



Graduate School of Development Studies

**Faith-Based Environmentalism:  
A Case Study of Islamic-Based Environmental  
Organisations in the United Kingdom**

A Research Paper presented by:

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(Malaysia)

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of  
MASTERS OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Specialisation:

**Environment and Sustainable Development  
(ESD)**

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The Hague, The Netherlands  
November, 2008

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## **Abstract**

In this paper I argue that Islamic-based environmentalism has a positive role to play in promoting the protection and conservation of the natural environment. Based on conducting a case study of two (2) Islamic-based environmental organisations established in the United Kingdom, this paper considers the role that they play by exploring their relevant critical drivers, including their belief, vision, activities, and religious resources. This paper seeks to help increase the appreciation of how such organisations could affect the landscape for environmental activism.

# Chapter 1 Introduction and Concepts

## 1.1 Problem and Research Questions

Recognising that religion can be a key shaper of people's worldview (Tucker and Grimm 2001: 13), this research considers whether or not Islamic-based environmentalist organisations can be employed for the purposes of promoting the care for the natural environment. This research is carried out by way of conducting a case study of two (2) Islamic-based environmental organisations that are established and located in the United Kingdom.

Colin Leys (as cited in Ter Haar and Ellis 2006: 352) in commenting about the role of religion in development, states that 'classic theories of development paid no attention to religion - simply because it seemed irrelevant to the processes they were analysing other than perhaps as an obstacle to modernisation'. But this view is changing to where there is much more interest and curiosity about how religion can bring about social change. This research paper taps into such interest and curiosity insofar as social change towards better environmentally responsible behaviour is concerned.

The environmental crisis has been unravelling since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and has manifested through different inter-related problems, such as resource depletion, species extinction, pollution growth, climate change, population explosion and over consumption (Tucker and Grimm 2001: 5). The cause, according to scientific consensus, is significantly attributable to humankind's past actions, committed in the name of 'development' that began at the dawn of the industrialised era, and has continued to date (Banuri and Opschoor 2007: 1). Scientists have gathered compelling evidence that the goal of development based on economic progress is unachievable. Climate change is now understood in scientific terms as a phenomenon for which humanity is mainly responsible, and that has already significantly impacted the poor and vulnerable (UNDP 2007: 1). This goal of economic progress/growth, being the aspiration of nearly every nation, and its implication for humanity, has been scrutinised and alternative paradigms of development have emerged to enrich and enliven the debate (Ayres et al. 1996: 2).

Some of these alternative paradigms have arisen out of a total rejection of the traditional conceptions of development (Pieterse 1998: 361). Writers such as Wendy Tyndale (as cited in Ter Haar 2005b: 48) argue that 'many of the major flaws of this development process arise from a failure to consider the metaphysical questions concerning human life'. This statement alerts us to the need to have a new look at development and its concomitant processes in order to bring true progress for humanity. It is also important to recognise at the outset that the unprecedented threats posed by climate change 'will require an un-paralleled collective exercise in international cooperation' (UNDP 2007: 10) which calls for urgent action.

The statement made by the British historian Arnold Toynbee (as cited in Taylor 2006: xx) that this present threat to mankind's survival could be removed 'only' by a revolutionary change of heart in individual human beings, is

increasingly regarded as being relevant to solving the crisis (*ibid*). In a world where there is a growing desire for spirituality and a resurgence of religion, it is argued that faith has the resources to become an effective tool to help transform people's view on development into one that increases the odds of humankind's survival (Goldewijk 2007: 4). As a consequence, the global community has extended a call for international cooperation to many religious leaders and all major religious communities, to aid in influencing the mitigation of such crisis (Motavalli 2002).

Beyond the context of the debate on the role of religion in development, this research also pertains to the subject of ecotheology. John S. Dryzek (2006: 191) describes ecotheology as the study of the root of environmental problems in spiritual terms. In his view, 'if the root is spiritual, then so too must be the cure' (*ibid*). Aldo Leopold (as cited in Meine 2006: 1005-1006), although not a theologian, was the first to recognise the need for an ethic in our relationship to nature. His publication, *The Land Ethic*, has become a core text and starting point for those concerned with the ethical and spiritual dimensions of conservation and environmentalism.

Thus far, the breadth of contributions to the literature concerning ecotheology has primarily been in response to Lynn White's well-known thesis (Proctor and Berry 2006: 1574) that a worsening ecological crisis will continue until the Christian axiom that 'nature has no reason for existence save to serve a man' is rejected (White 1967: 1203-1207). To this end, a sizeable body of literature on Christianity and its link to the care of the natural environment has developed; but the same cannot be said of other major religions.

Islam is one of the largest and fastest-growing major religions; and hence it is not incorrect to say that it has a major influence on the direction of global geo-politics and the future of humanity. The Muslim Diaspora is now located across most continents, and its communities are arguably both major contributors to, and victims of, global environmental degradation. And yet the amount of research on the role of Islamic environmentalism, beyond the theological and philosophical boundaries of its doctrinal position, is very limited. Given the urgency of the environmental crisis, and the size, expanse and influence of Islam, it is suggested that research into this area would be of value to promoting a better understanding of religion (in particular Islam), in its role to promote the protection and conservation of the natural environment.

In the present paper I will argue that:-

Islamic environmentalism can potentially play a positive role in promoting the conservation and protection of the natural environment.

This research looks at two organisations in the United Kingdom, which are a) the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), which is based in Birmingham (IFEES 2008a, n.d), and b) the London Islamic Network for the Environment (LINE), which is based in London (LINE 2008c, n.d.).

LINE is an Islamic environmental organisation that focuses solely on the local community in which it operates. IFEES, on the other hand, is considered to be an internationally recognised Islamic environmentalist organisation that focuses on imparting authoritative education and training on Islam's doctrinal



position with regards to humanity's relationship to the environment. It publishes academic and promotional literature, and conducts training and seminars on Islamic environmental ethics and conservation, with outreach projects and programmes that extend locally in the United Kingdom, but mostly into developing countries. IFEES' founder, Fazlun M. Khalid's is often quoted in major publications (UNDP 2007: 68) as an authority in the academic space where Islam and ecology intersect. Richard C. Foltz (2005: xiii), in fact, considers Khalid to be 'maybe the single most active "Islamic" environmentalist alive today' who was the first to articulate both the theoretical Islamic position on environmental ethics and conservation, and practical examples of its manifestation.

The reasons for why these organizations are chosen for the case study are different. In the case of IFEES, its founder has established a considerable international reputation for himself as an environmentalist. It would undoubtedly be insightful to understand how an environmental organisation that he founded operates and functions as a model of Islamic environmentalism. The choice of LINE however is made on the basis of appreciating the value derived from understanding how a local activist movement is able to employ Islamic principles to promote environmental protection within the local community. In addition to this, LINE serves as a comparison so as to help enrich the discussion on Islamic environmental organisations.

Given the aforesaid, the focus of this paper will be more weighted on IFEES, with the case study on LINE playing a supportive role to the research. The case-study on both organisations, when combined, will hopefully contribute to the richness of the findings that a case study on a single organisation cannot offer, and which is well needed, given that there is not much literature available on Islamic environmentalism in action.

I will conclude that given the organisations' worldview and their access to, and employment of, certain available religious resources, these organisations do potentially have a positive role to play in contributing to the necessary transformation of their stakeholders' attitudes and behaviour. I argue that some of these roles are performed directly, for example in the activities conducted to increase education and awareness, and in supporting various environmental campaigns. Others however are performed and delivered indirectly, and perhaps over a greater passage of time, by the remoulding of certain relationships and the creation of other new, synergistic relationships across a number of difficult ideological and disciplinary boundaries.

## **1.2 Background**

### ***1.2.1 Call for Ethics in Sustainable Development***

There is already wide acceptance for the concept of a holistic type of development, called 'human development', as opposed to one in which goals are based on economic progress alone. Human development, a notion conceived by Amartya Sen, and promoted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focuses on 'creating an environment in which people

can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their need and interest' (UNDP 2008). It describes the expansion of choice beyond just economic progress to that which is more closely tied to the goals of social justice and ecological integrity, which was called for by the notion of Sustainable Development as proposed in the *Our Common Future Report in 1987* (Brundtland 1987) and subsequently echoed in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (also known as the *Rio Summit*).

The notion that development can only be meaningful if it is sustainable, as espoused by the *Our Common Future Report* (*ibid*), is rather vague. Admittedly the Brundtland Commission, which was responsible for the Report, had a rather daunting task of balancing between addressing the causes of environmental deterioration due to the industrial mode of development, and the need for countries to develop in order to acquire a decent living standard (Rist 1997: 181). But, for all its weaknesses, *Our Common Future Report* has nevertheless triggered a discourse, initiating the convergence of different interests and communities to find solutions to the crisis, with sustainable development being put at the heart of the dialogue.

What is strikingly relevant is the statement in that Report that human survival and well-being depend on the need to elevate sustainable development to a global ethic (Brundtland 1987: 308, Engel and Engel 1990: 1). What this ethic means, who defines it, and whether or not there is truly a need to have one 'true' ethic, is left unclear. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the key author of the Report, recently restated that climate change is a threat which will most immediately impact the world's poorest and most vulnerable, magnifying wealth disparities, inhibiting opportunities for life improvement, and further into the future, pose the greatest risk of leading to ecological catastrophe (UNDP 2007: 59).

According to Rajni Kothari, the problem with the talk of ethics insofar as it relates to sustainable development, is the lack 'of a shared moral language in which to think and deliberate about the meaning of world order' (as cited in Engel and Engel 1990: 9). In search of this shared moral language or global ethic, the world has witnessed remarkable initiatives that have attempted to facilitate a shift from the mechanistic logic and materialistic worldview paradigm to one with a holistic appreciation of development, that inculcates the respect for ecological integrity, social and economic justice (Feldman and Moseley 2003, Motavalli 2002).

Since the *Rio Summit*, the twin moral principles of social justice (elevation of poverty and inequality) and environmental responsibility have remained permanent features in the discussion of sustainable development towards the resolution of the environmental crisis.

Quite separately, post-development theory has rebuked development as being a failure. A key contributor to this theory, Wolfgang Sachs (as cited in Nkurunziza 2007: 31) states that development is nothing more than a 'colonisation project, cultural westernisation and homogenisation endeavour'. Post development theory is unashamed in putting across an anti-development position which criticizes the influence of the neo-classical agenda of the free market for making commodities out of people, promoting the free

accumulation of wealth, giving rise to inequity, and leading to the destruction of local knowledge (Korten 1984: 34). This has also contributed to the emergence of different alternative development models, as a result of shifting the focus to the real needs of people and proposing that both the local and global agenda for development should also consider issues of social justice, human and civil rights and environmental sustainability. Nederveen Pieterse (1998: 358) argues that this 'alternative development' based on a people centred approach, is now becoming the mainstream position on development. All of this and more, aided by the rise of social movements, neo-traditionalist reaction against modernity, critiques on domination by global forces, and the view on the failure of development, have fuelled the growing support that the answer could be to infuse ethics, morality, and/or spirituality into development.

### ***1.2.2 Religion and Development Debate***

There is a growing acknowledgement that faith-based and faith-inspired organisations, which are widely recognised as having strong ethical moorings, have an important role to play in human development and the process of social change. But there has been little to no attention paid to the role of religion in development theories other than maybe in recognising it 'as an obstacle to modernisation' (Ter Haar and Ellis 2006: 352). Certain other factors can also be attributed to the lack of adequate consideration as to religion's impact on developmental efforts. They include inter alia, the dominance of the neo-classical theory on utility maximisation and the reluctance of secular organisations to act with religious organisations.

However, this view is changing to where there is now a growing interest to understanding how religion can play a positive role in development, part of which has arisen from the failure of development aid agencies to meet the full spectrum of their objectives (Nkurunziza 2007: 32). There are now a number of initiatives in place to uncover religious insights (Tucker and Grimm 2001) in order to avoid essentializing religion as either good or bad for development, sustainable development or, more relevant for this paper, for environmental sustainability. There are other initiatives that bring together religious insights on ecology and encourage dialogue with religious communities within and outside the discipline, and that explore the opportunities and/or obstacles that religion may bring to the realisation of sustainable development (Knowledge Centre 2008, Tucker and Grimm 1998). More research is clearly needed to fill the gap in knowledge relating, inter alia, to contemporary religions and their values, beliefs, and implications on people, the evolving relationships between states, organised religion and social organisations, and the interest religion serves and how it affects development activities (Rakodi 2005).

### ***1.2.3 The Development of Islamic Environmental Ethics***

Islam has been and is currently undergoing a resurgence and major introspection (Mutalib 1994: 12), which might or might not lead to a transformation. The internal transformation could be manifested through the reconstruction of the religious worldviews or the revivalism of more traditional

paradigms; and active efforts are under way to determine the appropriateness of interpreting religious sources in a way that usefully addresses current living conditions. Karen Armstrong (as cited in Goldewijk 2007: 27) supports this notion as being a general phenomenon of all religions, as demonstrated by her statement that ‘the global resurgence of religion involves the ideas of the divine that connect religious traditions to the unique living circumstances.’

Arguably the earliest and most prominent scholar who articulated the link between Islam and the non-human environment is Seyyed Hossein Nasr (as cited in Foltz 2006b: 1151, as cited in Kalin 2001). Nasr’s first publication, on religion, science, and the environmental crisis marks the pioneering work on the subject. His publication entitled *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Nasr 1968) is one of the first papers to predict the disastrous consequences of the environmental crisis. His critique revolves around the rise of modern science and the corresponding ‘secular and reductionist philosophies concerning nature’ (Nasr, Seyyed Hossein 1993), and stems from a desire to revive the sacredness of nature and traditional cosmology (Foltz 2006b: 1151, Kalin 2001).

Richard C. Foltz (2006a: 859), a leading academic on Islam and the environment, states that Islamic environmentalists today have attempted to derive an environmental ethic based on its two core sources, the *Quran* (the divine revelations of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad) and the *Prophetic Traditions* (a vast collection of formally authenticated traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad that supplement the *Quran*) which Muslims in general believe have all the answers needed for day-to-day life.

According to Foltz (2006a: 859-860), the development of such environmental ethic involves little to no attention to cultural contributions from the various Muslim societies. This is because of the extreme caution used in its development for fear that the end result might be seen as an innovation or accretion (which in Islam is referred to as *bida*) that strays from the true teachings of the religion, and is therefore considered un-Islamic.

Following on from this argument, Foltz makes a distinction between Muslim and Islamic environmentalism. Muslim environmentalism, he says, draws its inspiration from a variety of sources, which ‘possibly include but are not limited to the religion’ (*ibid*); whereas Islamic environmentalism is ‘demonstrably enjoined by the textual sources of Islam’. Examples of Muslim environmentalism are those activities, which, although carried out by Muslims, reflect the ‘western notion of what constitutes environmental education and protection’, such as those of international environmental organisations like the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) that operate in Muslim countries. Interestingly enough, the single example of Islamic environmentalism that he gives is IFEES, which conducts ‘environmental education programmes’ around the world, based on Islamic religious resources (*ibid*).

It should be noted, that notwithstanding the heterogeneity of Muslims and the fact that what is the ‘true’ Islam is often debated, there seems to be no suggestion from any source that contemporary literature on Islamic environmental ethics such as by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Mawwil Y. Izzī Dien, Fazlun M. Khalid and others is un-Islamic, or should be rejected for not being

representative of the view of Muslims (Foltz 2007). So one might conclude that at least for now, these contemporary writings, which are fairly consistent with and supportive of each other, are an acceptable basis by which to understand the link between Islam and ecology (*ibid*).

### 1.3 Structural Outline and Research Methods

In order to support my central thesis as set out earlier in Section 1.1 of this Chapter, I will structure this paper so as to seek to answer the following questions:-

1. What are the beliefs, vision, objectives, activities and worldview of the case study organisations?
2. What are the religious resources available and employed by the case study organisations; and what is the nature of the contribution of these resources in the performance of these organisations' role towards environmental activism?

In seeking to answer these questions, I will contextualise these case-study organisations in Chapter 2, by providing the necessary background information thereto (including in respect of their founders), a description of their general activities, their views and beliefs on the meaning of progress and development, and their diagnosis of the environmental crisis. Chapter 3 will thereafter focus on examining their religious resources and how such resources are employed. This examination will be structured in a way that utilises the categorisation of resources proposed by Gerrie Ter Haar (2005a: 22-27) to understand all religious traditions as follows:-

1. religious ideas (what people actually believe);
2. religious practices (ritual behaviour);
3. religious organisation (how religious communities form and function); and
4. religious / spiritual experiences (subjective experience of inner change or transformation).

In Chapter 4, I will discuss and analyses the key findings; after which, in the final Chapter, I will summarise the main conclusions that can be drawn from the research, and describe the role that such organisations can play in promoting the protection and conservation of the natural environment.

The approach to research employed for this paper relies on several different methodologies including the carrying out of interviews on persons directly and indirectly connected to the organisations. Most interviews take place in London, and some are conducted over the phone. Persons interviewed include the respective founding members of each of the case-study organisations, four (4) key volunteers, a number of Muslim youth representatives, two (2) *Imams* from local mosques, a number of participants of the organisations' events and activities who represent organisations which cooperate and interact with IFEES and LINE based on certain shared ideals (such as from the Christian environmentalist network, the Buddhist based environmentalist groups, the Muslim Council of Britain, the International Muslim Association of Scientists and Engineers, and other local and secular environmentalist organisations), and other participants in such events chosen

at random. The interviews with various respondents span over a period of three weeks, since a few of the key respondents were not readily available, and the observations of certain events could obviously only be made at the time they were being conducted.

Taking account of the time constraints on the part of the key respondents, all of whom volunteered to be interviewed, my interviews were based primarily on a structured questionnaire that looked to determine the respondents' understanding of the organisation's role, its worldview and priorities, its inner motivations and drive, the challenges it faces and its visions for the future. Each organisation's founder was interviewed a number of times (and at least once in person) using both the structured questionnaire and also an open-ended method of interview. I also conducted a number of open-ended interviews with key volunteers (including resource persons) and other stakeholders, where I thought it would be useful to do so. I also participated as a fee-paying participant in IFEES' prescribed one-day workshop entitled *Quran, Creation and Conservation* from which to make and record direct observations thereof, and conduct a number of interviews of its participants. I was also able to observe an IFEES event at the *Islam Expo* held in London, attend an interview of the IFEES founder by an environmental government agency of the United Kingdom, and participate in a one-day environmental organisations' network meeting organised by IFEES for all local Islamic-based environmentalist organisations.

Other than observations and interviews, the research also draws on secondary data extracted from a number of academic sources on Islamic environmentalism, which include works (in a number of different media formats) by the founders themselves on the belief, role and vision of their respective organisations, and third party literature about the subject in general, and about these organisation and/or their founders.

The discussion of the findings in this paper will purely be qualitative. The discussion on the findings of the organisations' worldview and such resources employed are used to tease out the respective organisations' potential role as agents to transform worldview and behaviour towards the protection and conservation of the natural environment.

## Chapter 2 Case Study Organizations and Their Worldview

### 2.1 Background on IFEES

IFEES is a charitable organisation that was registered in 1994, but whose activities ostensibly began in the mid 1980's in the United Kingdom. IFEEES' main priority is the establishment of a multi-purpose centre in the United Kingdom, which would, amongst others, have the capability and capacity to develop and implement projects worldwide in a manner that can demonstrate the positive contribution of Islamic conservation practice. It seeks to do this by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, experience and understanding between experts and activists alike. The setting-up of the *Muslim Alliance for Conservation* comprising of relevant grassroots' organisations is a step in the direction of fulfilling this objective (IFEES 2008a). IFEEES' main target that it seeks to influence is the Muslim population although it remains committed to helping to promote the protection of the environment to society in general, irrespective of race, religion or colour (IFEES 2008b: 2).

It networks extensively and on a worldwide basis, with NGO's, international organisations, academic bodies and grassroots' organisations, that share a common concern for the development of a healthy habitat for humankind and all other living beings in the non-human environment. It believes in community networks and working with grassroots' communities, as 'by working together, ordinary people can make a difference' (*ibid*).

#### ***2.1.1 Description of Founder of IFEEES:- Fazlun M. Khalid***

Fazlun M. Khalid, who is founder and director of IFEEES, was born in Sri Lanka but has lived in England for the last forty years (Khalid 1992a: xi). His background is in training, education and industrial relations with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), which organisation facilitates the implementation of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation in the United Kingdom (Khalid 2005: 88). Khalid's interest in the environment took shape in the 1980s, around which time he completed a Masters degree programme that had as its focus, the subject of Islam and ecology. After a 23-year career with the CRE, he took the decision to dedicate his life to the promotion of good environmental values and practices based on his faith, Islam.

Khalid has held various prominent positions including (between 1995 and 2002) as the Director of Training for the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), a multi-religious organization on environmental conservation that inter alia, organizes and host training workshops and seminars on the subject. In 1995, he helped develop the *Obito Declaration for Religion, Land and Conservation* in Japan, in which representatives of all major faiths pledged to work together in addressing environmental problems. He has also been an adviser and consultant to numerous international agencies and

academic institutions, including the World Wide Fund for Nature International, the World Bank, CARE USA, and Harvard University; and was the founder of the Muslim Education Forum United Kingdom and its General Secretary between 1989 and 1994 (IFEES 2008a).

A search on the Internet, and of press articles and personal interviews related to Islam and ecology reveals Khalid to be highly regarded internationally as an authority on faith-based environmentalism. Khalid's views on Islamic environmentalism have helped inspire and shape the philosophical approach of other Islamic based environmentalism organisations in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. His influence in the United Kingdom is particularly evident from the success of the environmental network meeting in London organized by IFEES in mid-2008. At that meeting which I attended, it was abundantly clear that the participants looked to him as a pioneer in the area of Islamic environmentalism, who inspires and motivates, and who has the intellectual and moral capacity to assist them through a challenging setting and in overcoming the growing pains of establishing a new movement.

When asked about what lies behind his personal motivation to pursue his work in IFEES, his reply was simply the concern about what the future holds for his grandchildren.

There exist many writings by Khalid expounding his views on Islam and ecology, such as on Islamic environmental ethics, under the title of *Guardians of the Natural Order* (Khalid 1999) as set out in Annex 1, and critiques on the root causes of environmental degradation (Khalid 1992b, 1996, 2003, 2005, 2006, Vadillo and Khalid 1992). It is therefore possible to discern a level of understanding of his worldview from such writings, and this is summarized in Section 2.3 of this Chapter.

### ***2.1.2 IFEES Activities***

IFEES seeks to bring about an awareness of nature in relation to Islam, through physical, intellectual and spiritual means and the availability of practical solutions and technology that are sympathetic to Islamic values to counter the environmental crisis. It also desires to promote greater understanding as to how communities can live through self-sufficiency such as by way of organic farming, recycling, reducing waste by abating consumption, and by emulating Islamic conservation traditions in different parts of the world. Its objective is to 'to establish centres of community living that will show Islam as an integrated pattern of productive social life working in harmony with nature' (IFEES 2008a). It is intended that this objective be realised by its activities around the provision of education, research support, training and training materials, conferences facilitation, access to database, and advice and practice assistance. Central to IFEES' approach to environmentalism is the recognition of the *Um'ma* (which means Islamic community) as its core stakeholder community and the use of *Da'wa* as the basis upon which such stakeholder is engaged. Tariq Ramadan (2004), a Muslim intellectual, explains *Da'wa* to mean a 'duty to explain what Islam is and to invite people to learn about Islam'.

Awareness and training workshops are core activities that IFEES conducts



both locally and internationally. Khalid regards the Islamic viewpoints on the subject of creation of humanity and the earth as having been ‘wilfully misinterpreted or misunderstood’ (Khalid 1992a: 4), and that urgent attention is needed to correct such misinterpretations and misunderstandings. To this end, these workshops play a critical role.

A number of documents form part of the literature circulated during these workshops, many of which are authored by Khalid, and articulate the Islamic principles on the subject of the conservation and protection of the natural environment. The discussions in these workshops are framed not as involving ‘reconstructions’ of Islam and ecology and humanity’s role within it, but rather as giving the messages inherent in the Quran a contemporary and ‘correct’ interpretation with respect to humanity’s role and relationship to the natural environment.

IFEES’ opinion on how Islam views humanity’s relationship with the natural environment and role in the environmental crisis has often been quoted by a number of established publications that deal with the subject of development and the environmental crisis. For example, recently, the *Human Development Report* in 2007-2008 (UNDP 2007: 68) afforded IFEES the opportunity to articulate its description of Islamic stewardship and environmental ethics and its connection to faith in religion.

Other specific examples of IFEES activities include producing a regular newsletter called *Eco Islam*, organising the breaking of fast (in the holy month of Ramadan) with organic food to discourage wasteful practices, arranging visits to organic farms, and participating in a number of socially active movements including, on climate change.

### **Selected Projects of IFEES**

IFEES also invests much time and effort on projects with grassroots’ communities outside the United Kingdom.

One important example of such projects is the marine conservation project in Misali Island, Zanzibar that was implemented around 2005 (BBC 2005). The central objective of this project (carried out in conjunction with the international NGO, CARE) is to ‘investigate whether religious ethics could manage better management of marine resources’(IFEES 2006b: 4). A total of 12,000 residents in 36 villages have always relied on fishing for their main livelihood from waters around the island of Misali, which is off the coast of Pemba, Zanzibar, Tanzania (BBC 2005). Although this area of coral reefs is endowed with great bio-diversity and has been designated as a conservation area by the government, unsustainable fishing practices, including fish bombing, have continued to be used, in breach of the government’s ban thereon. CARE, which was involved in projects in Zanzibar on sustained livelihood, engaged IFEES as consultants to, inter alia, design training programs for village and religious leaders, and *Quran* schoolteachers, based on Islamic environmental principles and conservation imperatives, so as to help influence the halting of these destructive fishing practices (*ibid*). Central to the project is the setting-up of an Islamic based conservation model called *hima* (a Shariah-based conservation zone that is further explained in Chapter 3).

The Zanzibar project relies on a number of different training material which include the IFEES published booklet entitled *Quran, Creation and Conservation*, (IFEES n.d), and a teacher's guide-book co-authored by Khalid and Thani entitled *Teacher's Guide Book for Islamic Environmental Education - Promoting Conservation in Misali, Zanzibar* (2008) (Khalid and Thani 2008) (translated also in Swahili). Khalid believes that these two publications, in particular the latter, hold great promise as effective training resource materials that can be used elsewhere. In Indonesia, IFEES is working with communities in Aceh, Sumatra to help rehabilitate mangrove swamps and to manage a forest reserve. 'We will start small, like Misali, and empower the villages through the local Muslim teachers,' says Khalid (IFEES 2006b).

IFEES has also published a practical guide for Muslims in the United Kingdom, co-published with UKLifemakers, called the *Muslim Green Guide To Reducing Climate Change* (IFEES n.d). The idea for this guide came about after in-house research revealed the inability of local initiatives to reach out to effectively communicate their green messages to the local Muslim communities. The guide also informs of impacts of climate change to humanity and the non-human environment by using Islamic references, and suggests behavioral changes that, if adopted, might help reduce such impact. At the end of the 20-page booklet is a checklist to help readers understand and reflect upon their own carbon footprint. Other publication projects include the production of a video entitled *Green Medina*. This video is targeted at and features Muslim youth, in which the central message is to promote environmentally responsible behaviour (IFEES 2008a).

In addition to the above, IFEES has also facilitated conferences of Islamic scholars predominantly from Muslim countries, to enhance the dialogue on the development of Islamic environmental law and ethics. One such example is the colloquium that was organized by IFEES in July 2007 in collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry of the Environment for such purposes (Llewellyn 2003). IFEES has also helped to facilitate the pronouncement of a *fatwa* in Indonesia in favor of the preservation of the forest.

The latest project that IFEES is currently involved in is situated in Gunung Lesur, Aceh, Indonesia, in which cameras are placed in this tropical rainforest, designated as a world heritage site, to enable the on-line viewing of the natural habitat therein. This project aims to be an educational resource to promote a better understanding and appreciation of the living environment of a tropical rainforest (IFEES n.d).

The list of projects set out above is merely a sample of the various projects in which IFEES is involved. Although incomplete, it is nevertheless believed to be a reasonably fair representation of the spectrum of its activities, which is sufficient to aid in the analysis of the use of its resources and its role the protection and conservation of the natural environment in the later Chapters.

## **2.2 Background on LINE**

LINE was established in 2004, and unlike IFEES, whose outreach is global, is an environmental organisation whose stakeholder community is wholly local.

Its Arabic catch phrase, which when translated into English means ‘Honoring unity and diversity’, reflects its desire to carry out its activities in an inclusive manner. This is further supported by the declaration on its website that it is ‘open to people of all faiths and beliefs’ and aims ‘to provide a safe, yet stimulating and enjoyable forum in which dialogue can take place, assumptions can be reflected on, and ideas developed’ (LINE 2008a).

### ***2.2.1 Description of Founder of LINE: Muzammal Hussain***

LINE’s founder and Chair, Muzammal Hussain, is a British of Pakistani origin, who moved to the United Kingdom at a very young age. He is a psychiatrist by profession and has worked in the field of mind-body healing for many years. Hussain has also a Masters degree in the field of environmental studies, and one might conclude that the research paper that he submitted in partial fulfillment of such degree was entitled *Islam and Climate Change: Perspectives and Engagement* (Hussain 2007) demonstrates a kindred spirit with Khalid in so far as the cure to and cause of climate change are concerned. Hussain’s vision has been shaped on one hand, by the inspiration he has drawn from the rise of social activism, especially through the efforts of social movement icons such as Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, and on the other hand, by the influence of Islamic teachings, *Prophetic Traditions* and history. Another major influence on Hussain is the World Development Movement (WDM 2008) in Brighton, whose work on campaigning on issues of social and ecological justice for the world’s poor, such as in relation to climate change, amongst others, helps shape the focus placed by LINE particularly in the area of social activism.

In his professional role, Hussain employs meditation techniques, which encourage physical healing by promoting the patient’s willingness to accept and come to terms with the condition upon which he or she is inflicted and the reasons therefor. It is clear that his approach to mind-body healing has had an influence in the shaping of LINE’s approach to promoting individual and societal transformation. Hussain says that his personal motivation is driven by the personal value he derives through the process of sharing and learning from others.

### ***2.2.2 LINE Activities***

The central activity of LINE is its monthly forum. In these forums, LINE utilizes an interesting approach to advance social change, as described in its Introductory Guiding Principles (LINE 2008b) that revolves around the essence of the unifying principles of Islam, which is to embrace plurality under the spirit of the oneness of God. The process employed for engagement in these forums is described as *Transformational Activism*, and requires participants to explore themselves through reflection and open dialogue, and to recognize that both personal and collective transformations are a crucial contribution to societal transformation. This reflection helps participants appreciate the threat of egoism, the importance of developing a thirst for knowledge, and the need to inculcate the desire to connect with nature. These forums, which also serve to promote effective networking and activism, cover a range of diverse topics

from the arts, poetry, politics and philosophy (both Islamic and non-Islamic). Example of topics of such forums include: a) bio-fuel and the food crisis; b) justice, trade and Islam; c) the *Hajj*; and d) communication through theatre and poetry. A variety of skills workshops to develop vocational competencies are also conducted as part of its activities to facilitate the development of self-reliance (LINE 2008c).

Within the limits of its resources, LINE also organises educational events on Islam and ecology, and engages in environmental and social justice activism where it feels morally compelled to do so. It organises nature outings, organic picnics, ecology outings, in which the objective is to connect with and learn from nature. In its campaigning activities, LINE has focussed on issues relating to climate change and Genetically Modified (GM) foods, both of which are naturally highly contentious issues in the United Kingdom.

LINE maintains a preference to work at the grassroots level with like-minded organizations. According to Hussain, working to pursue mindset change in local communities can still lead to effective change in due course, provided that there is a committed and sustained effort.

LINE was described by one of the non-Muslim faith-based environmentalist whom I interviewed as possessing the capacity to reach out to different faith and non-faith communities. The participants attending LINE's forums comprise of an even mix of Muslims and non-Muslims between the ages of twenty and mid thirties.

## **2.3 Diagnosis of the Environmental Crisis**

### ***2.3.1 IFEES Viewpoint***

As previously stated, Khalid has written a number of articles and given various interviews to the media on his worldview, both in his personal capacity, and for and on behalf of IFEES.

Khalid attributes the root causes of the environmental crisis to the following:-

1. the domination of the secular scientific worldview. IFEES cites Descartes (as cited in Khalid 2003: 311), whose failure to prove in a rational way that God exists led to the Cartesian Circle, or as Khalid calls it the 'predatory Cartesian', for being responsible for the development of the dualistic worldview of nature; and
2. the exponential economic growth that has resulted from usury which is applied by the secular and dominant practice of the banking system. Khalid describes usury and the financial system built around its use as a means by which to 'make money out of nothing' (Khalid 2003: 312). His critique therein lies in the argument that such growth will lead to the severe acceleration of environmental degradation as a consequence of the uncontrolled extraction and utilization of resources. Khalid also states that usury is the 'root of injustices of our time' (Khalid 2005: 98). He cites amongst others, Thomas Berry who is a Catholic priest and a well known

ecoth theologian (as cited in Tucker 2006: 164-166) when stating that industrial ‘progress’ has led to the devastation of the earth (Khalid 2005).

Furthermore Khalid believes that the goal of nation-states to achieve a certain standard of living and to be able to compete with other nation-states plays a critical role in contributing to this accelerated pace of economic growth with destructive environmental consequences (Khalid 2003: 311).

Khalid also criticises the ‘worship of modernity’, which he sees as leading to excessive consumerism and wastage, and which is driven by the dominance of a capitalistic banking paradigm. He also holds as complicit the dominant western-based education system; in particular how such system helps to oil the machinery of the dominant paradigm. This paradigm or secular order which serves self-interests, and seeks the domination of humanity over the earth, is wholly at odds with the values of Islam, which is based on humanity’s submission to God’s will, which submission invariably includes a duty to be God’s vicegerent on earth (IFEES 2008a, Khalid 2005: 99). It is by failing to submit to God’s will, that humanity ultimately disturbs the balance of life on earth, and causes the degradation of the environment.

Furthermore, he says, ‘the earth is a testing ground for the human species. The test is a measure of our act of worship in its broader sense’ (Khalid 2002: 4). He goes further by saying that Muslims are tested with regard to how they interact with God’s creation including the natural environment (Khalid and Thani 2008: 6), and quotes the verse in the Quran that God intends:-

..to test which of you has the best actions (*Quran* 11.7).

This statement by IFEES below, in describing the duty of Muslims to the natural environment, clearly impresses upon the need to being accountable for one’s actions (IFEES 2008a):-

The Islamic understanding of accountability is that each of us will be questioned over what we did or could have done.

On the first root cause of environmental degradation, Khalid draws a parallel between secular science and religion, in that both attempt to describe the natural world (Khalid 2003: 302). Khalid’s worldview is without a doubt built around his own faith, as exemplified by his statement quoted in the Christian Science Monitor Magazine (as cited in Barclay 2007) that the ‘The *Quran* provides ethical principles on guardianship and relationships with other beings, which can form the ethical foundation for conservation. And there are other sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad that relate to the sustainable use of resources.’ Khalid regards Islam as having a clear and ‘complete solution’ to the environmental conundrum, which solution is derived from its sources, predominantly the *Quran* and the *Prophetic Traditions* (IFEES 2008a). In his writing, he supports this belief by quoting amongst others the *Quranic* verse (6:39) which states, ‘We have not omitted anything from the Book (Khalid 2005: 101).

Khalid’s diagnosis of the environmental problem is framed in a way that places blame for the crisis on the actions of humankind rooted in corruption. He asserts that such crisis serves as a reminder (a sign) to help awaken humankind to the existence of God. This message is reflected in the words of

the *Quramic* verse, which he regularly quotes (IFEES 2008a, Khalid 2005: 111), as follows:-

Corruption has spread far and wide over land and sea consequent upon the activities of humankind. Allah therefore is giving them the taste of their own actions as a means of their finding a way back to Him (Al Qur'an: Rum 30:41)

In Khalid's written contribution in Richard. C. Foltz book entitled *Environmentalism in the Muslim World* (Khalid 2005: 87), he states the following: -

I had a sense then .. that racism, poverty, debt and environmental degradation had common origins...

Khalid clearly believes in the link between social and economic injustice and the environmental crisis. Khalid describes this injustice as being tied to the exponential growth of creating credit, and encouraged by 'the predatory tendencies of human beings' (Khalid 2003: 314). He is convinced that humanity must address social and economic injustices first if a meaningful solution to the environmental crisis is to be found. Although Khalid appreciates the enormity of the task, he is steadfast in his call for a shift away from the current economic paradigm which is based on what he calls 'the fraudulency of money creation' (Khalid 2005: 99). He concludes that humanity is living in a manner that goes against its very nature, making life unsustainable.

He therefore encourages and engages Muslims to reflect introspectively, and be willing therefore to accept criticism. Khalid says, of Muslims (Khalid 2005: 96):-

..we are culpable as the rest. For most Muslims, Islam has been reduced to ritual.

Khalid often articulates in his talks and writings (Khalid 2003, 2007) that humankind has surpassed its own limits, and has not played out its role as vicegerents (or *caliphs*) on earth as laid out in the sacred traditions of Islam, and is therefore threatened and itself a threat to the natural world. Khalid said the following (Khalid 2005: 93):-

.. the two truths I discovered for myself, however, were, that the human race was faced with a common threat of unprecedented proportions and that we are the threat itself.

On the concept of Islamic environmentalism, Khalid views it as a social movement that should be embraced by all Muslims, as he views that caring for the environment is 'integrated within the framework of Islamic values' (Khalid 2005: 101).

Having diagnosed the environmental crisis as described above, IFEES and Khalid propose that Islam has the means by which to 'lead the way' to resolve 'current concerns' through the application of Islamic socio- and ecological principles, since it is endowed with the 'complete solution' for avoiding the environment catastrophe (IFEES 2008a).

It is important at this juncture to introduce the outline of Khalid's view as to what the tenets of Islamic environmental ethics are (Khalid 1996, 2005: 103). It is based on four (4) principles described in Khalid's writing in the *Guardians of the Natural Order* (as per the extract set out in Annex 1), which in summary are: (i) the unity principle, (ii) the creation principle (iii) the balance principle;

and (iv) the responsibility principle. He believes that these principles will provide the foundation for an Islamic conservation practice or model, in which the objective must be to give an understanding as to how the role of humankind as guardian or vicegerent on earth can be performed so that 'humans function within the natural pattern, lead satisfying lives, and at the same time protect the earth from environmental degradation' (Khalid 2003: 318). These principles contextualize the place of humanity in creation and how the natural world needs to keep the balance in the space in which it is created (*ibid*). In reality, this worldview requires a total revamp of the dominant economic and political paradigm (*ibid*).

In answer to my direct question with regard to how he reconciles in his mind the monumental task of changing the paradigm given the reality of contemporary society and its limitations, Khalid's response, simply put, was that 'we just have to work with what we have' given that we are in a 'pickle of paradigms' (referring to the conflict between competing Islamic and secular worldviews).

Khalid hopes to awaken the Muslims to an alternative view as to the realities of the environmental change and he hopes that Muslims will discover, or may just realise, that 'they may be on the wrong side of the tracks' (Khalid 2002: 7).

### ***2.3.2 LINE Viewpoint***

LINE regards Islamic teachings as having 'a profound basis for environmentalism' (LINE n.d.). In its view, which it shares with IFEES, Islamic environmentalism is inherently embedded in the tenets of the faith itself, and premised on the idea of the interconnectedness of all creation. A holistic and integrated approach is therefore required, across all different areas of the human condition, including across the fields of economics, peace, health and conflict, if humanity is to overcome the environmental crisis (*ibid*). This crisis, according to Hussain (Hussain 2007: 31), should be viewed as a symptom. To him, it is the disturbing of the 'balance', that Khalid speaks of in his *Guardian of the Natural Order* as set out in Annex 1, which has led to today's environmental change (*ibid*).

According to Hussain, the response to climate change must be achieved at several levels. It firstly begins at the individual level, in which the response that is needed must manifest by the 'integration of the spiritual and rational' in the reflection upon the natural world. This will also aid the understanding of the dynamics between the human world and the non-human world, and reaffirm the interconnectedness of creation (LINE 2008c) and promote the awareness of the currently acquired knowledge of combating climate change. Secondly, it should be achieved at the community level, in which the response requires increased participation in global and environmental movements whose objectives are consistent with Islamic and universally held democratic values and principles (Hussain 2007: 32). And thirdly, it should be achieved at the economic level, in which the economic and banking systems must be replaced and rebuilt on the basis of a new ethical framework which would secure economic and environmental justice (Hussain 2007: 31).

Hussain places considerable importance on the need for communities to bridge the divide that creates ideological separateness. This is demonstrated by the approach used in LINE's monthly forums through reflective dialogue, in which openness, and the desire to learn from and share between different belief systems, is strongly encouraged (LINE 2007: 1). This 'healthier co-existence' a term coined by Tariq Ramadhan (as cited in Hussain 2007: 32), is reflected in LINE's Guiding Principles (LINE 2008a) as below:-

..we strive for an approach that is centred in the essence and unifying principles of Islam allowing us to extend outwardly with inclusiveness to those of other faiths and beliefs..

Like Khalid, Hussain believes that justice is a fundamental principle in Islam, and that such principle could, inter alia, take the form of ensuring the equitable distribution of natural resources, and imbuing a sense of responsibility for the future generation. The high regard that Hussain has for the World Development Movement (WDM), an organisation that deals with injustices affecting the poor, inspires the centrality of social and ecological justice in LINE's activities.

Hussain regards-

..the environment (as) an access point to talk about other things..

LINE focuses a substantial portion of its newsletter called *LINE Leaf* on topics that relate to issues of social and ecological justice (LINE 2007, 2008c). Recent examples of topics covered in this newsletter include a commentary on the Thailand-Malaysian pipeline project and the injustice and impact on local communities; and an editorial about the importance of getting serious about climate change.



## Chapter 3 Religious Resources

### 3.1 Religious Resources Employed

In this Chapter, I attempt to describe how both case-study organisations employ religious resources inherent to Islam in the fulfilment of their vision and objectives. Given that both organisations operate in different spheres of influence, there will clearly be differences in the composition and priority of the resources that are applied by each organisation, and that will need to be taken account of.

Resources in reality form a mobilizing structure which is crucial for organisations to achieve their objectives (Wiktorowicz June 2004). In looking at religion as a social fact, Ter Haar and Ellis (2006: 356) have identified and categorized religious resources into four (4) limbs as follows:-

1. religious ideas (what people actually believes);
2. religious practices (ritual behaviour);
3. religious organisation (how religious communities form and function);  
and
4. religious / spiritual experiences (subjective experience of inner change or transformation, or what I will refer to as experiences associated with mysticism).

This paper will utilize this categorization as the basis upon which to describe and articulate the resources employed by these organisations.

### 3.2 Religious Ideas

#### ***3.2.1 Signs for Reflection: Nature and the Quran***

It is clear from perusing the organisations' literature and interacting with key respondents, that both organisations believe that Islam can demonstrate the sacred quality of nature through the teachings of the *Quran* and the *Prophetic Traditions*.

In *Eco Islam*, IFEES' newsletter, one of the articles reminds the reader that there are at least 750 references to the natural environment in the *Quran* (IFEES 2006b, n.d). Many of these verses ask humanity to 'reflect' on nature and the cosmos, to study the living organism and their environment, and to make the best use of reason. By doing so, mankind will recognize and submit to God's existence, and accept that all of creation belongs to Him. In both the writings of Khalid and Hussain, they agree that nature and everything in it signify God's presence, and as such warrant special care and respect (as cited in Hussain 2007: 11, IFEES 2008a). Both organisations focus on the importance of awakening the Muslims in particular, and humanity in general, to perform the

duty of guardians of God's creation.

In IFEES' main training workshop called *Quran, Creation and Conservation*, participants are asked to reflect on several themes from the *Quran*, the first of which is the spiritual significance and sacredness of nature in Islam under the topic of Creation. The *Quramic* edict to reflect, by the multiple-use of expressions such as 'do you not think' and 'do you not reflect' in the body of the *Quran*, is mirrored in IFEES' own training strategies.

It should be noted that IFEES usually invites more than two resource persons (at least two of whom are Islamic scholars) to help translate the *Quran* and the *Prophetic Traditions* in its training course. This demonstrates the caution that IFEES applies interpreting sacred text. Karen Armstrong (as cited in Hussain 2007: 19), states that 'The whole mode of the *Quramic* discourse is symbolic' necessitating experts in Arabic language and those who understand the science of extracting meaning from the *Quran*.

### ***3.2.2 Obligation to Seek Knowledge***

In its literature, IFEES stresses that seeking knowledge is an obligation placed by God upon humanity. IFEES reminds Muslims that in Islam, seeking knowledge is in itself an act of worship, and a means by which to understand and appreciate the signs from God.

The *Teacher's Guide Book for Islamic Environmental Education* (Khalid and Thani 2008: 5), cites the following quotations:-

Seeking of knowledge is obligatory to all men and women (*Sabih Muslim* - A compilation of Prophet's Muhammad's sayings)

We have brought them a book explaining everything with knowledge, as guidance and a mercy for people who believe' (The *Quran* 7:52)

The book goes on to promote (Khalid and Thani 2008: 6) an approach to education which requires the engagement of deep thought and reflection in order to bring about an 'awakening' of the participants.

## **3.3 Religious Practices**

### ***3.3.1 The Duty to Act - Islamic Jurisprudence and Law***

It has been argued that Islam is, amongst other things, 'a religion of law' (Llewellyn 2003: 186). It is not surprising therefore that IFEES employs certain widely established legal concepts in Islam in their environmental discourse and training. In this section, I will summarize some of these key legal precepts.

The *Shariah* (Islamic law) comprises a body of laws that are based on the *Quran* and the *Prophetic Traditions*, and whose ultimate purpose is to safeguard universal common interests (Llewellyn 2003: 193). The *Shariah* places the interests of society in priority over and above the interests of the individual (IFEES 2008a, LINE 2008b).

The purpose of the *Shariah* is described in the legal theory known as the *Makasid* (Auda 2008: 2). This theory receives wide attention from modern-day Islamic jurists, particularly as Islamic law seeks to remain contextually relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Llewellyn 2003: 193). Although there is general consensus about the contextual relevance of the *Makasid* to the *Shariah*, the extent of its components and how it should be applied remains the subject of much debate (Auda 2008: 13).

In this theory, the *Shariah* seeks to fundamentally preserve five matters critical for the good functioning of society, which is: faith, life, posterity, intellect and wealth (in that order of priority).

One resource person of IFEES, Usama Hasan, who is also an *Imam* in a mosque in Norwich, and who was interviewed for the purposes of this paper, argues that there is now a growing acceptance that environmental protection should be included to the list of five matters which the *Shariah* seeks to preserve, given its criticality to mankind's survival. If universally accepted, it would provide a stronger basis upon which to require Muslims to adopt a more responsible environmental behaviour.

Hussain of LINE, also accepts the five purposes of the *Shariah*, which he collectively refers to as the 'necessary interest' (Hussain 2007: 21). In relation to the issue of climate change and inter-generational justice, he makes the argument that the intention to safeguard the posterity or progeny of society under the doctrine of *Makasid* already implies a duty to ensure the preservation of future generations (Auda 2008: 22). Since climate change will adversely impact the welfare of such generations, it therefore follows that the *Shariah* ought to be enacted to impose a legal obligation on society to behave in a more environmentally responsible way. Such laws that help mitigate against the effects of this environmental phenomenon should be developed and enacted without the need for further jurisprudential debate about extending the *Makasid* doctrine.

Amongst IFEES' projects worldwide is the effort to bring together the knowledge and understanding of Islamic environmental jurisprudence in order to increase awareness of the same to Muslims. Much of the substantive rulings of the *Shariah* relating to the protection of the natural environment that IFEES has disseminated are already contained in specialist books on Islamic jurisprudence under topics that range from transactions, public administration to criminal and penal law (Llewellyn 2003: 197), but in materials that are much less accessible to the general Muslim public.

### **Fatwa**

A *fatwa* (religious decree) is a recognized religious statement/pronouncement in Islam, which provides guidance to the Muslim community as to whether or not an act or omission might be encouraged, discouraged or prohibited in Islam. Many Muslim countries use the Common Law or Civil Law legal systems as the base for its national laws, and there is no hierarchical priesthood with jurisdiction to make 'binding' pronouncements on Muslims. As such, most *fatwa* lack any force of law. The scholars who are recognized as having the authority to pronounce on such matters earn such recognition by acquiring

over time a community's accedence to their moral authority in speaking about, and its knowledge and expertise in, Islam and its laws.

Nevertheless, IFEES regards the performance of its role in facilitating the issuance of a *fatwa* in 2007 by a prominent group of Islamic scholars, as a notable success. The ruling was in favor of the preservation of the forest (IFEES 2008c: 7) and declared that the burning down of forest is prohibited in Islam. IFEES informs that although the *fatwa* is not binding, it is still an important development in that there is no precedent anywhere else in the Islamic world for this type of religious declaration to be made on the subject of the protection of the natural environment.

### ***3.3.2 Conservation Practices***

IFEES also seeks to create awareness for the different types of Islamic conservation practices through its numerous communication channels including its newsletter, *Eco Islam* (IFEES 2008c: 5). Two of these conservation practices that were initiated (and subsequently reformed) by the introduction of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and which are specifically publicized and promoted by IFEES, are *haram* and *hima*.

*Haram* is the status ascribed by Prophet Muhammad to sacred, inviolable zones or sanctuaries, which are applied for the cities of Mecca and Medina. Specific duties to protect the environment are imposed on Muslims who reside or travel within such sanctuaries. IFEES reminds Muslims to not lose sight of these obligations, and encourages the extension of this prophetic example by incorporating such conservation practices and principles in the form of guidelines on 'practical ethics' (Haq 2001: 166, IFEES 2006a: 3).

*Hima* in essence relates to conservation and sustainable development practices to which communally owned lands 'that are reserved for purposes pertaining to public good' must be subjected (Llewellyn 2003: 212). In its publications, IFEES states that all of creation belongs to God and that 'the elements that compose the natural world are common property' (IFEES 2006a: 3). If that is the case, then it follows that any actions or omissions by a person, which might damage or destroy such common property must be subject to legal sanctions.

IFEES raised awareness as to these practices as part of its *Quran, Creation and Conservation* workshop carried out in the Misali marine conservation project, and consequently was able to influence the setting up of a *hima* over the common fishing waters around the Misali island, to protect against the use of environmentally unsustainable fishing techniques, such as fish bombing. IFEES also actively promoted the setting-up of an Islamic model of governance called *hisba* to ensure that the *hima* is adequately managed and protected (Llewellyn 2003: 20). Under *hisba*, an officer called a *muhtasib* would be appointed with the jurisdictional authority to enforce and implement policy, rules and regulations that might apply to the geographic zone of the *hima*. In the Zanzibar project, an Islamic Conservation Officer was appointed to ostensibly perform this role of the *muhtasib* with respect to the common fishing area which was declared a *hima*.

IFEES hopes to use the approach it took in Zanzibar as a model that could be emulated elsewhere in other Muslim countries. Eliza Barclay (2007), a journalist with the Christian Science Monitor, interviewed a number of the fishermen involved with the IFEES project and concluded that it was 'yielding results' in increasing the sense of religious responsibility over nature (Barclay 2007).

### ***3.3.3 Pillars of Islam***

Out of the five pillars of Islam (which relate to the mandatory acts of a) witnessing the oneness of God, and that Muhammad is his messenger (*shahadah*); b) praying five times a day (*salat*); c) fasting in the month of *Ramadan*; d) giving alms to the poor (*zakat*); and doing a pilgrimage to Mekah if financially able (*hajj*)), the pillars relating to prayer, fasting and the pilgrimage have each been singled out by the case-study organisations as creating opportunities for the immediate adoption of more environmentally friendly behaviour.

Both organisations remind participants and members to: a) not be wasteful in the use of water, in taking ablution, a ritual wash prior to each prayer; b) not eat excessively or be wasteful at the break of the fast during *Ramadan*; and c) be particularly sympathetic to the environment during the *hajj* pilgrimage, given that millions of people share limited resources in such a confined space during a very restricted period. IFEES has also suggested that Muslims should only perform the *hajj* once in a lifetime in order to reduce the environmental burden on Mecca and Medinah (the cities in which the *hajj* is performed) (as cited in Dowd February 2007), contrary to the prevailing view of many scholars that multiple pilgrimages are preferred.

During *Ramadan* in particular, IFEES organizes the breaking of fast with organic food, with a strong reminder that it is a sin to lead the lifestyle of excessive consumption. IFEES also incites similar events to be held in other parts of the world in order to bring together communities during this holy month, and to raise awareness of the objective of fasting to not be wasteful and to learn consideration and care for the less privileged.

IFEES issues the *Muslim Green Guide To Reducing Climate Change* (as mentioned in Chapter 2 above) in the month of *Ramadan* (IFEES n.d), when Muslims are encouraged to be 'most reflective of their actions' (IFEES 2008a). Recently, LINE also invited the general public to fast 'for the Planet' as a way to transform certain values that, if left unchanged, are untenable for mankind's survival. Such values include oppressive corporate domination, consumerism, the dominant economic system, and the dependency on fossil fuel (LINE 2008, October 16).

## 3.4 Religious Organisation

### 3.4.1 *The Mosque and the Imams*

The concept of ‘community’ or *jama’ah* plays a central role in Islam (Hinde 1999: 131), as the nucleus of the faith (Aslan 2006: 146). It is therefore to be expected that many of IFEES’ activities will be conducted by engaging with community leaders and representatives as potential agents of change. One such group of individuals are the *Imams* of the mosques, who run the mosques and all its activities, and lead the congregants in prayer. The importance of the role of the *Imams* or the religious leaders cannot be underestimated. CARE International project manager for the marine conservation project in Zanzibar, Mr. Ali Mbarouk, was quoted in Elizabeth Barclay’s article (2007) as saying, ‘... if people are told to do something from their religious leader [*or imam*], they are likely to obey.’

IFEES engages with *Imams* on several levels. Firstly, it trains them and other scholars and teachers on the Islamic perspective of the natural environment and conservation. Secondly, they serve as resource persons in IFEES’ training courses and workshops in particular to advise on the meaning of certain *Quramic* verses. Thirdly, IFEES provides the substance behind sermons on Islam and the protection of the natural environment that they might deliver before the obligatory Friday communal prayer. And finally, they work with IFEES to act as useful role models for their congregation. For example, the Tawhid mosque in Leyton has a bicycle rack to encourage eco-friendly means of transportation. One of the *Imams*, Usama Hasan who is a resource person for IFEES is a committed user of public transportation to reduce his carbon footprint.

### 3.4.2 *Partnering with Secular and Inter-faith Networks*

IFEES and LINE are generally weary of engaging with governments and private and public organisations, which they believe are agents of neo-liberalism. IFEES and LINE maintain a rejectionist stance against the totality of the global capitalist hegemony and the dominant paradigm, which they believe is unsustainable. As such, they prefer to partner with organisations like the World Development Movement, Friends of the Earth, and the Green Party, and other grassroots’ or local community-based organisations that share similar ideals of bringing about social and environmental justice in particular to the under privileged (Hussain 2007: 32).

They openly recognize the synergistic value in sharing resources and working together with such organisation. In addition, such co-operation helps increase cost-savings of organisations, which is critical given the difficulty of funding.

### 3.4.3 Intra-faith Networks

There are a number of Islamic humanitarian charitable organisation that IFEES has worked with, including but not limited to, the Islamic World, Islamic Relief, and Muslim Hands. Because of a lack of time, this could not be explored in any depth.

## 3.5 Mysticism

Mysticism comes from the Greek word '*mystiko*', and amongst other things relates to the desire to identify or commune with the divine, spiritual truth, or God, through direct experience, intuition or insight. Simply put, a mystic seeks the truth about himself, his relationship with others, and reality (both of the seen and unseen), with the objective of being 'awakened' so as to arrive in a union with God (Nationmaster.Com 2003). The mysticism in Islam called *tasawwuf*, originates from the *Quran*, and the *Prophetic Traditions*, and has developed over the ages through the numerous Sufi movements and masters (Argis 2002).

Martin Lings (1993: 1-133) explains the basis of Sufism by recounting the Prophet's explanation that the greater *jihad* relates to the battle against his own soul. 'The soul of fallen man is divided against itself,' writes Martin Lings (*ibid*). The lower soul, given to worldly desires, constantly battles against its better part, the conscience. Sufism can be regarded as one of the Islamic disciplines that applies deep spiritual reflection in order to effect transformation.

In his writings, Khalid has, in addition to quoting the *Quran* and the *Prophetic Traditions*, relied on Sufi philosophy and poetry (Khalid 2005: 90). 'Whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God' is a *Quranic* verse (11. 115) that is quoted by Khalid, and which links such philosophy to the core principles of the faith.

Khalid (2005: 90) cites the Sufi poem by Syakh Ibn Al habib, which in its opening line reads:-

Reflect upon the beauty of the way in which both the land and sea are made, and contemplate the attributes of Allah outwardly and secretly.

The greatest evidence to the limitless perfection of Allah can be found, both deep within the self and the distant horizon.

If you were to reflect on physical bodies and their marvelous forms, and how they are arranged with great precision, like a string of pearls;

Then you would reflect on the unity of *Tawhid* (oneness) with all your being, and you would turn from illusions, uncertainty and otherness.

Khalid considers that Sufi poems, which often speak of the love and character of God, assimilate and apply the poetic nuances of the *Quran* (Khalid 2005: 90). Given his inclination to quote Sufi poetry and employ its philosophy, it is not inconceivable that Sufism is an important part of his own spiritual journey.

LINE, at their monthly forums, also facilitates Sufi poetry reading. In the

forum entitled *Poetry, Islam and Ecology* (LINE n.d.), Hussain states that the *Quran* asks humanity ‘to reflect on nature’ as signs (Hussain 2007: 10). LINE arranges social outings to incite the human spirit to re-connect to nature.



## Chapter 4 Discussion

It is important to re-state at the start of this Chapter the purpose of this paper's inquiry. This research seeks to explore the role of these Islamic-based environmental organisations in the protection and conservation of the natural environment by understanding their relevant critical drivers, including their belief, vision, activities, and religious resources.

This Chapter is dedicated to discussing the major themes in the findings in respect of these critical drivers that are set out in the previous Chapters. It is on the basis of the analysis set out herein that the key roles of these case-study organisations are determined.

### 4.1 Awareness of Duty

IFEES aligns with the view of Seyed Hossein Nasr that there is a lack of awareness amongst Muslims of their role to protect the natural environment (Nasr 2003: 86), and it is the addressing of this gap that is the major focus of its activities. Since the role of Muslims in protecting the environment is a duty, it therefore follows that the work to make Muslims aware of such a duty is in itself also a duty. It is the realisation of such latter duty that underpins the concept of *Da'wa* towards the *Um'ma*, as set out in Chapter 2.

Both IFEES and LINE attempt to bring about greater awareness of the role of Muslims and humanity towards the environment, but clearly take different approaches to convey their messages. IFEES takes a more direct approach by describing and educating on the nature of the religious duty in clear and no uncertain terms, whereas LINE predominantly seeks to facilitate the awareness by utilising forums that encourages open dialogue, which is guided by the principles of Islamic principles of unity to embrace plurality under the spirit of the oneness of God (as set out in LINE's Introductory Guiding Principles). This approach is said to help awaken the spiritual and rational mind of their stakeholders. Notwithstanding, both utilise the methodology of seeking participants to 'reflect', and this approach to engaging participants serves as a common denominator between the two case-study organisations.

IFEES tends to focus on the participation of scholars and *Imams* in its awareness training workshops and session. The logic to such focus lies in the recognition of the importance to employ such participants as carriers of its environmental message through their own respective spheres of influence, such as to congregants of their mosques. It is also important to note that although there is no prohibition of non-Muslim's attending the awareness sessions of IFEES, the materials and its presentations presume that the main audience will be predominantly Muslim. In fact this presumption is made clear in its website (IFEES n.d).

LINE on the other hand is generally less orientated towards influencing the religious organisational structure and prefers instead to directly target the local communities within its geographical sphere of influence. It is not

surprising that LINE has less influence over such *Imams* and religious scholars, simply because its modus operandi, applied out of its own choice, is non-prescriptive and focuses on facilitating a process of sharing and learning between participants of different faiths and persuasion. Furthermore, its role in activism is to make aware of, and protest against ecological/social injustice, as viewed through the lens of Islam, along with encouraging social cohesion between communities. The difference in approach does not necessarily render LINE's message as being less authentic; but clearly its outreach is circumscribed by the approach taken.

The environmental movement is seen as a western concept which might remind Muslims of the bitterness of colonisation (Afzaal 2006), and be regarded as a patronising attempt by the west to 'preach' to its past colonial subjects. This perception provides a justification and an opportunity for IFEES and LINE to play a role in such communities to explain that the care for the natural environment is indeed an Islamic notion, and to further explain what such notion really means.

## 4.2 Religion vs. Environmentalism

The literature from IFEES suggests that environmental degradation is a sign of God's test on humanity's ability to find its way back to His path. The crisis therefore manifests for the same purposes as signs interpreted by the prophets of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, and that is as a demonstration of God's presence and omnipotence (e.g. Moses' locust and plagues, Noah's floods, etc.). However, unlike the stories of such prophets, in which God directly intervenes by unleashing his wrath upon humanity, both organisations point to the direct culpability of humanity whose quest for modernity, based on delusions of progress that fail to truly embrace social justice, have resulted in the current crisis. It is this culpability that has resulted in a state of affairs for which no salvation can be achieved without turning back to God's path for its solutions. And it is their belief that such solutions are to be found in the *Quran* and the *Prophetic Traditions*.

Clearly such a solution extends beyond the remit of tackling the environment crisis alone, and extends not just into all areas of economic and social justice but also in the prescribed submission and worship of the divine. This raises the question as to whether these organisations are 'first and foremost' environmental organisations, or do they employ a topical theme as a means by which to preach a religious message. Having said that, it is not inconceivable that these organisations consider the religious duty towards protecting the environment to be so fundamental and intrinsic to fulfilling the role being a true Muslim that the subject of environmentalism cannot be divorced from the faith itself.

It is difficult from the brief interview sessions and perusal of the associated literature of LINE and IFEES to conclude with any certainty on this matter. Suffice to say however, that a deeper understanding of the nature of its inter-organisational cooperation and the stakeholder community that it seeks to influence might facilitate an analysis of where the predominance truly lies. Arguably, the answer to this question might help determine the protagonists

who are most likely to support the efforts of this organisation, and the stakeholders who are most likely to be influenced. If indeed the cornerstone of the activities are environmental in nature, then it is organisations which share such a similar vision that are likely to be make up its key support network. On the other hand, if the main emphasis were religion, then it would be other Islamic religious organisations that would form the backbone of the inter-organisational cooperation that it maintains.

### 4.3 Social Justice in Islam

Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus (2004) regard modern environmentalism as a failure because of its inability to influence leaders to act in accordance with the magnitude of the crisis. They claim that the problem needs to be understood in the context of how society is organised as opposed to from some narrow technical discipline, and that its solution must be developed along an appreciation of such society's core values. In essence, they argue that the environmentalist movement must replace the approach of relying on 'narrow and technical policy' proposals, and instead reach out to religions (and other 'myth makers') to 'figure out who we are and who we need to be' in order to really tackle the problem from source (*ibid*).

Indeed both IFEES and LINE focus their approach to environmentalism from the social justice angle as opposed to from the deep ecology angle. Hussain of LINE opines that the underlying cause of the environmental crisis from which the world suffers, is predominantly caused by the inequitable relationship between societies. Khalid of IFEES shares a similar view, in that he refers to environmental degradation as sharing the same root cause with poverty, racism and third world debt. Both consider that the understanding of what lies behind the crisis creates an avenue from which to debate global, social, and economic injustices and to promote Islam's holistic solutions therefor.

For many communities worldwide, environmental justice is a matter of protecting ways of living which deem 'environmental, economic, and social values as inseparable' (Figueroa 2006: 610). Generally Muslims believe that the equitable distribution of natural resources is part of the religious duty of ensuring social justice (Parvaiz 2006: 877). To that end, the attribution of real value to resource precludes any usury costs associated with such resource or its exploitation. Foltz regards this approach as being 'human centred' (Foltz 2006a: 861), in which Islamic scholars, amongst others, have far greater interest in 'issues of justice than in the biosphere as an integral whole' (*ibid*). Both IFEES and LINE do not accept the separation of environmental degradation from social justice, because the ones most impacted by such degradation are the poorest and those with the least resources. As such, they are both against the hierarchical domination of the prevalent and dominant economic structures.

Related to this is LINE's emphasis on social ecology, which is accordingly reflected in its engagement with its members. Social ecology contextualizes ecological problems by reference, quoting Murray Bookchin (Bookchin 1993), to 'deep seated social problems'. LINE employs Islamic

principles to awaken its members and forum participants to disengage these deep-seated prejudices that lie at the heart of these social problems.

#### 4.4 The Image of Islam

The desire for Rajni Kothari's 'shared moral language' to find a global ethic (as cited in Engel and Engel 1990: 9) for the care of the environment presumes the contribution of all major global communities to its development. In that regard, the *Um'ma* (as explained in Chapter 2) is clearly viewed by IFEES and LINE, as a major global community whose views must be understood, taken account of, and also respected. The adverse image of Islam post 9/11 could impact the ability of such community, or such organisations, like IFEES, that seek to represent such community, to have sufficient influence or command sufficient respect in the environmental debate. This image may also impede inter-faith and inter-organisational cooperation, which as discussed elsewhere, is key for these organisations' struggle. It therefore means that these case-study organisations must consider efforts to explain Islam (by way of *Da'wa* as explained in Chapter 2), to as wide an audience as possible, as part of their task, perhaps not as an end in itself but as a means to an end. This imperative can be sensed in both organisations from the language that is used in their promotional material; for example where it is explained that activities are planned or conducted in order 'to show' Islam in a particular light (IFEES 2008a); or the justification for the organisation's role is explained in terms of promoting 'social cohesion' which is adversely affected by the misunderstanding of Islam's place in multi-cultural Britain (LINE n.d.).

#### 4.5 From Ethics to Development of Islamic Environmental Law

The moral /religious proposition that the founders of each of the case-study organisations promote is the result of their own personal spiritual journey. Both believe, as others such as Karen Armstrong do (as cited by Hussain 2007), that the teachings of the Quran must be applied in light of humankind's own changing circumstances in order to make it relevant to current times.

The commentary in Section 3.3.1 of the previous Chapter suggests a desire amongst those associated with IFEES, LINE and the Islamic environmental movement, for an adaptation, re-interpretation or extension of the purpose of the *Shariah* in order to accommodate the development of Islamic environmental law.

But it is quite clear that many Muslim scholars remain unwilling to move from the status quo understanding of the *Makasid* as posited by *Imam* Ghazali who died in 1111 (Hasan 2008). Hashim Kamali (as cited by Hussain 2007: 9) recognises the gap between the development of the *Shariah* and the changing conditions of society which he said must be closed.

The issue really relates to the extent to which the deductive process called *ijtihad* (Foltz 2007) can be called upon in these circumstances. *Ijtihad* is a tool of exegesis which facilitates the interpretation of the *Quran* and the *Prophetic Traditions* in the context of changing times (Hussain 2007: 9). Although the

Prophet sanctioned its application, the extent and manner of its usage has, over the centuries, been the subject of fierce debate.

On one hand of the debate, there are the traditionalists, who believe that the *Quran* is coeternal with God and uncreated, and therefore cannot be subject to change over time, and on the other hand, there are the rationalists, who believe that the *Quran* was created at a particular point in time for humankind, and therefore remains subject to contextualisation given humanity's changing circumstances. At stake is the concern that *ijtihad* could lead to the practice of innovation (*bida*), which, as discussed in Chapter 1, is generally accepted as being prohibited in Islam.

*Ijtihad* was a vital tool for developing new law until the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, when the traditionalist scholars, who by then dominated all major schools of law, outlawed its use as a tool of exegesis. The 'closing of the gates of *ijtihad*' as this action has been called, signalled the beginning of the end for those who held that religious truth could be discovered by human reason, for so long as it did not contradict any revelation (Aslan 2006). Clearly the effect of this domination was the extinction over time of the development of rationalist knowledge and moral philosophy in the vein of Muslim rationalist thinkers like *Ibn Rashid* (Averroes) who considered God's attributes, including His words through His revelations, to be nothing more than 'guideposts' that merely reflected humankind's understanding of God, not God in itself (*ibid*).

There are signs that the debate on the use of *ijtihad* is gaining momentum, as Islam tries to find its place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (*ibid*). The position that each case-study organisation takes as to the relevance of *ijtihad* in determining humanity's legal duty towards the protection of the natural environment might result in the building of more natural allegiances with those persuaded by the rationalist argument, rather than that of the traditionalist. This allegiance is not without a cost, and plays a critical role in determining the extent to which these organisations might be capable of influencing change particularly where the community they seek to influence, is dominated by one school of thought rather than the other.

## 4.6 The Search for Authenticity

The religious scholars and leaders are, and will continue to be, the 'custodians of Islam, who have the ear of the vast majority of Muslims' (Nasr 2003: 92). It is pivotal not just to have the message of environmentalism authenticated through such custodians, but also to secure their support to articulate the message with the necessary veracity and commitment in order to push for a positive change in the Muslim community.. Syed Hossein Nasr, a pioneer on the subject of Islam and ecology, and a major influence on Khalid, strongly calls upon these religious leaders and scholars to 'speak with courage' (Nasr 2003: 93) even against difficult political considerations affecting many autocratic Muslim countries.

According to Foltz (2006a: 859-860), most Islamic environmentalists, who by his definition would include IFEES, have attempted to derive environmental ethic from the *Quran* and *Prophetic Traditions* while paying no attention to cultural contributions from the various societies in which they live.

Such an approach helps strengthen the argument that the message of Islamic environmentalism is more authentic, in so far as its relevance to Muslims is concerned. What is interesting however is that *Imams*, so crucial as change agents in this regard, are themselves not free from the cultural biases for which Islamic environmentalism has no home.

A respondent of an interview believes that IFEES has been relatively successful with the *Imams* and the religious scholars who have attended its training sessions and workshops, mainly because it approaches the subject of environmentalism by focussing on the relevant body of religious Islamic doctrine whilst avoiding the cultural influences that might contaminate such doctrine. The respondent considers that there is general acceptance by attendees that Khalid is a 'holy man' with a mission, and therefore has the necessary credibility to bring forth the 'authentic' position of Islam on this subject. Given the nature of Khalid's writing and his approach to the subject of Islamic Environmentalism which Foltz opines excludes cultural influences (2006a: 859-860), it is therefore not surprising for such a view by a respondent to be expressed.

#### **4.7 Sufism and Environmentalism**

In many world religions, including Islam, humanity takes a special place in the world over and above all other living beings. This hierarchical stratification between humanity's special position and that of the non-human world characterises Islam's soft anthropocentric character (Afrasiabi 2006: 874).

Nature's beauty and its interconnectedness are central to the philosophical discourse in Islam that expounds the unity of being (*tasawwuf*) from which Sufism has grown. Sufism, which is a mystical expression of such philosophy, and viewed simply as the sciences and methodologies for the purification of the heart that have arisen within the context of Islam, has been employed for centuries to enable a personal transformation (Afzaal 2006). Sufism appears to be an important approach for both IFEES and LINE to contextualise (by way of spiritual means inherent in the resources therein) the importance of nature in humanity's relationship to God.

As many have argued, including Khalid, Islam in this day and age, has been reduced to the performance of religious rituals (Khalid 2005: 96), and it is now maybe opportune for the infusion of spirituality to be breathed back into the practice of Islam, albeit for the sake of protecting the environment; and Sufism seems to be an obvious channel by which this is to be done.

Khalid and many other Islamic scholars have made a number of references to Sufi resources such as poems, and Sufi writings on nature and how it interrelates to God (Khalid 2005: 90, Nasr 2003). In particular, Khalid's employment of the symbolic messages of the Quran to 'awaken' the Muslims in his courses and workshops is similar to the concept of awakening that is consistently employed in Sufism. Ahmed Afzaal (2006: 1606) supports the notion that Sufism has the potential of becoming the prime driver of environmentalism in Islam because, in its aspiration to seek intimacy with the Divine, it reveres nature, cultivating and assigning it as sacred and of intrinsic value as God's creation.

The description of the relationship between nature, humanity and God in spiritual terms is not limited to Sufism. In fact it can be seen across most religious traditions and culture, as evident in much of art, poetry and literature (Nasr 1973: 43). Although Sufism might have a unique means by which to express this relationship, and may have indeed been a pioneer to and major influence over how such art, poetry and literature might have developed elsewhere, the important point to note is that this spiritual expression can be and is appreciated beyond the strict confines of the Muslim community. It therefore creates a means by which to IFEES and LINE can gain currency with non-Muslims in explaining what Islamic environmentalism is all about.

However, although Sufi philosophy might play an important role in articulating nature's value, it has limitations as being the sole basis upon which to reach out to the Muslim community at large. As with mystical traditions in all religions, the pursuit of unification with the divine brings the rigorous demands of asceticism and contemplation, abandonment of materialism and of the self. This sometimes places a limit on its overall appeal. There are also many Sufis who cannot be categorized as fitting the peace-loving mould expected of an environmentally friendly order (Trimingham 1998: 123). Sufism has also been deeply political. During the period of regressive 'Islamisation' led by Pakistan's military rulers in the late 1970s and '80s, the words of local Sufi poets such as Bulleh Shah (1680-1758) became a source of resistance (Wikipedia 2007).

There is no suggestion from the literature or from the interviews that the association with Sufism might involve the courting of more radical elements of Sufi philosophy. Arguably, there is little to be gained by making any link beyond that which is needed to help shore up the cause of environmentalism for these two case-study organisations. As with any exercise of choice, there are hazards associated with any choice that be managed carefully.

#### **4.8 The Development of Alliances**

These case-study organizations clearly rely on a number of alliances to deliver their vision and objectives. For example, scientists and other subject matter experts work hand in hand with religious scholars and IFEES (whose role would be to articulate the Islamic viewpoint), in order to help propose a workable solution to mitigate against the environmental crisis. Environmental organizations of different faiths stand shoulder to shoulder, both to share in their knowledge and to lobby for change. Similarly, secular organizations such as WWF, Friends of the Earth, World Development Movement, and CARE International work with IFEES (and also LINE) on a number of projects and in the sharing of expertise. It might be said that the alliances make for strange bedfellows, given the difference in their underpinning ideology.

Notwithstanding, the aforementioned observations suggests that IFEES and LINE can play an interesting and important role as role models in helping to promote inter-faith co-operation and dialogue, not just as a means by which to engender greater social cohesion, but also to positively promote the protection of the natural environment.

## 4.9 The Role of Subject Matter Experts

The approach of IFEES to the environmental crisis and how it seeks to influence the debate within the Islamic circle of scholarship and its religious leadership suggests a reinvigoration of the role of subject matter experts to influence religious pronouncement on ethical behaviour.

Prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> century at which time the *Mu'tazilab* rationalists held influence over the caliphate, recognised subject matter experts in philosophy, architecture, mathematics or the natural and technical sciences, who could also demonstrate their knowledge and faith in Islam, were capable of influencing the determination of the ethical position of Islam for the subject matter under review (Aslan 2006). Thereafter, the dominance of the traditionalist scholars resulted in the role of the subject matter expert becoming limited to advising the religious scholar on the subject at hand to enable the latter or the religious council upon which the latter sits to exercise its sole responsibility to make a *fatwa* (Aslan 2006: 283).

Even till the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such pronouncements on the morality of scientific developments (say, such as in vitro fertilisation, genetic engineering and cloning) remained the exclusive domain of the religious scholars (Islamonline.Net 2008). But the environmental crisis gives rise to a distinct and unique challenge, in that there is much greater uncertainty as to its cause and impact, and much of the body of knowledge is captured not just in environmental scientific research but informed by the work of sociologists, economists and political scientists (Hussain 2007: 10, Llewellyn 2003: 223).

Perhaps therefore, there will naturally be a greater reliance on subject matter experts such as the organisations and its founder, who can transcend and mediate across the boundary between religion and the various disciplines in question (either on its own or with the assistance of other subject matter experts, whether Muslim or non-Muslim), to influence the determination of the moral philosophy that is to apply under the circumstances.

## 4.10 Selective Acceptance of Secular Science

There appears to be little doubt that these case-study organisations rely on the proclamation by secular science of the cause of say, global warming. This is demonstrated, for example, by the use of scientific data provided by agencies such as the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007).

But the purpose, morality and ethics underlying secular science is challenged by a key mentor of Khalid, namely Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who believes that there is a need to reclaim the methods and purpose of sacred science, as set out in his book titled *The Need for a Sacred Science* in 1993 (Nasr 1968, 1993). Sacred science derives its purpose and morality from the belief of the oneness of God, and the duty of humanity to serve in submission to God, which arguably is at odds with science that is built on a Cartesian world-view in which the centre of the universe and the quest for understanding is the welfare of humanity and not its Creator (*ibid*).

There is little evidence of any discourse in the literature of IFEES and LINE that looks to draw the line between what it is that can be accepted from



secular science and what it is that cannot be accepted as being in contradiction with the approach of sacred science, in discussing the ills and solutions of the environmental crisis. One could say that this is a very important point that needs to be articulated in order to ensure the credibility of the message and the basis upon which that message is to be believed, particular insofar as influencing Muslim communities. After all, research that applies the ethics and approach of sacred science might identify scientific data and form a prognosis along different lines of reasoning than research that relies solely on the approach of secular science.

#### 4.11 The Move Forward

Sir Hamilton Gibb (as cited by Haq 2001) says that it is a historical fact that 'Islam and its foundations is an integral part of Western society' and that Islam and Europe were 'nourished at the same springs'. To what extent Islam has contributed to the crisis (if any) and can contribute to its solutions are interesting questions that call upon Muslims' reflexivity (Ulrich Beck as cited by Arsel 2005) and critical thinking in order for them to take responsibility and empower themselves to own an Islamic idea on progress. This is an area where both IFEES and LINE can and has to a certain extent taken positions on.

The 'pickle of paradigm' that Khalid describes is the quandary that Muslims are in, in which they are overwhelmed by the influence of the dominant worldview, which makes it very difficult for them to live in the way that the Islamic faith has prescribed. In a world where the desire to be on the prescribed right path is wrought with challenges, his reply was simply, 'we do what we can, and trust in the Almighty'. Fatalism, that is characteristic of a Muslim's submission to his Creator, when coupled with pro-activity, has instead brought hope for these organisations that things may change.

Living in an era of globalisation, in particular with the threat of the environmental crisis, has placed pressure on religious communities 'to identify and clarify their particular place in the world by facilitating practical problem and challenges' (Beckford 2003: 115). Such a task presents an opportunity for such communities to extend their outreach to all parts of the world. As quoted by Beckford, 'Religions even enjoy new forms of appeal under global conditions' (*ibid*). Globalisation, in its failure of science to provide answers after the creation of calamity without proper accountability, some scholars might argue 'gives interesting opportunities for the deployment of metaphysical and teleological argument' (Beckford 2003: 117).

The call for religions to contribute positively to mitigating the crisis, the failure of science to provide solutions, the failure of development to find true progress, and the support that IFEES and LINE has managed to obtain from their stakeholders (whether governments, faith-based and other organisations, or otherwise) have all helped both organisations boost their influence and profile, which in turn has given them the opportunity to make a difference. The challenge to IFEES and LINE will be whether such opportunity can be fully seized, given the boundary conditions upon which each of these organisations operates.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

Mary Evelyn Tucker asserts that religions ‘have always helped to shape civilizations and cultures through their stories, symbols, rituals and ethics’ (as cited in UNESCO 2007: 4). Faith-based traditions add a broader, deeper and necessary dimension to the usually more technical and pragmatic focus of sustainable development (*ibid*). This paper seeks to promote a better understanding of how Islamic-based environmental organisations can potentially play a positive role in promoting the conservation and protection of the natural environment. This understanding could serve to underscore the importance of the role that religions are now required to play to ‘assist in the great transition to a future of the species’ (as cited in UNESCO 2007: 4).

The research carried out for this paper on the various aspects of these case-study organizations clearly reveals a committed vision to contribute to the protection and conservation of the natural environment. Their vision, beliefs, objectives and activities are premised on an unflappable commitment to the religion of Islam and a social justice agenda that might best be described as being aligned to the social green movement, that is supported by a rich vein of religious resources. This combination of key drivers could suggest that their prime focus is to take on the prevailing economic paradigm that they believe is the main cause of the environmental crisis. However, closer scrutiny suggests that their approach is multifold. The focus on spirituality through Sufism and other means of reflection, the recognition of the importance of co-operation across faiths and other disciplines, the substantial focus on increasing awareness and education, the desire to popularize and modernize past conservation practices, and the willingness to embrace plurality under the spirit of the oneness of God, suggests a level of pragmatism, tolerance and acceptance that the environmental cause must be fought, not just on the ideological battleground, but by securing the hearts and minds of those that matter, through influence, co-operation and by example.

Taking into account the primary and secondary data for this research, and the discussion and analysis thereof in the preceding chapter, it is opined that these Islamic-based environmentalist organisations have the following roles to play:-

1. These organisations are able to bring to Muslims communities, a better understanding of the environmental crisis, how it is to be abated, and what Islam’s position is with regard’s to humanity’s duty towards nature. They can do so, utilising the relevant organisation networks which include religious leaders, scholars and *Imams*, by a number of means, including using the language of Islamic spirituality, in particular Sufism, and by bringing to light the long traditions of Islamic conservation practices as demonstrative of the importance Islam pays to the care of the natural environment.
2. They can help spearhead communal introspection and self-criticism within Muslim communities, and their religious and political hierarchies, in order to better understand culpability and the root causes, and to help galvanise momentum to react to and address these causes.

3. By engaging with the organisational networks within Muslim communities, they can help encourage the re-think of the social justice priorities in Islam, in particular by helping to increase awareness that the addressing of the environmental crisis has greater urgency and requires a more holistic approach to problem-solving.
4. They can play the role of subject matter experts, or the repository for expert knowledge (by working, where necessary, with other bodies of expertise, whether Muslim or non-Muslim) across the various disciplines relevant to understanding the environmental crisis, so as to better advise and influence the way forward, particularly with respect to the forming of opinions on the ethical, moral and legal imperatives that should apply.
5. They can act as change champions, and role models to the communities and leaders that they wish to influence.
6. They can facilitate and initiate the discussion as to how Islamic ethics and law can be implemented and enforced to address the care for the natural environment. They can also help foster the accountability of the relevant authorities within Muslim communities to manage such implementation and enforcement (Llewellyn 2003: 221).
7. They can help promote Islamic conservation practices in a way that suits the circumstances of modern technology and living.
8. They can help promote social cohesion across society and its different stakeholders that is built on a shared understanding of the need to protect the natural environment.
9. They can contribute to the development of a range of environmental policy instruments that can be employed, in particular policies that merge command and control with moral suasion instruments (Common and Stagl 2005: 402-411).
10. They can help contribute to the improvement of the image of Islam, which although is not directly related to the protection of the natural environment, is a means by which the voice of Islam and its communities can truly be heard and considered in the context of the development of regional and global environmental initiatives (including the shaping of a global environmental governance framework) (Clapp and Dauvergne 2005: 81).
11. They can ensure that the Muslim global community, as a key stakeholder to the survival of this planet, is sufficiently represented and heard in the context of any initiatives to develop a shared moral language and global ethic to respond to the environmental challenge. To that end they can contribute to the creation or adoption of an alternative vision of progress and development, which might be capable of challenging the dominant view as to how best to tackle the environmental crisis.

Based on the above, it is clear that these organisations do potentially have a positive role to play in contributing to the necessary transformation of their stakeholders' attitudes and behaviour to promote the protection of the environment. Some of these roles are performed directly by the immediate activities of these organisations themselves. Others however are performed and delivered indirectly, and perhaps over a greater passage of time, by the

remoulding of certain relationships and the creation of other new, synergistic relationships across a number of difficult ideological and disciplinary boundaries.

Although many would say that religion indeed has a dark side (Ter Haar, 2006: 352), it has also historically succeeded in causing profound social transformation in many areas including those affecting the human condition. As a final remark, it is perhaps appropriate to recount the words of Roger S. Gottlieb, who states that ‘... part of the hallmark of religion is a prophetic challenge to conventional social standards’ (2006: 13).

Given the gravity and urgency of the challenge of the environmental crisis including the threat of global insecurity that could lead to conflicts, it is argued that it is critical that these organisations play a role in re-awakening their stakeholder communities into action and a re-evaluation of their priorities. This must include an effort to foster better understanding and cooperation within faith-based and other environmental networks to bring about cohesion and a communal spirit that can engender a viable force to help secure a sustainable future. It is for the above reasons that the efforts of organizations like LINE and IFEEES must be recognized, appreciated and supported.

(Word count: 17,419 Words)

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## Annex 1 - Guardian of the Natural Order (Full Extract)

In our eagerness to 'progress' and 'develop' we have lost sight of the finite and delicate nature of planet Earth and of humanity's place in it. Islamic teaching offers an opportunity to understand the natural order and to define human responsibility. It could be said that the limits of the human condition are set within four principles - *Tawbeed*, *Fitra*, *Mizan* and *Khalifa*.

*Tawbeed* is the fundamental statement of the oneness of the Creator, from which everything else follows. It is the primordial testimony to the unity of all creation and to the interlocking grid of the natural order of which humanity is an intrinsic part. God says of Himself in the Qur'an:

*Say; He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge 112: 1-2*

and about creation:

*To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth, all obey his will*

*And it is He who originates creation,... 30: 25*

The whole of creation - being the work of one Originator - works within one stable pattern, however complex it may be. Another verse in the Qur'an refers to the heavens and the Earth as extensions of God's throne, thus conveying the idea that creation was designed to function as a whole. Each of its complimentary parts, including humankind, plays its own self-preserving role, and in so doing supports the rest.

The *Fitra* describes the primordial nature of creation itself and locates humankind in it. The Qur'an says:

*So set thy face to the religion, a man of pure faith - God's original upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right religion; but most men know it not - 30: 29*

God originates humankind within His creation, which He also originated. Humanity is then inescapably subject to God's immutable laws, as is the rest of creation. Creation cannot be changed: global warming can be seen, in this light, as the Earth's endeavour to maintain a balance in the face of the human assault against it.

The *Mizan* is the principle of the middle path. In one of its most eloquent passages the Qur'an describes creation thus:

*The All-Merciful has taught the Qur'an. He created man and He taught him the explanation. The sun and the moon to a reckoning, and the stars and trees bow themselves; and heaven - He raised it up and set the balance.*

*Transgress not in the balance, and weigh with justice, and skimp not in the balance. And earth - He set it down for all beings, therein fruits and palm trees with sheaths, and grain in the blade, and fragrant herbs.*

*Of which your Lord's bounties will you and you deny?*

The *Quran* 55: 1-12

God has singled out humans and taught them reason - the capacity to understand. All creation has an order and a purpose. If the sun, the moon, the

stars, the trees and the rest of creation did not conform to the natural laws - 'bow themselves' - it would be impossible for life to function on Earth. So we have a responsibility not to deny the 'Lord's bounties' and actively to recognize the order that is around us, for ourselves, as much as for the rest of creation.

*Khalifa* - or the role of stewardship - is the sacred duty God has ascribed to the human race. There are many verses in the *Quran* that describe human duties and responsibilities, such as the following which aptly summarizes humanity's role:

*It is He who has appointed you viceroys in the earth*

The *Quran* 6: 165

Humankind has a special place in God's scheme. We are more than friends of the Earth - we are its guardians. Although we are equal partners with everything else in the natural world we have added responsibilities. We are decidedly not its lords and masters.

We may deduce from these four principles that creation, although quite complex and yet finite, only works because each of its component parts does what is expected of it - in the language of the *Quran*, submits to the Creator. Humanity is inextricably part of this pattern. The role of humans - who uniquely have wills of their own and are thus capable of interfering with the pattern of creation - is of guardianship. This added responsibility imposes limits on their behaviour and should lead to conscious recognition of their own fragility. They achieve this by submitting themselves to the divine law.

Until quite recently the human race - both rebels and conformists, the ignorant and the enlightened, whether in small self-governing communities or vast empires, barbarian tribes or points of high civilization - functioned unconsciously within natural, unwritten boundaries. It had an intuitive disposition to live within the *Fitra*, though this was only achieved by conscious recognition of the existence of a superior force, the divine. This was an existential reality, neither idyllic nor utopian.

We are clearly no longer functioning within these limits. Two events in 16th and 17th century Europe allowed the human species to break free from the natural patterning of which it had always been part. One was the appearance of the Cartesian worldview, which propounded a dualism that separated mind and matter and allowed for the development of science on purely mechanistic lines. Cartesian skepticism brushed aside the accumulated wisdom of the ages and sowed the seeds of doubt. From then on humanity began to worship itself: in Descartes' own words humans were 'lords and masters of creation'. They now had reason on their side to support them in their acts of predation. This period also saw the laying of the foundations of the banking system to which we are all now in thrall.

Bankers have, in Islamic terms, sabotaged the *Mizan* of creation by not only charging interest but by doing so on money which they create endlessly out of nothing.

This explosion of artificial wealth provides the illusion of economic dynamism: but in reality it is parasitic. Endless credit devours the finite *Fitra*. If kept up, this would eventually result in the Earth looking like the surface of the moon. People who lived in the pre-Cartesian dimension, that was before we

were told that nature was there to be plundered, were basically no different from us. They had the same positive and negative human attributes, but the results of human profligacy were contained by the natural order of things, which transcended technological and political sophistication and even religious disposition. Excess in the natural order was contained because it was biodegradable. When old civilizations, however opulent, profligate, greedy, or brutal died, the forest just grew over them. The pollutants, damaging poisons or nuclear waste. By contrast, and assuming we survive as a species, archaeologists excavating our present rampant civilization are going to have one or two problems...

The *Qurānic* references are from *The Koran* as interpreted by A. J. Arberry, 1983. The World Classics Series, Oxford University Press.

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