THE BASIC OF ISLAMIC SYSTEM TOWARDS THE BALANCE BETWEEN ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to explore the basic of Islamic system towards the balance between environment and development. Although this paper is not only attempts to elucidate the Islamic concept, which underlines the tripartite relationship between Allah, human and non-human, but also to examine the reason why Islam is referred to as the faith of submission. Therefore, it aims to analyse the integrated of Islamic systems such as Tawhid, Shariah and Akhlaq, as the foundations for the balance between environment and development.

1. INTRODUCTION

In every aspect of Muslim life, Islam has provided a complete system devised by God, which functions as the guideline. For instance, politics, economics, social matters, family, law and etc. fall under the system of Islam. It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate how the balance between environment and development issues are included within this system and that the onus is upon Islamic scholars to manifest such in order to benefit Muslims. Therefore, the author intends to analyse the balance between environment and development according to the Islamic system; the focus of this is inherent in the Tawhid, Shariah and Akhlaq. These Islamic systems are in place to relate and strengthen the value of that needs to balance between environment and development in Islam accordingly.

2. THE TAWHID IN ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

In Islamic ethics, the concept of Tawhid is indispensable. The application of the principle of Tawhid in every aspect of issues such as ecological, economic or others is important to establish a good relationship with God. According to Manzoor, Tawhid is thus the very process of Islamisation by which the natural world is brought under moral control; nature and ethics are integrated and the unity of intent and action, purpose and goal, means and ends is achieved. Therefore the researcher will analyse the relation of Tawhid to Islamic environmental ethics.

a. The Meaning of Tawhid

Islam has outlined the concept of Tawhid, which is an essential prerequisite not only for human beings to achieve success in the Hereafter, but simultaneously in this earthly life. Man is thus enabled to examine his relationship with himself and God and furthermore to establish a good relationship with fellow humans in particular and with others of God’s creatures. Afzal Rahman has stressed this principle:

Thus, an invitation to al-Tawhid is an invitation to an all comprehensive and all pervading revolution, which changes not only religion but the entire system of living. It provides a new philosophy of life, new values and a new ideology which lift a man far above his fellow-beings.

Tawhid is the foremost fundamental teaching and it epitomises the bedrock of Islam in every aspect of life. The term Tawhid represents belief in the existence and Oneness of God and His Supremacy of Being. Muslims, who are fully conscious, accept this short expression, “La ilaha illa Allah” meaning “There is no deity but Allah”. This absolute belief will transform human beings and place them within a totally different life perspective from others who do not accept it. Accordingly, it will produce personalities with a different view regarding the objective of their lives in this world.

b. The Role of Tawhid in Islamic Environmental Ethics

“La ilaha illa Allah” (There is no deity but Allah) carries the weight of God being the only One who is worthy of worship and obedience. When one utters this phrase with full understanding and consciousness, one becomes bound to follow the guidance prescribed by Islam in daily life, including that relevant to man’s interaction with the environment. Islam is the foremost yardstick with which to judge the permissibility of human actions and for the latter to be considered as acts of worship ‘ibadah; they must be carried out in parallel with the shar’ah. Consequently, such obedience will promise the final goal for which every Muslim strives, success in physical life and in the Hereafter.

The phrase also contains the vital concept of the Oneness of God, which implies that there is no other Creator, Provider and Sustainer of the universe except Him. This notion designates that everything created and provided by God is to be utilised by man as an instrument through which to serve and praise Him.
Hence, in order to acquire all the bounties that God has created in this world, human beings must attain and spend them in ways that do not contradict the Divine will. The role of man is that of khaliq, carrying the amanah and being the earthly holder of God’s trust.

Everything that has been created by God bears the same status and only the virtues of taqwa (righteousness) can generate any differentiation between His creatures. In order to attain this high and special status, man must perform everything in life in accordance with akhlq, good moral conduct, as prescribed in the teaching of Islam. With reference to environmental ethics, human beings have to consolidate their activities with the environment in ways that are halal (lawful) and beneficial to others. This universe and its environs have been set out by God for human beings to use, not to abuse, and being indiscriminate over consumption or waste of resources contravenes the Islamic notion of respect for all living creatures and their habitats. By sensitive use of the earth’s resources, man can display his consciousness and acceptance of the phrase of Tawhid, whilst simultaneously showing gratitude to the only Sustainer. Such a perspective will generate a positive attitude towards the environment and its value. Indiscriminate exploitation of the earth indicates man’s failure to fulfill his obligations as trustee amanah and caretaker, as demanded by the Tawhid.

To conclude, the importance of the Tawhid lies in its potential to affect an individual’s role in this life, so that man is encouraged to exist in balance and harmony with other creatures. This principle can inject norms and values that will entirely change human attitudes and relationships towards the many creations of God. Al-Faruqi maintains:

Tawhid commits man to an ethic of action; that is to an ethic where worthiness and unworthiness are measured by the degree of success the moral subject achieves in disturbing the flow of space-time, inside his own body as well as around himself.

3. THE ISLAMIC LAW (SHAR’I‘AH) ON ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

The law of Islam is termed Shar‘ah, literally meaning ‘the path to water’ or ‘the way to a watering water’. It is based on the Qur’an which states, Then We have put you on a plain way of commandment (law). So follow you that, and follow not the desires of those who know not. (Al-Jathiya, 45: 18)

The importance and value of all life forms are manifest in this symbolic connotation. The fact that Islamic law derives its name from the source of life gives a clear environmental flavour to the Islamic legal system. It is a law that aims to harmonise the diverse aspects of creation in a holistic relationship within the notion of submission to God.

a. The Objectives of Shar‘ah in Environmental Ethics

According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, the Shar‘ah is established and based upon wisdom and the welfare of God’s servants in this world of the living and the world of the return. It is entire justice, entire mercy, entire benefit, and entire wisdom; hence any case, which diverges from justice to oppression, from mercy to the violation of it, from benefit to harm, and from wisdom to futility, is not part of the Shar‘ah, though it be introduced therein by way of interpretation. For the Shar‘ah is God’s justice among His servants, His mercy among His creatures and His shadow on His earth.

In addition, Ibrahim ibn Musa al-Shatibi discusses the Qur’anic basis for the principle of maslahah, and the inductive reasoning by which it is discovered and clarified:

The rulings of the Shar‘ah have been instituted only for the welfare of God’s servants, both immediate and ultimate…. and the basis of this assertion is that by inductive analysis of the maslahah we have determined that it has been instituted for the welfare of God’s servants …. For God, be He exalted, has revealed in the Qur’an concerning His sending forth of messengers to mankind; and this constitutes the fundamental purpose, “And We have sent you, not but as a mercy for the Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists).” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 107). And He has revealed concerning the fundamental purpose of the creation, “And He it is Who has created heavens and the earth …. “ (Hud, 11: 7); “And I (Allah) created not the jinns and men except they should worship Me (Alone)” (Az-Zariyat, 51: 56); “Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best in deed.” (Al-Mulk, 67: 2). And as far as the Qur’an and the Sunna are concerned, they are more than can be enumerated …. The moral obligations of the Shar‘ah pertain to its ultimate purposes for the creation.

The preceding statements clearly indicate that Islamic ethics draw no limit either to the number or kinds of creatures that Muslims are required to benefit by their good works, or to the extent of the good that they are required to do to them. Of course, the ultimate objective of the Shar‘ah is thus the universal common good, the welfare of the entire creation.

b. The Role of Islamic Law (Shar‘ah) in Environmental Ethics

The sources of Islamic law may categorised into two components: firstly, the primary sources, which are the Qur’an and the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad; secondly, the secondary sources such as analogy or qiyas;
closing the gate to evil or *sadd al-dhara‘i*; customary practice or ‘*urf; and the Islamic legal maxims. In other words, according to I. Doi, the secondary sources are *al-Ijma*, *al-Qiyas* and *al-Ijtihad*. In this part, the researcher intends to analyse some of the sources of the Islamic law with regard to environmental ethics.

The Qur’an, which is the first primary source, contains the various general principles for human beings apropos the environment. These include: God’s exclusive ownership of all things in the universe; His ordaining sustenance in the earth for all humankind and other creatures; the serviceability of all things for beneficial human use; the permissibility of farming, raising livestock and of hunting for legitimate reasons; the injunction to enjoy all good and beautiful things provided for sustenance; and prohibition of excessive or wasteful consumption; the destruction of crops and livestock and the corruption in the earth. The taking of life without right is prohibited and the laws of slaughter and sacrifice are established. The Qur’ an also emphasises the need for justice as the foundation for arbitration between people:

> Verily! Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. (An-Nisa’, 4: 58)

The second primary source is the *Sunna*, an Arabic word that is translated roughly as ‘tradition’. In Islamic terminology *Sunna* refers to the actions, words and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad. According to Iazzi Dien, there are five guidelines of *Sunna* legislation on environmental protection. The *Sunna* encourages conservation as a pure good deed that should be performed even if the end of the world is about to take place.

As the Prophet said, “A person who is carrying a palm cutting in his hand when the Day of Judgement takes place should plant it”. This ‘tradition leads to the notion that planting is not for the anticipated material benefit but rather for the element of goodness in the principle of preservation, and for the hope of God’s reward, even if the end of the world is imminent. The second guideline illustrates the importance of care for all forms of creation. The *Sunna* instructs believers that all forms of creation are to be nurtured and protected.

The Prophet said about the mountain of Uhud that, “It is a mountain that loves us and we love it”. This would represent an important feature of the human-eco relationship, which is built on a foundation of love rather than on conflict and materialism. The third directive deals with raising awareness of the universe and all aspects of the natural world. The Prophet Muhammad often described the universe as being comprised of heavens, with dwellers within them. Bukhari transmitted a *hadith* that included a prayer offered by the Prophet, which reflects the universe as not only being occupied by humans, but also by many others who are sustained by God;

> Praise you, O Lord of heavens and earth! Praise you, O the Sustainer of heavens and earth, and all who are in it. You are the light of heavens and earth.

A further Prophetic *hadith* maintains that, ‘God and His angels and the occupants, *ahl*, of heavens and earth, even [the minute] ants in their nests and [the large] fish acknowledge the teacher of goodness to people’.

The fourth guideline outlines the environmental awareness of the Prophet Muhammad himself. Islamic law does not refer solely to the Prophet’s words as sources of legislation, but also to his actions, silent approvals and his character. Hence, some of his actions elaborate on the role of *akhlaq* in Islamic environmental ethics, a topic that will be clarified in the subsequent section. It is narrated that the Prophet Muhammad said that anyone who grows a plant or tree to be eaten by a bird, human being or animal would have a good deed recorded for him. The following is one of the most comprehensive *hadith* reflecting a substantial environmental awareness; ‘O people, give mercy for those who are on earth, for He who is in heaven will have mercy on you’. The fifth and final directive details care for the environment as a personal responsibility for every Muslim. It can be concluded from the variety of reported traditions that the Prophet Muhammad considered the welfare of all creatures to be an integral part of his and others’ personal responsibility.

Animals were created to fulfil certain functions in life, for example to act as part of food chains for one another or for human beings. No one has an absolute right to use them, and most importantly the owners of animals are expected not to abuse, exploit or neglect them. According to Ibn ’Abbas, the Prophet Muhammad prohibited man from using animals to fight one another in the name of sport.

It is clear that the primary sources have provided important sources for the Muslim Jurists regarding the general principles of Islamic law. However, under the circumstances that Islam is universal and suitable for every time and day, in order that the objective of *Shari‘ah* may be realised and preserved, the role of secondary sources are important to undertake this function.

Among the secondary sources, first is analogy, *qiyas*. It is one of a number of mechanisms that the Islamic law utilises to extract legal injunctions. It is a logical process, which is employed as a tool for legislation. According to I. Doi, *qiyas* could be defined as analogy or anological deduction. It is the legal principle introduced in order to arrive at a logical conclusion of a certain law on a certain issue that has to do with the welfare of Muslims. In exercising this, however, it must be based on the Qur’an and *Sunna* and *Ijma*. For example, the usage of *qiyas* in accordance with the environmental problems, as practised by the Prophet
Muhammad, was in order to prevent public salt from becoming privately owned. Abyad b. Hammal al-Ma’rabi narrated that he asked the Prophet Muhammad to grant him the sole use of the mineral salt in Ma’rab, Yemen. The Prophet granted his wishes. Then someone commented to the Prophet that this was like a permanent water, which is unceasing. The Prophet then said, “No permission is therefore granted”. Ibn Qudama, who recorded the hadith, commented that this decision was made because of the importance of this mineral to the public. Their need for it was so great that no individual should claim it, *iqta’,* and no government should give it, *iqtac,* because it is similar to the public’s access to water and thoroughfares. Ibn Qudama then confirmed that mineral salt is a basic element owned by God and one which cannot be possessed by any individual. In addition, the benefits of *qiyas* in terms of its usage may be an important tool for the Muslim environmentalist such as a lawyer and others. It can be applied in a wide range of cases to solve outstanding questions in the Muslim community. Therefore, the researcher intends to analyse one of the case studies in the following chapter.

Another source of Islamic law is known as ‘closing the gate to evil’ or ‘blocking the ways’, *sadd al-dharaic.* It is a mechanism in which the danger (evil) is anticipated and measures taken to prevent it happening, with all types of legislation being capable of validation under this apparatus. In the context of environment, it can be useful as a tool to prevent all causes of environmental degradation, abuse and exploitation, whether direct (pollution and hunting, particularly hunting endangered species) or indirect (deforestation and increasing the levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases). Therefore, in the case of haze in South East Asia, particularly Malaysia, this mechanism is most useful to prevent any activities that are causes of haze such as open burning fires and so on. Another mechanism of Islamic law is represented by customary practice, *‘urf.* One of the benefits of this mechanism on the environment is the acceptance of the principle of preserving biodiversity, which is also acknowledged by Islam on the basis that it ensures the preservation of God’s creatures.

Furthermore, among the mechanisms that Muslim legal scholars have devised for formulating legislation is the legal maxim which represents general principles being phrased as concisely as possible. Some of these maxims in brief are as follows:

a. Actions are by intention
b. No harm is to be inflicted or retaliated
c. Necessity justifies committing that which is prohibited
d. Harm may not be negated by inflicting further harm
e. Nature of the harm, where public protection is given preference over private.
f. And others.

An example is a legal maxim ‘no harm is to be inflicted or retaliated’. This means that no individual is permitted to inflict harm on others, and if harm should take place it should be removed. In the context of the environment, the most important aspect of this rule is to establish the harm that is covered by legislation in order that it may be stopped. In addition, the damaging of the environment is considered to be harmful and therefore, it should be stopped by the authorities.

4. **THE AKHLAQ IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

The aim of this section is to analyse some of the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad, particularly towards the environment. It will describe his action towards such things as animals, plants and others. It is clear that the Qur’an has given major evidence in the previous parts and chapter, so here the researcher will focus on the Prophet Muhammad’s attitude towards the environment. It can be examined through his life both in Mecca and Medina. Although, there are a lot of relationship between the Prophets and the environment, such as the Prophet Nuh with the ark, the Prophet Sulaiman with the animals and others; however, the researcher will elucidate on the Prophet Muhammad only.

*Akhlaq* is a crucial factor in the teaching of Islam and it also plays a role in Islamic environmental ethics, being perceived as one of the basic principles for all the Prophetic teachings. Muhammad stated, I have not been sent except for the perfection of moral conduct.

This tradition clearly indicates to Muslims that one of the imperative missions of His messenger was the perfecting of mankind’s moral behaviour. In addition, the Prophet Muhammad is the role model for every Muslim.

a. **The Role of Akhlaq in Environmental Ethics**

There are a lot of examples on the attitude and behaviour of the Prophet Muhammad towards the environment. The researcher intends to analyse the characteristics of *akhlaq* for Islamic environmental ethics. This concept and its practice are important because the relationship between human and human; human and the environment; human and animal; and human with the other creatures of God to establish environmental ethics is inevitable.
A further example as practised by the Prophet is contained in the subsequent story of ‘The Ants’. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet Muhammad said,

*Once while a Prophet amongst the Prophet was taking a rest underneath a tree, an ant bit him. He, therefore, ordered that his luggage be taken away from underneath that tree and then ordered that the dwelling place of the ants should be set on fire. Allah sent him a revelation, “Wouldn’t it have been enough to burn a single ant (that bit you)?”*

In another version as narrated by Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet said,

>An ant had bitten a Prophet among the Prophets and he ordered that the colony of ants should be burnt. And Allah revealed to him, “Because of an ant’s bite, you have burnt a community from amongst the communities, which sing My glory”.

The most important lesson from the above hadith is that although an ant is a tiny species, it is not permissible to kill ants unnecessarily. Also, it is improper to burn any living creatures with fire. This is a proof that even creatures such as ants glorify and sanctify God.

Then, the universe and whatever is in it are subjected to the command of God. Therefore, the sun, moon, stars, planets revolve and rotate at His command. For instance, the clouds that saturate the earth and quench the thirst of the fields turning them into green, fertile gardens also obey His command. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet Muhammad said,

>While a person was in the wilderness he heard a voice from the cloud (commanding it), ‘Irrigate the garden of so-and-so’. After that the cloud (separated from other clouds) and came to a side and poured water on a stony ground. It filled a channel amongst of the channels of that land. That person followed the water and found a man standing in the garden occupied in channeling the water with the help of a hatchet. He said to him, “Servant of God, what is your name?”; and he gave him the same name that he had heard from the cloud. Then, the other asked him, “Servant of God, why do you ask me my name?” He said, “I heard a voice from the cloud, which has brought the downpour saying: Water the garden of so-and-so, taking your name. What do you do that God has shown you favour in this matter?” He said, “Now that you ask, I look what yield I get from it, and I give one-third as charity out of it; and I and my children eat one-third of it; and one-third I return to it as investment”.

Despite human beings having responsibility towards God, the above hadith demonstrates that everything in the universe and the working of the universe is dependent on the command of God. A cloud, for instance, will pour its water where it is commanded to pour it and not at any other place it chooses. Therefore, when the owner of the garden receives extra income, he should give charity as a mercy from God. This explains the interrelationship between God, humankind and the creatures.

Regarding dealing with animals such as cats or dogs, Abu Hurayrah has quoted the Prophet as saying,

>While a man was walking he felt thirsty and went down a well and drank water from it. On coming out of it, he saw a dog panting and eating mud because of excessive thirst. The man said, “This dog is suffering from the same problem as I had been suffering”. So he (went down the well), filled his shoe with water, caught hold of it with his teeth and climbed up and watered the dog. God appreciated his gesture and God forgave him. The people asked, “O God’s Messenger! Is there a reward for us in serving the animals?” He replied, “Yes, there is reward for serving the animate”.

A prostitute saw a dog moving around a well on a hot day and hanging out its tongue because of thirst. She drew water for it in her shoe, and she was pardoned (for that).

The greatest lessons from the above hadith are that to show mercy to the creatures of God entitles human beings to the mercy and benevolence of God, and particularly to be merciful to the mute animals. Although the persons concerned did not mind the trouble they had to face to help a dog, God forgave them for that, even though the dog is an impure. But to help the creatures of God is a worthy deed in the sight of God and they earned forgiveness for that.

Then, there is the case of the cruelty of a hard-hearted woman who tortured a cat. As narrated by ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar the Prophet said,

>A woman entered the Fire because of a cat, which she had tied; she neither gave it food nor set it free to eat from the vermin of the earth.

In another version of Hadith, the Prophet said,
A woman was tortured and was put in Fire because of a cat she had kept locked till she died of hunger.

In contrast to the previous lessons, these hadith teach human beings that to show mercy to animals is an obligatory act. But to let an animal die of hunger and thirst is the worst kind of cruelty. If animals and birds are caged, then those who keep them must be very particular about feeding and watering them and catering for their other needs. It is not proper to cause hardship to the creatures of God.

In fact, the interaction of Muslims with the environment may be considered as a kind of faith: for instance, the removal of harmful things from the road. These may be thorns, garbage, trees and so on. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet said,

While a man was going on a way, he saw a thorny branch and removed it from the way and God became pleased with his action and forgave him for that.

A man while walking along the path saw the branches of a tree lying there. He thought, ‘By God, I shall remove these from this road, so that they may not harm the Muslims, and he was admitted to Paradise.

Muslims must be aware of their environment. They must keep their surroundings: rooms, houses, neighbourhoods, gardens, parks, roads and so on, clean and tidy. Not only must they attend to the environment, but also the safety and interest of others.

Another prohibition from the Prophet is the forbidding of urination into still water, such as reservoirs, ponds, lakes, wells and so on. His companion, Jabir reported.

The Prophet Muhammad has forbidden urination into still water.

Man must also be aware of the fine balance of nature and take care not to degrade it. The above hadith condemns urination into still water and this reflects the importance of maintaining a healthy and clean environment.

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude, Islam stresses the good relationship between three parties, these being God, human beings and the environment (non-human beings). The important is on how to implement the Islamic system towards the environmental crisis nowadays, particularly in Malaysia.

**REFERENCES**


