the adoption of IEE in the Muslim world and beyond. Utilising an integrative literature review methodology, the paper synthesises diverse theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and sociocultural and political developments. This approach creates a cohesive body of knowledge that is theoretically robust, incorporating intersectional analyses of social, economic, and cultural factors within Muslim communities. The article concludes with three suggestions: capacity building, good governance, and collaboration.

**Keywords**: Environment, Ecological Crisis, Integrative Literature Review Methodology, Islamic Environmental Ethics, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*

**Abstrak:** Kertas penyelidikan ini membincangkan Etika Persekitaran Islam (IEE), menekankan tanggungjawab kolektif untuk mengurus sumber alam

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sekitar dan melindungi alam semesta daripada kerosakan fungsinya, dan memberikan gambaran keseluruhan Islam dan wacana alam sekitar di arus moden. Matlamat kertas kerja ini adalah untuk menyediakan pembaca dengan perspektif holistik tentang IEE yang meliputi akidah Islam, Undang-undang Islam, dan akhlak.  Kajian ini penting kerana ia menyediakan manusia dengan unsur moral dan tanggungjawab terhadap ancaman kewujudan planet ini. Kertas kerja ini memberi tumpuan kepada pendekatan metodologi yang komprehensif untuk perlaksanaan IEE di dunia Islam. Kaedah yang digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah metodologi kajian literatur integratif yang mensintesis pelbagai perspektif teori, penemuan empirikal, politik dan sosiobudaya. Ia mewujudkan satu badan pengetahuan yang padu yang secara teorinya kukuh dengan menggabungkan analisis persimpangan isu-isu yang bersilang faktor sosial, ekonomi dan budaya dalam masyarakat Islam. Artikel ini diakhiri dengan tiga cadangan iaitu pembinaan kapasiti, tadbir urus yang baik dan kerjasama.

**Kata kunci:** Alam Sekitar, Krisis Ekologi, Etika Alam Sekitar Islam, Metodologi Kajian Literatur Integratif, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*

## Introduction

Our planet is undergoing radical environmental and social changes. Environmental sustainability is now being questioned in terms of consumption patterns, loss of biodiversity, resource depletion, and imbalanced and exploitative power relations (Islam, 2013; Islam and Hossain, 2016). On a global scale, humans on a daily basis consume 54% of the accessible runoff water, mine more materials than natural erosion processes replace, add over 100 million tons of carbon to the atmosphere, destroy 180 square miles of tropical rain forest, create over 60 square miles of desert, eliminate at least 74 animal or plant species, erode 70 to 80 million tons of topsoil, and add approximately 1,400 tons of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) to the stratosphere, causing various cancers and other health problems (Frey, 2001; Islam, 2013). Given the apparent ecological and social limits to globalisation and development, the current levels of consumption are unsustainable, inequitable, and inaccessible to the majority of humans today (Islam and Hossain, 2016; McMichael, 2017).

One apparent environmental crisis is known as the ecological climacteric, which is a result of liberalisation and development that includes exploitation of Southern resources, massive population displacements, and elimination of staple foods for subsistence dwellers,

who make up most of the world (McMichael, 2017). The depletion of
our physical environment is directly connected to the current neoliberal
modernity, in which 1 million acres disappear annually due to urban-
industrial development, 2 million acres of farmland are lost annually due
to erosion, soil salinisation, and flooding or soil saturation by intensive
agriculture, which consumes groundwater 160 percent faster than it can
be replenished, 80 countries experience severe water shortages with
more than 1 billion people lacking clean water, and by 2025, 2/3 of the
world's people will face water stress (Islam, 2013; McMichael, 2017).
One of the long-term impacts of neoliberal modernity is rupturing
humans' long-term relationship with nature and society that, along with
other factors, pose an existential threat to this planet (Islam, 2013; Islam
and Hossain, 2016; McMichael, 2017).

Given the contemporary environmental challenges affecting
millions worldwide, it is imperative for Muslims to refer to Islamic
sources, such as the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the works of Muslim
scholars like Al-Faruqi, Osman Bakar, Hashim Kamali, and Seyyed
Hossein Nasr. These sources help conceptualise an ethical framework
to halt and reverse the planet's destruction. Islam's stance on sustainable
development is rooted in its principle of recognising the ecosystem's
unlimited capacity to support life. Fundamentally, Islamic teachings
guide land development and human activities, forming the basis of
Islamic ethical principles (Bakar, 2007; Helfaya et al., 2018; Gade,
2019). The Islamic view of human development and economic growth
is not driven by the exploitation of natural and social resources, market
controls, or technological misuse. Governments are responsible for
distributing natural resources, while social institutions must preserve
ecological spheres, with both working towards sustainable development
goals.

Islam regards the Earth's resources and wealth as divine gifts,
emphasising the collective human responsibility to manage these
resources and protect the universe (ʿālam) from functional degradation.
The universe offers humans boundless ideas for governance, with
intellect (ʿaql) serving as a crucial tool guiding human actions on
Earth. Islamic teachings on the environment and their associated ethical
principles align with the concepts of balance (mīzān) and moderation
(Khan and Haneef, 2022). Furthermore, Islamic jurisprudence provides

guidance to social institutions on environmental ethics, stressing the importance of avoiding harm (*ḍarar*) to the Earth (Karia, 2022).

"Al-Mīzān: A Covenant for the Earth," published in 2019 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and leading organisations and scholars, offers a foundational overview of the role of faith in environmental stewardship but lacks a clear focus on contemporary applications in the Muslim world. Similarly, Gada (2024) delves into the theoretical foundations of environmental ethics in Islam but does not propose practical solutions to adapt to socio-economic changes in the Muslim world. Kamali (2016) provides an in-depth examination of the Islamic jurisprudence framework, emphasising the higher objectives of the *Sharī'ah*, yet overlooks the socio-cultural aspects of its adoption. Helfaya and Hanafi (2018) highlight the theological perspective and Quranic ethics in business, mentioning ethical elements without addressing the intersection of environmental justice within and between Muslim communities. Khan and Haneef (2022), on the other hand, discuss the role of Islamic ethics in the economic sphere, but neglect integrated socio-political factors and environmental practices in Islamic countries. These studies largely overlook the methodological aspects necessary for developing a comprehensive and actionable framework for Islamic environmental ethics.

The current research on Islamic Environmental Ethics (IEE) showcases its strength through an integrative literature review method, synthesising diverse theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and sociocultural political spheres to address gaps left by previous studies. This approach combines the strengths of earlier research, creating a cohesive body of knowledge that is both theoretically robust and practically relevant to the contemporary Muslim world. By consolidating foundational insights from Muslim scholars and supportive elements from other works, this research bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering a nuanced understanding of how IEE can inform environmental policies. For this, we outline the limitations of modern environmentalism in the second section (below) and then discuss Islamic perspectives on the current ecological crisis in the third section. The fourth section details Islamic Environmental Ethics (IEE), focusing on three fundamental principles: faith, Islamic religious law, and Islamic ethics. The final section concludes by explaining how IEE can help avert

the existential threat to our planet by restoring humanity and enhancing the relationship between humans and the environment.

## Islam and Modern Environmental Discourse

This section addresses the contemporary ecological crisis, highlighting key events that have created a rift between humans and nature and emphasising the importance of reconnecting humanity with the Creator, God. It explores the limitations of modern environmentalism, which often fails to challenge the mindset driving the ongoing destruction of our planet. Crucially, it reminds us that the crisis is deeply rooted in humanity's egocentric relationship with nature, lacking a fundamental connection to the Creator of nature itself. By examining these factors, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of the spiritual and ethical dimensions necessary for addressing environmental challenges.

Human societies exist within a world shaped by businesses and enterprises that have collectively constructed powerful socioeconomic spheres, political administrations, and the built environment. With the advent of neoliberal modernity, there is potential for further expansion of our living landscapes. Humans, endowed with technological prowess and collective commitment, possess the means to alter the state of the world. This human intelligence has led to unprecedented progress, rendering societal systems increasingly complex and unpredictable. The main concern in this era of modernity is that it poses significant risks to the modern environment and the social fabric. The rapid advancements and changes have the potential to cause irreversible impacts, threatening both ecological balance and social cohesion (Ardelt, 2004; Aljayyousi, 2016). This necessitates a critical evaluation of our current trajectory and the development of sustainable practices to safeguard our planet and societies for future generations.

The profound crisis threatening human existence and the entire fabric of life on Earth is disrupting communities worldwide. In response, there has been a rise in modern discourse on environmentalism. Scholars have developed various frameworks to understand the complex interactions between societies and the environment, drawing on a broad base of indigenous knowledge, religious principles, and social practices (Mistry and Andrea, 2016; Mu et al., 2016). However, a dominant inclination toward anthropocentrism persists in many of these frameworks, emphasising human-centred perspectives and often

overlooking the intrinsic value of the natural world (Dunlap and Catton, 2015). This anthropocentric view limits our ability to fully address the environmental crisis, as it prioritises human needs and desires over ecological balance and the well-being of all life forms. To effectively tackle the environmental challenges we face, it is essential to incorporate more holistic approaches that recognise the interdependence of humans and the environment. This includes integrating ecological perspectives that value the natural world for its own sake and fostering a deeper sense of stewardship and responsibility towards the planet. By moving beyond anthropocentrism, we can develop more sustainable and ethical practices that support the long-term health of both human societies and the Earth.

Human dominance frequently centres people within a complex network of systems, influencing discussions around economic advancements, financial resources, and cutting-edge technology. This anthropocentric ideology suggests that solving environmental problems primarily depends on technical knowledge, which disproportionately affects societies in the global south where access to advanced technology is limited (Buttel, 1987; Harding, 1998; Davey, 2009). Moreover, modern environmental discourse often overlooks the deeper, systemic issues such as the metabolic rift between humans and nature, and the alienation from our Creator, God. This disconnect is a critical aspect of environmental sustainability. The metabolic rift refers to the disruption of natural cycles and the degradation of ecosystems due to human activities, which modern discussions frequently neglect. Similarly, the spiritual dimension, which involves recognising and respecting the divine creation and our role as stewards of the Earth, is often missing from contemporary environmental conversations. Addressing these gaps requires a shift from a purely technical approach to one that integrates ecological, spiritual, and ethical considerations. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of all life and the spiritual responsibility to care for our planet, we can foster a more holistic and sustainable approach to environmental stewardship. This broader perspective can help bridge the divide between technical solutions and the fundamental need to reconnect with nature and the Creator, promoting a more balanced and inclusive strategy for addressing global environmental challenges.

For many decades, the prioritisation of people over nature has been a significant barrier to the development of comprehensive ecological

frameworks (Islam, 2012). This human-centred paradigm, compounded
by relentless economic progress within social spheres, has exacerbated
environmental degradation (Hardin, 1998). The continuous emphasis
on human needs and economic growth has led to significant ecological
harm, creating an imbalance that further damages our natural systems.

Additionally, the repeated failures to reverse environmental
damages, such as flooding and climate change, have prompted
societies to increasingly question the sustainability of consumerism
culture (Figueroa et al., 2016). These environmental crises highlight
the limitations of a consumerist approach, which prioritises short-
term economic gains over long-term ecological health. To develop
more effective ecological frameworks, it is crucial to shift away
from an anthropocentric perspective and towards a more integrated
approach that values nature intrinsically. This involves recognising the
interconnectedness of human well-being and environmental health and
adopting sustainable practices that promote ecological balance.

In response to alarming environmental incidents, nations have
introduced various rules and implemented regulations aimed at reversing,
mitigating, and adapting to environmental problems. However, these
interventions to prevent socio-ecological disasters do not necessarily
lead to national sustainability (Ostrom 1990a, 2000b; Thorp, Stewart,
and Heyer, 2005). Often, the presence of environmental laws and
regulations amounts to little more than a "green delusion," characterised
by minimal efforts to address environmental catastrophes (Lewis,
1994). Many of these regulatory measures are superficial, offering
the appearance of action without enacting meaningful change. This
tokenism fails to address the root causes of environmental degradation
and instead provides a false sense of security that environmental issues
are being effectively managed. Consequently, these efforts often fall
short of promoting genuine sustainability and resilience.

To achieve true sustainability, it is essential for nations to move
beyond superficial regulations and adopt comprehensive strategies
that integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations.
This involves fostering a deeper commitment to sustainable practices,
investing in green technologies, and encouraging community
participation in environmental stewardship. By addressing the root
causes of environmental degradation and fostering a cultural shift

towards sustainability, we can create a more resilient and equitable future. This requires rethinking our economic models, reducing consumption, and embracing a stewardship ethic that respects the limits of natural systems. Only through such a holistic approach can we hope to mitigate the ongoing environmental crisis and ensure the well-being of both current and future generations. Additionally, policies must be enforced consistently and backed by robust scientific research to ensure they are effective. By adopting a holistic approach that prioritises long-term ecological health over short-term economic gains, nations can better address the pressing environmental challenges and work towards a sustainable future for all.

## Islamic Perspective on the Current Ecological Crisis

Muslim societies are not immune to the ecological crisis faced by the planet. According to Kamali (2010), environmental discourse rose into prominence during a time of rapid expansionist policies, industrial powers, carbon emissions, and abusive applications of technology. Scholars have marked this period as the root cause of environmental crises (Bakar 2006a, 2007b; Islam 2012; Anna 2019). Although modern environmentalism gained traction in Western nations during the industrial period, the same predicaments traverse to other parts of the (Muslim) world. The native lands of Muslims experienced a similar ecological crisis after their colonial masters departed (Kamali, 2010).

Changing weather patterns and their impacts on local and global societies have resulted in a series of climate change declarations appearing in public discourse (Hens, 2005). For Muslims, these incidents have shaped new directions in environmental discourse. To them, understanding the crisis and its solutions is rooted in their own faiths. They have also formed alternative views on the importance of solutions from the perspective of Islam (Mangunjaya, 2011a; Mangunjaya, 2019b).

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's pioneering works on the contemporary ecological crisis (See Nasr, 2009) have stimulated an interest in Islamic tenets and the environment. Studies on spiritual resources in environmental care add value to this new topic (Bakar, 2007; Bakar, 2012; Islam, 2012). Muslim scholars have also drawn on the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions within Islamic sources, proposing an alternative paradigm to mark the important position of Islam in

the environment and human relationships (Khalid, 2002a, 2010b; Baharuddin, 2011; Abdullah and Abdullah, 2017). Many others work on various topical issues, such as animal welfare (Islam and Islam, 2015), happiness or contentment (Ali, 2014), environmental education (Fathil et al., 2015), and haze (Abdullah and Shaleh, 2018), in which contemporary environmental discourse is a critical and crucial topic in contemporary Muslim scholarship Islam. The emergence of eco-activists' movements in modern times invites Muslim societies to demonstrate an unequivocal interest in conversations about environmental conservation (Alam, 2020; Nilan, 2021; Islam, 2012). Hence, Islamic environmental discourse evolves from mere development of theory to a strong groundwork through a series of activities aimed at overcoming the urgent and serious threats of human-induced environmental problems (Fathil et al., 2015; Ningrum and Soesilo, 2018).

The negative consequences of the contemporary environmental crisis emanate largely from naked self-interest and individuals' desires to exploit land and other natural resources. The freedom to make choices in the age of modernity does not translate into actions that are supposed to make the Earth sustainable. God says in *Sūrah* 30, verse 41: "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." Therefore, God may give them a taste for some of their own deeds in order for them to take heed and retract. In the words of Osman Bakar:

> Modern man learns the wisdom of ecological equilibrium and environmental health the bitter way. It is also the expensive way. Not until he has seen with his own eyes the bitter fruits of his scientific and technological culture and extravagant lifestyle does he come to realise how important ecological equilibrium and environmental health are to the survival of humankind on earth. The names of these bitter fruits include environmental pollution and ecological disasters (Bakar, 2006a: 27).

Thus, today's rapid age in consumerism, industrialisation, and ecological degradation transcends nations. This Anthropocene age, where ecological changes are induced by human actions, calls for an integrated framework in environmental discourse. The state of the present environmental changes and identical calamities are felt by

wealthy nations in the global North and developing nations in the South. The fact remains that modern consumerist culture, along with "ego-centric" nature rather than an "eco-centric" worldview of wealthy nations, threatens environmental sustainability. With the ethos of unbridled consumption, individual freedom, and unlimited appetite for wealth and power, the culture of modernity aggressively focuses on economic progress and destructive technologies in the present time, showing an apparent audacity to ignore its ramifications in the future. The incumbent ecological issues produced by modernity are profound, as these threats disrupt lives, are agonised by many societies, and have diminished social value.

Gareth Hardin (1967) echoed modern humans' self-interest and unlimited desires on the land and spaces, which led to what he described as the "tragedy of the commons." According to him, "each man is locked in a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, pursuing their best interest in society that believes in the freedom of common. Freedom in a common brings ruin to all' (Hardin 1967: 1147).

## Islamic Environmental Ethics

Islamic environmental scholarship currently encompasses established Islamic principles to address environmental discourse. Examples include Islamic doctrines (Baharuddin, 2011), Islamic laws (Auda, 2008), grassroots faith-based institutions (Mangunjaya, 2011), and community-based activities (Yuliana and Sanjaya, 2017). Central to the Islamic theoretical interpretation of humans and the environment is the relationship between humans and their Creator, God. Building on this foundational principle, Islamic scholars have developed a profound understanding of the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. This scholarship emphasises that humans are stewards of the Earth, entrusted by God to care for and protect the environment. This stewardship is not merely a responsibility but a form of worship, reflecting a deep spiritual and ethical commitment to preserving the natural world

Islamic doctrines provide guidance on maintaining this balance, advocating for moderation, conservation, and respect for all forms of life. Islamic laws offer a framework for implementing these principles, promoting sustainable practices, and prohibiting actions that cause harm

to the environment. Grassroots faith-based institutions and community-based activities play a crucial role in translating these principles into action, mobilising communities to engage in environmental stewardship and conservation efforts. Moving forward, it is essential to continue expanding and deepening this scholarship, integrating contemporary environmental challenges with Islamic teachings. By doing so, Islamic environmental ethics can provide a comprehensive and actionable framework for addressing the global ecological crisis, fostering a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature grounded in faith and ethical responsibility.

IEE derives Islamic concepts from the *Qur'ān*, Prophetic *Sunnah*, and scholars' opinions about daily obligations, social duties, transactions in businesses, and core principles associated with common practices to build a cohesive and sustainable social structure. It also focuses on understanding the importance of social norms and value systems in society (Knoerl, 2008). Based on these epistemological and ontological foundations of Islam, we can discern at least three fundamental principles or ethos of IEE: *al-ʿAqīdah, al-Sharīʿah*, and *al-Akhlāq*[1] (figure 1). These profound concepts in Islam encompass, among other things, humans' inherent transcendental relationship with God, their purpose in life on this planet, and the ethical principles to follow as the vicegerents of this ephemeral earth.

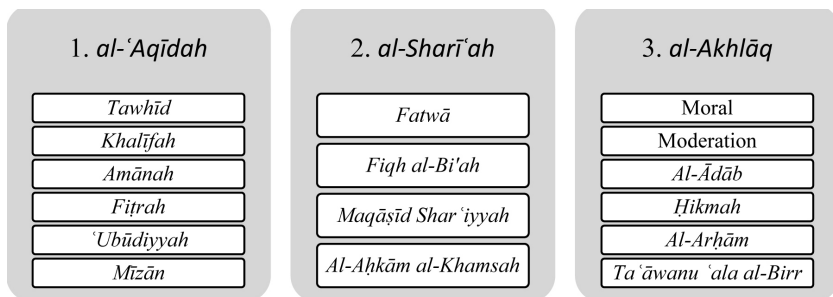| 1. *al-ʿAqīdah* | 2. *al-Sharīʿah* | 3. *al-Akhlāq* |
|---|---|---|
| *Tawḥīd* | *Fatwā* | Moral |
| *Khalīfah* | | Moderation |
| *Amānah* | *Fiqh al-Bi'ah* | *Al-Ādāb* |
| *Fiṭrah* | *Maqāṣīd Sharʿiyyah* | *Ḥikmah* |
| *ʿUbūdiyyah* | | *Al-Arḥām* |
| *Mīzān* | *Al-Aḥkām al-Khamsah* | *Taʿāwanu ʿala al-Birr* |

Figure 1: Islamic Environmental Ethics (IEE)

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[1] al-Akhlāq is an Arabic term referring to practice virtue, morality and good manners and character in Islam. In this article, Islamic Environmental Ethics is an extension of al-Akhlāq, where the authors discuss key principles and concepts that have or are closely associate the morality, good manners and virtue.

### 1. al-ʿAqīdah (Faith)

This section discusses Islamic Environmental Principles through the lens of faith and its various components (see Table 1). The components are discussed below.

*a. Tawhīd (monotheism):* Muslims accept God's absolute supremacy in the universe. Al-Faruqi (1998) emphasises that *al-Tawhīd* is the recognition of the truth, and man lives on purpose, enjoying goodness and happiness for the sake of Allah. Although nature has been created for human beings, it should not be abused or exploited, and must be used in line with divine purposes. A fundamental aspect of Aqidah is that Muslims believe that there is a higher grand for the entire scheme on Earth, in which God knows all creations. God says in *Sūrah* 2, verse 115: "whithersoever ye turn there is the presence of God." Muslims testify *Tawhīd* in the *Shahādah* as they witness that there is only one God (Allah) and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is His messenger.

As trustees on earth, Muslims perform their daily manifestations, including interactions with fellow human beings, based on this fundamental belief. For Muslims, God has created all lives, and all living beings, which He has endowed with ecological functions and social duties that are carefully measured. He allocated attributions to the universe and its ecosystem to create a balance for all living. God says in *Sūrah* 13, verse 8: "every single thing is before His sight, in (due) proportion." In *Sūrah* 15, verse 19: "and the earth We have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon Mountains firm and immovable; And produced therein all kinds of things in due balance."

*b. Khalīfah (stewardship):* Khalifah posits that human beings serve as God's viceregent on earth. God says in *Sūrah* 2, verse 30: "behold thy Lord said to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on earth." The key principle is that they govern the earth's natural resources with moderation and, at the same time, carefully organise human activities in order to benefit socio-ecological systems. The Khalifah relationship with nature includes meditation, contemplation, enjoyment of its beauties, and restoration of (*mizan*) or the proportion God has attributed to all creations. This *Tawhīdic* view of humans' relationship with the universe comes together with other compelling doctrines, including *Amānah* (trust), *ʿUbūdiyyah* (serving), and *Fiṭrah* (natural belief in God). The term *Khalīfah* distinguishes humans from other creations

because the former is endowed with the faculty of intellect (*ʿAql*) to
build and manage the earth. Thus, they are responsible for safeguarding
fellow humans and inhabitants of the Earth.

*c. Amānah (trust and responsibility): Amānah* forms an integral part of
Muslims' lives. It highlights the role of humanity in resource care and
social obligations on earth. This implies that humans are not dominant in
other creations. It deters the desire to abuse the given power and creates
a social contract to prevent disturbances and imbalances in the universe.
In addition to *Amānah*, there are also concepts of justice (*ʿadl*), doing
of good (*iḥsān*) towards fellow humans, and the natural environment
as integral religious principles in Islam. God says in *Sūrah* 11, verse
61: "it is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you."
Furthermore, these principles encourage human progress in developing
the earth without compromising the health of the environment and the
well-being of other species and their habitats. The Prophet (peace be
upon him) sees nature as a gift and encourages humans to build, manage,
and maintain it. Some of the good actions on the land include planting
trees, growing flora and fauna, fruits, and vegetables, and building
houses, hospitals, and industries for human well-being (Islam, 2012).

*d. Fiṭrah (original state of the creation):* The concept of fitrah originates
from its root, "*faṭara*," which means to originate something; therefore,
the word is exclusively an attribution to God (Abdullah and Abdullah,
2017). There is a chapter in the Qur'an about *al-Fāṭir* (The Originator)
who invites human beings to observe natural creation to recognise the
omnipotence of its Creator. Muslims believe that the universe, which
has the same meanings as the cosmos, world, and realm, is a sign of
God's existence in the lives of all creations. The theological foundation
of environmental protection from the lens of *ʿAqīdah* embodies God's
absolute power, human responsibilities to benefit from it, and their
efforts to manage the ecosystem. Hence, the earth is perfect for all living,
maintaining a balance (*Mīzān*) within the natural and social world.

*e. ʿUbūdiyyah (servitude):* For Muslims, servitude is a comprehensive
term strengthening the assertion of serving God. In *Sūrah* 1, verse 5,
God clearly said about servants: "Thee do we worship, and Thine aid
we seek." Muslims see the doctrine of servitude as an expression of the
status of humans in front of God (*ʿabd Allāh*). This means that they have
no power to self-proclaim the dominant figure on Earth. In addition,

the concept of *ʿUbūdiyyah* accentuates the doctrines of stewardship and responsibility in Muslim faith. In Islam, the slave role means that humankind has limited power on earth. Muslims see it as the means to carry out important roles on earth that include obeying God's laws, the care of nature and the ecosystem, and dealing with resources on earth properly.

*f. Mīzān (balance):* The Arabic term *Mīzān* refers to balance, equilibrium, and scale. Islamic environmental ethics are translated as an ecological balance or a middle way. This principle calls for the conservation or restoration of balance on Earth, both in terms of harmony within nature and in terms of human justice and morality in day-to-day dealings. God created the earth and everything in it as perfect, free from faults, and balanced. However, it is the task of human beings to keep this way.

Table 1: Islamic Environmental Principles:
Aqidah and its various components

|     | **Components** | **Explanations** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| a. | *Tawḥīd* | • Unity of God as opposed to polytheism, and Trinity<br>• Unity of God with all creations: everything in the world is part of creation and is related to everything else, which makes the entire world significant, valuable, and worthy of protection |
| b. | *Khalīfah* | • God has entrusted humans with responsibility for creation, and has entrusted the earth to humans<br>• Calls in humankind to assume the role of the steward and to stop subjugating nature to itself |
| c. | *Amānah* | • Linked to the doctrine of *khilāfah*, *amānah* stands for the fulfilment of responsibility in all dimensions of life<br>• It is a "moral burden" rooted not in the power and authority over creatures but in accountability that only humankind has towards God |
| d. | *Fiṭrah* | • The natural state of humans in harmony with nature<br>• Necessity that humankind protects the environment to re-establish the state of *fiṭrah* and to conserve the earth |

| e. | *ʿUbūdiyyah* | • The role of the slave restricts the power of humankind<br>• As servants of God, humans have to obey laws, including the care of Nature and ecosystems dealing properly with its resources |
|---|---|---|
| f. | *Mīzān* | • Restoration of balance on earth (both ecological and social)<br>• God has created the earth and everything in it as perfect, free from fault and in balance. The task of humans is to keep it that way. |

Source: Adapted from "Islamic Environmentalism: The Call to Eco-Jihad" (Zbidi, 2013)

## 2. Al-Sharīʿah (Islamic Religious Law)

The *Sharīʿah* is a practical expression of religious conviction, as it guides Muslims to accomplish their divine goals. In Muslim countries, the influence of *Sharīʿah* rulings and legal systems vary in advocacy, public policy, education, and businesses (Mangunjaya, 2019). The religious edict (*fatwā*) provides legal guidance that is purported by the *Muftī* of the state and his religious subordinates. Notably, *Sharīʿah* rules are not limited to common practices in business, marriage, and prayers. For example, in IEE, *fatwā* is made for Muslims, so they understand the importance of nature conservation (Mangunjaya, 2019), community empowerment in environmental care (Maimunah et al., 2019), and structural components of Islamic governance in Muslim communities (Marsuki, 2009).

Environmental rulings can also be seen in Muslims' obligations for self-care or purification. In *Sūrah* 2, verse 222, God says: "for God loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean." Regarding their spiritual significance in Muslims' lives, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "God is beautiful, and He loves beauty" [Reported by Muslim, #131]. Another example of environmental care through the ambit of *Sharīʿah* is *Waqf*. Seen as philanthropic deeds, there is well-documented evidence of the role of fixed assets (land donors) that offer a perpetual contribution to societies worldwide. Charitable institutions following Islamic rulings provide a means to alleviate poverty (Atan and Fuadah, 2017) and social innovations to overcome environmental problems (Budiman, 2011; Yaakob et al., 2017). Islamic Environmental Law intends to inform

policymakers of the key principles for managing resources and making judgements through public consultation in order to safeguard public interest. In this regard, *Sharīʿah* rules are implemented to minimise harm and risk in public goods (Mangunjaya, 2011).

The above innovations and solutions to social issues are not devoid of divine purposes, because Muslims' eventual aim is to serve God. Hence, the purpose of Islamic ruling is to fulfil goodness for human beings and other creations. This understanding of the divine purposes and objectives of laws and rulings is called *Maqāṣid Sharʿiyyah* (Auda, 2008). The term "*Maqāṣid*" in Arabic is plural to the word "*maqṣud*" which refers to a purpose, objective, principle, intent, or end. The general objectives of Islamic legislation consist of deeper meanings and inner aspects of wisdom, which is considered by the lawgiver (Allah) in areas and circumstances of legislation (Maimunah et al., 2019).

*Sharīʿah*'s general rules and specific proofs indicate that the all-purpose principle of Islamic legislation is to preserve social order and ensure the welfare of God's creations. The overall objective of the *Sharīʿah* is to remove corruption in all kinds of human activity (Bakhashab, 1988) and to protect the following five essential goals: faith (*dīn*), life (*nafs*), progeny (*nasl*), intellect (*ʿaql*), and property (*māl*). Al Ghazali considered everything that safeguards these five fundamental objectives to be a *maṣlahah* (goodness), whereas the abandonment of these five essentials to be destructive. Its five associated values are obligatory (*wājib*), commendable (*mandūb*), permissible (*mubāḥ*), disapproved (*makrūḥ*), and forbidden (*ḥarām*). These Islamic tenets are established categories for assessing societal activities pertaining to environmental impact (Auda, 2008; Sandisi, 2020).

*Sharīʿah* rulings encourage greening the earth as a collective obligation (*Farḍ Kifāyah*), whereas plans for long-term sustainable solutions are an absolute requirement (*Ḍarūriyyah*) for the survival of planets and the spiritual well-being of human beings (Auda, 2008). Humans are trustees and guardians of the environment (Mangunjaya 2011; Islam, 2012). Muslim scholars have concurred that human beings have personal, societal, and spiritual obligations to curb the spread of environmental degradation (Nasr, 2009; Sandler, 2013). This spiritual stand comes together with the Shariah rulings that have precipitated Muslim nations to pursue environmental preservation (*ḥifẓ al-bi'ah*) in the context of the existential threat of this planet (Mangunjaya, 2011).

### 3. Al-Akhlāq (Ethics)

Ethics are concerned with the proper conduct of human beings, entailing what is morally good and bad or morally right and wrong (Palmer et al., 2014). As an indispensable doctrine of IEE, a*khlāq* has played a pivotal role in shaping environmental policies in Muslim countries (Maimunah et al. 2019). Islamic moral principles shape behavioural changes and the direction of environmental sustainability in Muslim countries (Shaleh, 2017). On the other hand, social values eventually create social norms that dictate a vision of sustainability for Muslim societies in Indonesia (Magunjaya, 2011).

The Qur'anic verses reveal numerous important moral principles of Muslims. Deeply rooted in the Qur'anic paradigm, the concept of moderation teaches humans to oppose extravagance (*isrāf*). God says in *Sūrah* 7, verse 31: "O children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess for God loveth not the wasters." In terms of sharing resources, Muslims encourage others to share the water supply with others, a sign of good conduct between humans. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "whoever doesn't allow the access water or pasture for others will not share in the blessings of Allah on the day of judgment" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmiʿ, # 6436). Anas has narrated: "the Prophet used to take a bath with one Sa (about 2.5 kg) or up to five Mudds of water and used to perform ablution with one Mudd of water" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, # 201). Prophet (peace be upon him) passed by a companion (Saʿad) while he was performing ablution next to a river. The Prophet said, "What is this squandering?" Saad replied, "Can there be a (*isrāf*) in ablution?" He (peace be upon him) replied, "yes, even if you are by the side of a flowing river" (Musnad Aḥmad, # 7065).

Ethics have also brought Muslims closer to moral education. Islam encourages Muslims to develop good life traits. The conduct of good traits is a testimony to Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) message to the people. He said, "I have been sent for the purpose of perfecting morals" (al-Muwaṭṭa', # 1614). According to Al-Attas (1980), the teaching of morality (*adab*) encompasses the spiritual and material aspects of life. The formation of good traits in IEE moves along with human-to-human and natural relationships. Good characteristics include compassion, generosity, enjoining the good, social justice, courage, and

wisdom to benefit society and the environment (Pfattheicher et al. 2016; Yuliana and Sanjaya 2016).

The incorporation of moral education encourages Muslim parents to teach Muslim children the wisdom found in the Qurʾan, Ḥadīth, and *Sharīʿah*. These practices, as a result of moral education, are demonstrated in the formation of good characters and the appreciation of ecological wisdom found in other societies. God says in *Sūrah* 2, verse 269: "He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the message but men of understanding."

The Islamic concept of wisdom aligns with moral teachings. Through the exploration of diverse intellectual, moral, cultural, and religious realms, it matures from childhood to teenage years, and as students are connected to nature, they acquire skills to analyse natural facts and begin to appreciate the holistic understanding of human and environmental relationships (Ningrum and Soesilo, 2018). This enables learners to increase their sensitivity to environmental change. In turn, this gift may have a positive impact on conservation efforts as it is deeply rooted in a sensitive, ethical, and holistic view of nature (Hayes, 2009). They value world resources and do not indulge in activities that could prevent others from enjoying the benefits of natural resources, such as water and energy (Cobb, 1977; Stone and Zenobia, 2009Putrawan, 2017).

Islamic ethical norms are invested in collective action. People cooperate in localities to guard against common resources. This qualitative trait is critical for the survival of human progeny and their welfare. It promotes more conservation of nature, which benefits people's livelihoods, and mitigates the impact of climate change on earth. Many studies have attested to this crucial aspect of the collective formation of ethics through the lens of social capital, where societies have displayed innovative ways to develop social governance in their environments (Mu et al., 2016; Yuliana and Sanjaya, 2017).

A society that inhibits social norm and cares for the environment has always been active in addressing the existing and impending environmental problems. The integration of communal values into agricultural activities in Muslim majority nations in Southeast Asia, for example, have promoted goodness to the environment (Bakar,

2007). In this regard, IEE perceives collective responsibility as a good norm in all cultures. Social bonds create a set of human behaviours, customs, traditions, trust, and social institutions, which are collectively constructed to overcome environmental issues in many societies.

Indeed, the trove of knowledge developed by different societies across the globe has provided unequivocal evidence of the stewardship of the environment and its ecosystems. For instance, studies on indigenous people have promulgated ideas about experiential knowledge that give rise to a sustainable relationship between humans and their natural environment (Shaleh, 2017). Scholars have found that indigenous medicinal knowledge, traditional sustainable fishing practices, and forest protection demonstrate a profound human-nature relationship and are largely in line with environmental protection and sustainability (Raymond et al., 2010; Mistry and Berardi, 2016).

These macro-level activities encourage public participation and community empowerment in environmental management. With regard to community empowerment in the Muslim world, Muslim environmental duties aim to empower imams and local communities, creating mutual bonds and relationships with nature. The advice of imams to Muslims is a strong religious direction where they provide answers to ambiguities that occur regarding religion. Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) explicitly mentioned scholars as fundamental source of reference in this regard, when he explicitly said that "the scholars are heirs to the prophets" (Al-Tirmidhī, # 2682).

A holistic view of Islamic environmental ethics provides integrated community-oriented solutions for addressing environmental problems. In this regard, Islam collates local knowledge and its cultural wealth for the needs of the general public (*maṣlaḥah ʿāmmah*), which is to be harnessed within the scope of *Tawḥīd* and *Sharīʿah*, to construct a new model for sustainability. One is to make people aware of their responsibilities. "If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds and then a bird or a person or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift" (Bukhārī, # 513).

## Conclusion

Today, the environmental crisis affects the global natural ecosystem, human environments, the air we breathe, the food we consume, the water we drink, and our bodily functions. Eco-theologians have

developed theological foundations and Islamic doctrines to address nature and the environment. The doctrine of unity (*Tawḥīd*) is a crucial aspect of Islamic Environmental Ethics (IEE), motivating individuals to be exemplary servants of God. This reflects the powerful and persuasive spiritual teachings of Islam regarding the natural world and the human relationship with it. In practical terms, community empowerment through piety and awareness aligns with the concept of mercy for all mankind. This approach incorporates justice under human stewardship, leveraging social capital to unite people with shared values, thereby fostering a strong social fabric within society.

Islamic Environmental Ethics (IEE) integrates religious elements into a conceptual model through the lens of *Sharīʿah*, which prohibits retaliation and other negative behaviours in our environments. *Sharīʿah* rulings on purity, cleanliness, and water resources are designed to prevent disruptions to the lives of many societies and their ecosystems. These objectives align with the moral values of nations and promote economic and social stability. Practical implementation of these rulings drives behavioural changes, resilience, and adaptation in Muslim nations.

IEE is fundamentally linked to *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, encompassing the Islamic worldview of the Creator, creation, the universe, and the environmental responsibilities of Muslims. This framework encourages exploring the purposes of *Sharīʿah* laws and rulings in addressing evolving economic development and environmental crises in the Muslim world. By revisiting the changing relationships between humans and the environment, leaders and communities can better understand the general principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* and their relevance to current environmental discussions and crises.

In IEE, Muslims strive to restore humanity and enhance the relationship between humans and the environment. This understanding is essential for upholding the concept of *Khalīfah* (stewardship) on Earth, which demands responsible management of natural resources and a sense of love and care for nature. The trust that God has placed in people means they must fulfil their duty, which is key to overcoming contemporary environmental crises. Muslims are entrusted with this divine duty and responsible for safeguarding society and the environment by fostering an attitude of environmental care.

Practically, the role of social capital in developing a collective understanding of modern environmental change is integral to IEE. First, Islam's comprehensive approach encourages collaboration between partners to achieve shared environmental goals. Second, IEE transcends physical, cultural, and national boundaries to address the relationships between humans, the environment, God, and the universe. Third, IEE condemns behaviours lacking cooperation, empathy, and moderation, and rejects social values that promote the exploitation of nature without regard for sustainability. To address the main limitation in our theory-based work, we suggest the following practical collective responsibilities for current and future generations:

- Build capacity for environmental awareness through community-based conservation projects.

- Promote social justice and environmental stewardship through good governance.

- Showcase successful environmental initiatives in Muslim countries by collaborating with mosques, art centres, national galleries, and educational institutions.

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(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

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(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

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ISSN 0128-4878

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