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Tourism and environmental protection from the Islamic spiritual approach

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Abstract

Religion unequivocally is significant. It is part of religion that teaches human how to be law-abiding to God, human and nature as a whole concept. Necessity of understanding diverse aspects of religions will contribute towards a harmonious life. In contrast, disregarding it would bring chaos to humanities as well as this world. Considering the fact that understanding the concept of sustainability from religion's perspective is vital, this discussion is considered significant. Human equipped with such knowledge will encounter new ways of understanding and maintaining harmonious living via comprehending the whole aspects of religion.

Tourism is on the rise. People are now willing to spend their time and money on tourism locally or abroad. In fact, tourism is greatly encouraged by government of a country. Islam, as *al-din* or a way of life, provides guidelines in every aspect of life. Islam observes that any action performed by a Muslim is counted as virtue as long as it is done accordingly and does not inflict harm or damage to his self or others. In fact, this action is deemed worship if it is for the purpose of seeking Allah's blessing and the implementation does not contradict with the tenets of Islam. Likewise, in tourism. Aspects such as intention of a visit, places to visit, method of a visit, activities and *rukhsah* during a visit are among the guidelines discussed. This paper thus attempts to describe the basic concepts of Islamic Tourism based on the Quran and Sunnah and its relation to the environmental preservation and protection.

Keywords: Religion, Tourism, Environment, Spiritual

Tourism from the Islamic Perspective

Today people are willing to spend their time and money on tourism locally or abroad. The government is also keen on encouraging the people to take a holiday within the country. People tend to overspending in their travelling. There is a relationship between satisfaction and tourist spending behavior (Marta & Linda, 2016). Lavishness in any aspect is prohibited in Islam. In fact any wasteful act is considered wrongdoing. Travelling if merely for the sake of touring and

enjoying is considered useless. (Al-Quran, al-isra': 27)¹ Islam is *al-din* that provides the means to a way of life. The teachings of Islam encompass all aspects of life and not only confined to the relationship of servant and Creator (Din, 2003). As a Muslim whatever is done will not come to nought in fact can be regarded as an act of worship if it is carried out with the intention to seek Allah's pleasures and the execution/performance thereof do not contradict with the Islamic tenets. The "Cuti-Cuti Malaysia" Campaign that encourages local tourism can actually be an act of worship when the following aspects that are to be discussed are performed and carried out accordingly.

Studies have been done on tourism and environment. For instance, *Tourism and environmental research: a review*, (Douglas, 1985) *The relationship between tourism and environment*, (Faraji and Aghajani, 2010) *Research on environmental impacts of tourism in China: Progress and prospect* (Zhong, 2011) and *Environment effects of tourism* (Rabbany, 2013). The mentioned discourses mostly focus on the physical and the tangible elements. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, is one of the pioneers on scrutinization between spiritual aspect and environment. He wrote *The Spiritual and religious dimensions of the environmental crisis*, (Nasr, 2000) but this study focuses on tourism and environment from the spiritual aspect. Thus the following exploration is relevant.

Apart from intention, Islam also places importance on safety, wealth and family. After making the necessary endeavour to ensure that aspects of safety during a journey and the safety of what is left behind, a Muslim is encouraged to supplicate to Allah. This is because any efforts made can only be successful with Allah's consent (Nawawi, 1983). The importance of seeking safety from Allah whilst travelling is also clear with the Islamic rulings of the recommended travelling prayer (*nawafil solat musafir*).

Islam encourages the activities of *tafakkur fi qalqi Allah*. In the Quran there are numerous persuasions imploring man to always reflect, think and observe Allah's creations. Contemplation (*tafakkur*) can lead to the increase of a man's faith. The activities of contemplation can be carried out when he is travelling. Among Allah's related commandments are:-

"Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day,— there are indeed Signs for men of understanding" (Ali 'Imran, 3: 190)

"Do they not look at the Camels, how they are made?" (Al-Ghasyiah, 88:17).

Say: "Who is the Lord and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth?" Say: "(It is) Allah." Say: "Do ye then take (for worship) protectors other than Him, such as have no power either for good or for harm to themselves?" Say: "Are the blind equal with those who see? Or the depths of darkness equal with Light?" Or do they assign to Allah partners who have created (anything) as He has created, so that the creation seemed to them similar? Say: "Allah is the Creator of all things: He is the One, the Supreme and Irresistible." (Al-Ra'd, 13:16).

¹ "Indeed the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful". (Al-Quran, al-isra': 27)

In addition, the excuse (*rukhsah*) given in the performance of the acts of worship of the *solat* (prayer) and *saum* (fast) show that the Islamic rulings gives due recognition to the importance and the need to travel provided that the travelling does not condone futile activities and do not contradict the Islamic rulings. Simultaneously, there are aspects of tourism which is regarded as an act of worship in Islam. This is exemplified with the existence of elements of tourism such as the *Haj* (pilgrimage to Makkah). The pilgrims are required to make the necessary preparations for the long journey to Makkah and also the nearby journeys from one place to another whilst there. Another example is pertaining to a group of travellers who are travelling good intention but unfortunately are cut off from their supplies or resources whilst in their journey are also recognised in Islam. This is because this group of people are eligible to receive *zakat* and help in Islam. (Sahata, 2003)

Furthermore, vacation or tourism can help to sharpen one's thoughts (Ali-'Imran:190) besides giving him the peace of mind, reduces stress and increase a person's motivation level.

Reflecting on Allah's creations, to feel Allah's grandness and remembrance of Allah can help to compose one's thoughts. This is in line with Allah's commandments "*Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.*" (al-Ra'd, 13:28).

In a tradition of Rasulullah s.a.w. "Verily for your self on you is a right and on your Lord on you is a right" (Narrated by al-Tarmizi)

As such tourism or taking a vacation is at times deemed as a necessity when a person puts his mind at ease because he needs time to rest from his daily routine.

Whilst taking a vacation and putting one mind's at ease, a person gains time to reflect on his self. The space and free time that are available can be used to evaluate one's behaviour and deeds. This method is directly in line with *muhasabah al-nafs* that is encouraged in Islam.

In one of Allah's commandments that brings forth the following interpretation, "*O ye who believe! Fear Allah and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for the morrow. Yea, fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do*" (al-Hasyr, 59:18).

The above verse encourages persons who have the faith in Allah to fear Allah. They are the ones who are always conscious of their deeds to ensure that their deeds do not oppose Allah's orders. It acts as a reminder and a warning that all deeds performed by someone whether good or bad will all be accounted for.

The purpose of *muhasabah* is to ensure that a person makes the necessary preparations to face the hereafter and thus prepare one's self with the good deeds that can save him from the torment of Allah (Ibn Kathir: 1999).

Based on the traditions of Rasulullah s.a.w.: “The wise person is the one who stoops his desires and perform deeds for the days succeeding his death. The weak person is one who follows his desires and daydreams with the rewards from Allah”

(Narrated by Ibnu Majah).

However to ensure that tourism is in line with the Islamic philosophy, it is imperative that the intention of the journey or travelling is ascertained. In Islam, each and every deed of a Muslim is based on the intention. According to a Hadith of Rasulullah based on the authority of Umar al-Khattab “*I heard the messenger of Allah salla Allah alihi wa sallam say: "Actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended."* (Narrated by Bukhari).

Besides that, the obligatory prayers and others must be observed. A Muslim cannot neglect his responsibility to pray whilst in travel. This also holds true with his responsibility to look after the environment, in ensuring that he eats food that are permissible (*halal*), wear clothes that are according to Islamic rulings, uses permissible financial sources for the travelling expenses, carry out activities that do not oppose Islamic rulings whilst travelling and other matters that must be observed whilst travelling.

Tourism can also be used to gain knowledge and to conduct research and studies. This has been proven by scholars of the past such as al-Ghazali (d.1111)², Ibn Battutah (d. 1369)³, Ibn Khaldun (d.1395 Masihi)⁴ and others. History has proven that there were many geographers who started from the Muslim community such as al-Razi (d. 925 Masihi) and Ibn Hazm (d. 1064 Masihi) and al-Idrisi (d. 1166 Masihi) (Mu’nis, 1967).

The same also holds true during the Islamic Golden Era era, such as during the Abbasiyah period where the economic system developed and flourished as tourism played a part in the economic development then. There were hotels built at that time to meet the needs of businessmen and travellers. The scholars of the day such as the experts of *hadith* had travelled to obtain the authentic *ahadith* from the Muslims all over the continent due to the spread of the Islamic empire. The same concept is adopted by the scholars of the Malay Archipelago. Among them is Hamka (d. 1981 Masihi) who did not receive formal education during his lifetime but gained knowledge from his travels within and outside of Indonesia (Salam, 1983).

Moreover according to Islamic tourism philosophy the travel must not be in vain including the opportunity to preach. History has shown that the travels carried out by the Muslims of the past had contributed tremendously to the advent of Islam in the Malay Archipelago (Hasyimy, 1981).

² He had travelled to Damascus in the year 1095 Masihi. (For further details refer to Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir (2008), *Al-Ghazali and His Theory of the Soul*, Penerbit USM: P. Pinang.

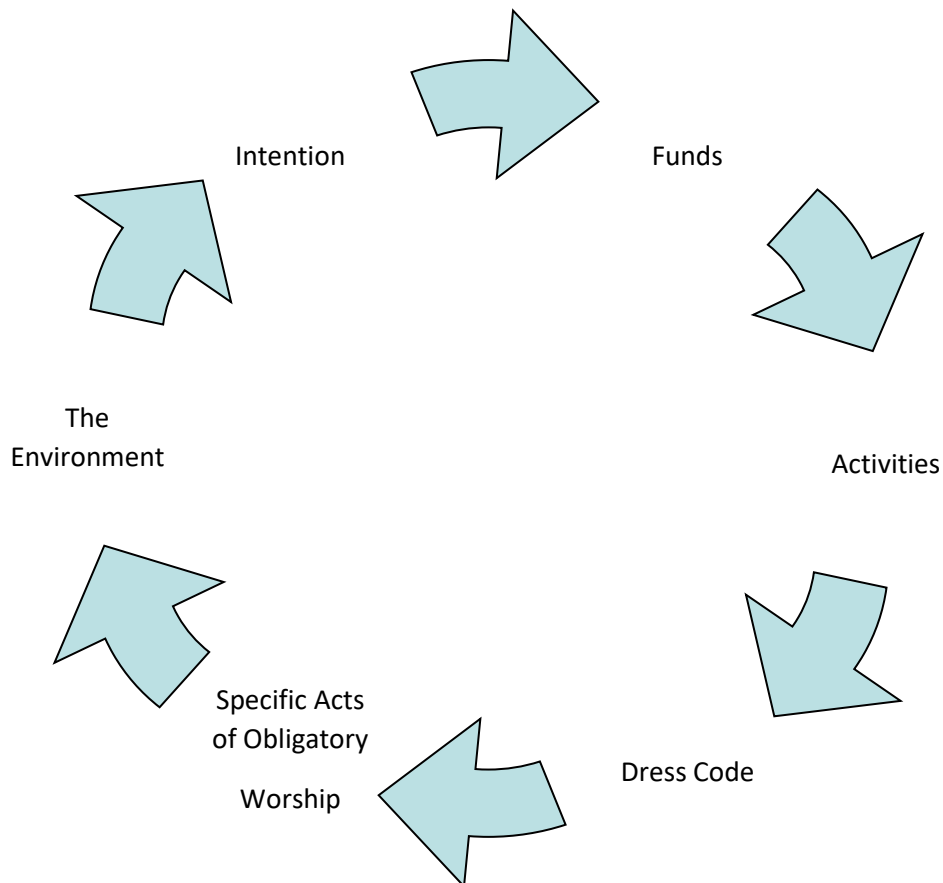
³ He is renowned for his book *Rihlah* that has been translated into numerous languages such as the English Language and the Malay Language. Mackintosh Smith, Tim (ed) (2003), *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, Picador: London. Syed, A. Syed. N. A. & Mohd. D. A. S. (2003), *Pengembaraan Ibn Battutah*, MPH & IKIM: Kuala Lumpur.

⁴Also has been translated into numerous languages such as the English Language and the Malay Language. See Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History*, trans. By Franz Rosenthal, Princeton University Press: Princeton. Ibn Khaldun (1995), *Muqaddimah*, DBP: Kuala Lumpur.

Islam also puts the emphasis on the place to travel. For example if a person visits a historical site, numerous benefits can be gained from it. From such travels one is able to get a glimpse of the struggles of the early Muslims especially when the said site recorded the important moments in the expansion of Islam. As a guideline, Muslims are able to choose the sites mentioned in the Quran⁵ such as certain prophets' incidents and their people. Apart from tourism, one can be in receipt of a lesson and the teachings associated thereto as well as use the travels as a platform to increase his faith.

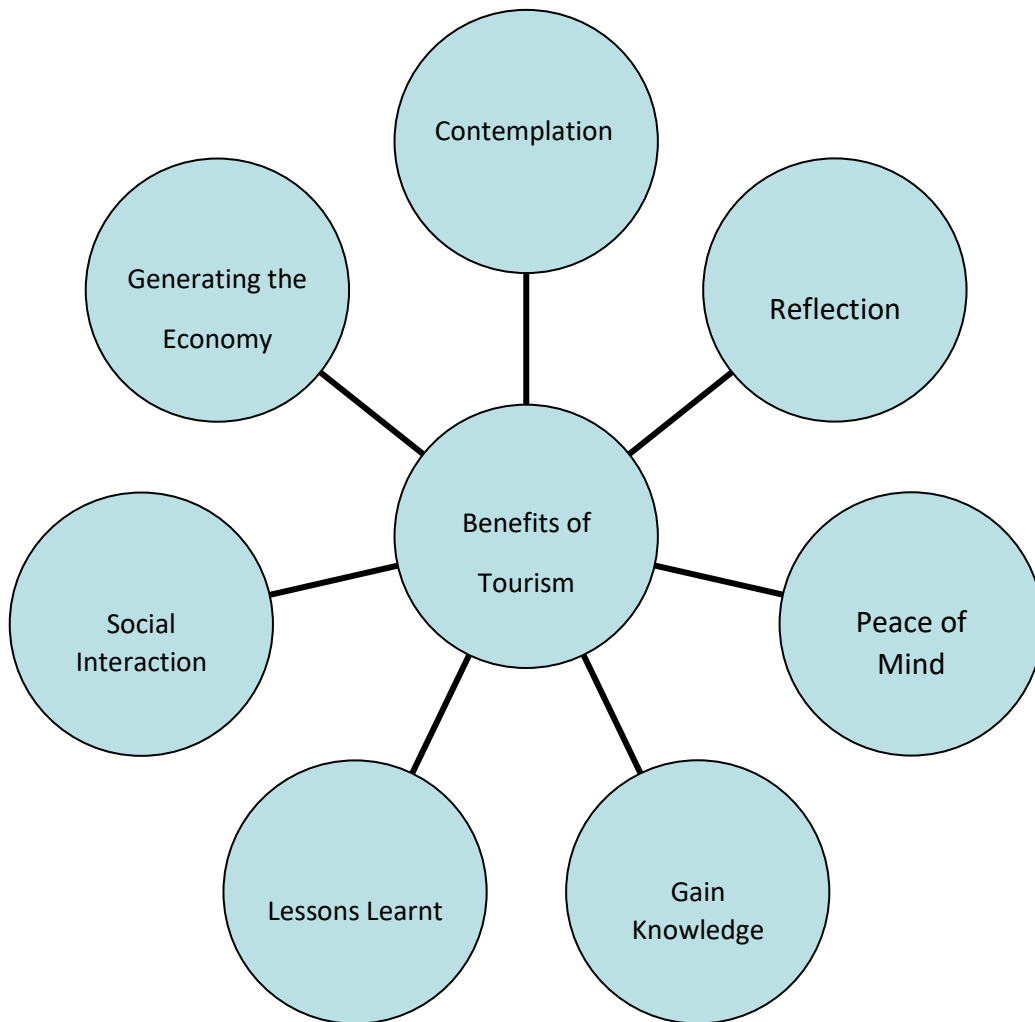
In tourism there also exists the concept of social interaction. This hold true when travelling in a group as it allows for the bondage of brotherhood among the travelling members, getting to know one another better and helping one another. Tourism also contributes to the economic development of a community. Tourism often times provides opportunity to generate income for the local community (Shuib, 1994).

Figure 1: MAIN ASPECTS THAT NEED TO BE GIVEN CONSIDERATION



⁵ For example the cave that is related to the story of the "Dwellers of the Cave" (*ashab al-kahfi*). According to Allah's commandments "Behold, the youths betook themselves to the Cave: they said "Our Lord! Bestow on us Mercy from Thyself, and dispose of our affair for us in the right way!" (al-Kahfi, 18:10).

Figure 2: BENEFITS OF TOURISM



A Holistic Sustainability

It is pertinent to note that moral virtues towards sustainability are universal virtues. These virtues encompass values based on religion and humanity. Needless to say, all religions propagate sustainability and this propagation is assisted by humanity values. In Islam, moral virtues towards sustainability are based on faith in Allah.

Sustainability literally signifies maintaining or enduring for long period (Wehmeier, 2005). In actual fact, the concept of sustainability is extensive. It is universal as well as comprehensive and it swathes manifold facets. In other words, it is not marginalized to only certain area like environment and as such.

Islam encourages a holistic and comprehensive concept of sustainability and it perceives this concept from various angles. Firstly, it encompasses the relation between human and Allah, i.e.,

performing general and specific *ibadat* to Allah. Secondly, it touches upon the relation between human and his/her community, i.e., politic, economy, education and the likes. Lastly, it articulates the relation between human and other creations like animals, plants, air, and water and as such. In short, each of this creation of Allah has its own task and role to run in this world. All these creations of Allah have their roles to run in this world.

According to Islam, sustainability is a process which does not end with the worldly affairs. In point of fact, it is a continuum to life after death, viz., the hereafter. Corroborating this is one hadith of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) which records,

“Abu Hurairah (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three, recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him (for the deceased).” (Narrated by Muslim) (Muslim, 1993).

This is one of the Islamic aspects of sustainability which lucidly illustrates the greatness of Islam. In a strict sense, Islam does not only emphasize worldly sustainability, but also lengthen its emphasis to the life after death. However, before attaining hereafter sustainability, one incontrovertibly must achieve worldly sustainability.

Sustainability in the form of *ibadat* is in conformity with one of the Prophet sayings:

“The Prophet was asked, "What deeds are loved most by Allah?" He said, "The most regular constant deeds even though they may be few." He added, 'Don't take upon yourselves, except the deeds which are within your ability.' (Narrated by Bukhari) (Bukhari, 1992).

This saying cogently illustrates that sustainable and continuous deeds should be prioritized in one's life.

Sustainability between human and his/her community as portrayed by Islam is broad and covers a wide range of spectrum. Instance given is Islamic economy which is interest-free, devoid of suppression, oppression, injustice, spendthrift and excessive wastage of money. In addition, the act of performing *zakat* and *sadaqah* is commendable by Islam. In all, these steps are to assure that all incomes and materials accumulated are distributed evenly and properly. In so doing, the sustainability of humanity is maintained and any form of monopolized wealth can be avoided. Substantiating this, Allah says:

in order that it may not make a circuit between the wealthy among you
(al-Hasyr:7)

In ensuring the effectiveness of the Islamic economy sustainability, Islam advances moderate approaches. It teaches human how to differentiate between necessities and desires and how to spend his money wisely. This is to avoid any forms of greed and lust when spending money. In a strict sense, in spending money one must be economical prudent. In so doing, the sustainability of income may be achieved and any forms of overwhelmed debt can be avoided.

In terms of politic, Islam favors a trustworthy and a just system of politic. In the aspects of education, it boosts to a continuous and holistic educational system. All these steps, in all, are to ensure the sustainability between human and his/her community.

The sustainability between human and other creations of Allah is closely related to the roles of human as khalifah of Allah in this world. The term khalifah denotes the supreme leader. It also implies substitute or representative. Thus, it is incumbent upon human to lead and administer this world in orderly fashion exploiting any means necessary in order to establish good administration. Human must run this task with compassionate and benevolence. Should any malevolence or malice been employed, human will suffer grave consequences. This has been reprimanded repetitiously in the Quran. Substantiating this, the Quran says in chapter al-Rum verse 41.

Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned. That (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds in order that they may turn back (from evil) (al-Rum: 41)

It is a cogent fact that human is given responsibility to nurture the world and to ensure each creation runs its sustainable task accordingly. The world's equilibrium involves the concept of *al-Mizan*, a concept outlined by Islam to retain the eco system. According to this concept Allah has bestowed upon each creation with different tasks and roles. If this role faces interruption, the world system might encounter disruption. Should this happen, the whole humanity would be in jeopardy.

Thus as a khalifah, it is a must for human to make sure that the world's ecosystem remains intact. This effort is incumbent upon all humanities regardless of religion, ethnic and culture. It is this effort that Islam encourages and recognizes as the holistic sustainability. Needless to say, any effort to sustain the world holistically is praiseworthy. It is indeed worth mentioning that this effort comes from one of the teachings of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) whom Allah declares as blessing to the world over. In line with this statement, the Quran says:

We sent thee not but as a mercy for all creatures. (al-Anbiya': 107)

Another aspect that steers the holistic sustainability is the human development. In discussing sustainable human development module, one should also emphasize the spiritual aspects. In Islam, the spiritual aspects and *akhlaq* are intertwined. Thus, emphasis on the spiritual aspects is needed to establish good *akhlaq*. Human development needs to be rectified first before human

can play his/her role as khalifah on this world. Instances given of the spiritual aspects of human development that need to be observed are faith in Allah, the function of mind and the likes.

The core of faith if administered accordingly will ensure the sustainability of other aspects. Safeguarding the environment is one of the pertinent examples that should be highlighted here. Islam sees it as compulsory and those who commit it will be handsomely rewarded. In contrast, those who transgress it will be penalized. This kind of action definitely has a connection with faith and only those with solid faith will fear Allah, hoping for His gratitude and begging for His mercy in the hereafter.

There are many ways to generate awareness of the holistic sustainability like providing early education to children in particular, and to society in general. Children starting from the early age should be informed and educated that the elements of sustainability derived from the Islamic teachings which are closely related with the aspects of faith. For instance, safeguarding the nature and environment are the signs of faith in and gratitude to Allah, and considered one of the significant *ibadats* to Allah. Within this exercise then emerges good akhlak which eventually leads to interactive ummah that emphasize on sustainability in all facets.

The final impact that could derive from the holistic sustainability is noble *akhlaq*. Needless to say, noble *akhlaq* is one of the main goals in Islamic teachings. Achieving it is commendable and in line with the messages brought by the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) to perfect the noble *akhlaq*. One of the hadith which corroborates this goes as follows:

“I was sent to accomplish the noble akhlaq (*solih al-akhlaq*)”
(Narrated by Ahmad) (Ahmad, n.d.)

In order to achieve a holistic in a precise manner, any effort or focus must not only linger around young generation. In fact, it should extend to all walks of life. Present scenario evidently shows that social illness is problematic not only to young generation but also to old generation regardless of society, community, race and as such.

Sustainable educational approach to young generation can be done in many attractive and suitable ways. One of the approaches is to apply accurate information on holistic sustainability in the formal education. For instance, teaching them that nurturing the sustainability of nature is important and is considered as *ibadat* as well as religious duty. As this task is in line with human inherent and is considered religious task, one who nurtures will be blessed whereas one who violates will be chastised. There are elements of nature in the creation of human. Humankind is created partly from soil and water as illustrated in the Quran, which records:

Behold! Thy Lord said to the angels I am about to create man from sounding clay from mud molded into shape (al-Hijr:28)

It is He who has created man from water. Then has He established relationships of lineage and marriage for thy Lord has power (over all things) (al-Furqan :54)

Due to the close tie between human and nature, human will easily get disrupted whenever the nature is interrupted. In order to sustain the nature and to maintain its stability, human must be one with the nature. Thus, aside from formal education in schools, colleges and universities, any attractive programs that could save the nature like recycling, save energy campaign, recreation are encouraged among the societies. These programs, in all, could cultivate the sense of caring for the nature.

Young generation in particular and society in general should realize that performing religious duty does not only revolve around specific ibadat. In fact, it encompasses general ibadat like safeguarding the environment.

All creations have their own roles. Human is blessed with mind and is given a task as supreme leader. Each human has his/her own roles which are based on his/her own capacity. If he/she is an educator, he/she is incumbent upon teaching. If he/she is a parent, he/she is incumbent upon educating his/her children. The list goes on with economist, politician, engineer, and scientist and as such. In short, all should aware that their roles are taken as *ibadat*. Failure to run these roles would lead to transgression against Allah. If human misuses all the blessings given by Allah, various crises will come to surface as what we are seeing today

In all, it is our duty to govern this world accordingly and to avoid any mayhem while maintaining it. As amply attested to, he/she who implements his/her task dutifully will be rewarded and he/she who contravenes will face severe consequences. In this respect, Allah says:

All these transgressed beyond bounds in the lands and heaped therein mischief therefore did thy Lord pour on them a scourge of diverse chastisements for thy Lord is on a watchtower (al-Fajr: 11-14)

The Connection of Trees and Plants with the Spiritual Aspects in the Quran

The elements of environment are mentioned many times in the Quran. These elements such as mountain, water, tree, river, sea, sky, earth and their roles are lucidly exhibited in the Quran. Presently, the environment is facing assorted threats and various steps have been taken to outmanoeuvre these menaces. Despite of many strategies taken to sustain the environment, there is one step which is often being neglected and that is to dissolve the threats and retain the environment via spiritual aspects. This discussion thus attempts to exhibit the connection between the basic concept of tourism and the spiritual aspects of environmental preservation as portrayed in the Quran. It is hoped that the discussion will provide a preliminary yet clear understanding of the connection between spiritual aspects and the preservation of environment and how the environment can be sustained via spiritual realizations.

The issues that will be addressed are selected verses of Quran which are discussing the elements of environmental preservation and its connection with the spiritual religious aspects in Islam. This discussion is considered significant in sustaining and safeguarding the environment while the practice of tourism. Human equipped with such knowledge will encounter new ways of understanding and maintaining harmonious life with the environment via spiritual aspects of religion.

As amply attested to in the Quran, Allah has created every single creature worthwhile. No creature is generated worthless. In fact each form of life has been designated with specific role and task. Trees and plants are among those creatures. As a living genetic resource, they are of enormous benefit to all creations particularly mankind. It is not an exaggeration to say that the creation of trees and plants are unique and irreplaceable. Once lost, it is lost forever (Bagader, 1994). In a strict sense, trees and plants constitute the indispensable source of sustainability of mankind on earth. It is in this context that the Quran eloquently writes:

Then let man consider His nourishment that We pour down rain in showers and We split the earth in fragments, and therein make the grains to grow and vines and herbs, and olives and palms, and gardens of dense foliage, and fruits and fodder provision for you and your cattle. (al-Abasa: 24-32)

In line with the above statement and in parallel with the above-cited Quranic verse, the Glorious Quran proceeds with this:

Have you seen the fire you kindle? Was it you who grew its timber or did We grow it? We have made it a reminder and a comfort for desert dwellers (al-Waqiah 71-73)

The above verse again proffers another distinct testimony of the benefits of trees and plants to mankind. For all intents and purposes, trees and plants are a natural engine of nature. They nourish the world by enriching the soil and shielding it from erosion by wind and water. Their presence moderate the climate and they are without a doubt a water flow controller. They are also of immense value as natural medicines to mankind. The most significant of all is that trees and plants provide oxygen which mankind breathes to stay alive. By virtue of this stupendous function mankind survives (Bagader, 1994).

As noted earlier, Allah has never made every single life form of His creatures worthless. In point of fact, each is created worthwhile and has certain roles to play on this earth. What matters now is to highlight that from the Islamic point of view, all creatures do not only provide physical profits but they also contribute to spiritual benefits. The foregoing discussion has sufficiently elucidated the benefits of trees and plants from the physical point of view. What matters now is to demonstrate trees and plants from the spiritual perspectives. In other words, the following piece attempts to see how the Quran and Sunah relate the spiritual aspect with the creation of trees and plants.

The Quran has mentioned a number of trees for human to ponder. These trees are not a mere tree but possess special merits for mankind. In other words, they are of massive benefit to mankind both physical and spiritual. The date palm tree is one of them. Pertaining to this tree, the Glorious Quran eloquently writes:

See you not how Allah sets forth a parable? – A goodly word is as a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches (reach) to the sky. (Ibrahim 14-24)

The date palm tree is well-known among Muslims. It bears fruits, viz., dates which the taste is extremely good. The date itself possesses lots of essential substances needed by the human body. The interesting part is that the Quran does not only praise the tree but liken it with the believer whose heart is sincere and always promotes good deeds that strengthen his/her faith (Al-Razi, 1991).

Substantiating this is one hadith reported by Ibn Umar. The hadith goes as follows:

The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said: there is a kind of tree whose leaves do not fall and it is like the Muslims. Tell me what it is. The people mentioned different kinds of desert trees and I said to myself it is the date palm tree but I felt too shy to speak up. Then the people said tell us what it is O Messenger of Allah. He said it is the date palm tree. (Narrated by Bukhari) (Bukhari, 1992).

The above hadith corroborates the Quranic verse mentioned earlier. For all intents and purposes, a believer whose tawhid stands tall and always active in disseminating truth, establishing deeds and avoiding mayhem, is like a date tree that is good in all aspects and offers assorted kinds of benefit to mankind (Razi, 1991).

Another tree that attracts our attention is the olive tree. The parable set forth in the Quran goes in two different verses as follows:

Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of his Light is as a niche and within it a lamp, the lamp is in glass, the glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree an olive neither of the east nor of the west whose oil would almost glow forth though no fire touched it. Light upon Light. Allah guides to His Light whom he wills and Allah sets forth parables for mankind and Allah is All-Knower of everything (al-Nur 24-35)

And a tree olive that springs from Mount Sinai that grows oil and relish for the eaters (al-Mukminun 23-20)

The above two Quranic verses have recognized olive tree as a blessed tree. It is blessed for a reason. The main reason is that it has outstanding features. One of them is that the oil it generates is of extraordinary merits to mankind (Zuhaili, 1991). Indeed this tree is meritorious. Otherwise it would have never been documented as a blessed tree.

It is palpable that he/she who establishes good conduct, always propagating good deeds and set himself as a savior of society by portraying mercy and kindness is blessed by Allah. Simply put, he/she is like an olive tree which is blessed for the oil it produces for the good of mankind the world over.

Elsewhere in the Quran, there is one verse which relates the story of Prophet Yunus (Peace Be Upon Him). It goes as follows:

And verily Yunus was one of the Messengers...then a fish swallowed him and he had done an act worthy of blame. Had he not been of those who glorify Allah, he would have indeed remained inside its belly until the Day of Resurrection. But We cast him forth on the naked shore while he was sick and We caused a plant of gourd to grow over him (al-Saffat 37: 139, 142-146).

The above verse relates the story of Prophet Yunus (Peace Be Upon Him). As he was between life and death, Allah has ordered an exceptional plant called the gourd, a kind of pumpkin, to shelter him and to serve him food. This plant, as explained by science, has smooth leaves. Its fruit has good nourishment and it can be eaten raw or cooked (Razi, 1991).

As noted, Allah has not created anything in this universe in vain, without wisdom, value and purpose. In a strict sense, all things and creatures in the universe are created with purpose. When Allah mentions specific name or plant in the Quran, it incontrovertibly has merits for human to ponder upon. One who reads the above verse and comprehends it from the spiritual point of view will somehow understand the characteristics of a good believer.

That a good believer is like a gourd that provides shelter and food to the needy. A good believer is also like a tree that has strong roots and firm trunk and branches. A tree with healthy roots and trunk will produce good fruits. Similarly, a good believer with strong and clean *iman* embedded deep in the heart will establish righteous deeds and develop a noble character.

It is in this context that the Quran mentions the functions of trees, plants and the likes. Apart from taking advantage of their usefulness, human is also required to perceive them from the spiritual realization. As a trustee on earth embedded with special status and responsibility, it is human's duty to nurture the nature and understand it not only from physical realm but also from spiritual realization.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Islam has put in place a few philosophies and procedures to travel. Starting with intention, endeavour and supplication, the dress code, entertainment, activities, food, expenses and others have been given the general guidelines in Islam. Tourism in Islam is also related with the belief to the Creator (*aqidah*). Tourism is deemed worship if it is for the purpose of seeking Allah's blessing and does not in conflict with the teachings of Islam. Human's responsibility to make sure that the world's ecosystem remains inviolate while travelling. The connection between spiritual aspects with tourism and the preservation of environment cannot be repudiated.

The benefits of tourism that adheres to Islamic rulings are abundant such as contemplation, reflection, peace of mind, gaining of knowledge, lessons learnt, social interaction, generating the economy and others.

As such before incurring expenses in the travels, a Muslim should foremost correct his intention and does not neglect the guidelines that have been set. This will ensure that one's journey or travels is blessed.

The relevant authorities need to view these efforts to ensure that each and every tourism packages follow the guidelines in Islam. To attract the Muslims tourists and to ensure that the tourism package offered adheres to Islamic rulings, provide the facilities that help tourists to fulfil their obligations need to be given due attention. The travelling schedule that takes into account the prayers' time and other needs must also be attended to. If gauging from the Islamic perspective the methods of generating the economy that is blessed by Allah is also one that corresponds to the Islamic rulings. The efforts to bring forth more tourism packages that correspond to this Islamic philosophy need to be seriously given consideration.

It is imperative to note here that human who manages to observe the spiritual realization within the nature and applies it in his/her life will attain merits to a successful conclusion. He/she knows how to appreciate life and always in the state of thankfulness towards Allah. He/she regards the nature as divine blessings and uses it in a way which is right. He/she will then please Allah by not violating His divine blessings. As any misuse of nature is regarded as the signs of ungratefulness which is severely condemned in Islam. He/she will avoid it at all costs and by all means try to preserve it to the fullest. In so doing, he/she has not only maintained the nature but also retain his/her faith in Allah.

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