

The Sacred Creation of Earth and Man in Islam: A Renewal of Harmonious Relationship in Current Scenario of Environmental Crisis

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Abstract

This article explores the sacred relationship between Earth and mankind as understood within the Islamic worldview against the backdrop of a growing environmental crisis. It seeks to revive a harmonious coexistence between humanity and their natural surroundings as described in the sacred scriptures of Islam. Drawing upon the verses of the Holy Qur'an and hadiths, the research highlights the divine origin of Earth and man, their natural order of creation, the characteristics of both phenomena, and their relationship in the hierarchy of the cosmos. It also underscores the profound respect for Earth as prescribed in Islam as the signs of Allah SWT and emphasizes the role of human beings as trustees of the Earth. This study aims to highlight Islamic philosophies to instill the sacredness and value of Earth in the mind of modern secular man and provoke a valuable change in his environmental concerns. By using a descriptive and analytical method, this paper presents a comprehensive view of the actual and potential resources rooted in Islam and analyzes the eco-theological understandings of contemporary Islamic scholars to describe a harmonious relationship between Earth and man in the current environmental crisis. In conclusion, the sacred creation of Earth and man in Islam offers a holistic understanding of the relationship between humans and their environment. This new eco-understanding promotes harmony among all components of Earth and their basic rights to live and flourish.

Keywords: Environmental Crisis, Secular, Disequilibrium, Anthropocene, Tawhīd, Sacred, Al-Khāliq, Khāliq, Šhahada, Ihsān, Fiṭrah, Harmony, Islam.

1. Introduction

The Earth is the most active planet of the terrestrial planets and is the only place inhabited by living things. It is divided into four distinct parts: the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere. These four parts of Earth: air, water, land, and life are interconnected and entirely interdependent. On this living planet, humans are the most evolved and intelligent creatures. The term “man” is used to represent all human beings irrespective of gender. Historically, humans have interacted with Earth since they first walked on it, relying on its natural resources for food, water, medicines, fuel, shelter, building materials, and many other necessities. A good environment includes clean air, water, fertile soil, and biodiversity that enables humans to live and thrive, while a degraded environment comprises polluted air, limited and dirty water, infertile land, and lack of biodiversity that makes survival difficult, leading to the destruction of livelihoods, loss of life, and displacement. These environmental crises are the negative effects of human activities.

This research describes the sacred creation of Earth and man in the light of the Islamic worldview to address the imbalance of Earth and eliminate environmental crises. Islam teaches a holistic approach to existence, creating a foundation for the relationship between the finite and infinite, man and Divine, creature and Creator, the

secular and the sacred. Submission to Allah SWT implies that humans are created to act as His vicegerents or protectors on Earth.

2. Review of Literature

Numerous works on the Earth-man relationship from the 20th century onward, such as Rachel Carson's "*Silent Spring*"¹ Lynn White's "*The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*"² and Garrett Hardin's "*The Tragedy of the Commons*"³ have drawn attention to environmental crises from a secular perspective. These works have spurred environmental movements and academic attention to ecological issues. However, Islamic canonical sources, such as the Holy Qur'an and Hadith, contain numerous references for regulating human behavior with Earth and natural resources. This study consults "*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*"⁴ "*In the Shade of the Qur'an: Fī zilāl al-Qur'an*"⁵ and various books of hadith like "*Sahih al-Bukhari*"⁶ and "*Sahih Muslim*"⁷ for theological discussion of Earth and man. For instance, the natural order of creation, origination of earth, creation of mankind and position of all diversity in the bosom of creation.

Contemporary Islamic responses to environmental issues are discussed in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's works, such as "*An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for Its Study by the Ikhwān Al-Safā', Al-Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā*"⁸ and "*Religion and the Order of Nature*"⁹ which emphasize the need for a sacred order of creation in the current scenario of environmental disequilibrium. Fazlun Majeed Khalid's "*Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis*"¹⁰ and "*Islam and the Environment – Ethics and Practice an Assessment*"¹¹ discuss Islamic environmental ethics to protect the natural world. Mawil Izzi Dien's "*Islam and the Environment: Theory and Practice*"¹² explains how modern industry has destroyed the environment of middle east. Al-Halim's edited volume "*Islam and the Environment*"¹³ addresses the sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection.

3. Research Questions

Based on previous fountain of knowledge, this present research is going to answer following questions in purely Islamic understanding. 1. How has the modern secular worldview challenged the sacred understanding of Earth, and how has humanistic philosophy created disequilibrium in nature? 2. What are the fundamental concepts of Islam about the order of creation for a harmonious relationship between man and Earth in the current environmental crisis?

4. Methodology of Research

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical methodology, revising the order of creation, the sacred origin of Earth, and the place of man in the light of divinely guided scriptures. It explores the renewal of an ecological worldview as an alternative remedy for the current crisis that Earth faces due to scientific and technological advancements. This new eco-understanding promotes harmony among all components of Earth and their basic rights to live and flourish.

5. Discussion

5.1. Modernity and Environmental Crisis

The crucial influence of modernity started in the 14th century, also known as the era of renaissance. Before the rise of humanistic philosophy of Rene Descartes or a new worldview of human superiority over nature, the earth and natural resources were considered sacred by human beings. People in the medieval era were aware of the limitation of their activities concerning the environment. Their hand tools and technologies were eco-friendly and their approach to utilization was very harmonious and balanced. They were against the over exploitation of natural resources. Thus, they built a constructive and progressive approach to our living planet which was equally suitable for humans and non-humans.

Renaissance philosophy of humanism started to grow in northern Italy. After the long period of chaos and misery, the people of the Renaissance came to know that there

was more to life. They presented a sense of liberation from the forces of heaven and made a man not a blind tool of fate, but as an energizing force then other phenomenon. Thus, man did not attach into medieval cosmic hierarchy and turned from classical learning. Ficino describes renaissance philosophy as: *“I will fill and penetrate and contain heaven and earth. I fill and am not filled because I am fullness itself. I penetrate and am not penetrate, because I am the power of penetration. I contain and yet am not contained, because I am the faculty of containing”*¹⁴

This new egocentric or Anthropocene view made a fundamental separation between man and his environment. It abolished all kind of balance and a harmonious attitude of man concerning the natural world. It suggested mankind to develop his own vision of life and get rid from the forces of heaven and live a dominion life. This new vision of life made him a cosmic destroyer and vagabond. Along with the circumstance of Europe in 15th and 16th century, the industrial revolution of United States in 18th century changed the man-nature relationship. Renaissance worldview and industrial revolution both were spread entire world through colonization and caused to bring change in human’s practices concerning the environment. As a result, our living planet is facing several environmental crises like desertification, deforestation, lack of biodiversity, water and air pollution, climate change and many others.¹⁵

In this regard, the contemporary eco-scholars of Islam have criticized modern secular worldview and suggested a path toward understanding of earth and man relation based on sacred worldview of Islam. After recognizing the global crisis of our earth, Nasr appeals to solve them collectively in the light of all major religious traditions of the world. He says: *“A need exists to develop a path across religious frontiers without destroying the significance of religion itself and to carry out a comparative study of the Earths of various religions”*¹⁶ Khalid also criticized modernity and presented anti-secular philosophy. His following citation describes the severity of environmental crisis: *“Our global civilization looked very artificial, resting on industrial and financial systems in singular pursuit of profit. The very human ecology was collapsing. Tradition and the wisdom of the ages spurned, replaced by an iconic modernity based on the enslavement of man to machine”*¹⁷ Thus, it is argued to return toward the sacred understanding of man and his natural surroundings in order to reduce current environmental crisis and create harmony between man and his environment.

5.2. Islamic Worldview in Understanding of Man and Nature Relationship

Unlike Western anthropocentric worldview, Islam is based on the theocentric approach or tawhīdic centric worldview. It is basically a belief on the existence of only one Creator God, Who has created everything in this entire cosmos. He is the sole creator, ruler, sustainer, and destroyer of this phenomenal world. Al-Faruqi describes tawhīd in following words: *“Al-tawhīd is a general view of reality, of truth, of the world, of space and time, of human history and destiny”*¹⁸ Al-Jurjani defines the meaning of tawhīd as knowing the tawhīd of His Lordship, believing on His oneness, and rejecting all other polytheistic beliefs.

﴿التوحيد: ثلاثة اشياء: معرفة الله تعالى بالربوبية, والاقرار بلوحدانية, ونفى الانداعنه جملة﴾¹⁹

This Islamic view of tawhid is the bases of relationship between the Creator (Allah SWT), mankind and nature. It is based on dual concept in which one is creator (Al-Khāliq) and the other is creature (Khālq). Thus, Allah SWT alone is the creator of man and this whole cosmos including earth, water, mountains, animals, forests, and everything animate and inanimate. This unity of creation is also affirmed by Islamic šhahada (Lā ilaha illa al-Lāh). The Islamic faith also describes the relationship between Creator and creation. There is hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW which is narrated by Umar bin Khattāb in following words:

﴿الإسلام أن تشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وأن محمداً رسول الله وتقيم الصلاة وتؤتي الزكاة وتصوم رمضان وتحتج البيت إن استطعت إليه سبيلاً﴾²⁰

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This hadith is divided into three parts, the first is about the core values of Islam or the five pillars of Islam like šhahada (a believer must be witness on oneness of Allah SWT and prophecy of Muhammad SAW), salāat (an offering of five daily prayers), zakāat (payment of annual taxes), sawm (fasting during the month of Ramadhan), and last one is Ḥajj (pilgrimage to Mecca for those who have enough money to perform it once in lifetime). The second part of Islamic faith is *Īmān*, prophet Muhammad SAW has described it in following:

﴿أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدَرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ﴾²¹

It is basically a declaration of faith in Allah SWT, His angels, His divine books, His prophets, and a belief that all good and bad circumstance of believer's life occurred by God alone. The third aspect of Islamic faith is *Ihsān*. Prophet Muhammad SAW has described it as:

﴿أَنْ تُعْبَدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ﴾²²

*“The act of worshipping Allāh as if you see Him, knowing that even if you do not see Him, He sees you”*²³ It means that every good act of believer to please Allah SWT is under this paradigm of *Ihsān*. This understanding of *Ihsān*, ascribes the caring for our only home planet earth is an act of worship that is integrated within the framework of this value system. This value system guides believer in everyday concern with natural resources and their best use without any exploitation.²⁴

Furthermore, Islamic worldview clarifies the sacred origin of earth as it is created by Allah SWT in an orderly fashion and gifted human beings for their temporary existence. The Holy Qur'an says in this respect:

﴿وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنْ لَسْتُمْ لَهُ بِرَازِقِينَ﴾
﴿وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ﴾ وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَّاحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَاسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ²⁵

*“And the earth We have spread out; set thereon Mountains firm and immovable; And produced therein all kinds of things in due balance. And We have provided therein Means of subsistence, for you and for those for whose sustenance Ye are not responsible...”*²⁶

On the other hand, mankind is also created by Allah SWT and entrusted with the duty of vicegerency for the protection of the natural world. In Khalid view, this Islamic concept of vicegerency rejects human dominion over other creature and make him as the representative of divine or caretaker of nature. Allah SWT is the sole Creator and man is not an owner of this entire world.²⁷ Depending on how humans perform their duties in earthly lives, and they will be judged on the Day of Judgment in this regard. In Islamic view, there is a direct relationship between the utilization and sustainable use of natural resources and getting rewards in the hereafter.²⁸ Islam does not only insist a “no harm” policy to natural resources, but it emphasizes on the good action to all living and non-living creatures.²⁹ Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

﴿مَنْ رَأَى مِنْكُمْ مُنْكَرًا فَلْيُغَيِّرْهُ بِيَدِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِلِسَانِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِقَلْبِهِ وَذَلِكَ أَضْعَفُ الْإِيمَانِ﴾³⁰

*“Anyone who witnesses evil should remonstrate upon it by hand, mouth or heart, the last is the weakest of faith”*³¹

5.3. The Order of Creation in Islam

Fazlun Majeed Khalid (a contemporary eco-scholar of Islam) defines the order of creation under the Qur'anic term “*Khālq*.” This term is used in approximately 250 verses of the Holy Qur'an in its grammatical forms to denote the entire process of creation. This whole phenomenal world is described in these verses.³² This word was also used in its verb form to dramatic effect in very first revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad SAW:

﴿اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ﴾³³

“Read in the name of your Lord who has created. Created man out of a germ-cell”³⁴ Khalid defines that creation is described in this verse as a “fabric into which the tapestry of life is worked”³⁵

The Holy Qur’an as the sacred scripture of Islam, also defines this natural world as the signs and symbols (Āyāt) of Allah SWT. Although the verses of Holy Qur’an are also named as Āyāt of Allah SWT. Thus, both of them are the proof of Allah’s supremacy. The Holy Qur’an also speaks about some signs within the innermost selves of human beings as mentioned in following verse:

﴿سَرَّيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾³⁶

(We will show them our signs in the universe and in themselves). In this regard, our home planet earth, including all natural resources and human beings are the signs of Allah SWT and equal members of His creation. Both are created with the purpose of fulfilling divine will. Seyyed Hossein Nasr also describes man and nature as the signs of Allah SWT in following words: “Muslim sages referred to the cosmic or ontological Qur’an... they saw upon the face of all creature letters and words from the cosmic Qur’an...they remained fully aware of the fact that the Qur’an refers to phenomena of nature and events within the soul of man as Āyāt...for them forms of nature were literally Āyāt Allāh”³⁷

Thus, the origin of mankind and this natural world is in one supreme source Who is called Allah SWT in Islamic tradition. The Creator is determined to be a subsidiary one that makes relationship between mankind and rest of His creatures.

5.3.1. The Position of Earth in the Order of Creation

In Islam, earth is described under the term “khalq” which means that earth is a creature, non-eternal, and dependent reality. In Khalid view, the Qur’anic term “khalq” include earth with all its richness like mountains, plants, forests, animals, water, rivers, birds, and all other animate and inanimate. Nothing existed before the very act of creation except Allah SWT. The creation began by His command “كُنْ فَيَكُونُ”³⁸ (be and there was). The holy Qur’an describes the origin of earth from singularity or smoke in following verse:

﴿ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ﴾³⁹

“Then He turned to heaven when it was smoke and said to it and to the earth: ‘Come both of you willingly or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly’”⁴⁰ The Holy Qur’an also describes the creation of earth, and everything in the universe in six days. The Qur’an says in this respect:

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾⁴¹

“Your Guardian Lord is Allāh, Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days...His are the creation and the command blessed be Allāh, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds”⁴² In this verse, the word “youm” is mentioned to denote an eon, era, or an age. The interpreters of Holy Qur’an did not specifically describe the length of these periods. In the interpretation of this verse, Ibn Kāthīr narrated the hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW for the creation of diversity as mentioned in hadith: “Allah SWT created the dust on Saturday, and He created the mountains on Sunday, and He created the trees on Monday, and He created the unpleasant things on Tuesday, and He created the light on Wednesday, and He spread the creatures throughout it on Thursday and He created Adam after Asr on Friday. He was the last created during the last hour of Friday, between Asr and the night”⁴³ After the creation of earth, Allah SWT brought forth water and created all animate from water.⁴⁴ As verse states:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ﴾⁴⁵

“And We have made out of water every living thing”⁴⁶ Allāh SWT also says in Holy Qur’an about the expansion of the creation:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ﴾⁴⁷

“He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days and then rose over the Throne... Allāh is the All Seer of what you do”⁴⁸ This verse clearly indicates the dynamic nature of creation. After creating heaven and earth, Allāh “settled Himself upon the Throne” and constantly watched His creation. This is understandable by the fact that the process of creation is an ongoing process. The universe including earth and its resources are expanding because Allāh is never “done” with His work. Hence, the universe and earth are continuing to expand not by their own but with the power of Allāh SWT.⁴⁹ Qur’an states:

﴿وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ﴾⁵⁰

“With Hands We constructed heaven. Verily We are able to expand the vastness of space thereof”⁵¹

The Holy Qur’an also defines certain characteristics of earth which depicts the significance of earth among other creatures. These characteristics also describes respectful relationship between earth and man. In Islamic scripture, earth is not treated as bad entity opposing to man’s spiritual destiny rather an integral part of man’s religious world sharing in his worldly existence. The Holy Qur’an describes the characteristics of earth as the *creation of Earth is greater than man*, (The Qur’an, 40:57) *the creation of earth is purposeful* (The Qur’an, 38:27) *there are communities like man in creation* (The Qur’an, 06:38) *Subservience of creation to man* (The Qur’an, 17:70) *creation is a testing ground* (The Qur’an, 05:48) *Earth as a reflection of the Divine* (The Qur’an, 51:20-21) and *the sacredness of all creature* (The Qur’an, 24:41).

5.3.2. The Position of Mankind in the Order of Creation

The Arabic term “الإنسان” is used to describe the place and position of man in the hierarchy of cosmos. Man is the most active and intelligent creature of God on this phenomenal earth. The earth and natural resources are gifted to him for his temporary existence. It is also a testing ground for his deeds and these tests are a measure of his acts of worship or *Ihsān*. It means that man should live a life accordance with the will of Allah SWT or adopt a way of living which please Allah SWT through using a balance approach in every field of life including environment to create harmony between his inner and outer self.

The Holy Qur’an describes the origin of man from the chronological phases of fetal development in following verse:

﴿وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سَلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ (12) ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ (13) ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَبَارَكِ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ﴾⁵²

“Man, We did create from a quintessence So blessed be God, The Best to create”⁵³ In the interpretation of this verse, Sāyyid Abūl A’lā Maūdūdī defines the process of fetal development in mother womb and consider this process as a proof for the doctrine of *tawhīd*.⁵⁴

The Holy Qur’an also describes the physical creation of mankind in following verse:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِتَكُونُوا شُيُوخًا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُتَوَفَّىٰ مِنْ قَبْلٍ وَلِتَبْلُغُوا أَجَلًا مُّسَمًّى وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ﴾⁵⁵

“It is He, Who has created you from dust, then from a Nutfah then from a clot, then brings you forth as an infant, then to reach the age of full strength, and afterwards to be old though some among you die before and that you reach an appointed term in order that you may understand”⁵⁶ Both origin of mankind are described in this verse. In Ibn Kāthīr view, this verse speaks about the origin of Adam from dust and the creation of his offspring from semen of worthless water. Allāh not just created us, but also gives

us provision from day one to make us grow, acquire a physical form, be blessed with many qualities like, sight, hearing, and intellect.

In ecological discussion, there is an argument that man is part of nature like all other creatures and is not outside or above the natural world. Because the origin of man from clay made him very much part of natural world. Ecology consider man from this perspective. However, the Holy Qur'an describes the reason the man is somewhat special in Allāh's scheme of creation. Because God has gifted man His spirit as mentioned in following verse:

﴿فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ﴾⁵⁷

“When I have fashioned him and breathed of My spirit into him, kneel down before him in prostration”⁵⁸ And blessed mankind with the knowledge of everything.⁵⁹ These qualities guide him to differentiate between good and bad, the faculty of speech, and to limit his free will.⁶⁰ The Holy Qur'an also describes the Fiṭrah of mankind in following verse:

﴿فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا﴾⁶¹

In current ecological issues, Fazlun Majeed Khalid describes this fitrah as “the natural primordial condition of man in harmony with nature”⁶² in Khalid's ecological understanding this verse indicates two messages. The first is that mankind is created with the bosom of creation and is an equal partner with the rest of creatures. He is created like all other creatures are created by Allah SWT. Secondly, this verse makes a foundation for deep ecology inherent in Islam. This deep understanding of nature brings the basic rights of living and flourishing of all creatures. Thus, this fitrah principle of Islam lead humanity to address the current environmental issues from its very root of fitrah.

The Holy Qur'an describes certain characteristics of man such as *the vicegerent of God* (The Qur'an, 02:30-34) *knowledgeable creature of God* (The Qur'an, 02:31-33) *trustee of God* (The Qur'an, 33:72) *honorable creature of God* (The Qur'an, 17:70) *accountable for his actions* (The Qur'an, 99:6-8) and some negative characteristics of man (The Qur'an, 33:72, 22:66, 17:11). Although man has some negative characteristics, but Adl is the central Quality of Man (The Qur'an, 16:90) and his moderate approach (The Qur'an, 02:143) reduce his uncontrolled desires for materialistic benefits. In Izzi Dien view, “all human's relationships in Islam have to be based on the concept of justice (adl), and kindness (Iḥsān), and not on material or economical gain.”⁶³ The Holy Qur'an vividly says about this concept in following verse:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ﴾⁶⁴

“God commands justice, the doing of good.”⁶⁵ Thus, we can say that Islamic ethics tried to promote a moderate way of living and forbids a life of extravagance and luxury.

5.4. Philosophical Dimension of Earth-Man Relationship in Islam

In the above discussed considerations of Holy Quran regarding Earth and man, it is clarified that both are Khālq and created with definite purposes. The first is created with purpose as a living place while the man as a representative or *khalīfat Allāh-fīl-ard* to serve his Lord.⁶⁶

Therefore, first šahada, Lā ilaha illa al-Lāh of Islamic faith expresses the basic principle of Unity (al- Tawḥīd) in Islam. It describes the most profound sense that there is divinity or no reality outside but Allah SWT, the only Divine and the Absolute one. It means that there are not two independent orders of reality. He is Al-Khāliq, and the other is His Khālq as unified whole. This unity Principle is the Qur'anic basis for Sūfi doctrine of wahdat al-wujūd. But it does not imply that there is a substantial continuity between Allah SWT and this phenomenal world. This Unity principle does not indicate any form of pantheism.⁶⁷

The orthodox Islamic cosmological sciences were based upon this formula of Unity. Muslim philosopher and theologians were seeking to discover the unicity of natural world and searched for the transcendent cause of all things. The Holy Quran constantly refers to the phenomena of nature as the signs of God or ayat of Allah SWT to be contemplated by the believer. For this reason, Muslim philosophers, mystics, and theologians were engaged to discover in the wonders of nature the signs of God or investigate the relation between finite and infinites. Through their deep intuition, they want to see the Invisible in the visible world of nature. In the particular trait of spirituality, Islam made nature a vast garden in which the handiwork of the invisible gardener is ever present.⁶⁸

5.4.1. Atomistic Philosophy

Atomistic philosophy was found very early in the history of Islamic natural philosophy. The Ash'arite school of philosophy is the most successful form of Islamic atomism, most notably it is presented in the work of al-Ghazali.⁶⁹

In the above discussed general considerations of Holy Quran regarding nature, Ash'arite the dominant Sunni school of theology describes the absolute transcendence of Allah SWT with respect to the phenomenal world. Atoms are only material or perpetual things in existence. All else in this phenomenal world is accidental which lasts for only an instant. As it exists for a moment. Accident cannot be the cause of anything. Thus, contingent events are not subject to natural physical causes. But are the result of God's interference. This natural world is completely dependent on God. In this school of thought, the discontinuity between the finite and infinite is much emphasized. Thus, they favor *tanzih* or transcendence relationship of God with the world of nature.⁷⁰

5.4.2. Ishrāqī/Pantheism

In the perspective of mysticism or the Sufis, especially those belonging to Ishrāqī school like Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhrawardī (d. 1191) and Ibn-i-Arabī (1165-1240), the other aspect of the relation between the Divine Principle and nature came to be emphasized. Through the use of *tashbīh*, these sages emphasized the continuity between Divine Principle and its manifestation.⁷¹ Without denying the absolute transcendent of God, these Sufis sought to find this manifested world of nature as the symbol and shadow of the spiritual world. Thus, this whole manifested cosmos is connected to its Divine Principle through its very existence (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Therefore, this is considered as *shirk* or polytheism by orthodox Muslim theologians.⁷²

5.4.3. Traditional and Mystical Cosmology of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali

Imam al-Ghazali (d.1111) has developed two systems of Islamic cosmology. A mystical cosmology that introduces philosophical substance and a traditional theology that is based on atomic cosmology.

His mystical cosmology is different from traditional Ash'arite theologians. In his view, the world is divided into two, the *ālam al-mulk wa-al-shahādah* and *ālam al-ghayb wa-al-malakūt*. The first is phenomenal and visible world while the other is invisible world or the world of *malakūt*. Although both worlds are different but there is a certain correspondence between them. This visible world is a *mirqāt* (ladder) to the invisible world. And the soul of human being can ascend from phenomenal world to the world of *malakūt*. Thus, human soul *fanā* or attain unity with God through mystical practices. In his view, multiplicity is excluded, and absolute unity is established.⁷³

In his theological work, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād* (The Middle Path of the Belief) al-Ghazali adopts atomism. He states that the created world consists of *jawhar fard* (atoms) and *arad* (accident). In his theological discussion of atomism, al-Ghazali did not admit spiritual substance in atomism. The spiritual world is filled with immaterial beings. These immaterial beings are totally different from those of the material world. He presents the ontological classification of the human soul that it is something divine and spiritual in nature. It is not a subtle material spirit. In his view, human soul and God

are similar to each other in attributes. It belongs to the world of malakūt and is totally different from material world.⁷⁴

5.4.4. Integrative Cosmology of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi

Islamic theologian, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1209) attempt to integrate al-Ghazali's two system of cosmology. He was Ash'arite theologian and also inclined toward mysticism.⁷⁵ His cosmological doctrines states that there are two worlds, the phenomenal and invisible world. Ālam al-ajsād (physical world) is consist of jism (bodies) and jumāniyāt (bodily things). These things are seen with natural eyes. While ālam al-arwāh is the invisible or spiritual world. In his view, there is a connection between the spiritual world and the physical world. The being of physical world is symbol of being of the spiritual one.⁷⁶

In his cosmology of the mi'rāj (night journey of Prophet SAW), al-Razi attempts to adopt al-Ghazali mystical cosmology into traditional atomism of theology. Traditional atomism is against the ontological relationship between atoms and spiritual being. It rejected the spiritual immaterial substance admitted in philosophy. Atomism is against ascension of human soul because the atom is completely different from God. so, there is nothing to connect between God and this material world.⁷⁷

In his interpretation of mi'rā, al-Razi tries to reconcile atoms and spiritual beings. He explains the relationship between atoms and spiritual beings. And he describes spiritual beings in his cosmology that connect God and this physical world. Thus, he adopts the philosophical immaterial substance that is criticized by traditional theologians of atomism. His spiritual substance is what neither fills space nor resides in what fills space.⁷⁸

His classification of theological works is divided into three, 1). what fills space, 2). What resides in what fills space, 3). What neither fills space, nor resides in what fills space. Al-Razi adopts Ash'arite atomism with category 1 and 2 which are created beings consist of atoms and accidents. Atoms are an indivisible part and have no dimension while accident is a quality of atom. Accidents are things such as life, death, will, knowledge, power, smell, taste, color and so on. The composite of atoms is body and atom accept its accidents. In tradition atomism, spiritual beings are considered as subtle bodies. All beings in this phenomenal world are bodies and it is impossible for them to exist which neither fill space, nor reside in what fills space. Only God exist in category 3. Therefore, traditional theologians do not allow the existence of purely spiritual beings and criticized the spiritual immaterial substance. Here al-Razi states that spirits are not atoms but philosophical immaterial substance. They have quality in common with God that connect God and phenomenal world. Thus, al-Razi introduces philosophical spiritual beings into traditional atomism. Therefore, this phenomenal world is consisting of bodies i.e., atoms and accidents while the philosophical spiritual substance existed in the invisible world.⁷⁹

Furthermore, al-Razi mystical cosmology suggests spiritual contemplation through purification of body and heart. He describes spiritual ascension from this physical world to God in detail through dhikr and discursive mediations.⁸⁰

5.4.5. Mystical Cosmology of Seyyed Hossein Nasr

The following citation describes Nasr cosmological understandings: *"Islam as the religion of the middle way stands between tashbih and tanzih, or immanence and transcendence, each of which taken alone can lead to serious error, but which taken together express the just relationship between God and the Universe"*⁸¹

In Nasr ecological understanding, nature is the theater of theophanies and mirror of divine creativity. The Holy Qur'an portrays it as the signs or ayat of Allah SWT. Thus, the nature is both that veils and reveals the Supremacy of God. Its components have various masks that hidden the divine qualities and at the same time reveal such qualities to one who has developed his spiritual vision and has deep spiritual feelings like the sages and saints in all religious traditions. In this regard, Nasr interpreted al-Muhit, the attribute of Allah SWT in a deeper sense of Islam. He says, Allah SWT

Himself is “Ultimate Environment” which encompasses mankind. Mankind is negligence of his and nature understandings that connect them with Ultimate Reality. Nasr has suggested a way to overcome such kind of negligence is to remember Allah SWT by understanding nature as His reality as Muhit. In his view, the current environmental crisis is the result of promethean or modern man’s attempt to understand them as ontologically independent order of reality. Human beings should understand nature and all resources as the sacred signs of Allah SWT.⁸²

Nasr says that human beings should understand their position and their role in the materialistic world to eliminate such ecological issues. First, they should understand that they were created by Allah SWT with a definite purpose. They are theomorphic beings as having divine qualities. They are also the vicegerent of Allah SWT or Khalīfah on earth. They are the channel of grace or baraka for cosmos.⁸³ They are not free but submissive to heaven and caretaker or trustee of earth. They have the ability to act as a bridge between heaven and earth. Secondly, they should understand themselves not only as the vicegerent of Allah SWT but His servant or abd Allah. Because vicegerency may create feeling of superiority but the other status as the abd Allah as the servant of God makes mankind as a humble creature of God on earth to bring harmony between his inner and outer world.⁸⁴

Thus, the traditional view of Islam about the order of natural world is based on this understanding of relationship between divine environment and creation which include both earth and man. The Holy Qur’an describes many verses which depicts the visible world or earth as not an independent order of reality but a manifestation of an invisible greater world which surrounds and permeates it. Hence, the divine environment being the origin and end or al-mabda and al-ma’ad of the manifested world. It permeates and sustains the earth and natural resources.

6. Analysis and Understanding

After the details study of Islamic stance on Earth-Man Relationship, it is understood that Earth-Man Relationship interwoven with the holistic of approach of Islam. Islam establish a peaceful relationship between earth and man only when it understood as a din/complete way of life and utilized under the notion of Islam/submission to the paradigm of theocentric worldview that governs the entire world. In ecological paradigm, Islam defines theocentric or Tawhīdic centric worldview. It describes Allāh SWT as Al-Khāliq who is One while earth and man as Khālq that are unified whole. Earth and man are not existing by themselves or independent realities, rather they are created by Allāh SWT and are dependent on Him. The earth is the only planet where human life can survive with full nourishment. It is given as a temporary gift to humans to sustain worldly existence. Islam relates human beings with both divine and materialism (earth) which is also an argument in ecological discussion. Man is related with divine because Allāh breathed into Adam of His spirit, and he is not outside the material world or above it rather he is very much a part of nature. Because Adam was created out of clay, which is understood as his earthly or material origin.

Islam describes the status of man in the hierarchy of cosmos. There is a complete passage in Holy Qur’an that describes the position of man as vicegerent of God. Thus, their role is one of trusteeship which imposed a moral responsibility on him. Islam explains the worth of earth and all natural phenomena. The diversity of earth as sign of Allāh SWT. It reflects that this huge phenomenon of earth is filled with signs of Allāh SWT that directed the attention of human beings toward His greatness and supremacy. Earth is a testing ground for man. Although it is Allāh’s gift to man and created for him. But a gift with certain limits and conditions. It is not something that humans run and play with. These tests are a measure of our acts of worship (Īhsān), that is living in a way that please Allāh SWT and striving in everything we do to maintain the harmony of our outer (earthly) and inner (selves) environment.

On the paradigm of philosophical and mystical understanding of Earth-Man Relationship, Islam religions connect natural world to Divine. In theocentric worldview of Islam, Allāh SWT alone is Al-Khāliq while earth and man are His creation or signs. This unity Principle is the Qur'anic basis for the doctrine of wahdat al-wujūd through tashbīh by Ishrāqī or pantheistic Sūfī like Suhrawardi and Ibn-i-Arabi. But it does not imply that there is a substantial continuity between Allah SWT and this phenomenal world. This Unity principle does not indicate any form of pantheism. On the other hand, the Ash'arite through the doctrine of tanzīh describes the absolute transcendence of Allah SWT with respect to the phenomenal world. They emphasize the discontinuity between the finite and infinite. Al-Ghazali, in his theological discussion of atomism, al-Ghazali did not admit spiritual substance in atomism. He presents the ontological classification of the human soul that it is something divine and spiritual in nature. It is not a subtle material spirit. In his view, human soul and God are similar to each other in attributes. It belongs to the world of malakūt and connects the visible world to invisible. Al-Razi integrates al-Ghazali's two systems of cosmology by introducing philosophical immaterial substance or spiritual beings into traditional atomism. Therefore, this phenomenal world consists of bodies i.e., atoms and accidents while the philosophical spiritual substance exists in the invisible world that connects phenomenal world to spiritual world.

Nasr as the contemporary eco-philosopher took a middle way between tashbīh and tanzīh, or immanence and transcendence. His philosophy describes nature as the theater of theophanies and mirror of divine creativity. It is divine reflection in both those veils and reveals the supremacy of its Creator. While man is the theophany of God's Names and Qualities. They both are created through a set of procedures. These two entities are obliged to survive in accordance with the Fiṭrah principle or with the order created by Allāh SWT. Therefore, at the level of intra behavior between earth and man, is to be harmonious to the universal order and their inter behavior is described based on human's role in the universe. In this respect, earth is created as subservient to man and man has accepted it as a trust. Although man has been created with the ability to behave and misbehave, but he is blessed with a spiritual element which describes his role as the master and guardian of earth. This position assigned to him by his Creator Who intends a high destiny for him, for instance to affirm His existent, to be His vicegerent and to serve Him as being a trustee or responsible agent on earth. Any deviation of assigned role may intensively disturb the harmonious relationship of man and earth with the order of the universe. It results in disaster and ecological crisis.

Lastly, based on traditional concept of Islam, it can be said that it is eco-friendly and harmonious relationship between earth and man. It does not allow man to destroy Earth and its marvelous beauty. The Holy Qur'an states:

﴿كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ﴾⁸⁵

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the sacred creation of Earth and man in Islam offers a holistic understanding of the relationship between humans and their environment. By recognizing the divine origin of Earth and mankind, Islamic teachings provide a framework for sustainable environmental practices. Emphasizing the role of humans as vicegerents, Islam advocates for a harmonious coexistence with nature, addressing the current environmental crisis. The renewal of an ecological worldview rooted in Islamic principles can inspire modern secular individuals to adopt more sustainable and respectful environmental practices. This study underscores the importance of integrating religious and ecological perspectives to achieve a balanced and harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world.



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⁷⁸ Kaoru Aoyag, "SPIRITUAL BEINGS IN FAKHRAL-DIN AL-RAZI'S COSMOLOGY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS INTERPRETATION OF THE MIIRAJ," *ORIENT XLI* (2006): 145–61.

⁷⁹ Al-Razi, *Tafsir Al-Fakhr Al-Rāzī Al-Mushtahir Bi-Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr Wa-Mafatih Al-Ghyb, Vol.1*, 278–80.

⁸⁰ Nasr, "Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī."

⁸¹ Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for Its Study by the Ikhwān Al-Safā', Al-Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā*, 11.

⁸² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Sacred Science And The Environmental Crisis: An Islamic Perspective," in *Islam and the Environment*, ed. Harfiyyah Abd Al-Halim (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd, 1998), 121.

⁸³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1990), 96–97.

⁸⁴ Nasr, "Sacred Science And The Environmental Crisis: An Islamic Perspective," 124–25.

⁸⁵ The Holy Qur'an, 02:60