

**Promoting Conservation of Misali Island - Pemba, Tanzania**

# **Teachers Guide Book for Islamic Environmental Education**



Fazlun Khalid and Ali Kh. Thani  
2007

Fazlun Khalid & Ali Kh. Thani forego their copyright  
so that through this resource Muslims wherever they live may take a step  
towards preserving this green planet for future generations

Published by  
The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences  
93 Court Road, Balsall Heath  
Birmingham B12 9LQ  
England  
January 2007



The publication of this book  
was made possible by a generous grant from  
Muslim Hands Nottingham, England.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library  
ISBN

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## FOREWORD

The Misali Ethics Pilot Project has been a ground breaking endeavour in many ways. Collaborative ventures between secular and faith based organizations in the field of environmental ethics is not a new phenomenon. But what is new about this partnership between a secular NGO and an Islamic counterpart is the focus on ethical messages from the Qur'an and their application by a particular community of Muslims in the Islamic world. The collaboration between CARE International (Tanzania) and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) is setting a bench mark for the future evolution of this work. What is also significant about this project is the active support given by the government of Zanzibar and the Mufti of Zanzibar himself.

The involvement of IFEES began in the spring of 1999 thanks to Rob Wild who was Project Coordinator for CARE at that time. The first phase culminated in Pemba in November of the same year, with a workshop based on teaching material modelled on the approach of the Qur'an to environmental ethics, developed by IFEES. Judging from the responses of the participants this workshop was a notable success. This paved the way to this project being accepted by the international community as the only submission from the continent of Africa to the Sacred Gifts for a Living Planet Program in Kathmandu in November 2000 organised by WWF and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation.

Islam is an inherently environmental faith and we could come up with interesting answers to the question as to how the connection between "man and Nature" was lost. Nor is this a matter that is of exclusive concern to Muslims as other traditions could also legitimately be posing this question. But, this is not the place to go into this suffice to say that there is now a growing awareness of the tensions between economic growth and conservation, articulated in the debate that is being generated on the issues surrounding the pursuit of sustainable development.

This Guide Book is part of the Misali Ethics Pilot Project (under the Misali Conservation Project in Pemba, Zanzibar), which was initiated by a second

round of workshops supported by the MacArthur Foundation in January 2001 and implemented by CARE International in Tanzania. The material itself is not new as it is based entirely on the Qur'an, but what is new is the ordering of the material under specific headings that would make sense to the participants from the target villages who are ultimately responsible for its implementation and insha Allah its success. It also needs to be said that Muslims did not need this compartmentalisation in past times as life was lived as an organic whole, as a reflection of the Qur'an itself; holistically to use a fashionable word. What has been attempted here is to lay out an orchard so that people may harvest the knowledge from it in abundance.

That this project has got this far is in no small measure due to Polly Dolan (who has now returned to the USA), who succeeded Rob Wild, and her determination to see it through to its conclusion. My thanks are due to her for the excellent support she has given me at every opportunity. My thanks are also due to Helen de Jode whose support and assistance at various stages of the project I found invaluable; to staff of the former Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Natural Resources and the Commission for Natural Resources particularly Thabit Masoud and Rashid Juma Hamad; the Mufti of Zanzibar and his staff. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture Natural Resources Environment and Co-operatives with whose continuing support this project will hopefully succeed in reaching its sated objectives. My warm thanks are also due to my co-author and companion Ali Thani, whose unstinting support and affability made a challenging project a pleasurable experience. I am also deeply grateful to Muslim Hands for financing both the publication and the launch of this resource and to Islamic Relief for defraying our freight costs.

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July 2007

# INTRODUCTION

## **Misali Island and its importance**

A significant part of Planet Earth is covered in water, two thirds of which is sea water, which hosts thousands of life forms. Despite the abundance of the oceans natural resources are declining particularly in areas where there are coral reef habitats and inshore fisheries. The people of Pemba are experiencing a declining quality of life and vital resources are being lost. This decline as we are aware results from unsustainable human activity on finite natural resources.

Misali Island is a beautiful example of the wonder of nature with its coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangroves, shells and large variety of fish and non-fish species living in the natural world. The reef surrounding Misali is said to support 300 species of fish and 42 genera of coral and is known as a world-class snorkelling and diving site. Its once abundant fish stocks provided a livelihood for over 1000 fishermen and their families or approximately 12,000 people from around Pemba. In recent years the increased use of illegal fishing techniques, and the over exploitation of marine resources, has caused harm to the existing environment and has depleted fish stocks to dangerously low levels. These events are unprecedented in the history of the island and if not dealt with immediately with any degree of urgency, the prospect of Misali losing its status as a provider of sustenance to the fishing communities of Pemba is very real. Thus, present and future generations will have been denied the benefits of this unique and abundant habitat.

## **The Misali Ethics Project**

The idea that Islamic ethics could be used to promote conservation at Misali arose from the cultural and social context of Pemba, where community life revolves around Islam. This is probably the very first occasion when a conservation project based on Islamic ethics has been successfully employed in a marine conservation environment and its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is driven from the bottom up by the community itself. However, this community like many others in different parts of the world, face the threat

posed by “development” that if not sustainably handled will cause further degradation of ecosystems at a time when this trend needs to be urgently reversed.

The Misali Ethics project works with community leaders and fishermen in a group of targeted villages in the island of Pemba. The objectives of the project are to promote marine conservation awareness and then compare the results with other villages where the more usual environmental education messages are being used. Posters, a video and a Madrasa school competition are being developed in addition to this guide book.

## Islam and Conservation

### Enjoining what is right

The basis of Muslim social interaction is to establish good action and prohibit the bad. This is Fardh (an obligatory act) and is embodied in the phrase *Amr bil maa'ruf* (calling to the good). Teaching others about the natural world and how to behave in it are important parts of this responsibility. This resource has been designed to help teachers how to communicate this message to others and cultivate respect for the marine environment.

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ  
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“Let there be a community among you who call to the good, and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. They are the ones who have success”

Al Qur'an 3:104

“Seeking of knowledge is obligatory to all men and women”

Sahih Muslim



Conservation is the act of keeping something whole and undamaged and if a resource that is of value is threatened it requires a considered act of protection by those who stand to lose by the threat. It is also an act of goodness to protect or conserve our natural surroundings for its own sake. The idea of “conserving the environment” as it is understood today is relatively new having emerged as a matter of concern to the human race less than fifty years ago. It is now a worldwide phenomenon. It has come about because human behaviour is increasingly threatening the mizan (balance) of life on earth. The two main causes of this are vastly increased global economic activity, which sees the earth exclusively as a consumable resource and rapid population growth. A report produced by the United Nations Environment Programme called GEO 2000 says, “A wasteful and invasive consumer society, coupled with continued population growth, is threatening to destroy resources on which human life is based”. It also says that “time for a rational well planned transition to a sustainable system is running out fast”. As the human race traverses a path it has defined for itself as “progress” it leaves in its wake a trail of destruction that threatens its own survival. It may not look like it, but Pemba and Misali are very closely linked to these processes. (In fact the link is made when policy makers see Misali as an attraction for eco-tourism). Equally, the people of Pemba are crucially placed to provide answers to a world looking for sustainable life styles and the fact that Misali Island was accepted as a Sacred Gift to the Earth by the International Community, meeting in Kathmandu in November 2000, may be an encouraging sign in this direction.

The relationship that exists between environmental ethics and Din al Islam is as old as the human race itself. Life was never separate from the rest of the natural order in Islam. It was a matter to be reckoned with at every moment of existence like the very air we take into our lungs. As Allah Ta’ala explains in Al Qur’an –

وَلَقَدْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِكُتُبٍ فَصَلَّنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى  
 وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

We have brought them a book  
explaining everything with knowledge,  
as guidance and a mercy for people who believe  
7:52

The Qur'an speaks neither of the environment nor of conservation in the sense that we have come to understand these terms today. It uses a different language, the language of the fitra (natural state) to deal with these matters. Until recently the entire human race lived in the fitra and evolved traditions of their own for hundreds and some times thousands of years and conducted their lives in harmony with their natural surroundings. These traditions have now been undermined and have gone through the same processes the people of Pemba are experiencing today.

Din al Islam is a complete system of life and in addition to the spiritual, integrates social, cultural, scientific, environmental and economic matters within its teachings. Education for all and at every level is encouraged and is considered to be an act of worship. Conservation in Islam is about how human beings behave and this is how the Qur'an explains human relationships not only with each other but also with the rest of creation –

يَبْلُوكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

... to test which of you has the best actions.

11:7

We are now at war with our natural surroundings and are failing in the test imposed on us by the One who created.

What Allah Ta'ala has created is also referred to as His *ayah* (signs) and this is also the term we use when referring to the *ayas* in the Qur'an. As the Qur'an is proof of Allah Ta'ala so is His creation and the following *ayah* ask us to see that the entire universe and all that is contained in it are His *ayas*.

Misali is an *ayah* of The Creator and is an example of both His artistry and generosity –

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِّلْمُوقِنِينَ  
وَفِي أَنفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

There are certainly Signs in the earth for people with certainty.

And in your own selves. Do you not then see?

51:20-21

## The Approach

Allah Ta'ala says in Qur'an that the sun and the moon revolve in perfect orbits (55:5), meaning that they follow certain rules. This is true for the entire universe as it is for the earth and its ecosystems. The whole of creation works because it functions within certain limits. Likewise, there are limits to human behaviour and the Qur'an defines these limits for us. The *Shari'a* that evolved subsequently clarified these limits. Living within them may be defined as living holistically, that is in Islam and as if there was no separation from one aspect of Allah Ta'ala's creation to the rest of the natural order.

The problem now is that we as Muslims live mostly outside the precepts of the *Shari'a* and in doing so we have lost our understanding of man's relationship with nature. We have strayed so far we now have to look for and recognize those aspects in Din Al Islam, which specifically regulate our behaviour in relation to the environment. If the *Shari'a* can be described as a vast carpet with intricate patterns woven into it, what we are doing here is to borrow some of these patterns from the complex weave of the carpet and make sense out of them. Let us say that one of these patterns represents an orchard with many groves of fruit. This orchard is *Ilm ul Khalq* (Knowledge of Creation) that is the environmental teachings of Din al Islam. This is a vast teaching and what we attempt to do in the following pages is to provide an introduction to this subject which insha Allah, will be built upon by

those participating in this undertaking.

The six themes in this Guide Book each represent a grove of fruit in the orchard and their basic layout is derived from Al Qur'an. We may harvest from them as we will.

## **Using this Guide Book**

### **Purpose**

This booklet focuses on the teachings of Al Qur'an that relate to environmental education. It is designed to facilitate religious leaders during their daily prayers or religious gatherings including Friday sermons and special occasions. It is also the intention that this booklet be used as a resource by religious schools (madrasas) in teaching environmental ethics to children. Other potential users include Tableegh teams and people who design environmental education materials (such as posters, leaflets, brochures, films, radio and TV programmes) with an interest in exploring Islamic environmental ethics.

### **The Main Themes**

The booklet comprises six themes or sections each of which has a core message and a key quotation from Al Qur'an. They follow a logical sequence beginning with Tawhid where we introduce a discussion of Allah Ta'ala as the law giver, work through an understanding of His creation, the purpose of our existence, our propensity for destructive behaviour and conclude with the responsibilities inherent in our role as *Khalifa*. The themes are arranged as follows –

Theme one - *Tawhid* Understanding the Principle of Unity, the nature of the Creator, His creation and the importance of conservation.

Theme two - *Khalq* Understanding how Al Qur'an deals with matters relating to the environment and conservation through ayas relating to Khalq.

Theme three – Mizan Understanding the principle of balance and how the earth remains in a stable condition as a step towards conserving the environment.

Theme four – Insan Knowing why Allah Ta’ala created humankind and understanding our place in the fitra.

Theme five – Fasad Knowing the capacity of the human species for destructive behaviour which, leads to the destruction of the environment.

Theme six – Khalifa Knowing our responsibilities as Guardians of the environment including our treatment of other sentient beings.

## **The Structure**

Each of the six themes follows the following structure:

<b>MESSAGE</b>	States the overall message that is being explored
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Defines the objective behind the message which can be the basis of a sermon
<b>KEY AYA FROM AL QUR’AN</b>	Quotes the most appropriate and well known ayah from Al Qur’an that introduces the message being discussed with a brief look at its meaning
<b>ADDITIONAL AYAS FROM AL QUR’AN</b>	Lists further ayas from Al Qur’an that provide wider explanations to the primary message
<b>FURTHER REFLECTIONS</b>	Extends the discussion and provides more information concerning the primary message, which can be used as appropriate in the design of a sermon

**LINKS TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT**

Provides introductory material on how the primary message might be explained in terms of the local marine environment

**SUMMARY**

Provides a summary of the points made in the foregoing discussion

All users are free to decide how and how much of this material they wish to use. They are encouraged to develop their own presentations and add more verses and ahadith based on the six themes. It is also important that presenters bring to bear their own experience and ideas to this project.

Madrasa teachers will find the format of the themes particularly helpful in presenting them to their students in easily digestible stages. The Misali Ethics project will be holding competitions between different madrasas, and students should be encouraged to produce poems or dramas, which explore environmental ethics and the marine conservation issues. The project will provide teachers with handouts for distribution to interested students.

# THEME ONE - TAWHID

## MESSAGE

*Tawhid* is the Foundation of Din al Islam. It teaches the uniqueness and oneness of Allah Ta'ala The Creator (*Al Khaliq*) and provides the starting point to the discovery of the nature of His creation (*khalq*) and the need to conserve it.

## OBJECTIVE

In this section we will look at specific aspects of Tawhid that will make sense for us in terms of our relationship with the environment, that is, Allah Ta'ala's creation.

## KEY AYAH FROM AL QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿١﴾ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ﴿٢﴾ لَمْ يَكِدْ  
وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿٤﴾

In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful

Say: He is Allah, the One.

Allah the Everlasting Sustainer.

He has not given birth and was not born,

And no one is comparable to Him.

112:1-4

Knowing the Creator is the first step to understanding His creation and the very familiar *Sura Al-Ikhlās* (verse on Sincerity), which we often recite in our salah (prayers) lays down the basis of this understanding. This is an affirmation of *Abad*. That is the oneness of the Creator and the unity of all creation of which the human race is very much a part. What is commonly described today as the holistic approach to environmental protection is deeply embedded in the meaning of *Tawhid*. In the second ayah *Allah Ta'ala* describes himself as *Samad*, the Everlasting Sustainer, as a reminder to us that He sustains us through what He has created. *Samad* is also translated as eternal or absolute.

### ADDITIONAL AYAS FROM AL QUR'AN

*Tawhid* is illuminated in the context of *khalq* by the following ayas:

#### Al Khaliq (The Creator)

ذَٰلِكُمْ ٱللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ  
لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاَنَّىٰ تُؤْفَكُونَ

Such is Allah, your Lord, The Creator of all things.

There is no God but Him:

So how have you been perverted.

40:62

هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْخَلِيقُ ٱلْبَارِئُ ٱلْمُصَوِّرُ

He is Allah – the Creator, the Originator, the giver of form.

59:24



## Al Muhit (The Encompasser)

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ  
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا

But to Allah belongs all things in the Heavens and on the  
earth: And He encompasses all things.

4:126

## Al Badi' (The Originator)

أَمَّنْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَمَنْ  
يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Or who originates creation and then regenerates it  
and gives you sustenance from heaven and earth?

27:64

### Also consider:

Created the heaven and the earth in truth - 6:73

The earth belongs to Allah - 7:128

### FURTHER REFLECTIONS

*Tawhid* is the foundation of Din al Islam. It has three aspects and for our purposes we are looking at just one of these, which is *Tawhid ar Rububiyyah*. This teaches us that there is only one Creator, Allah Ta'ala and that He is the Lord of all creation. (The other two are *Tawhid al Uluhiyya* – to believe that none is worthy of worship except Allah and *Tawhid al Asma was Sifat*

– to believe that the names and attributes of Allah are uniquely His alone). Understanding the primary aspect of *Tawhid* helps us to recognize that the Creator is one and His creation is a unified whole. Its essence is contained in the *shahada* (bearing witness), the first of the five pillars of Islam, which every Muslim accepts and is a constant reminder of Faith. It is *la ilaha illallah* (there is no God but God) and it affirms the unity of the Creator from which everything else flows.

The second part of the *shahada* is *Muhammadur Rasulullah* (Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah) whose example we follow. The *Shari'a* as we know evolved from the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the Prophet (sw) as he interpreted the revelations. This corpus of knowledge has much to show us concerning our relationship with the environment.

*Tawhid* is a vast teaching and *Rububiyah* occupies a significant part of this. This instructs us in Allah Ta'ala's role, which is comprehensively embodied in the *al asma ul husna* (the most beautiful names) a few of which are mentioned in the ayas we have just discussed. *Al Khaliq* – The Creator, *Al Bari'* – The Originator, *Al Musawwir* – The giver of form, *Al Muhit* – The Encompasser, *Al Badi'* – The Originator. Furthermore, *Rububiya* teaches us that the act of creation is Allah Ta'ala's alone. He is the Designer and the Constructor of *Al Alamin* (the universe) and the following ayas describe the process through the use of terms like *fatara* to bring into being, *ansha'a* (to produce) and *anzala* (to send down).

**Fatara (to bring into being)** – this term shares the root F T R with other words that describe a crack or splitting or an explosion) –

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

I have set my face firmly towards Him  
Who brought the heavens and earth into being .

6:79

Anshaa' (to produce) –

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرِ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ  
وَالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا أُكُلُهُ وَالزَّيْتُونَ  
وَالرُّمَانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ

It is He who produces gardens with and without trellises;  
dates palms, crops of diverse flavours,  
the olive, the pomegranate, alike yet different.

6:141

Anzala (to send down) -

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا  
مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ

And We send down rain from the sky  
And made every kind of species grow on the earth.

31:10

### LINKS TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

If we look at the above *ayas* again we will recognize a consistency that will identify the marine environment for us. Allah Ta'ala created everything (40:62): that includes the sea and everything in it. He gave it form (59:24): that is shaped the coral and the fish and other creatures that live in it and determined their physical form, chemical composition and genetic

structure. He regenerates and provides from heaven and earth (27:64) and this further explains the term *As Samad* in the key ayah. Earth (*ard*) is a term that includes both the terrestrial and marine environment. Thus the aspect of regeneration is also linked to everything the sea contains like coral reefs and fish stocks. Regeneration ensures the continuity of our livelihood and sustenance.

## **SUMMARY**

*Tawhid* is the foundation of *Din al Islam*. It affirms the Lordship of Allah Ta'ala over every single aspect of creation, which is an expression of His will. This is the root of the holistic approach in *Din al Islam*. As *Al Muhit* Allah Ta'ala absorbs Misali Island in His embrace and continually regenerates it to keep us alive.

## THEME TWO – KHALQ

### MESSAGE

*Khalq* is the term used in Al Qur'an to describe Allah Ta'ala's creation. It is an all encompassing term that includes every single thing we see around us including ourselves. The word "environment" may be used as a substitute for *Khalq* in most situations.

### OBJECTIVE

In this section we discuss *Khalq* and begin to explore how Din al Islam deals with the environment and issues relating to conservation.

وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ بِنَقْدٍ رَافِعٍ

He created everything and determined them in exact proportions.  
25:2

This ayah provides for us a simple and straightforward definition of the environment. The key word is *khalaqa* (created). Allah Ta'ala created everything in the universe including the human race. Furthermore, there is exactness in creation, which tells us two things. One of these is that there is an implicit responsibility on our shoulders to recognize and maintain this exactness (see theme six *Khalifa*). That is, to conserve and the other is to measure or quantify.

Words that derive from the Arabic root Q D R occur twice in this ayah. They are *quaddara* (determined, made, ordered) and *taqdir* (exactly) and words like measure, decree, to have power, amongst others also belong to the group of words that owe their origins to this root. This prompts us to ask questions about measurement itself. Hence scientific enquiry, which will not only tell us about the natural world as it is or should be but, will also inform us about the destruction and pollution we inflict on it. (Also see themes under *Mizan* and *fasad*)

## ADDITIONAL AYAS FROM AL QUR'AN

The term *khalq* is derived from the root Kh L Q in Arabic and there are estimated to be 261 ayas in Al Qur'an derived from this root in their various grammatical forms. These ayas contain references to the human world, the animal world, the forests, the seas, the sun, the moon and the stars. The very first revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet (SW) used this word in its verb form to dramatic effect

أَقْرَأُ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ  
خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ

Read in the name of your Lord who created,  
Created man from clots of blood  
96:1-2

The following selection of ayas derived from the root Kh L Q demonstrates the depth of the material on this matter in the Qur'an.

Sun, moon ...

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ  
وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِنَعْلَمُوا أَعْدَادَ السِّنِينَ  
وَالْحِسَابِ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ  
يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

It is He who appointed the sun to give radiance  
And the moon to give light assigning it in phases  
So you would know the number of years  
And the reckoning of time.  
Allah did not create these thing without a true purpose.  
H explains His signs to those who understand,  
10:5

### Heavens, earth...

إِنَّ فِي أُخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
وَمَا خَلَقَ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَّقُونَ

In the alternation of the night and day  
And what Allah has created in the heavens and earth  
Are signs for people who are aware of Him.  
10:6

### Cattle...

وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ  
وَمَنْفَعٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ

And He created cattle. There is warmth for you in them  
And various uses and some you eat  
16:5

## Animals from water ....

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِّن مَّاءٍ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Allah created every animal from water,  
Some of them creep on their bellies,  
Some that walk on two legs and some on four.  
Allah creates whatever He wills.  
Allah has power over all things.  
24:45

## Also consider –

He gives each thing its created form and then guides it. - 20:50  
It is He who sends down water in due measure - 43:11  
Created with truth and for a set term - 46:3

## **FURTHER REFLECTIONS**

As the key ayah makes it clear *Khalq* describes everything from the minute detail to the vastness of Allah Ta'ala's creation. Commentators of Al Qur'an like Ibn Kathir also consider the word *'alamin* to include all the creatures that inhabit the sky, the land and the sea in its meaning. The first *ayah* of the first *sura* in Al Qur'an contains this term –

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds



It is significant that we repeat these lines in every rak'a (unit) of our five daily prayers. *'Alamin* could be seen as an all inclusive definition of *khalq* incorporating the physical world. It should also be noted that some translators refer to *'alamin* as the universe.

We have explained the connections between Islam and conservation in the introduction to this Guide Book. The following is an extension of this.

The introductory ayah to this section reminds us that Allah Ta'ala created "everything". The additional ayas that follow refer to the sun, moon, heaven, the earth and creatures of every kind and animals from water. This is an all inclusive definition of the environment and there are many more ayas of this nature. When Allah Ta'ala says that He created everything, it means exactly that. Nothing is left out including the very air we breath, the water we drink and the earth we tread on.

The earth is our only home, which we share with millions of other species much of which we do not know (Al Qur'an 16:8). It provides us and all other living beings with all our needs. It is a gift (n'ihma) of the Creator for past, present and future inhabitants of this world. But, the human species is uniquely responsible for causing wanton damage to the ecosystems on which we depend and thus pose a threat to all life forms on this planet. Hence our concerns with conservation, which is defined as safekeeping, preserving, saving from damage or keeping something in its original state. Paradoxically our concerns with conservation expose our failings in living up to our responsibilities.

We see how Al Qur'an teaches us to conserve in the sections that follow.

## **LINKS TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT**

When Allah Ta'ala says He created "every animal from water (24:45), this is intended to mean that we as humans are included in this process and the water is the sea. It is estimated that about two thirds of the human body consists of water. It should be noted that this statement was made in Al

Qur'an many centuries before modern science discovered this fact. It is also a fact that all life, animal and vegetable depend on the sea for it is the source of all moisture that sustains us. The sea is thus beneficial to us in the wider context of our lives not forgetting that it keeps us alive with provision from its depths every day. Al Qur'an says –

Anything you catch in the sea is halal for you - 5:96  
He knows everything in the land and sea.- 6:59

Without Misali there would have been no coral reefs and it is a geological fact that they grow only in marine habitats similar to that found around the island. They are not found in the deep ocean. Coral reefs could be likened to a terrestrial forest with its own complete ecosystem where trees give shelter to bird life and a host of other species forming a food chain. We are the ultimate beneficiaries of this chain as we are the ultimate beneficiaries of the food chain that the coral reef habitat supports. Like trees the coral is alive; they grow and after a period they die and they also react adversely to bad treatment.

## **SUMMARY**

The term khalq is used in Al Qur'an in many ways to describe what we see, feel and sense in the world. There are millions of creatures and plants that Allah Ta'ala has created and millions of stars in the cosmos that we have yet to discover. 'Alamin is used in key ayas in Al Qur'an as a sweeping reference to Allah Ta'ala's creation.

The term environment is an inclusive term that is usually used to describe our surroundings or a specific habitat. We know that Misali Island is Allah Ta'ala's creation and we could also refer to it as a space with its own terrestrial environment and ecosystem. In the wider context we could say that Misali is part of the Marine environment and plays its part along with the sea, coral reefs and fish in maintaining the ecological balance of the area.

Caring for the environment is a matter that is deeply interlocked in Din Al Islam. This becomes apparent as we look at Al Qur'an and the hadith literature as we are attempting to do now. Although it is not dealt with as a separate subject, it is nevertheless a matter that should be of everyday concern to us and be an expression of everything we do. Conservation is about good personal conduct and caring for other living beings (see section under *Khalifa*). Destroying coral reefs is bad personal conduct resulting in loss of habitats and the destabilisation of ecosystems. It is bad personal conduct to deprive our neighbours and future generations of their sustenance.

## THEME THREE - MIZAN

### THE MESSAGE

*Mizan* is the principle of balance on which all creation works and maintains itself in a stable condition. Preserving the balance and stability of both marine and terrestrial ecosystems helps us to conserve the environment.

### OBJECTIVE

To achieve an understanding of *Mizan* and the stability inherent in Allah Ta'ala's creation.

In one of its most eloquent and popular passages Al Qur'an al Karim describes creation thus –

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ  
عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ  
وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ  
وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ  
أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ  
بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ

The All Merciful; Taught the Qur'an;  
He created man; Taught him clear speech;  
The sun and the moon both follow exact paths;  
The stars and the trees all bow down in prostration;

He created heaven and established the balance;  
So that you would not transgress the balance;  
Give just weight – do not skimp in the balance.

55:1-9

The introduction to this group of ayas reminds us of the unique nature of the human species in creation. Our intelligence, the ability to express our intentions clearly, is what differentiates us from every other sentient being on earth. Allah Ta'ala has given us the gift of intellect with reasoning powers that can distinguish right from wrong, good from bad, honesty from dishonesty, conservation from destruction, moderation from greed, purity from pollution and so on.

The sun and the moon, the two objects in the cosmos most closely associated with us have exacting functions. The stars (the word *najm* in the Qur'an is translated sometimes as herbs or shrubs) and the trees bow down in prostration. For the Muslim (one who submits to the will of Allah) these ayas go beyond the metaphor to the realms of the real. Everything in the universe is in *sujud* (prostration), that is in *islam* (submission), and that is how the earth remains in *mizan*. Everything we see around us works because it is in submission to the will of the Creator.

The humbling fact is that we can only look at the world around us and recognize it in this way because everything is held together for us. Paradoxically, we are the only sentient beings in creation who can through the very gift of reasoning chose not to be in submission and destroy everything around us by our presumed cleverness.

#### ADDITIONAL AYAS FROM AL QUR'AN

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ  
يَنْفِيوْا ظِلَّهُ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَايِلِ سَجَّدَ لِلَّهِ وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ

وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ  
وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَهُمْ لَا يُسْتَكْبِرُونَ

Do they not see the things Allah has created,  
Casting their shadows to the right and to the left,  
Prostrating themselves before Allah in complete humility?

Everything in the heavens and every creature on the earth  
Prostrates to Allah, as do the angels.  
They are not puffed up with pride.  
16:48-49

**Also consider –**

Made everything grow in due balance - 15:19  
And we put sustenance for all - 15:20  
We only sent it down in a known measure - 15:21

### **FURTHER REFLECTIONS**

One of the meanings we can derive from the word *mizan* key ayas above is that we are commanded by Allah Ta'ala to be just to the natural order and keep it in balance.

The stability of the environment is explained in Al Qur'an by two processes. The first of these as we have seen is the principle of balance, which is maintained by all of creation remaining in submission. The second is the means by which this is achieved. This is exactness or measure as discussed in the previous section.

The term *Mizan* shares the root W Z N with the term *wazan* which means

to weigh or measure. *Mizan* means balance or scales and these two words are used together on numerous occasions and when associated with the term *qist* (justice) conveys a powerful meaning as in the key ayah -

Give just weight – do not skimp in the balance - 55:9

In the ayah 15:19-21 terms derived from W Z N and Q D R (see previous section) come together. Allah Ta'ala made everything grow in due proportion (*mawzun* from the root W Z N) and sends everything down in known measure (Qadr from the root Q D R). The themes of balance and measurement appear frequently in Al Qur'an to remind us of the nature of creation.

It is interesting to note that this same powerful combination of words is used in relation to the care of orphans –

And that you do not go near the property of orphans  
before they reach maturity –  
except in a good way;  
that you give full measure and full weight with justice –  
6:152

## LINKS TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

It is easy to see the balance of creation when we look at a coral reef. The storms, the surging seas, swelling tides are all part of this balance. Misali Island, which itself is formed entirely out of coral, is part of this balance for without it there would have been no coral reefs and therefore no fish. It will be useful to look at this in some detail to give us an idea of Misali in the *mizan* of Allah Ta'ala's creation.

All natural ecosystems of the earth are in ecological balance. The food web straddles terrestrial and marine ecosystems and they can be disrupted or changed by changes in environmental conditions. These changes can be natural or caused by humans as is the case with Misali. This balance, *mizan*,

is the support mechanism that allows ecosystems to support plants, animals and humans (J. Francis...et al...2000). The coral reefs, seaweeds, sea grasses and mangrove areas protect juvenile fish and the marine environment. If we destroy these environments and take these fish when they are small from these areas the balance of the ecosystem will have been disrupted.

Coral reefs are among nature's most spectacular creations. They are endowed with a multitude of colourful creatures and are among the most biologically diverse and productive ecosystems known to man. They provide a wide variety of habitats each with its own set of species. Differences in the degree of exposure to wave action, currents, light levels, the amount of algae, plankton and other food, and the abundance, shape, and varieties of coral and other shelter combine to create a large variety of possible niches (Lieske and Myers 1994). The lives of some of the reef's animals are closely associated with and often dependent upon the life of another species. This relationship is scientifically known as symbiosis.

There is a close link between how people use coral reefs and their socio economic background. People have to balance sustainable use and reef conservation by better fishing practices. Coral reefs are effectively the marine ecosystem's richest habitat and even though they are among the most visited and best known marine areas they still harbour numerous unknown species. Scientists have noted that the greater is an ecosystem's species diversity the more functions the ecosystem is able to carry out and the more efficiently it does so. Moreover, the more species present that have similar functions, the more stable the ecosystem.

As a part of the coastal ecosystem coral reefs provide food and shelter to animals such as fishes, crabs, lobsters and clams and hence supports many important fisheries. It plays a very important role in the protection of the sea shore from erosion as they act as natural barriers against wave action and storms. It is also the origin of these very same shores as formations of sand due to coral breakdown contribute to the building up of beaches and shorelines. This results in providing spectacular scenic sites for our enjoyment and also for tourism, especially for divers and snorkellers. It is also known to possess medicinal value for some reef animals.



When coral reefs are destroyed, the balance of life and overall productivity of the reef ecosystem is affected. Fish which feed off living corals have to change their diet or move away.

Over fishing of species that feed on algae can result in over growth of algae, which cause the demise of other reef species. This is an example of what happens to an ecosystem when its natural balance is upset.

Excessive targeting of certain species will change the ecosystem balance as all living species form part of the food chain. Trigger Fish and Parrot Fish eat the Crown of Thorn Starfish and Sea Urchins, which in turn eat coral. If we take away too many of these fish then the populations of coral eaters will increase and the coral will be destroyed. It is true to say that over fishing of species that feed on algae can result in excessive algal overgrowth as well as explosions of other species elsewhere in the food chain (Westmacott et al. 2000).

Destructive fishing techniques such as dynamite fishing and the use of seine and gill nets and spear guns in coral can cause extensive physical damage to the reef and result in the mortality of high percentage of immature fish.

Direct physical damage can come from boats anchoring on the reefs, trampling of corals by people collecting shells and other organisms on reef flats or in shallow reef areas and divers or snorkellers standing on corals or knocking against the reef.

Discussing coral reefs is not complete without looking first at the habitat that they are mutually dependent on. These are mangroves forests, sea grass and seaweeds.

Mangroves: are salt tolerant trees that grow in the margins between land and sea, and are often in close proximity to coral reefs. Usually they can be found bordering estuaries and lagoons. The shelter provided by their extensive root systems and nutrient laden waters make them rich nursery grounds for variety of marine life including many coral reef species. Apart from

other tangible benefits to man, mangroves also acts as breeding and feeding sites for most fish species, shelter for coastal and marine creatures and acts as wave breaks. Scientific studies have also confirmed that this ecosystem contribute towards improving the quality of water by filtration as their roots are capable of trapping sediments, debris and toxins found in water. The types of relationships that prevail in the mangrove ecosystem are also common to other marine environments like seaweeds and the sea grasses. Seaweeds are abundant around the areas of beach that are periodically exposed and submerged by the tide as well as on corals. Sea grasses are often found interspersed with reefs in very productive areas with roots and flowers fully adapted to the marine environment.

All these ecosystems have complex links to coral reefs and play a very important role in maintaining the balance of marine species and provide safe breeding sites for them. Removal or disturbing one among these components may affect the survival of other creatures. This is why Allah Ta'ala declares in Qur'an -

In the creation of the heavens and the earth,  
and the alteration of night and day  
there are signs of people with intelligence:

Those who remember Allah,  
Standing, sitting and lying on their sides,  
and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth:  
' our Lord, You have not created this for nothing.  
Glory be to You!.

So safeguard us from the punishment of the fire.  
3:190,191

## **SUMMARY**

Allah Ta'ala's plan is universal. The earth is a place of abundance and it contains enormous diversity. It is created in due proportion and measure and exists in a state of dynamic balance.

Humankind has been given the capacity to understand clearly the relationships between different aspects of the environment and produce explanations for them. As the earth is in balance our attitude to it is also expected to be in balance and that requires us to be just to everything else in creation. Just as we recognize Allah Ta'ala's pattern in creation it is also important that we recognize our responsibilities to care for the earth and thus establish limits to what we take from it.

The oceans and the creatures that live in it were created in a balanced relationship. Misali was created as a stable, balanced environment.

## THEME FOUR - INSAN

### MESSAGE

Knowing the purpose of Allah Ta'ala's creation of Insan (humankind) gives us an understanding of ourselves in the totality of His scheme.

### OBJECTIVE

To know the place of humankind in creation and why we need to conserve the environment.

فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا  
لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ

The natural pattern on which Allah has made mankind  
There is no changing Allah's creation  
30:30

*Fitra* is the pure and natural state of Allah Ta'ala's creation. It conveys to us a sense of where we belong in the totality of His scheme leading us to an awareness of our relationship with the environment. Some translators call it the natural pattern, others the original state or pattern and yet others describe it simply as nature. By consensus Muslims recognize the term *fitra* as the pure state or the state of infinite goodness acknowledging that everything in creation has a potential for goodness, the conscious expression of which rests uniquely with human kind. We often say that children are born in a state of *fitra*, untarnished and pure. It is commonly held that the real meaning of the Qur'an in Arabic is untranslatable into any other language but we may conclude that *fitra* denotes the original and natural state of purity, which applies to all of creation including the human in its newborn state. The term *fitra*, which is a noun is derived from the root F T R and occurs once in the Qur'an. It appears in its verb form, *fatara*, fourteen

times. Both the noun and the verb form occur together in this unique ayah to poetic effect.

*Fatara* is translated as originated or made and as the translators attempt to convey the meaning of this ayah there is simplicity inherent in this message that conveys two things to us. The first is a sense of where we belong in the pattern of Allah Ta'ala's creation. The human race was originated, indeed like all other sentient beings, in the bosom of creation Allah Ta'ala originated. Humankind was made part of a vast natural pattern, which cannot be changed. Secondly, it could be said that taken together with the rest of the ayas in Al Qur'an on creation this lays down the foundation for the deep ecological principles inherent in Din al Islam.

An appreciation of this would lead us, as Muslims, to addressing the environmental concerns of today at its root. Al Qur'an comprehensively defines our place and our relationships within this pattern as the following ayas demonstrate.

#### ADDITIONAL AYAS FROM AL- QUR'AN

**Everything was created for humankind -**

الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا

It is He who created everything on the earth for you

2:29

**Creation greater than mankind -**

لَخَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ  
خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

The creation of the heavens and the earth is far greater than the creation of mankind. But most of mankind do not know it.

40:57

**There was a purpose in creation –**

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا

We did not create the heaven and the earth  
And everything between them to no purpose

38:27

**Creation is a test –**

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لَيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا  
ءَاتَكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ

Had Allah willed, He would have made you a single community.  
But He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you.  
So compete with each other in doing good.

5:48

**Creation is not a playground –**

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَعِبِينَ

We did not create heaven and earth  
And everything between them as a game

21:16

**There are other communities like you –**

مِن دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ  
بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ

There is no creature crawling on the earth  
or those that fly,  
who are not communities like yourself  
6:38

**Also consider -**

Honoured the sons of Adam over others - 17:70.

Everything on the earth subservient to you - 22:65

Reflect and be grateful - 45:12

### **FURTHER REFLECTIONS**

The human being is the most intelligent and most complex of Allah Ta'ala's creation. Our ultimate purpose is to serve the Creator by recognizing our unique place in the grand design. We are special as everything was created for us (2:29) and yet we are of a humble status as "the creation of the heavens and the earth is far greater than the creation of mankind" (40:57).

We are capable of taming the forces of nature like no other creature can. We use the intelligence that Allah Ta'ala has given us and invent things that make life comfortable for us. We have tamed the wind and fire and we can stop or divert the courses of great rivers by building huge dams. But, people are now beginning to realize that we may have carried these activities to excess and that we are putting the lives of future generations in jeopardy.

Although we are of a humble status in Allah Ta'ala's hierarchy we are a favoured species (17:70) with the rest of creation made subservient to us (22:65). We are also reminded that there are other communities like

ourselves towards whom we have responsibilities. But, our actions would seem to indicate that we now have no awareness of our responsibilities nor our place in Allah Ta'ala's *fitra*.

Everything we see is Allah Ta'ala's *n'ihma* (gift) to us. It is however a gift with conditions and the earth is a testing ground for us. The tests are a measure of our *ihсан* (acts of worship) in its broadest sense. That is living in a way that is pleasing to Allah, striving in everything we do to maintain the harmony of our inner and outer environments.

## LINKS TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Our connection with the sea is obvious. It is home to the fish we eat and Allah Ta'ala says "He created everything on the earth for us" (2:29). The sea enables us to travel as Allah Ta'ala has made the sea "subservient to us" (45:12). We use it to go to Unguja or the mainland on special occasions and to go to Misali to catch our dinner. It also gives us the weather, which gives us rain, which gives allows us to grow food on land. All this is on the surface.

The sea hides many secrets in its depths. It is where the coral lives and it has taken thousands of years to form itself into a habitat where the fish can also live and spawn its young of which we are the ultimate beneficiaries.

## SUMMARY

We are indeed fortunate. If we look at the *ayas* above we see that we are a favoured species – everything was created for and made subservient to us; we are honoured and favoured. Allah Ta'ala has uniquely given us, the human race, both intelligence and abundance and we are very much a part of the grand design of His creation. We are integral to it, woven into the *fitra*, into nature itself. Although the rest of creation is greater than us (40:57) everything in it is there for our use (2:29). Our purpose in being on this earth is a test and the test is our capacity for *ibada*, that is worship in the widest possible sense and that is to do good and compete with each other in doing it (5:48).



## THEME FIVE – FASAD

### MESSAGE

Humankind has a capacity for fasad (corruption, mischief) to the extent that we are capable of damaging and destroying the very habitats that nurture us and provide us with sustenance.

### OBJECTIVE

Understanding the human capacity for destructive behaviour and its consequences.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ  
أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

Corruption has appeared in both land and sea  
Because of what peoples own hands have brought about  
So that they may taste something of what they have done  
So that hopefully they will turn back.  
30:41

Everything now points to the fact that humankind has neglected its responsibilities as *Khalifa* (this is dealt with in the next section) in the way it is ignoring the *fitra* of Allah Ta'ala. There is a limit to the progress we can make materially because of the obvious fact that the resources of the natural world are limited but we pay little heed to the consequences of our actions. We pollute the air we breathe and the water we drink at such an alarming rate that serious risks are now being posed to our health. Scientists now confirm that our actions have changed the very weather patterns that have uniquely endowed our planet with a climate suited to supporting life forms.

## ADDITIONAL AYAS FROM AL- QUR'AN

Do not be wasteful –

كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ  
حَصَادِهِ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

Eat of their fruits when they bear fruit and pay their due on the day of their harvest. And do not be wasteful.

He does not love the wasteful.

6:141

Do not overstep the limits –

لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ  
لَا تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

You who have iman! Do not make haram  
The good things Allah has made halal for you,  
And do not overstep the limits.  
Allah does not love people who overstep the limits.

5:87

An open challenger –

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ

He created man from a drop of sperm  
and yet he is an open challenger  
16:4

**Also consider –**

You show little thanks - 7:10

Do not corrupt the earth; Allah's mercy is close to the good-doers - 7:56

Allah could eliminate you and bring about a new creation - 14:19

**FURTHER REFLECTIONS**

The gift of intelligence that Allah Ta'ala has given us can be used to good effect or for destructive purposes. We use it to justify wrong doing and to make excuses for our bad behaviour. The damage and the pollution we cause to the marine and terrestrial habitats and the war we have declared on other living beings is the evidence for the darker sides of our nature. The human capacity for destructive behaviour is nothing new but living in the *fitra* has always meant that the scars we inflict on the natural world has time to heal. The environment is like the human body; small wounds heal in time and leave no scars; other wounds heal but leave scars; large wounds cause deformity and permanently affect the way the body works.

Today, we live outside the *fitra* and we know no limits. We have become wasteful (6:141), that is, addicted to selfishness and excess. Globally much of the damage to the earth has taken place in the past hundred years or so. What is happening in Misali is more recent. Our fathers did not have these problems. In their time over exploitation of marine resources, illegal fishing techniques, harvesting of endangered species and the destruction of breeding sites of marine creatures were unheard of. If they were living now they would have been both ashamed and perplexed.

The other gift that Allah Ta'ala has given us is abundance. As we have seen in the section on *Insan* He created everything on the earth for us and He

asks us to partake of the fruits of His creation (6:141) warning us at the same time of our tendency towards excess.

## **LINKS TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT**

The condition of Misali is serious. This has been the result of the indiscriminate use of dynamite, dropping anchor over the coral, the collection of coral to make lime, the use of poison and other destructive gear. Destroying the coral is like throwing dynamite at a mango tree for its fruit or perhaps even cutting it down: no tree no mango; no coral no fish.

These and other malpractices destabilise the ecosystem and consequently cause the depletion of fish stocks and other endangered marine species. It is conceivable that if we do not change our attitude to Misali and its surrounding marine habitat we will be seeing the total disappearance of the species of fish we depend on resulting also in the disappearance of our livelihood.

## **SUMMARY**

We are now behaving in such a manner as to cause irreparable damage to the very habitat that sustains us and keeps us alive. Allah Ta'ala reminds us that He has been generous with humankind and forbids us to behave in such a way that threatens the survival of ourselves and other beings that inhabit the earth. By not allowing the forces of regeneration (27:64) to work we are openly challenging (16:4) Allah Ta'ala's authority to our detriment.

## THEME SIX - KHALIFA

### MESSAGE

As Allah Ta'ala's khalifa (vice-gerent, steward, inheritor, successor) on earth we assume the mantle of guardian of His creation. We are thus obliged to protect the environment not destroy it.

### OBJECTIVE

To achieve an understanding of how we are each responsible for the stewardship of the earth's resources.

### KEY AYAH FROM AL - QUR'AN

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ

It is He who appointed you khalifs on the earth  
6:165

Allah Ta'ala by making the human race His *Khalifa* has given us the role of managing the environment and conserving its resources to the benefit of all the inhabitants of this planet. As we have seen the human race has a special place in Allah Ta'ala's scheme. Having given us the gifts of intelligence and abundance He has given us responsibilities by making us the guardian of the environment He has created for us.

We saw in the section under *insan* (p.32) that Allah Ta'ala has created everything bigger than us. And yet we are given the role of *khalifa*. An enormous trust (*amanah*) has been placed on our shoulders in spite of our humble station. He also commands us to be truthful (*Haq*) to the rest of His creation meaning that we should treat other sentient beings equitably. We

will examine these two added responsibilities that go along with the role of *Khalifa* in this section.

### ADDITIONAL AYAS FROM AL QUR'AN

**A great trust has been placed in our hands –**

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا  
الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains  
But they refused to take it on and shrank from it.  
But man took it on.  
He is indeed wrong doing and ignorant.  
33:72

**Also consider –**

Man will be the cause corruption - 2:30

Judge with justice. - 4:58

Creation was for true and just ends – 5:85

Upholders of justice - 4:135

Do not knowingly betray your trusts - 8 27

We (Allah) see how you act - 10:14

Allah commands justice and doing good - 16:90

## FURTHER REFLECTIONS

*Khalifa* is the role that Allah Ta'ala has given us and the handing down of *amanah* (trust) to the human race is recognition of this responsibility. 'Adl (justice) is the principle upon which we are required to execute this trust. The role of Khalifa is then a sacred duty handed down to the human race as no other sentient being in creation can perform this role. The enormity of this trust is expressed metaphorically as the "heavens and the earth and the mountains refusing to undertake it" (33:72). Yet, there is a seeming paradox in that the humblest of all of Allah Ta'ala's creation (40:57) has been given the weightiest of all responsibilities. This could be seen as the price we pay for the gift of intelligence which is the exclusive privilege of the human race. (See under **mizan** – 55:4)

As *Khalifatullah* (Allah Ta'ala's representative) we are required to care for and manage the earth in a way that conforms to His purpose in creation. That is to use it for our benefit without causing detriment to the other inhabitants of planet earth. This is executing the trust placed in our hands bearing in mind the limits of the *fitra*.

The authority we have over creation is not a right to do as we please but a responsibility, which carries with it the burden of accountability. The discharge of our responsibilities should be tempered by justice and kindness with the intention always to do good. This is *ihسان*, doing what is pleasing to Allah who is ever present, ever watchful and the ultimate reward is goodness itself –

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

Will the reward for doing good be anything other than good?

55:60

Allah Ta'ala "gives each thing its created form and then guides it" (20: 50) and the guiding principles for life on this earth are clearly stated in Al Qur'an. Conservation in Islam is seen as good behaviour, that is, how we

conduct our affairs and manage our surroundings. Al Qur'an points the way thus –

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ  
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

Let there be a community among you who call to the good,  
And enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.  
They are the ones who have success.

3:104

## LINKS TO THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

What makes us different from all other living beings is that we are held accountable for our actions. This accountability requires us to take urgent action and introduce good conservation practices in Misali. As guardians of Allah Ta'ala's creation we have a responsibility to the marine environment to protect it for what it is, a place of beauty and tranquillity and for what it means to us for our survival.

- Our primary concern should be to wisely manage the resources the marine environment offers and conserve the ecosystem for future generations.
- Fishing gear compatible with conservation practise should be used at all times.
- The no fishing zone in which fish are being allowed to breed for the future should be respected.
- The species that are in danger of dying out should be allowed to breed without being disturbed. Turtles, dolphins, whales, large shells (including the Giant Triton and the Bull-mouth Helmet shell) should be left alone.
- Overall care should be exercised when working in the fragile environment of the conservation zone.



## **SUMMARY**

Allah in His wisdom appointed the human race as His *Khalifa* and gave us the role of guardians on earth. In doing this He made us the humblest of all creatures and yet gave us the intelligence that can distinguish right from wrong. He placed His trust in our hands and reminded us that this be executed with justice and equity towards all beings. Our immediate priority now is to use these powers and responsibilities to conserve and protect the Misali Island Marine Conservation Zone for the benefit of all living species.

## CONCLUSION

Looked at in terms of Misali we know that it is an *ayah* (sign) of Allah Ta'ala's creation. It is also a demonstration of the *mizan* (balance) of creation and is part of the *fitra* (nature) of the Creator. It is not a playground and it is the place that gives sustenance to the people of Pemba. Misali also is in *Islam*. That is in submission to the will of the Creator and is an example of how nature is made to work. It does that by being exactly what it is and in giving from its bosom the *n'ihma'* (gift) of Allah Ta'ala to the people who depend on it for their livelihood and sustenance. We fail in the *amanah* (trust) that Allah Ta'ala has placed in us as His Khalifa if we do not act justly to this wonderful resource He has placed in our hands and cause *fasad* (corruption) in a way that would deny future generations its benefits. The Qur'an itself summarises this whole matter for us –

وَاللَّهُ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ  
لَايَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَإِنْ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةٌ لَتُؤْتِيكُمْ مِمَّا  
فِي بُطُونِهِمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَبْنَاخًا لِصَاسٍ يَغَالِ الشَّرْبِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾  
وَمِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا  
حَسَنًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَأَوْحَى رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ  
أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ ثُمَّ كُلِي  
مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا  
شَرَابٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ

يَنْفَكِرُونَ

Allah sends down water from the sky  
And by it brings the dead earth back to life.  
There is certainly a Sign in that for people who hear.

There is instruction for you in cattle.  
From the contents of their bellies,  
From between dung and blood,  
We give you pure milk to drink,  
Easy for drinkers to swallow.

And from the fruit of the date palm and the grapevine  
You derive both intoxicants and wholesome provision.  
There is certainly a Sign in that for  
people who use their intellect.

Your Lord revealed to the bees:  
'Build dwellings in the mountains and the trees,  
And also in the structures which men erect.

Then eat from every kind of fruit  
And travel the paths of your Lord,  
Which have been made easy for you to follow.'  
From inside them comes a drink of varying colours,  
Containing healing for mankind.  
There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect.  
(16): 65 – 69

## **AFTERWORD**

The holy Qur'an contains several foundational statements regarding environmental conservation most of which specifically emphasize the profundity of Allah's creation and the ethical responsibilities of human beings to preserve what He has created. The conservation of the environment and its natural resources is a mandatory religious duty to which every Muslim

should be committed. Religious elders should employ all possible means and at all levels to call upon their communities to be committed to the teachings of Al Qur'an in dealing with natural resources and the guidance that is needed from all religious leaders so that every individual may take part in the conservation of the environment.

Much environmental degradation is due to people's ignorance and negligence of what Allah Ta'ala requires of them. People should be encouraged to appreciate that -

- Conservation of the environment is a religious duty demanded by Allah
- Any deliberate damage to the environment and its resources is a kind of corruption which is forbidden in Islam
- No wastage or over-consumption of resources is allowed by Allah
- Everyone should consider the sustainable development of the earth by practising wise utilization of resources and respecting the lives of other creatures
- Every human is a guardian of his surroundings and he should make all possible efforts to educate others and ensure that a safe environment is established not only for oneself but, for all creatures of the world now and in the future.

Last but not least it would be unfair if I did not express appreciation and gratitude to the following persons who played a key role in advising me and sharing their ideas and literature during the initial stages of this guide, in addition to those referred to in the foreword. My very special appreciation and thanks go to My Beloved Late Sheikh (Al- Mar hum) Ali Bin Seif Sariboko of Zanzibar, Sheikh Moh'd Suleiman of Istiqama Organization Chake Chake Pemba, Dr. Bakari S. Asseid Director for The Department of Commercial Crops, Fruits and Forestry, Zanzibar and Ustaadh Talib Juma Ali of African Muslim Agency Zanzibar.

I am indebted for the support and cooperation of many individuals working with CARE International in Tanzania, WWF (TZ), Menai Bay project, Department of Commercial Crops Fruits and Forestry and the Department

of Fisheries Zanzibar. I am grateful for the administrative and collegial support for recognizing the need and importance of this document. Finally to my lovely wife and children Aisha and Little Fazlun go my love and gratitude for their patience and encouragement during all stages of this effort.

With all my sincere feelings I pray to Almighty Allah to give them the great reward of a safe planet in this world and tranquillity in the abode of the Hereafter.

Wabillahi Tawfiq

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July 2007

## AHADITH

- All creatures are God's dependants and the most beloved to God are those among them who do good to God's dependants. (Kash-al-Khafa)
- Whoever plants a tree and looks after it with care, until it matures and become productive, will be rewarded in the hereafter (Bukhari and Muslim)
- Narrated by Jar'ir bin Abdullah Al- Bajali (RA): The prophet (SAW) said, "He who is not merciful to others, will not be treated mercifully." (Sahih-Al Bukhari, Hadiths No: 2020- 8:42)
- Narrated by Shaddad ibn Aws: Two are the things which I remember Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) having said: Verily Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good

way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. So every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably (Muslim).

- Narrated by Anas Ibn Malik (RA), the prophet (SAW) said, “If any Muslim Plants any plant and a human being or an animal eats of it, he will be rewarded as if he had given that much in charity (Bukhari).
- The world is beautiful and green, and verily God, be He exalted, has made you His stewards in it, and He sees how you acquit yourselves. (Muslim) Live in this world as if you were going to live forever. Prepare for the next world as is you were going to die tomorrow. (Bukhari)
- Live in this world as if you were going to live forever. Prepare for the next world as is you were going to die tomorrow. (Bukhari)
- Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said, “If anyone kills a sparrow or anything greater wrongfully, Allah will question him about killing it.” On being asked what was the right way he replied, “To cut its throat and eat it, but not to cut off its head and throw it away.” Ahmad, Nasa’i and Darimi transmitted it (At Tirmidhi)
- If you kill a sparrow senselessly it will hasten to God on the day of judgement saying: O Lord! So and so killed me for play and not for use (narrated by Al Nasai and Ibn Habban).
- The Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited to kill four creatures: ants, bees, hoopoes, and sparrow-hawks (Abu Dawood)
- A woman who tied a cat will go to hellfire; she neither fed it nor allowed it to find food on its own (Al Bukhari).
- The Messenger of God (sw) was travelling with a group of companions amongst whom was a woman from the Ansar who was

riding a camel. At one point the camel became difficult and she cursed it. The Prophet (sw) said to her, “ now that you have cursed it unload it and allow it to roam free (Muslim).

- If the last day comes and one of you has a palm seedling, which he was going to plant, let him plant it. God will reward him for doing so (Sunan al Bayhaqi al Kubra)

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### **Note on references to the Qur'an**

The Qur'an is considered to be untranslatable in its pure form into any other language from its original Arabic. For this reason we have consulted a range of English translations not only to bring the meaning as near as possible to the sense of the original but also to express it in the idiom of the contemporary world. The verse numbering is that of the popular Yusuf Ali translation and the other accessible versions we have had recourse to are by Muhammad Asad, Abdalhaq and Aisha Bewley, M.A.S Abdel Haleem and Marmaduke Pickthall. A serious study of the Qur'an will of course necessitate a working knowledge of Arabic.



## ARABIC – ENGLISH GLOSSARY

**‘Adl** – justice; fairness; equitableness

**‘Alamin** – the worlds; the universe

**Amanah** – trust; moral responsibility; all the duties, which Allah Ta’ala has ordained.

**Anshaa’** – to produce

**‘Anzala** – to send down (like rain)

**Ardh** – the earth

**Ayah** – verse of the Qur’an; means “sign”; also refers to the signs one sees in nature

**Badi’** – originator, creator

**Din** – the life transaction, the path,; as in Al din Al Islam – The path of Islam.

**Fard** - obligatory

**Fasad** –corruption; mischief

**Fatara** - bring into being; derived from the root to split; germinate; create

**Fitra** – the natural primordial condition of mankind in harmony with nature

**Hadith** –narrations of the sayings and actions of the prophet (pl. Ahadith)

**Halal** – lawful; that which is permitted

**Haram** – unlawful; that which is not permitted

**Haq** – truth

**Ihsan** – absolute sincerity in Allah Ta’ala

**Iman** – belief, faith; acceptance of Allah and His Messenger

**Insan** – the human race; mankind

**Islam** – submission to the will of Allah

**Khalaq** – created

**Khaliq** - Creator

**Khalq** - creation

**Khalifa** – vicegerent; steward; someone who stands in for someone else

**Madrasa** – Qur’an school; a place of religious instruction

**Mizan** – balance; scale; symbol of harmony in creation

**Muhit** – encompassing, total awareness

**Muslim** – one who follows the way of Islam; one who submits

**Musrifeen** – those who are wasters; profligate

**N'ihma** - gift

**Qist**– justice; a measure of grain

**Rak'a** – a unit of the five daily obligatory prayers

**Sala** – the five daily obligatory prayers

**Samawat** – the heavens

**Shahada** – bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

**Shari'a** – the path; the legal modality of Islam

**Sujud** – prostration; one of the acts of the five daily prayers

**Sunna** – the sayings and practices of Messenger of Allah

**Sura** – chapter of the Qur'an

**Taqwa** – awe or fear of Allah

**Tawhid** – the doctrine of divine unity

**Wazan** – weigh; measure

## COMMON TERMS USED IN CONSERVATION PRACTISE

**Biodiversity** – richness and variation of wildlife species.

**Conservation** – managing natural resources without damaging the resource base or causing damage to the environment.

**Ecology** – the study of relationships between all living organisms and also the effect of human activity on the natural world.

**Ecosystem** – a scientific term used to describe a community of organism and their environment.

**Endangered species** – animal and vegetable species in danger of extinction if the causal factors are not removed.

**Environment** – collective term meaning the natural surroundings of the earth including land, sea and the atmosphere and everything they contain.

**Habitat** – the physical environment of any species of animal or vegetable.

**Holistic** – a perception of the natural world as a complete and self contained system.

**Natural Resources** – food, fuel, water shelter, climate on which the human race is dependent; products of the land and sea which supports human well-being and can also be a source of economic wealth.