



## Islam and Environmental Stewardship: Da'wah as a Viable Alternative

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### Abstract

*This paper Islam and environmental stewardship: Da'wah as a vital solution examines the intersection of Islamic teachings and environmental stewardship, highlighting the critical role of Da'wah (propagating the message of Islam) in promoting sustainable practices and environmental responsibility. By examining Islamic principles and texts, this research demonstrates the importance of Da'wah in raising awareness, inspiring eco-friendly lifestyles, and fostering accountability. Da'wah is identified as a vital solution for raising environmental awareness, inspiring eco-friendly lifestyles, and fostering a sense of accountability among Muslims. The study argues that Islamic Da'wah can mobilize collective action, promote cooperation, and contribute to a global response to environmental challenges not only among the Muslims but can also encourage people of other religion. By embracing Islamic teachings, Muslims can play a significant role in addressing environmental issues and ensuring a sustainable future. The paper further argues that the concept of environmental stewardship as integrated in the global, regional and national environmental protection plans, movements and strategies, particularly as it relates to the Muslim Ummah. The paper presents a brief description of verses dealing with the environmental stewardship and explores into the eco-philosophy of Islam scriptures and the teachings. The study adopted desk review base research, hence data collected from secondary sources. The paper concludes with a number of important findings, such as the necessity for employing Da'wah approach in environmental protection in accordance with the purposes of and values of Islamic teachings.*

## Introduction

The need to promote improved human-environment interactions through stewardship is ever pressing, which applies to terrestrial, marine, aquatic, and aerial environments in both rural and urban environments.<sup>1</sup> Many individuals, local communities, environmental groups, and governments around the world are taking and promoting actions to steward the environment.<sup>2</sup> The term environmental

<sup>1</sup> J. Rockstrom, W. Steffen, and K. Noone, "A Safe Operating Space for Humanity". Nature 461, (2009): 472-473. <https://doi.org/10.1038/461472a>

<sup>2</sup> M. Izzi Dien, "The Environmental Dimensions of Islam". (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2000).





stewardship according to Bagader has been used to refer to such diverse actions as creating protected areas, replanting trees, limiting harvests, reducing harmful activities or pollution, creating community gardens, restoring degraded areas, or purchasing more sustainable products.<sup>3</sup> It is applied to describe strict environmental conservation actions, active restoration activities and/or the sustainable use and management of resources. Stewardship actions can also be taken at diverse scales, from local to global efforts, and in both rural and urban contexts. The global scale of many current environmental issues might lead to the perception that local actions can no longer meet these challenges.

However, one way through which people get involved in promoting sustainability and in responding to external drivers of change, using their own expertise and knowledge, is through engaging in local environmental stewardship actions and initiatives. Thus, implicit in our framing of environmental stewardship throughout this article is a focus on the often central role of local people in caring for the environment that they are proximal to, connected to and, in some contexts, that they depend on for subsistence needs and livelihoods.

Our natural environment constitutes the surrounding conditions of living and non-living creatures. For the humankind, apart from the basic needs of food and shelter - social, cultural, and ideological factors play vital role in shaping their environment. In addition, ecological systems are the fundamental building blocks of environment. Ecological systems and natural habitats are shaped by a complex interaction of living and non-living components, which sustain each other. Thus, environment thrives on an interlocked relationship between and among natural elements such as animals, plants, air, water, and land. Any interference with the environment may weaken and consequently destroy its key functions.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars of environmental studies iterate that over the last few centuries, humankind has used and exploited the environment in an increasingly unsustainable manner causing severe degradation and depletion of environmental resources such as croplands, fresh waters, forests, and fisheries. Consequently, the world is facing unprecedented ecological and environmental challenges. Some of these problems include global warming, pollution, ozone layer depletion, and climate change. Other indirect impacts may include but not limited to desertification, loss of biodiversity, novel pests and diseases, and even environmental conflicts posing grave threats to the future of humanity as well as other living beings.<sup>5</sup>

Islam is a way of life, which has laid down specific rules of action and obligations to regulate the routine affairs of individuals and communities. One of the key principles of Islam is the universal common good of all creatures. Additionally, Islamic teachings inform the humans that there is a perfect balance in the

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<sup>3</sup> A.A. Bagader, "Environmental Protection in Islam". IUCN Environmental Policy and Law Paper No. 20, (IUCN Switzerland and Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> A. Kamar, "Brief Introduction of Environment, Ecology and Environmental Pollution". *Journal of Modern Management & Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 08, No. 01, 2018, (2018): 314-322.

<sup>5</sup> W. Maathai, "Replenishing the Earth; Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World". (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2010).



relationships of all living creatures on earth.<sup>6</sup> According to Izzi Dien, Islamic teachings express great concerns for a balanced and equitable use of nature and its resources. Furthermore, Islam aims to foster a relationship of harmony among individuals as well as within societies so that all can coexist and benefit from each other. Islamic history provides concrete evidence from the Islamic rulings regarding man's role and responsibility in preserving the environment.<sup>7</sup>

For the last few decades, as environmental issues surfaced on the agenda of international community, many scholars debated on the role of religious teachings on environmental protection. These teachings primarily focus on the behavior of humans towards their relationship with the environment and at large, sustainable use of natural resources and their conservation. Against this background, this paper discusses the Islamic perspectives behind environmental stewardship. First section delves on historical background for the recognition and significance of natural environment. Later sections discuss the Islamic point of view on the conservation of environmental resources such as water, flora and fauna. Furthermore, it explores how individuals, communities and governments being the custodians of nature, are required to incorporate religious perspective while crafting and implementing local/national environmental conservation rules and regulations.

Environmental stewardship, as an area of research, has gained prominence relatively recently, emerging only in the past four decades. It is now recognized as a notable confluence of sociocultural norms and ecological sustainability which is crystallized into practice and conservation strategy.<sup>8</sup> The practice of stewardship not only creates more environmentally responsible citizens, but also expands the capacity of management organizations by redistributing the responsibility of environmental monitoring and maintenance to the average citizen.<sup>9</sup> Citizen-based environmental stewardship programs are increasingly relied upon by government agencies to expand capacity for restoration efforts, greening initiatives, and other improvements to urban ecosystems.<sup>10</sup> The term "stewardship" tends to get applied broadly and can be difficult to pinpoint for analysis.

The relationship between humans and the environment is ancient, dating back to the first appearance of life on Earth. However, the current imbalance in this relationship is a relatively recent phenomenon. The Qur'an and Sunnah (teachings of Prophet Muhammad) emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship and present principles that align with environmentalism. Despite these teachings, the environmental situation in Muslim countries is not significantly different from

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<sup>6</sup> W. Maathai, "Replenishing the Earth; Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World" ...121.

<sup>7</sup> M. Izzi Dien, "The Environmental Dimensions of Islam" 84.

<sup>8</sup> R. Worrell, & M. C. Appleby, "Stewardship of Natural Resources: Definition, Ethical and Practical Aspects". *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 12(3), (2000): 265-269. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009534214698>.

<sup>9</sup> R. J. Berry, "Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present". (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> M. Romolini, W. Brinkley, K. and Wolf, "What is Urban Environmental Stewardship? Constructing Practitioner-Derived Framework". (Portland: United States Department of Agriculture, US Forest Service: Pacific Northwest Research Station, 2012).



the rest of the world.<sup>11</sup> Islam views a healthy environment as serving a higher purpose. Allah (S.W.T) endowed humans with cognitive abilities and free will to fulfill their duties as His representatives on Earth. Humans have responsibilities towards themselves, their families, others, and all of Allah's creatures. They can choose to be virtuous or deviate from the teachings of the Qur'an.<sup>12</sup>

Allah has shown humanity the way to judge their gratitude in the Glorious Qur'an: Verily, we showed Him the way, whether He be grateful or ungrateful.<sup>13</sup> Allah also said; Have we not made for Him a pair of eyes? And a tongue and a pair of lips? And shown Him the two ways (good and evil)?<sup>14</sup> The Qur'an, considered the final divine revelation by Muslims, is a comprehensive guide that addresses various aspects of human life, including ethical living.

## Research Method

Methodological survey was utilized in the conduct of this research. Basically, there are a variety of ways to collect data for survey-based researches, the most popular of which are interviews and questionnaires. However, the primary data used for research is obtained through the desk review methods. Finding and gathering of reference materials that are relevant to this research is the first of three processes the researchers adopted when putting this piece together. Secondly, the researchers utilize several literatures, analysed and elaborated such in order to fully understand the intersections of this work. Thirdly, the researchers conclude the research giving a highlight and the outcome of the research for further study.

## Results and Discussion

### Environmental Stewardship as a Concept

Stewardship has also been lauded as a way to build community resilience, to increase civic engagement, and to create partnerships between government and community.<sup>15</sup> As use of the term has proliferated, so have the many definitions of environmental stewardship. A more critical interpretation of environmental stewardship is also often invoked within the literature. To some, stewardship bears a moral core, providing a path for people to characterise their relationship toward nature as one of right or wrong actions or an ethic of care.<sup>16</sup>

Environmental stewardship is the responsible management, conservation, and preservation of the natural environment through, sustainable practices,

<sup>11</sup> L. Bsoul, A. Omer, L. Kucukalic, and R. H. Archbold, "Islam's Perspective on Environmental Sustainability: A Conceptual Analysis". *Social Science*, 11, (2022): 228. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11060228>

<sup>12</sup> A. Alfiyah, S. Yuliawati, and F. Utami, Humans as Caliphs on Earth Environmental Responsibility in Islamic Perspective. *Journal Kajian Keislaman*, 1(2), (2024): 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.56566/jks.v1i2.243>

<sup>13</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al Insaan, 76:3.

<sup>14</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al Balad, 90:8-10.

<sup>15</sup> D. Fischer, J. Connolly, S. Erika, and L. Campbell, "Who Volunteers to Steward the Urban Forest in New York City? An Analysis of Participants in Million Trees NYC Planting Events". *Environmental Stewardship Project White Paper #1*. National Science Foundation, (2011): 76-98.

<sup>16</sup> J. Welchman, "The Virtues of Stewardship". *Environmental Ethics*, (1999). <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics19992146>.



resource conservation, ecosystem protection, waste reduction and management, education and awareness, community engagement and participation, and Long-term thinking and planning.<sup>17</sup> It requires a collaborative effort from individuals, communities, organizations, and governments to adopt environmentally conscious practices and policies.

A key element in achieving a sustainable future is for humans to take responsibility as environmental stewards.<sup>18</sup> Whilst stewardship is just one of several framings for the human environment relationship, it most closely supports reconnecting people with nature and building resilience in social ecological systems.<sup>19</sup> Environmental stewardship is a fluid concept;<sup>20</sup> here we define it as active earth-keeping, taking responsibility to protect, care for and use the environment for positive ecological and social outcomes.<sup>21</sup> Societal transformations will depend on new conceptualisations of the human environment relationship, as today most theoretical social ecological models have limited application.<sup>22</sup> Protected areas can provide places which facilitate environmental stewardship, resulting in improved social and ecological values.<sup>23</sup>

Stewardship of the environment refers to protecting the environment through recycling, conservation, regeneration, and restoration. It means taking responsibility for our choices. The responsibility for environmental quality should be shared by all those whose actions affect the environment.<sup>24</sup> Environmental stewardship is the actions taken by individuals, groups or networks of actors, with various motivations and levels of capacity, to protect, care for or responsibly use the environment in pursuit of environmental and/or social outcomes in diverse social-ecological contexts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> N. Ammar, "Islam and Deep Ecology." In *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb and David Landis Barnhill, 193-211. (State University of New York Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> W. Steffen, D.L. Persson, J. Zalasiewicz, M. Williams, K. Richardson, C. Crumley, P. Crutzen, C. Folke, L. Gordon, and M. Molina, The Anthropocene: From Global Change to Planetary Stewardship. *AMBIO* 40(7), (2011): 739–761.

<sup>19</sup> R. Preiser, L.M. Pereira, and R.O. Biggs, "Navigating Alternative Framings of Human-Environment Interactions: Variations on the Theme of 'Finding Nemo'." *Anthropocene* 20, (2017): 83–87.

<sup>20</sup> J.W. Turnbull, E.L. Johnston, L. Kajlich, and G.F. Clark, Quantifying Local Coastal Stewardship Reveals Motivations, Models and Engagement Strategies. *Biol Conserv* 249, (2020):108714.

<sup>21</sup> S.C. Lerner, (ed.) "Environmental Stewardship: Studies in Active Earth Keeping", Department of Geography, University of Waterloo, Vol. 39, (1993).

<sup>22</sup> C.R. Binder, J. Hinkel, P.W. Bots, and C. Pahl-Wostl, Comparison of Frameworks for Analyzing Social-Ecological Systems. *Ecol Soc* 18(4), (2013).

<sup>23</sup> J. Powell, P. Selman, and A. Wragg, "Protected Areas: Reinforcing the Virtuous Circle". *Plan Pract Res* 17(3), (2002): 279–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/026974502200005643>.

<sup>24</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, (n.d.). Environmental Stewardship. EPA, USA.

<sup>25</sup> N.J. Bennett, T.S. Whitty, E. Finkbeiner, J. Pittman, H. Bassett, S. Gelcich, and E.H. Allison, "Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework". *Environmental Management* 61, (2018): 597–614. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-017-0993-2>.





## Conceptualising *Da'wah*

From an Islamic perspective, *Da'wah* has a broad and important meaning. "*Da'wah*" is an Arabic word meaning "to call" or "to invite".<sup>26</sup> In the Glorious Qur'an, the word "*Da'wah*" in the sense of "invitation" is found approximately 46 times, with details 39 times of the word "*Da'wah*" in the sense of inviting Islam and goodness, and also 7 times the word "*Da'wah*" in the sense of calling for hell and evil.<sup>27</sup>

Precisely, in Islam, *Da'wah* is seen as an effort made to convey the instructions of Islamic teachings to other individuals, both Muslim and non-Muslim, with the aim of leading them to truth, goodness, and salvation.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, here are some vital aspects of understanding *Da'wah* from the perspective Islam. (i) Conveying the Message of Islam: The task of *Da'wah* is to convey the message of Islam to individuals or communities in a wise, patient, and loving manner.<sup>29</sup> It includes explanations of religious teachings, moral principles, worship practices, and principles of Islamic life. (ii) Inviting Goodness: The main purpose of *Da'wah* is to invite people to do good, shun evil, and follow the right path according to Islamic teachings.<sup>30</sup> It includes constructions of justice, mercy, truth, and social good.<sup>31</sup> (iii) Safeguarding the Teachings of Islam: *Da'wah* also involves efforts to safeguard the teachings of Islam in every aspect of life, including personal, family, society, and politics.<sup>32</sup> This includes motivating people to follow Allah's commandments and follow the example of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). (iv) Building Closeness with Allah: *Da'wah* is not only about spreading the teachings of Islam to others, but also about building a deeper relationship and closeness with Allah Almighty.<sup>33</sup> These include increasing spiritual awareness, increasing worship, and strengthening faith. (v) Sharing Mercy and Truth *Da'wah* is a way to give others the mercy and truth of

<sup>26</sup> M. R. Nur Rochim, K. Nugroho, & A. Nirwana, "The Meaning of the Word "Wazir" in the Qur'an: A Semantic Analysis". *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah*, 20(2), (2023): 385. <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v20i2.20205>.

<sup>27</sup> A. N. Fadhliah, & A. Nirwana, "The Role of Prayer in Seeking Mercy and Guidance: Lessons from the Tafsir of Surah al-Fatihah". *Ma'ālim Al-Qur'ān Wa Al-Sunnah*, 19(2), (2023): 292–298. <https://doi.org/10.33102/jmq.v19i2.434>

<sup>28</sup> S. R. Pratama, A. N. An, & A. Yahya, "Genealogy Magic in the Perspective of *Mufasssir* Indonesia (QS. Al Baqarah (2): 102 Analysis Study)". *AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies*, 7(2), (2024): 512–530. <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i2.1000.Abstract>.

<sup>29</sup> A. A. Zahra, Y. Dahliana, & A. N. An, "Sha'rawi's Perception of Economic Solutions for Home Women in QS Al-Ahzab Verse 33 with Tahlili Approach". *Al-Afkar: Journal for Islamic Studies*, 7(1), (2024): 79–87. <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i1.905>.

<sup>30</sup> I. A. Cahyono, A. Azizah, & A. N. "Resilience to Calamity in Qur'anic Perspective" *AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies*, 7(2), (2024): 975–993. <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i2.1035.Abstract>

<sup>31</sup> S. Hidayat, & I. Khaq, "Living Quran Surat Al-'Asr to Instill Moral Values and Develop a Progressive Muhammadiyah". *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental*, 18(6), (2024): e05715. <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n6-010>

<sup>32</sup> M. Weston, A. Nirwana, & M. Muthoifin, "Parenting Problems in the Digital Age and Their Solution Development in the Frame of Value Education". *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 7(8), (2024): 21–91.

<sup>33</sup> A. Rhain, A. Nirwana & B. A. Setiawan, Reformulasi Metode Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Melalui Metode Tajdidi. *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis*, 6(3), (2022). <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v6i3.5299>



Almighty Allah.<sup>34</sup> With the hope that everyone will receive kindness both in this world and in the hereafter, it shows empathy and compassion for others.<sup>35</sup>

In general, *Da'wah* in Islam is a call to improve oneself and help others to achieve happiness and salvation both in this world and in the Hereafter.<sup>36</sup> It is an integral part of Muslim religious practice and it is incumbent upon every individual Muslim to participate in *Da'wah* efforts according to his or her ability and knowledge.<sup>37</sup> In addition, scholars and prominent figures provide opinions from every one of them that we can take the definition to better understand what *Da'wah* is. Here are some notions of *Da'wah* from the point of view of the figures;

Ibn Khaldun, a Muslim scholar in the 14th century, defined *Da'wah* as an attempt to change people's lives by bringing them towards goodness, whether in religious, moral, or social terms. On his part, Muhammad Asad, a renowned Muslim scholar and author, stated that *Da'wah* is an ongoing effort to increase religious understanding, strengthen faith, and direct individuals towards a more meaningful and fruitful life.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Fazlur Rahman, a renowned Islamic scholar, defined *Da'wah* as an effort to convey religious messages in the context of modern life, taking into account social, cultural, and political changes. His definition highlights the importance of contextualizing *Da'wah* in contemporary settings, making it relevant and effective.<sup>39</sup> Fazlur Rahman's approach emphasizes the need for Muslims to engage with modernity, understand the changing world, and present Islamic teachings in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences.<sup>40</sup> His work focuses on the importance of: 1. Contextualization: Understanding the social, cultural, and political context in which *Da'wah* is being carried out; 2. Relevance: Making Islamic teachings relevant to modern life and concerns; 3. Engagement: Engaging with modernity and contemporary issues, rather than isolating oneself from them.

Also, Naquib al-Attas, a contemporary Muslim scholar, defined *Da'wah* as a comprehensive effort to develop a society based on Islamic religious principles, encompassing all aspects of life. Al-Attas' definition highlights the holistic nature of *Da'wah*, emphasizing the importance of integrating Islamic values and principles into every aspect of human life, including, individual behavior and character; family and community life; education and knowledge; economics and social justice; politics

<sup>34</sup> A. Majid, & A. N. An, "Studi Tafsir Ibnu Katsir atas Nilai-Nilai Kesabaran pada". *AL-AFKAR : Journal for Islamic Studies*, 7(2), (2024): 376–384. <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i2.952>..Study

<sup>35</sup> W. Ayuni, A. Nirwana, & A. Nurrohim, "Bibliometric Analysis of the Development Map and Research Trends in Qur'anic Studies and Tafseer: A Scopus Database Exploration (1974-2023)". *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 12(2), (2023): 95-116. <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v12i2.36191>

<sup>36</sup> A. Nirwana, S. Suri, D. Junaedi, S. Akhyar, F. H. Ismail, F. Fansuri, M. S. bin Sahimi, M. Z. Bin Husain, M. Amri, F. Arfan, S. Hidayat, & W. Nur Hidayat, "Exploration of Wasatiyah Diction to Realize Sustainable Tolerance Between Religious Communities: A Study of the Translation of the Qur'an of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia". *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental*, 18(6), (2024): e05717. <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n6-012>

<sup>37</sup> A. M. Yahya, M. A. K. Hasan, & A. N. AN, "Rights Protection Guarantee for the Partners of Indonesian Gojek Company According to Labour Laws No 13 of 2033 and Maqasid". *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam*, 16(1), (2022): 115–132. <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v16i1.6382>

<sup>38</sup> M. Asad, "The Message of the Qur'an". (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980).

<sup>39</sup> F. Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism". (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> F. Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism"...



and governance. He stresses that *Da'wah* aims to create a society that reflects the teachings of Islam, promoting a harmonious and balanced way of life.<sup>41</sup>

### Purpose of *Da'wah*

According to Islamic law, the purpose of *Da'wah* is varied and covers various aspects that are important in the effort to convey the teachings of Islam to others. Here are some of the main objectives of *Da'wah* according to Islamic law: 1) Calling for *Tawhid*. The main purpose of *Da'wah* in Islam is to convey the concept of *tawhid*, that is, belief in the Oneness of Almighty Allah, to others. This includes understanding orders of Allah's existence and power and the importance of worshiping Him alone. 2) Leading people towards the straight path. The purpose of *Da'wah* is to guide people towards the straight path and educate them about moral values, ethics, and proper life principles in accordance with the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This includes inviting people to renounce sinful deeds and live lives of obedience to Allah. 3) Improving Community Conditions: *Da'wah* aims to improve the condition of society by promoting justice, unity, peace, and social good. This includes fighting poverty, injustice, social inequality, and all forms of crime that corrupt society. 4) Inviting to Goodness and Preventing Evil: The purpose of *Da'wah* is to invite people to do good and prevent evil. This includes inviting people to do good deeds, helping others, and avoiding all forms of sin and wrongdoing. 5) Building Closeness with Allah: One of the purposes of *Da'wah* is to help others build closeness and a better relationship with Almighty Allah. This includes guiding people to draw closer to Him through worship, prayer, and repentance. 6) Achieving Worldly and Hereafter Happiness: The Final Purpose of *Da'wah* is to help people achieve worldly happiness and the Hereafter. This means helping them achieve success and blessings in this world as well as eternal salvation and happiness in the hereafter.<sup>42</sup> Overall, the purpose of *Da'wah* according to Islamic *Shari'ah* is to guide people towards truth, goodness, and salvation whether it is in this world or in the Hereafter. *Da'wah* is an important component of Muslim religious practice, and every Muslim has an obligation to participate in *Da'wah* efforts according to their abilities and knowledge.

### Islam and Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship in Islamic tradition is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an, Hadiths (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad), and the broader Islamic jurisprudence and ethics. This perspective emphasizes a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world, emphasizing stewardship, conservation, and respect for all forms of life.

<sup>41</sup> S. M. N. Al-Attas, "Islam and Secularism". (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> Wahid, A., Ibrahim, M., Shomad, B. A., Nirwana AN, A., & Damanhuri, D. (2023). Utilizing Zuhd Hadiths for Upper-Class Crime Prevention. *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 23(2), 263. <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v23i2.17353>





The Almighty created human beings mainly to perform two vital roles. Firstly is to be His *Khalifa*, meaning vicegerent or steward; and secondly, to be His servant.<sup>43</sup> Scholars of Islam interpret this by asserting that being a steward and servant of the Creator, man has a primary duty to serve as the executor of Allah's injunctions and commands. According to Mawdudi, '*Khalifa* or vicegerent is one who exercises the authority delegated to him by his principal'.<sup>44</sup> All of those resources upon which life depends have been created by the Almighty as a trust in man's care. It means that humans were created with a purpose and definite mission in life, to become an obedient servant, and manage the universe according to Allah's commands.<sup>45</sup>

According to Islamic belief, before Allah created man, He prepared the earth, the skies, and the heavens, and filled them with sufficient quantity of all the necessities that man would need. For instance, the Allah says, Verily, all things have We created by measure.<sup>46</sup>

While creating everything Allah kept His known number and an ideal measure, both qualitatively and quantitatively. For example, air is a perfect mixture of many gases needed for breathing and survival of life. However, being Allah's vicegerent, it is expected that man has to control his needs and desires. This is evident from the Qur'anic words like '*haq*', '*adl*', '*meezan*' and '*qadar*', meaning truth, justice, equity, fairness and honesty respectively.<sup>47</sup> Scholars of Islam affirm that these terms form the basis of human interaction and behavior towards other living creatures.

Furthermore, Allah states in the Glorious Qur'an: And We have produced therein everything in balance.<sup>48</sup> In Allah's provisions, there is perfect symmetry and consistency in the quantities required to fulfill the basic needs. He supplies accordingly, without any question of oversupply or shortage. Scholars explain how Allah has set a balanced system of supply and demand in the creation of every living being. Additionally, the divine planning of supply and demand is arranged and maintained within an eternal circle of creation, which itself helps to maintain a systematic balance.<sup>49</sup> The Almighty says

And We have provided sustenance for you on it and for those of whom you are not the providers.<sup>50</sup> For instance, the mineral kingdom supports the vegetable and they are in their turn support the animal, and there is a link of mutual dependence between them. Excess is eliminated through a natural cycle as the waste

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<sup>43</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqara 2:30

<sup>44</sup> S, A, A. Mawdudi, "Towards Understanding the Quran" English Translation by The Islamic Foundation, (2006).

<sup>45</sup> A.A.M. Any et al., "Understanding the Role of Khalifa for the Foundation of Wizard Khalifa Tourism". *International Journal of Human and Technology Interaction*, Vol. 3 No. 2, (2019).

<sup>46</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al Qamar 54:29.

<sup>47</sup> M.R. Akhtar, "Towards an Islamic Approach for Environmental Balance". *Islamic Economic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (1996).

<sup>48</sup> Qur'an, Surah Ar Ra'd 13:8.

<sup>49</sup> M.R. Akhtar, "Towards an Islamic Approach for Environmental Balance"...

<sup>50</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al Hijr 15:19-20.



of one is converted to food for another and vice versa. This is an infinite chain of gradation and interdependence.<sup>51</sup>

The universe is filled with a myriad of elements, including the living (such as trees, animals, birds etc.) and the non-living (earth, sun, moon, stars etc.). Nothing is conflicting with the other because there is equilibrium and stability in Allah's creation. These elements have an enormous range of form and function that serve the fulfillment and well-being of the humankind. Each of Allah's creation worships His greatness and knows how to praise Him which is a wonderful sign of His glory and majesty. It is also highlighted in another verse of the Qur'an, He who has spread out the earth for you and threaded roads for you therein and has sent down water from the sky; with it have We brought forth diverse kinds of vegetation. Eat and Pasture your cattle; verily, in this are signs for men endued with understanding.<sup>52</sup>

Everything in the universe has a fundamental worth and purpose for a fixed period. More importantly, no part of the creation is futile, without wisdom or value. As Allah says, We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them carelessly. We have not created them but for truth.<sup>53</sup> This verse clearly marks that each element of the universe has a dual function. Firstly, to praise and glorify the Creator who controls and sustains everything and secondly to serve His other creatures by performing the specific roles assigned to them. Those roles are to serve other creatures with justice.

Allah says also in the Qur'an, .....He has power over everything: He who has created death and life to try you, which of you work the most good.<sup>54</sup> This verse attests to the fact that Allah gives life to test and examine His creatures and the ones who perform the best job. This is supported by a well-substantiated Hadith of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) narrated by Anas and Abd-Allah ibn Mas-ud (may Allah be pleased with them), All of mankind are dependents of Allah, and the most beloved of them to Allah are those who are most beneficial to His dependents.<sup>55</sup>

This Hadith demonstrates that key purpose of the enormous diversity of life is to create an atmosphere of interdependence among all creatures. As explained by scholars such as Bagader this relationship between man and the universe leads to three fundamental principles. Firstly, that this relationship of pondering on; that is based on deliberation and examination of the universe and its constituents. Secondly, that this relationship requires equitable use while considering man's contentment and personal benefits. Lastly, that this relationship affirms responsibility and discipline where humans are not only considering the benefits of their own fellows but of other creatures also.<sup>56</sup>

Conclusively, man being an integral element of this universe, holds pivotal role among other creatures and therefore, has been granted stewardship over the

<sup>51</sup> A. Y. Ali, *The Holy Quran, Text, Translation and Commentary*, (Lahore: Sh., Muhammad Ashraf, N.D).

<sup>52</sup> Qur'an, Surat Thaahaa 20:53-54.

<sup>53</sup> Qur'an, Surah Ad Dukhaan 44:38-39.

<sup>54</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al Mulk 67:2.

<sup>55</sup> *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 8, Book 73, Hadith No. 42.

<sup>56</sup> A.A. Bagader, "Environmental Protection in Islam". IUCN Environmental Policy and Law Paper No. 20...118.



earth being the best of Allah's creations. At the same time, man is not more than Allah's agent and administrator on the earth. For this reason, his role is solely of a manager who is expected to utilise the goods and services of the earth for his own as well as others' benefits. Thus, based on equity, he has been ordained with the responsibility as a trustee.<sup>57</sup> As the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has said, The world is beautiful and verdant, and verily Allah, be He exalted, has made you His steward in it, and He sees how you acquit yourself.<sup>58</sup> This Hadith emphasises on responsibility of mankind as stewards (*khulafa'*) of the earth, entrusted with its care and management. It reminds the Muslims that, the world is a beautiful and verdant trust from Allah, and human beings are accountable for their actions and their impact on the environment wherein Allah observes our behavior and will judge us accordingly.

Allah filled the earth with all the resources to sustain life and thus honored and entrusted man to utilise them for his benefit while also keeping in mind the share of future generation without over exploiting those resources for himself. This also means that man should not misuse, degrade or deteriorate natural resources as Allah has entitled every generation to benefit from them. As the Allah states: Eat and drink, but waste not by excess; Verily He loves not the excessive.<sup>59</sup>

Islam has greatly prohibited the abuse and overuse of resources and as such called it corruption with Allah's system of generation and regeneration. The Almighty further explains, And do not follow the bidding of the excessive, who cause corruption in the earth and do not work good.<sup>60</sup>

To Allah the matter is so serious that He states in the Glorious Qur'an repeatedly; And do not cause corruption in the earth, when it has been set in order.<sup>61</sup> Studies from the Seerah of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) reveal that throughout his life he encouraged his followers to plant trees, to dig wells and cultivate land. There are more than 30 Hadith regarding cultivation, agriculture, hunting, and guarding cattle where the Islamic attitude towards the environment is structured on principles of sustainable development.<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, centuries before today's "Green Movement", Islam gave tremendous importance to the notion of green agricultural development by bringing life to the land through cultivation and agriculture. This is evident from the Prophet's (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying, If any Muslim plants a tree or sows a field and a human or animal eats from it, it shall be reckoned as charity from him.<sup>63</sup> Following the footsteps of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the fourth caliph of Islam Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) extensively stressed on environmental protection and specifically agronomy.

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<sup>57</sup> A.A. Bagader, "Environmental Protection in Islam". IUCN Environmental Policy and Law Paper No. 20...120.

<sup>58</sup> Sahih Muslim, Book 33, Hadith No. 1634.

<sup>59</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al A'raaf 7:31.

<sup>60</sup> Qur'an, Surah Ash Syu'araa' 26:151-152.

<sup>61</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al A'raaf 7:56.

<sup>62</sup> Sahih Bukhari 2322-28.

<sup>63</sup> Sahih Bukhari 2320.



Saving the environment involves taking major steps to promote a universal approach towards environmental protection for the benefit of man's present and future generations as well as all other creatures who have their share in the use of these resources. As Allah says in the Qur'an, Let you be a nation that calls to all that is good, that establishes right and eradicates wrong. Such are they who shall prosper.<sup>64</sup>

### Islamic Da'wah as a Comprehensive Alternative to Promoting Environmental Stewardship

The Qur'an, considered by Muslims as the final divine revelation, serves as a profound source of inspiration, guidance, and illumination for Muslim scholars, theologians, scientists, jurists, and believers. It is revered as a comprehensive sacred text that encompasses prayer, wisdom, worship, law, and invocation. As such, it is universally acknowledged as the cornerstone of both individual faith and Islamic civilization. The Qur'an continues to provide Muslims with an ethical framework for leading a meaningful life, offering a holistic worldview based on the unity of reality.<sup>65</sup>

Islam teaches that individuals will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment for their actions, including how they treat nature, the environment, and other living beings. While Islam does not prohibit the use of the environment for human benefit, it mandates that such use must be sustainable and not excessive, to prevent environmental damage and harm to other creatures, including humans. Islam advocates for the responsible and equitable use of resources to ensure the welfare of all living things.<sup>66</sup>

Islamic *Da'wah* and environmental stewardship are interconnected aspects of Islamic teachings. There are some key connections to which Islamic *Da'wah* plays on environmental stewardship: 1) Invitation to care for creation: Islamic *Da'wah* invites people to care for the environment and all creation. 2) Environmental awareness: *Da'wah* efforts raise awareness about environmental issues and Islamic teachings. 3) Sustainable practices: Islamic *Da'wah* promotes sustainable practices and responsible resource management. 4) Spiritual connection: Environmental stewardship is seen as an act of worship and a way to connect with Allah. 5) Holistic approach: Islamic *Da'wah* integrates environmental stewardship into a broader framework of spiritual, social, and economic responsibility. 6) Justice and equity: *Da'wah* emphasizes environmental justice and equity in access to natural resources. 7) Education and awareness: *Da'wah* efforts educate people about Islamic environmental teachings and promote awareness. 8) Collective responsibility: Islamic *Da'wah* emphasizes the collective responsibility of Muslims to protect the environment. 9) Role modeling: *Da'wah* practitioners model environmentally responsible behavior, inspiring others to follow.

<sup>64</sup> Qur'an, Surah Ali 'Imran 3:104.

<sup>65</sup> O. İbrahim, A. Savaş, and D. Dilek, "Environment and Islam." *Journal of Economic Cooperation and Development*, Vol. 34, No. 4, (2013).

<sup>66</sup> R. Sabrina, "Environmental and Sustainable Development in Islamic Perspective." Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal), Vol. 3, No. 4, (2020): 2979-2988.



Muslims can effectively integrate environmental stewardship into Islamic *Da'wah*, in order to promote a comprehensive understanding of Islam, inspire environmental responsibility, and contribute to a more sustainable future. In Islam, Allah created human beings as vicegerents on the earth, not as its lords. This role of stewardship demands the utmost care and respect towards nature. While Islam permits the utilization of environmental resources, it emphasizes that such use should not be arbitrary or irresponsible. Instead, Muslims are required to use natural resources with moderation and responsibility, reflecting their role as vicegerents of the All-Wise.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, Islamic *Da'wah* plays a vital role in promoting environmental stewardship through: 1) Raising awareness: Educating Muslims about Islamic teachings on environmental care. 2) Inspiring action: Encouraging Muslims to adopt sustainable practices and reduce their environmental impact. 3) Role modeling: *Da'wah* practitioners model environmentally responsible behavior, inspiring others to follow. 4) Integrating Islamic values: Connecting environmental stewardship to Islamic principles, such as justice, compassion, and accountability. 5) Encouraging sustainable lifestyles: Promoting simple living, reducing waste, and conserving resources. 6) Supporting environmental justice: Advocating for equitable access to natural resources and environmental protection. 7) Islamic *Da'wah* have provided for the Ummah a holistic approach to integrates environmental stewardship into a broader framework of spiritual, social, and economic responsibility. 8) Collaborating with others: Building bridges with non-Muslim environmental groups to promote collective action. 9) Providing spiritual motivation: Emphasizing the spiritual benefits of environmental stewardship, such as closeness to Allah. 10) Empowering youth: Educating and empowering young Muslims to become environmental leaders and change-makers. 11) Community engagement: Islamic *Da'wah* encourages community involvement in environmental initiatives. 12) Stewardship (*Amanah*): Islamic *Da'wah* is aimed at informing Muslims to be responsible in protecting and preserving the environment. 13) Islamic *Da'wah* is made to educate Muslims that they are “Trustee of the Earth” (*Khilafah*) and therefore humans are entrusted with caring for the Earth and its resources. 14) Accountability: Islamic *Da'wah* in relation to environmental stewardship is to educate Muslims that they are accountable to Allah for their actions which includes, environmental impact, conservation and sustainable use of resources, and that Muslims are commanded to protect and care for all creation, including animals and plants. 15) Islamic *Da'wah* has also proffer solution on integrating spiritual and environmental values, recognizing the sacred trust (*Amanah*) of the Earth to mankind.

Furthermore, Islamic *Da'wah* as a comprehensive solution to environmental stewardship is aimed at; Promoting sustainable practices and responsible resource management, based on Islamic teachings of moderation (*Mawaddah*) and conservation (*Hifz*), while also educating Muslims about Islamic environmental teachings, highlighting the importance of environmental care in Islamic texts. Not only that, it inspiring behavioural change and sustainable lifestyles, through the

<sup>67</sup> O. İbrahim, A. Savaş, and D. Dilek, “Environment and Islam”... 22.





example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as role model to the *Ummah*. Islamic Da'wah also provide ways in addressing environmental injustices and promoting fairness, based on Islamic principles of justice (*Adl*) and compassion (*Rahma*) which lead down ways of revitalizing the spiritual connection between humans and nature, recognizing the signs of Allah (*Ayat*) in all creations.

By fulfilling this role, *Da'wah* can inspire a new generation of environmentally conscious Muslims, contributing to a more sustainable future and a better world for all.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper highlights the significance of Islamic teachings in promoting environmental responsibility and sustainability. Environmental stewardship is deeply interconnected in relation to Islamic teachings. The Glorious Qur'an and Hadith emphasises humanity's responsibility to care for and protect the natural world. And by so doing, Islamic *Da'wah*, or sharing the message of Islam, plays a vital role in promoting environmental stewardship through raising awareness about Islamic teachings on the environment and encouraging sustainable practices and responsible resource management that would inspire individuals to adopt eco-friendly lifestyles by fostering a sense of accountability and justice for the environment, thereby promoting cooperation and collective action for environmental protection among the *Ummah*. Not only that, Islam emphasises the importance of environmental stewardship, considering it a fundamental aspect of faith which employed Muslims play a vital responsibility to address environmental challenges, and mobilize collective action. To this end, the study concludes that religious and ideological awareness influences numerous human behaviours while interacting with their environment. They will struggle in the market contestation of ideas dispersed across social, cultural, symbolic, and spiritual capital. Although Islamic Da'wah focuses on fostering environmental care among the *Ummah*, it also incorporates ethical ideals.

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