

2. Man and the Natural Environment

Man is part of the natural world in his formation, growth and the continuity of his existence on this earth; interacting with the natural components and their environmental conditions, continuously. The Holy Qur'an, in many instances, has referred to man's relationship with nature and the environment. Here, we quote some of the verses:

وَاللَّهُ أَنْبَتَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ نَبَاتًا

“And Allah has made you grow out of the earth as a growth.” (71:17)

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

“...and We have made of water everything living...”(21:30)

وَالِى تَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۚ هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ

“And to Samood (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: O my people! Serve Allah, you have no god other than He; He brought you into being from the earth, and made you dwell in it, therefore ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him, surely my Lord is Nigh, Answering.”(11:61)

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۚ وَالْفِى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِي أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ ۚ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ

“He created the heavens without pillars as you see them, and put mountains upon earth lest it might convulse with you, and he spread in it animals of every kind; and We sent down water from the cloud, then caused to grow therein (vegetation) of every noble kind.” (31:10)

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً ۗ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُنِيرٍ

“Do you not see that Allah has made what is in the heavens and what is in the earth subservient to you, and made complete to you His favour outwardly and inwardly? And among men is he who disputes in respect of Allah though having no knowledge, nor guidance, nor a book giving light.” (31:20)

وَيُنزِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُنَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ

“...and sent down upon you water from the cloud that He might thereby purify you, and take away from you the uncleanness of Satan...”(8: 11)

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا

“...and We send down pure water from the cloud.” (25:48)

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلُكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْأَنْهَارَ

“...and He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command...”(14:32)

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلُكَ مَوَاجِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“And He it is Who has made the sea subservient that you may eat fresh flesh from it...”(16: 14)

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلُكَ مَوَاجِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“From it We created you and into it We shall send you back and from it will We raise you a second time.” (16: 14)

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ

“And when he turns back, he runs along in the land that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock...”(2:205)

The above Qur’anic verses speak about man as a part of the natural environment he interacts with; gaining from it and likewise, giving to it. He is also responsible for its growth as well as preventing vices and corruption in it.

Man, this living creature, represents a part of the natural system, which activates its components toward understanding and the coordination between each other. Thus, the natural world can be defined as the balance and the accurate, scientific, calculated equilibrium from the most learned and knowledgeable being.

The amount of water, the salinity of sea, the sweetness of river, the ratio of oxygen, the grade of light rays, the degree of heat and the quantity of rain, fish, animals, plants...etc., all this is well calculated without the least error.

The earth and its gravitational force, rate of movement, and power of absorption has an effect on the life of man, animals and plants, and their continuous existence in this universe shows that the knowledgeable Creator has arranged it accurately.

Consequently, the above–quoted verses have discussed the reality in the life of man, naturally and environmentally, viz:

Man was created from the earth and he grows from it, that water is a fundamental part of life, and that the Almighty Allah has colonized man in this world, i.e., He entrusted him with the building of it by using its natural resources and its good environmental conditions, so as to understand the power of the Almighty Allah and His blessings to him.

And that the natural environment of this world, like mountains, is meant for protecting the equilibrium of the earth and its living creatures, by production and consumption, which live under the system of life’s equilibrium.

Thus, the rains which fall, the plants which grow, all this is a proof of Allah’s greatness, His power, knowledge and wisdom, and any action of the Wise Knower must be accurately calculated without the least contradiction, and even if it is abused it will act in accordance with the natural system and protect the environmental equilibrium, which, in one way or the other, is evidence of the greatness of the Creator and His wisdom.

Everything in this world and its natural surroundings, such as, water, animals, forest and plants, the aquatic living creatures, solar rays, heat, rain, the salinity of the sea and the sweetness of the rivers, were all created for man, in order to make his life better.

In view of this fact, the Holy Qur’an enjoins man to reflect on the blessings of Allah to him and calls him

toward monotheism, thanksgiving and worshipping Him alone. This is how the Holy Qur'an places man in the natural environment as part and parcel of it.

However, after explaining this relationship between life, intellect and nature, the Holy Qur'an discusses the activities, responsibilities and social systems, which protect the well-being of the environment, as well as protecting the divine will of the world of existence under the power of Shari'ah.

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