

Islamic perspectives on environmental conservation with comparative insights from other religions

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Abstract. Kurniawati B, Pramadaningtyas PS, Wahyuningsih NI, Wijaya DS. 2025. *Islamic perspectives on environmental conservation with comparative insights from other religions*. *Dakwah & Islamic Outreach* 1: 1-14. This article explores Islamic environmental ethics in conversation with comparative religious perspectives to construct an interfaith framework for ecological responsibility. Grounded in the Qur'anic principles of *tawhīd*, *khalāfah*, *amānah*, and *ḥifz al-bi'ah*, the study examines how Islam offers a holistic ecological worldview, further enriched by classical jurisprudence and prophetic practices. It also draws from the ecological wisdom embedded in Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, revealing shared values such as stewardship, reverence for life, and moral restraint. These convergences suggest the possibility of interfaith collaboration in facing climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental injustice. The article analyzes theological and institutional challenges to interreligious engagement and highlights the strategic role of Islam in leading global religious ecology. Finally, it emphasizes the implications for *da'wah* and Islamic education, calling for a revival of eco-theology through spiritual formation, educational reform, and grassroots activism. By integrating environmental ethics into Islamic outreach and pedagogy, this study positions Islam not only as a faith of divine transcendence, but as a living tradition of ecological responsibility.

Keywords: Da'wah, eco-theology, interfaith ecology, comparative religion, *fiqh al-bi'ah*, Islamic environmental ethics, religious stewardship

INTRODUCTION

The rapid intensification of environmental degradation in the 21st century has revealed the limitations of conventional, technocratic solutions (Albert 2020). Despite international treaties, scientific advances, and sustainability efforts, ecological destruction manifested in deforestation, biodiversity loss, climate disruption, and pollution continues unabated (Steffen et al. 2015; IPBES 2019). This suggests that the crisis is not merely ecological or economic, but deeply ethical and spiritual. Central to this crisis is a dominant worldview that reduces nature to a resource, commodified and exploited without reverence. In contrast, religion historically marginalized in ecological discourse offers a corrective vision rooted in sacredness, responsibility, and moral order (Thamrin 2019; Palmer and Finlay 2003).

Religions shape how people perceive and interact with the natural world (Ives and Kidwell 2019). The rise of eco-theology across traditions shows that faith-based ethics can critique anthropocentrism and offer healing alternatives. Islam, in particular, provides a rich theological foundation through its concepts of *tauḥīd* (divine unity), *khalāfah* (stewardship), and *amānah* (trust). These concepts position humans not as owners, but as trustees of Earth, accountable to God. However, Islam is not alone in articulating ecological responsibility. Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism also preserve

environmental wisdom grounded in spiritual cosmologies and moral frameworks (Gade 2019). This shared concern presents an opportunity for interreligious dialogue and collaboration on ecological stewardship.

Within Islamic thought, the environment is not inert matter but a sign (*āyah*) of divine presence. The Qur'an asserts that all creation praises God and that human beings are appointed *khalīfah* to uphold *mīzān* (balance) and prevent *fasād* (corruption) (Q.S Al-An'am[6]: 165; Q.S Ar-Rahman[55]: 7-9). Islamic jurisprudence elaborates these values through the framework of *fiqh al-bi'ah*, emphasizing moderation (*wasatiyyah*), prohibition of waste (*isrāf*), and preservation of public interest (*maṣlaḥah*) ('Izz al-Din 2000; Kamali 2010). These principles are not only spiritual ideals but practical norms applicable to individual behavior, social structures, and policy-making.

Nevertheless, while Islamic sources provide a strong internal ethic, engagement with other faith traditions on ecological issues remains limited (Abdelzaher et al. 2019). In an increasingly pluralistic and ecologically imperiled world, comparative religious ethics is urgently needed. This article therefore proposes that the Islamic approach can be strengthened not diluted by learning from and dialoguing with other traditions. This includes acknowledging shared moral insights while preserving the distinctiveness of Islamic teachings.

For example, Christianity emphasizes stewardship derived from the imago Dei, while Hinduism promotes

cosmic balance through *Dharma* and *Tri Hita Karana* (Dwivedi 2000; Hitzhusen and Tucker 2013). Taoism and Confucianism offer principles like *Wu Wei* (non-coercive action) and *Li* (ritual propriety) that cultivate harmony with nature (Tucker and Berthrong 1998). Buddhism's ethic of *Ahimsa* (non-harm) and interdependence promotes minimalist, compassionate living (Kaza and Kraft 2000). While their metaphysical frameworks differ, these traditions converge on the imperatives of reverence, restraint, and relational responsibility toward nature.

This comparative approach serves multiple aims. First, it reaffirms the universality and moral authority of Islam in responding to ecological crisis. Second, it offers a platform for interfaith ecological cooperation, essential in facing global environmental challenges that transcend religious and cultural boundaries. Third, it enhances the relevance of Islamic outreach (*da'wah*), framing environmental ethics as a vital component of religious engagement in today's world.

Accordingly, this article is organized into several sections. It begins with the theological foundations of environmental ethics across religions, then focuses on Islamic ecological ethics in doctrinal and jurisprudential dimensions. The following sections examine comparative insights from Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, before turning to interfaith collaboration and the potential for Islamic leadership in global religious environmentalism. Through this dialogical yet principled approach, the article aims to contribute to both academic discourse and practical initiatives that link faith, ethics, and the future of the Earth.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Religion and the sacredness of nature

Throughout history, religions have offered not only metaphysical explanations of the cosmos but also ethical frameworks that regulate how humans should interact with the natural world (Coward 2003). Central to many religious worldviews is the conviction that nature is sacred, imbued with divine presence or purpose, and therefore deserving of reverence, respect, and protection (Armstrong 2022). In monotheistic traditions, such as Islam and Christianity, nature is viewed as the creation of God, functioning both as a resource and as a revelation a set of signs (*āyāt*) that point to the majesty and unity of the Creator (Foltz 2013; Remikatu 2020). The Qur'an, for instance, repeatedly calls upon believers to reflect upon the heavens, the earth, the rain, the mountains, and the diversity of species as manifestations of God's wisdom and mercy (Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]: 164; Q.S An-Nahl[16]: 10-11; Q.S An-Nur[24]: 45). Likewise, the Psalms proclaim, *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it* (Psalm[24]: 1), affirming divine ownership over all of creation and implying a duty of care among human stewards.

This sense of sacredness, however, is not limited to Abrahamic faiths. In Hindu cosmology, the entire universe is seen as pervaded by the divine (*Brahman*), and every

element of nature trees, rivers, mountains, animals may be associated with specific deities or spiritual energies (Dwivedi 2000). The Balinese Hindu concept of *Tri Hita Karana*, for example, links environmental harmony with harmonious relationships between humans and God (*parhyangan*), humans and other humans (*pawongan*), and humans with nature (*palemahan*) (Sukayana and Putri et al. 2019). Similarly, Taoism teaches that nature is governed by the Tao the cosmic principle of order and balance and that humans must live in harmony with this flow rather than attempt to dominate it. The Tao Te Ching states, *Man follows the earth. Earth follows heaven. Heaven follows the Tao. The Tao follows what is natural* (Tao Te Ching, Chapter 25), suggesting a cosmic hierarchy in which nature occupies an essential, law-bound place (Chen et al. 2020).

Such theological affirmations of nature's sanctity carry profound ethical implications (Kellert and Farnham 2013). If nature is sacred either as divine creation, divine presence, or the very expression of the cosmic order then harming it constitutes not merely a physical or legal violation, but a moral and spiritual transgression. This view contrasts sharply with anthropocentric paradigms that reduce the environment to a set of utilitarian resources to be exploited at will. By framing the environment as a sacred trust, religion reorients human-nature relations from domination to stewardship, from consumption to contemplation (Gottlieb 2003). It cultivates virtues such as humility, gratitude, responsibility, and restraint virtues that are essential for any meaningful environmental ethic (Nasr 1996; Palmer and Finlay 2003). Moreover, it grounds ecological action not merely in rational calculation or economic benefit, but in a sense of divine accountability and eternal consequence.

In sum, religious traditions, despite their theological diversity, converge on a key premise: that nature is not neutral (Thoha 2005). It is not inert or meaningless, but rather imbued with moral and spiritual significance. This shared recognition across faiths provides fertile ground for a theologically rooted environmental ethic, one that can inform not only personal virtue but also public policy, community action, and interfaith dialogue on ecological sustainability. As we shall see in the subsequent sections, the Islamic tradition embodies this sacral view of nature in distinctive ways that are both theologically grounded and pragmatically applicable in the face of today's ecological crises.

The role of human agency in ecological crisis

One of the central insights of religious environmental ethics is the acknowledgment of human agency our unique capacity to shape, protect, or destroy the natural world as both a blessing and a profound responsibility (Kellert and Farnham 2013). While modern science and policy often diagnose environmental crises in terms of emissions, land-use change, or industrial systems, religion offers a complementary perspective by tracing these crises back to moral failings and distorted worldviews (Prihwanto et al. 2021). Human greed, arrogance, heedlessness (*ghaflah*), and lack of gratitude are seen not only as personal vices but as societal tendencies that fuel environmental destruction

(‘Izz al-Din 2000). In the Islamic tradition, such attitudes are symptomatic of a deeper ontological error: forgetting that the Earth is not *mulk* (property) but *amānah* (a trust), and that humans are not owners but stewards.

The Qur’an affirms this agency clearly. In Q.S Al-A’raf[7]: 56, God commands *Do not spread corruption in the land after it has been set in order*. Similarly, in Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41, it is stated *Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned, so that He may let them taste some of what they have done, that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]*. These verses encapsulate a key theological point environmental degradation is not an accident, but a direct result of human moral and behavioral choices. The language of *what the hands have earned* (*bimā kasabat aydīnās*) emphasizes human causality and accountability, while the hope that *they may return* (*la‘allahum yarji‘ūn*) implies that repentance and restoration are still possible (‘Izz al-Din 2000; Kamali 2010).

In this light, sin and ecological harm are often linked in religious thought. Christian theology has long associated the fall of humanity with the loss of paradise, a theme that resonates metaphorically with our current rupture from the natural world (Bouma-Prediger 2010). Buddhist and Jain traditions identify *trṣṇā* (craving) and *ahiṃsā* (nonviolence) as essential moral concerns, cautioning that unchecked desire leads to both personal suffering and environmental imbalance (Kaza and Kraft 2000). Likewise, Hindu teachings warn against *adharma*, or actions that violate cosmic harmony, and encourage restraint (*vairāgya*) as a spiritual discipline (Dwivedi 2000). Across traditions, the message is consistent that the ecological crisis is, at its core, a crisis of the human soul.

Understanding human agency in this way has several practical implications. First, it shifts the focus from technological fixes to transformations of character and consciousness. It calls for ethical cultivation through prayer, meditation, education, and community practice as the foundation of ecological action (Pudjiastuti 2025). Second, it frames environmental justice as a form of moral justice, thereby integrating ecological concerns into broader struggles for equity, compassion, and dignity. Finally, it insists that true environmental change begins within: in how we think, what we value, and how we relate to the Earth and its creatures. As Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si’*, “The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion” (Francis 2015) a sentiment deeply compatible with Islamic *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the self) and the prophetic model of humble stewardship (Hamid 2015).

In summary, religious traditions not only sacralize nature but also diagnose ecological harm as a moral consequence of human misconduct (Petrov and Rahman 2023). They remind us that the Earth responds to our actions sometimes with abundance, sometimes with disruption and that we, as moral agents, must restore our role as caretakers rather than exploiters (Le Duc 2023). This foundational insight prepares us to engage more deeply with how Islam, in particular, constructs a

comprehensive environmental ethic grounded in revelation, law, and ethical virtue.

Toward a moral-ecological framework in religious thought

As the previous sections have shown, Bergmann (2009) stated that religion provides a compelling lens through which environmental degradation can be understood not merely as an ecological malfunction but as a moral rupture a failure to fulfill humanity’s spiritual, ethical, and covenantal responsibilities toward creation. Yet the true power of religion lies not only in its critique of anthropocentric excess but in its ability to construct a positive, holistic framework for living ethically within the ecological order. A moral-ecological framework, when derived from religious worldviews, affirms that human beings are embedded within not above the web of life, and that all actions toward the environment carry not only material but spiritual consequences (Nasr 1996; Foltz 2003). Such a framework transcends instrumental approaches to sustainability by restoring *meaning* to environmental engagement situating it within the broader goals of justice, mercy, accountability, and cosmic balance.

Across religious traditions, certain common ethical themes emerge that form the pillars of this moral-ecological vision (Bible 2011, El-Sherbini et al. 2023). The first is the concept of stewardship, or trusteeship, whereby humans are not autonomous rulers but responsible caretakers of the Earth. This is most clearly articulated in the Islamic concept of *khilāfah*, but it finds resonance in the Christian notion of dominion as service (not domination), the Hindu principle of *Rta* (cosmic order), the Taoist ideal of harmony through non-intervention (*wu wei*), and the Buddhist ethic of non-harm (*ahimsa*) (Tucker and Grim 2001; Kaza 2000). The second theme is interconnectedness, which rejects the illusion of separateness and affirms that every being is interdependent. This is a core tenet in Eastern religions seen in *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) in Buddhism and the relational ontology of Confucianism and is echoed in Abrahamic calls to see nature as a living community of divine signs (*āyāt*) (‘Izz al-Din 2000; Chen et al. 2020). The third theme is restraint a call to limit consumption, control desires, and live in balance with nature, as exemplified in Islamic prohibitions against *isrāf* (waste), the Christian virtue of temperance, and the Taoist preference for simplicity.

What distinguishes a moral-ecological framework rooted in religion from secular environmental ethics is its teleological dimension its orientation toward ultimate ends, such as salvation, enlightenment, or spiritual flourishing (Marsuki 2009). Environmental action, in this view, is not only about mitigating harm or securing survival; it is an expression of obedience to divine will, a form of worship, or a step toward liberation (Palmer and Finlay 2003; Kearns 2011). This theocentric orientation grants depth and urgency to ecological behavior, turning it from mere compliance with rules into a sacred duty (Le Duc 2023). Furthermore, it embeds ecological ethics within a narrative of creation, fall, and redemption; of cosmic cycles; of

spiritual evolution that gives moral coherence to the human relationship with nature. In this way, religion supplies not only prescriptions but also stories, rituals, and identities that reinforce ecological values at both the individual and communal level.

Constructing a religiously grounded moral-ecological framework also allows for interfaith synergy. While theological details may differ, the ethical imperatives care, reverence, restraint, accountability are widely shared. This opens a space for collaboration across traditions in responding to global ecological threats. It also highlights the potential of religious institutions, leaders, and networks as agents of ecological transformation through education, advocacy, worship, and example (Tucker and Grim 2001; Francis 2015). For the Muslim world in particular, recovering and reactivating its ecological teachings through *fiqh al-bi'ah*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and prophetic practices can position Islam not only as a guardian of the Earth, but also as a vital contributor to a global moral ecology (Nadia and Hidayat 2023).

This chapter has outlined the theological and ethical ground upon which religious environmentalism stands. In the next chapter, we turn our focus to the Islamic tradition in greater depth, examining how its scripture, jurisprudence, and spiritual teachings construct an integrated and actionable ethic of environmental conservation.

ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND PRACTICES

Tauḥīd, *khilāfah*, and *amānah* in environmental thought

The Islamic worldview begins with *tauḥīd*, the uncompromising belief in the oneness of God (Al Mahmud 2023), which serves not only as the theological foundation of Islam but also as the axis around which all ethical, legal, and metaphysical principles revolve. In the context of environmental ethics, *tauḥīd* has profound implications. It establishes that all creation is interconnected under one divine reality, and that everything in the universe animate and inanimate is part of the cosmic order willed by Allah (Foltz 2003; Nasr 1996). This negates the idea that humans are independent actors with absolute autonomy over nature. Instead, *tauḥīd* calls believers to recognize that the environment is a manifestation of God's will, and harming it is akin to disrupting the signs (*āyāt*) of the Creator spread across the cosmos (Q.S Fussilat[41]: 53; Q.S Al-An'am[6]: 99). Through *tauḥīd*, nature becomes sacred not in a pantheistic sense, but as a reflection of divine wisdom, harmony, and balance (*mīzān*) (Q.S Ar-Rahman[55]: 7-9).

Flowing from this core theological principle is the ethical concept of *khilāfah* human vicegerency on Earth. The Qur'an states, *Indeed, I will make upon the earth a khalīfah*" (Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]: 30), affirming humanity's entrusted position not as owners (*mālik*), but as caretakers of the Earth. This stewardship is not symbolic but active: it entails responsibility, accountability, and justice in managing natural resources and ensuring the welfare of all creatures (Kamali 2010; 'Izz al-Din 2000). The concept of

khilāfah invites humans to act in alignment with the divine order, cultivating the Earth (*isti'mār*, see Q.S Hud[11]: 61) and refraining from corruption (*fasād*, see Q.S Al-A'raf[7]: 56; Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41). Unlike secular notions of stewardship that may be grounded in legal contracts or utilitarian ethics, *khilāfah* is a moral trust imbued with eschatological weight: every action has a consequence, and every misuse of creation may be called into account in the Hereafter.

Closely tied to this is the principle of *amānah* (trust), which frames the human-nature relationship within a covenantal ethic. The Qur'an mentions that the trust was offered to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but they declined; only humans accepted it (Q.S Al-Ahzab[33]: 72). This passage symbolizes the magnitude of human moral responsibility, including in relation to the environment. The trust (*amānah*) includes safeguarding life, honoring creation, and ensuring that resources are neither hoarded nor wasted (Q.S Al-Isra[17]: 27). In Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), this is supported by prohibitions against extravagance (*isrāf*), destruction (*itlāf*), and pollution (*najāsa*), as well as the promotion of communal welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and balance (*i'tidāl*) (Kamali 2010; Marfai 2019). These principles are not abstract ideals; they are to be applied in water usage, land cultivation, animal treatment, and all spheres of ecological engagement.

Taken together, *tauḥīd*, *khilāfah*, and *amānah* form a tripartite ethical structure that defines Islam's distinctive approach to environmental responsibility (Gada 2024). *Tauḥīd* situates nature within divine unity; *khilāfah* defines human duty within that unity; and *amānah* specifies the moral weight of that duty. This trinity provides not only a theological foundation but also a spiritual motivation to protect the Earth not merely for its utility, but because doing so is an act of worship (*'ibādah*) and obedience. In this sense, environmental care in Islam is not optional activism but a core expression of faith (*dīn*). As we explore in the following subsections, these foundational concepts are operationalized through concrete ethical norms, legal rulings, and prophetic practices that make Islamic environmentalism both principled and practical.

Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions on nature

The Qur'an integrates nature deeply into its spiritual and ethical discourse, with over 750 verses referencing elements of the natural world mountains, rivers, stars, animals, and plants. These are presented not as passive scenery but as *āyāt* (signs) of God, meant to inspire reflection, gratitude, and ethical conduct (Foltz 2003; 'Izz al-Din 2000). Scholars describe nature as *Al-Kitāb Al-Manshūr* (the *unfolded book*), a form of divine revelation complementary to the written Qur'an (*Al-Kitāb Al-Mastūr*) (Nasr 1996). Thus, environmental awareness is central to Islamic spirituality and theology.

A key Qur'anic concept is *mīzān* the balance that governs creation. Q.S Ar-Rahman[55]: 7-9) emphasizes this equilibrium and warns against its disruption *Do not transgress within the balance... do not make deficient the balance*. Violating this order through overconsumption,

pollution, or ecological harm is considered *zulm* (injustice), not only to nature but also to the divine order itself (Kamali 2010). The term *fasād* (corruption), frequently invoked in the Qur'an, often connotes environmental degradation. Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41 directly links human misconduct with ecological crisis *Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people's hands have earned...*

Nature, in the Qur'anic view, is also a worshipping community. Q.S Al-Isra[17]: 44 declares that *there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] with His praise*, even if humans cannot perceive it. This ascribes spiritual agency to the environment: animals, trees, and rivers are part of a sacred chorus glorifying God. To damage or exploit them unjustly is to violate this sanctified harmony.

The Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*) reinforce this ecological ethic with practical guidance. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) prohibited cutting trees during warfare, warned against water waste even beside a river, and denounced the killing of animals for sport (Abu Dawud; Al-Nasa'i). He emphasized compassion toward animals namely in one narration, a woman who starved a cat was condemned, while someone who gave water to a thirsty dog was forgiven (Sahih al-Bukhari). He also extolled tree-planting as a *ṣadaqah jāriyah* (ongoing charity), saying that any living being benefiting from a planted tree earns reward for the planter.

These sources establish that environmental protection is not an imported or peripheral concern in Islam, but a core ethical and theological commitment. The Qur'an and Sunnah frame nature as sacred, balanced, and alive with praise, and they task Muslims with stewardship grounded in reverence, moderation, and compassion. Environmental ethics, in this light, are not optional but integral to Islamic faith and practice (Al-Damkhi 2008). Muslims are called not only to observe creation but to safeguard it, as an act of devotion and responsibility toward God.

***Fiqh al-Bī'ah*: Juridical and ethical contributions**

Islamic environmental thought is not confined to abstract moral exhortations or spiritual metaphors. It has also produced a structured legal and ethical system for engaging with ecological issues, often termed *fiqh al-bī'ah* the jurisprudence of the environment. Rooted in the broader discipline of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and informed by sources such as the Qur'an, *ḥadīth*, consensus (*ijmā'*), analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), and public interest (*maṣlaḥah*), *fiqh al-bī'ah* represents an effort to articulate practical guidelines for the sustainable and just management of natural resources (Kamali 2010; 'Izz al-Din 2000). Unlike modern environmental law, which often focuses on regulation and punishment, *fiqh al-bī'ah* integrates environmental responsibility within a moral-religious framework, where care for the Earth is seen as part of worship (*'ibādah*) and moral accountability.

One of the foundational concepts in *fiqh al-bī'ah* is the prohibition of harm (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*), derived from a Prophetic saying: *"There should be no harm and no reciprocating harm."* This principle has been widely applied to issues such as pollution, resource depletion, and unjust land use. Activities that cause environmental

damage—whether to humans, animals, or ecosystems—are thus considered impermissible (*ḥarām*) if they violate the rights of others or disrupt the ecological balance. Additionally, the concept of public benefit (*al-maṣlaḥah al-'āmmah*) justifies the creation of policies that promote sustainability, protect biodiversity, and ensure equitable access to natural resources. Environmental protection is not a marginal concern but a legal obligation (*fard kifāyah*) when harm is widespread or systemic (Kamali 2010, Jufri et al. 2024).

Historically, Muslim societies developed institutions and legal rulings to support environmental ethics. The *ḥisbah* system, for example, was an early form of environmental oversight in the marketplace and public space, wherein *muḥtasibs* (market inspectors) would monitor issues such as water cleanliness, waste disposal, and animal welfare. Classical jurists also established zones of environmental protection, such as *ḥimā* (conservation areas) and *ḥarīm* (protected buffer zones around water sources), which served both ecological and social functions ('Izz al-Din 2000). These were early Islamic equivalents of modern protected areas or ecological reserves and were based on principles of equitable access and regeneration. Such examples demonstrate that *fiqh al-bī'ah* is not a modern invention but an evolving tradition with practical precedent.

Modern scholars have continued to expand this framework. Scholars like Mawil Izzī Dien and Mohammad Hashim Kamali have argued that the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) should include environmental protection as part of the goal to preserve life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), and religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) all of which are compromised by ecological collapse (Kamali 2010). There is also increasing attention to integrating *fiqh al-bī'ah* into modern policy frameworks, from urban planning and resource management to environmental impact assessments and climate action. Importantly, the revival of this discourse is not merely academic but aims to mobilize Muslim communities toward sustainable action, using tools that are both theologically authentic and contextually relevant.

Fiqh al-bī'ah thus bridges the spiritual and the structural. It takes the ethical imperatives of the Qur'an and Sunnah and transforms them into actionable norms, guiding behavior at individual, communal, and governmental levels. It affirms that environmental protection is not just an ethical preference or global obligation, but a Shar'ī duty a legal and religious responsibility for which Muslims are accountable before God. In an era of ecological crisis, recovering and revitalizing *fiqh al-bī'ah* is a necessary step in restoring the balance (*mīzān*) that lies at the heart of both the Earth and the Islamic tradition.

Integration of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* with ecological aims

The framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, or the higher objectives of Islamic law, offers a dynamic and adaptable foundation for engaging contemporary ethical challenges, including environmental degradation. Traditionally, *maqāṣid* are categorized into five core aims: the protection

of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-‘aql*), progeny (*ḥifẓ al-naṣl*), and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) (Al-Ghazālī, 11th century; Al-Shāṭibī, 14th century). Contemporary scholars have argued that this framework must evolve to include additional dimensions, such as the protection of environment (*ḥifẓ al-bī‘ah*), on the basis that environmental collapse threatens the fulfillment of all five traditional aims (Kamali 2010; Auda 2008). In this light, ecology is not an external domain but an internal necessity for the preservation of divine purposes.

The integration of environmental concerns within *maqāṣid* reasoning can be observed across all five objectives. First, *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (protection of life) is directly compromised by pollution, water scarcity, climate change, and biodiversity loss conditions that lead to disease, famine, displacement, and mortality. Environmental protection, therefore, is essential for upholding this primary *maqṣad*. Second, *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of wealth) includes not only individual assets but also communal resources and public goods. The degradation of agricultural land, fisheries, forests, and water systems undermines long-term economic sustainability and social welfare, especially among the poor (Foltz 2003).

Third, *ḥifẓ al-naṣl* (protection of progeny) relates not only to family lineage but to the intergenerational responsibility of leaving a habitable and fertile planet for future generations. This aligns with the Qur’anic vision of the Earth as an inheritance (*mīrāth*) and a testing ground for human trusteeship (Q.S Al-An‘am[6]:165; Q.S Al-Qasas[28]: 77). Fourth, *ḥifẓ al-‘aql* (protection of intellect) includes the development of ethical reasoning and awareness. Ecological literacy, environmental education, and scientific inquiry into climate systems and ecological balance are thus part of a holistic preservation of intellect in the service of justice and sustainability (Auda 2008). Fifth, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of religion) is also affected, since environmental degradation disrupts religious practice whether through natural disasters, pollution of sacred spaces, or the inability to access clean water for ablution and ritual purity.

By explicitly including *ḥifẓ al-bī‘ah* (preservation of the environment) within the *maqāṣid* paradigm, Islamic ethics gains a normative tool that can guide policy, education, and jurisprudence. It allows scholars and practitioners to issue *fatwas*, design governance frameworks, and formulate environmental advocacy with deeper theological legitimacy. Moreover, this integration opens the path for interfaith and international collaboration, as it aligns Islamic legal theory with global ethical standards such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while retaining its unique spiritual foundations (Khan and Haneef 2022).

Importantly, the revival of *maqāṣid*-based environmental reasoning can energize Islamic outreach (*da‘wah*) and education, particularly among youth and urban Muslim populations who are increasingly engaged with issues of climate justice, food ethics, and sustainable living. Teaching ecology as part of the objectives of Islamic law reinforces the message that faith is not separate from sustainability, and that caring for the Earth is a divine

imperative, not a modern trend. It also strengthens the public role of Islamic institutions mosques, schools, waqf (endowments), and community leaders—as agents of ecological transformation rooted in sacred law.

In sum, *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* offers a powerful bridge between Islamic tradition and ecological ethics. By recognizing the preservation of the environment as a sixth *maqṣad*, Muslim scholars and communities are better equipped to address one of the most urgent crises of our time not as outsiders to the environmental discourse, but as bearers of a rich and proactive ecological legacy grounded in the principles of justice, mercy, and balance (*‘adl, raḥmah, mīzān*).

Environmental practices in islamic outreach (Da‘wah)

Islamic outreach (*da‘wah*) traditionally aims to guide individuals and communities toward spiritual awareness, ethical conduct, and social harmony in line with Islamic teachings. In recent decades, however, the urgency of the environmental crisis has prompted a broader understanding of *da‘wah* one that includes ecological awareness and responsibility. This aligns with the holistic nature of *da‘wah*, which encompasses not only conveying religious doctrines (*tablīgh*) but also embodying Islamic values through wise counsel (*ḥikmah*) and righteous action (*‘amal ṣāliḥ*) (Kamali 2010). In this context, environmental engagement becomes *da‘wah bi al-ḥāl* preaching by example and demonstrates Islam’s relevance to global sustainability challenges (Prajā and Muslih 2021).

The Qur’an repeatedly affirms that the Earth is a divine sign, reflecting God’s mercy and creative power (Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]: 164; Q.S Al-Jatsiyah[45]: 3-5). Integrating this cosmological vision into *da‘wah* repositions environmental discourse from a purely technical issue to a moral and theological responsibility. Concepts such as *tauḥīd* (divine unity), *khilāfah* (stewardship), and *amānah* (trust) offer powerful ethical foundations for encouraging environmental behavior. When recycling, water conservation, or sustainable living are framed as acts of *ibādah* (worship) and expressions of *shukr* (gratitude), they resonate more deeply with Muslim audiences (Nasr 1996; Auda 2008).

Several practical avenues exist for incorporating environmental ethics into *da‘wah*. Mosques can serve as green models by adopting water-saving technologies, reducing waste, or cultivating biodiversity on their grounds. Imams and preachers can include environmental themes in Friday sermons, using Qur’anic verses and ḥadīth to highlight ecological concerns. Religious educators can teach that caring for nature is part of broader Islamic values such as *raḥmah* (compassion), *wasatiyyah* (moderation), and *maṣlahah* (public welfare). Youth groups can organize eco-friendly initiatives tree planting, clean-up drives, or sustainability workshops within an Islamic ethical framework.

Importantly, *da‘wah* in the environmental domain also opens space for interfaith collaboration. Environmental issues transcend religious boundaries, offering shared ethical ground for cooperation. Muslim communities can partner with other religious or civil organizations on

ecological education, green infrastructure, or sustainable consumption campaigns. Such interreligious *da'wah* is not about theological compromise, but constructive engagement affirming Islamic identity while contributing to a global ecological ethic (Tucker and Grim 2001).

In essence, integrating environmental stewardship into Islamic outreach transforms *da'wah* into a forward-looking mission. It revitalizes the prophetic model teaching through mercy, action, and relevance and encourages Muslims to become ethical leaders in the face of ecological collapse. In a world plagued by environmental degradation and moral fragmentation, *da'wah* that speaks to both the Earth and the soul offers a powerful, faithful witness (Anshori and Pohl 2022).

Reviving islamic ecotheology in the anthropocene era

The dawn of the Anthropocene a proposed epoch in which human activity has become the dominant influence on Earth's geology and ecosystems presents profound challenges to religious traditions. For Islam, this era is not merely a test of environmental policy but a theological turning point that demands the revitalization of its ecotheological heritage. Islamic ecotheology, broadly defined, explores the relationship between God, humanity, and the natural world. It insists that nature is not inert matter, but a domain saturated with divine signs (*āyāt*), purpose, and ethical implications. In an age marked by ecological collapse, climate injustice, and spiritual alienation, reviving this theology is both a moral and existential necessity (Nasr 1996; Foltz 2003).

Historically, Islamic thought integrated cosmology, spirituality, and natural observation into a unified vision of the universe (Khan 2024). Classical scholars such as Al-Rāzī, Al-Ghazālī, and Ibn al-ʿArabī saw the natural world as a mirror of divine attributes and a pathway to knowledge (*ma'rifah*). The Qur'an's rich ecological language was not allegorical alone it affirmed the ontological status of nature as a sign of God's will and wisdom. Yet, with the onset of colonial modernity and the fragmentation of Islamic education systems, much of this cosmological imagination was marginalized. The result was a separation of religious piety from environmental consciousness, and a retreat from nature as a site of theological reflection.

Reviving Islamic ecotheology in the Anthropocene begins by reintegrating Qur'anic cosmology into ethical discourse and education. Nature must once again be taught not as a passive resource but as a revelatory field—alive with meaning, rights, and responsibilities. The Qur'anic notion of *mīzān* (balance), for instance, is not just ecological equilibrium but a moral principle that governs all interactions. Similarly, *tasbīḥ* (praise of God by all beings) challenges anthropocentric views of sentience and invites a posture of reverence, not dominance. This theological grammar already embedded in the Qur'an—needs to be re-activated through curricula, sermons, spiritual practices, and public dialogue (Kamali 2010; Auda 2008).

The Anthropocene also forces a reckoning with climate injustice, where those least responsible for environmental damage—often Muslim-majority regions in the Global

South bear the brunt of its consequences. Reviving ecotheology thus entails a commitment to eco-justice, rooted in Islamic imperatives of justice (*ʿadl*), mercy (*raḥmah*), and collective welfare (*maṣlahah*). This includes critiquing systems of economic exploitation, consumer excess, and fossil-fueled development that violate both the Earth and the poor. In this context, Islamic ecotheology can function as a form of resistance and ethical renewal, reasserting the sacredness of creation against forces of commodification and destruction (Fazlhashemi 2025).

Moreover, a revived ecotheology must engage spirituality as an ecological force. The Prophetic model marked by humility, simplicity, gratitude, and deep communion with animals, plants, and landscapes offers not only precedent but inspiration for living sustainably. Practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance), fasting, and *ḥalāl*-based consumption become ecological disciplines when seen through a theocentric lens. Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) in particular offers rich symbolic tools to deepen eco-consciousness, reminding us that true dominion lies in mastering the self, not nature (Ag 2023).

Finally, Islamic ecotheology must speak to hope and eschatology. While the Qur'an warns of destruction (*fasād*) and human arrogance, it also promises renewal, forgiveness, and the possibility of *islāḥ* eparation. The Anthropocene need not culminate in despair; it may catalyze a spiritual reawakening, in which the Muslim community reclaims its role as *khalīfah*, cultivator, and healer of the Earth. In doing so, Islam can contribute not only to environmental repair but to the ethical and theological foundations of planetary healing.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER RELIGIONS

Christianity

Christianity, as one of the world's largest religions with a significant global environmental footprint, has undergone a notable ecological reawakening over the past several decades. This revival has been shaped by both theological reflection and environmental necessity, giving rise to what is now broadly referred to as Christian eco-theology. At the heart of this framework lies the concept of theological stewardship, which holds that the Earth, as God's creation, is not to be exploited but cared for as a sacred trust. This idea is deeply embedded in the Genesis narrative, where humanity is created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and is commanded to *till and keep* the Garden (Genesis[2]: 15). The *imago Dei* has been reinterpreted by many Christian theologians not as license for domination, but as a model for responsible care, justice, and relational harmony with creation (Hobson 2019).

Historically, Christianity has been critiqued most notably by Lynn White Jr. for contributing to environmental degradation through an anthropocentric worldview that placed humans above nature (White 1967). However, more recent theological developments have challenged this reading by emphasizing interdependence, humility, and ecological justice. The writings of

ecotheologians such as Sallie McFague, Leonardo Boff, and Pope Francis emphasize that creation is not merely a backdrop for salvation history but a participant in God's redemptive work. Pope Francis' landmark encyclical *Laudato Si'* (Francis 2015) is a prime example of this transformation. It calls for an integral ecology that connects environmental health with social justice, economic equity, and spiritual wellbeing. The encyclical urges the faithful to recognize "our common home" as a shared inheritance and to resist the "throwaway culture" that commodifies both people and nature.

Biblically, Christian environmentalism draws strength from both the Old and New Testaments. The Psalms are filled with imagery of nature praising God: "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands*" (Psalm 19:1). The Hebrew prophets often linked ecological destruction with social sin, warning that injustice toward the poor and idolatry would lead to environmental ruin (e.g., Isaiah[24]: 5). In the New Testament, Christ's parables often center on seeds, soil, trees, and harvests, reinforcing the pedagogical role of nature. Moreover, the vision of the *New Creation* in Romans 8 and Revelation 21 depicts not the destruction of Earth but its renewal and restoration.

Christian denominations have responded in diverse ways to these theological insights. The World Council of Churches has declared ecological care a gospel imperative. Many Protestant and Catholic communities have embraced Creation Care ministries, green churches, and faith-based climate advocacy. Christian environmental NGOs such as A Rocha and interfaith platforms like the *GreenFaith* network exemplify this engagement. Notably, many Christian leaders now speak of ecological sin and advocate for climate justice, especially for vulnerable populations in the Global South.

Theologically and practically, then, Christianity shares common ground with Islam in affirming that the Earth is a divine trust, that humans are accountable for its care, and that ecological responsibility is inseparable from faith. This alignment opens space for interfaith cooperation in environmental ethics and education, particularly in pluralistic societies where both traditions coexist. For Muslims engaging in *da'wah* or ecological activism, understanding Christian perspectives can enhance dialogue, mutual respect, and joint stewardship of shared ecosystems.

Hinduism (Balinese Tradition)

Balinese Hinduism presents a spiritually rich and cosmocentric perspective on nature, exemplified through the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*. This philosophy articulates harmony across three essential relationships: *parhyangan* (human-divine), *pawongan* (human-human), and *palemahan* (human-nature). These dimensions are seen as interdependent, forming a foundational ethic that integrates spirituality, social life, and environmental responsibility in Balinese culture (Rahmawati 2019).

The underlying cosmology perceives the universe as a sacred, living totality. Natural elements mountains, rivers, forests are not inert matter but manifestations of divine presence. The Earth (Prithvi) is honored as a mother, while

elemental forces such as wind, rain, and fire are venerated as deities (*dewa*). This animistic-theistic synthesis grounds a form of ecological reverence in which harming nature is viewed as disturbing the cosmic order (*rta*). In practice, this translates into a liturgical ecology, where rituals like *tumpek wariga* (for honoring trees) and *tumpek kandang* (for animals) express gratitude and promote restraint in resource use (Yuniati and Khotimah 2016, Payuyasa 2017).

Environmental ethics in Balinese Hinduism are enacted through sacred landscape management. Forests (*alas*), springs, and rice fields are integrated into a ritual geography guided by the cosmological zoning of *kaja-kelod* (sacred-profane, upstream-downstream). Many forests are designated *alas kekeran* (forbidden forests), protected under customary law (*awig-awig*) and spiritual prohibitions (*pamali*), functioning as community-based conservation zones. Water temples (*pura tirta*) and the subak irrigation system illustrate the union of theology, ecology, and agrarian technology, ensuring both spiritual sanctity and fair water distribution.

These systems are upheld through ritual governance rather than state enforcement. Religious figures such as *pedanda* (priests) and *pemangku* (lay leaders) guide communities not only in worship but in environmental stewardship. Their spiritual authority enforces sustainable practices via blessings, offerings, and communal obligations, all synchronized with lunar cycles and agricultural seasons. This creates a rhythm of life in which conservation is inseparable from worship and community identity.

Despite modern pressures from tourism and land commodification, many Balinese communities continue to uphold *Tri Hita Karana* as the basis for environmental governance. Scholars increasingly recognize these traditions as models of sustainability rooted in religious and indigenous knowledge (Astara et al. 2018; Paramita et al. 2023).

For Islamic environmental advocates, the Balinese experience offers a compelling example of how spiritual cosmology, community norms, and ecological ethics can be harmonized. It highlights that religious environmentalism is not exclusive to monotheistic traditions but includes diverse worldviews that nurture deep reverence for the Earth—offering valuable lessons for interfaith collaboration in ecological stewardship.

Buddhism: Interbeing, compassion, and the ecology of mind

Buddhism offers a unique ecological perspective rooted in its philosophical and ethical foundations. Unlike theistic traditions that emphasize divine will, Buddhist environmentalism emerges from principles such as interdependence (*paṭicca samuppāda*), non-harming (*ahiṃsā*), and compassion (*karuṇā*). These form what scholars describe as an ecology of mind, where external environmental degradation reflects internal afflictions greed, ignorance, and hatred (*lobha, moha, dosa*) that must be addressed through spiritual discipline (Badiner 1990; Williams and Tucker 1997).

At the heart of Buddhist ecology lies the doctrine of interbeing, popularized by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. It asserts that all life forms are interconnected; harming nature is ultimately harming oneself. This non-dualistic view dissolves the separation between humans and nature, fostering ecological responsibility as an extension of enlightened awareness. Ethical behavior toward the Earth is not imposed externally, but arises naturally from spiritual realization.

The ethic of non-harming is central in all Buddhist traditions. The first precept to abstain from killing has been broadly interpreted to include care for all sentient beings and ecosystems. Buddhist monasteries in countries such as Thailand, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka have long served as wildlife refuges, and monks frequently lead reforestation efforts, such as tree ordination ceremonies and anti-logging campaigns, framing environmental protection as a sacred duty (Swearer 2010).

Mindfulness (*sati*) and simplicity (*santutthi*) further support ecological values. Buddhist practice encourages conscious awareness of consumption, waste, and one's impact on the environment. The minimalist lifestyle of monastics is viewed as a model for ecological sustainability. Lay practitioners often apply these principles through mindful eating, ethical livelihoods, and reduced materialism—transforming environmental care into daily spiritual practice (Kaza 2000).

In recent decades, Buddhist leaders have increasingly emphasized ecological responsibility. The 14th Dalai Lama advocates for compassion-driven environmental ethics, while the 2009 Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change calls for inner and societal transformation to confront ecological collapse. Organizations such as the Ecobuddhism Network and INEB (International Network of Engaged Buddhists) exemplify engaged Buddhism, applying dharma teachings to address environmental crises.

Although Buddhism does not invoke a creator God, its ecological worldview resonates with key Islamic values—such as *mīzān* (balance), *rahmah* (mercy), and *tawādu'* (humility). Engaging with Buddhist insights can deepen Islamic environmental ethics and foster interfaith cooperation. In plural societies, especially in Southeast Asia, Buddhist-Muslim ecological collaboration holds promise for nurturing shared moral commitments to protect the Earth as a common trust.

Taoism and Confucianism

Taoism and Confucianism, two central streams in Chinese philosophy, offer ecological worldviews grounded in harmony with nature and moral self-cultivation. Although Taoism emphasizes mystical alignment with the cosmos and Confucianism stresses ethical social order, both traditions promote principles that support environmental balance and sustainability (Tucker and Berthrong 1998).

In Taoism, the foundational concept of *Dao* (the Way) signifies the immanent, spontaneous order of the universe. Nature is not governed by divine command but follows the flow of *Dao*—evident in rivers, forests, and the life cycles of all beings. Taoist ethics revolve around *wu wei* (non-

coercive action), encouraging individuals to live in accord with natural rhythms rather than manipulating them for dominance (Laozi, *Dao De Jing*). Taoist texts use metaphors such as water, empty valleys, and the “uncarved block” to teach humility, flexibility, and simplicity qualities that promote environmental restraint.

Taoist practice fosters reverence for natural places; temples are often located in remote mountains or forests, and rituals express gratitude to earth, water, and celestial bodies. This biocentric orientation regards humans as part of a cosmic ecosystem, not superior to it. Environmental degradation is thus interpreted as the result of *you wei*—excessive, artificial human interference with natural processes (Palmer and Finlay 2003).

Confucianism, though more anthropocentric, also supports ecological ethics. Its core concept of *ren* (humaneness) extends beyond human society to encompass the natural world, while *li* (ritual propriety) links social harmony to cosmic balance. The principle of *ganying* (moral resonance) suggests that when rulers and citizens cultivate virtue, the natural world remains in balance—echoing Islamic ideas of *fasād* (corruption) as both moral and ecological (Chan 2000).

Confucian values emphasize stewardship through intergenerational responsibility and education. The land is seen as a sacred trust passed down from ancestors and to be preserved for descendants. The ideal of *tianren heyi* (the unity of Heaven and humanity) encourages sustainable living and moral reflection on environmental use. Environmental responsibility is developed through character building: *xiu shen, qi jia, zhi guo, ping tian xia*—self-cultivation leads to good governance and peace with nature.

In contemporary China, Taoist and Confucian principles have inspired religious environmental initiatives. The Taoist Ecology Protection Network promotes forest conservation, while Confucian scholars advocate *Green Confucianism* for addressing climate challenges. These efforts show that East Asian philosophies provide both ethical vision and practical strategies for environmental care.

For Islamic environmental discourse, engaging Taoist and Confucian thought expands interfaith collaboration and reveals shared values—balance, humility, reverence for nature that enrich the moral foundation of global ecological responsibility.

TOWARD AN INTERFAITH FRAMEWORK FOR ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

Shared values and ethical convergences

Across the world's major religious traditions, a growing awareness has emerged that environmental degradation is not only a scientific or political issue but a deeply ethical and spiritual crisis. Despite theological and doctrinal differences, the comparative analysis above reveals striking convergences in ecological values ranging from stewardship and reverence for life to restraint, humility, and intergenerational justice. These shared moral

orientations suggest the possibility of an interfaith ecological ethic, grounded not in uniform belief, but in mutual moral resonance and common responsibility (Palmer 1998, Tucker and Grim 2001)

At the heart of these convergences is the notion that nature is sacred or divinely patterned, and that humanity bears some form of trusteeship or moral obligation toward it. In Islam, this takes the form of *khilāfah* (trusteeship), *amānah* (responsibility), and *hifẓ al-bī'ah* (preservation). In Christianity, it is expressed through *stewardship*, *imago Dei*, and *creation care*. Hinduism emphasizes *rta* (cosmic order) and *dharma* (moral duty), while Buddhism promotes *interbeing*, *karuṇā* (compassion), and *ahiṃsā* (non-harm). Taoism calls for *wu wei* (effortless action) and harmony with the *Dao*, and Confucianism highlights moral cultivation, respect for Heaven (*Tian*), and balance with nature (Hall 2004, Wu and Lee 2021, Garfield 2022, Chatterjee et al. 2025)

All these traditions, in their own theological language, oppose excessive consumption, environmental injustice, and the commodification of the Earth. They call instead for spiritual mindfulness, ethical restraint, and harmonious coexistence principles that align with contemporary ideals of sustainable development, ecological justice, and climate resilience. These shared values offer a foundation for collaborative environmental efforts among religious communities, even in contexts marked by religious pluralism or tension.

Moreover, many religious rituals, fasting practices, pilgrimage ethics, and agricultural taboos have conservationist effects, whether intended or not. Such rituals can be reinterpreted as part of faith-based ecological action, adding cultural depth and theological legitimacy to modern environmental initiatives. The integration of these values into education, governance, and civil society can help re-enchant public discourse, turning ecological citizenship into a sacred duty rather than a legal imposition.

As climate change intensifies and planetary boundaries are breached, the convergence of religious voices could become a transformative moral force, mobilizing billions of believers toward sustainable lifestyles and ecological solidarity. While interfaith dialogue is often focused on peace and tolerance, environmental collaboration offers a tangible and urgent arena for unified moral leadership where praying together can evolve into planting together, restoring together, and acting together for a livable future.

Challenges in interfaith ecological engagement

Interfaith collaboration on environmental issues holds immense promise, but it faces several theological, institutional, and socio-political challenges that must be addressed to ensure meaningful and lasting cooperation. A key barrier is theological exclusivism. Many religious traditions regard their teachings as the ultimate truth, making collaboration across faiths complex. While the concept of environmental stewardship may appear universal, interpretations vary significantly across religious texts and cosmologies. Some Muslim groups accept *ta'āwun* (cooperation) with non-Muslims for the common good, yet others remain wary of alliances that might dilute

theological purity. Similar concerns exist within other religions, where efforts at interfaith environmental dialogue may be perceived as syncretistic or as compromising doctrinal clarity (Cornille 2013).

Another challenge is power asymmetry between religious groups. In many contexts, dominant religious institutions have more access to media, funding, and policy platforms, while minority voices are often marginalized. Interfaith environmental initiatives may unintentionally replicate these inequalities, reducing participation of less powerful groups to symbolic roles. In some cases, external funding from international or secular organizations introduces agendas that do not align fully with local religious perspectives, undermining authenticity and community ownership (Berlinguer 2020).

Cultural and linguistic differences in expressing environmental values also present obstacles. Terms like stewardship, balance, or sacredness may exist in multiple traditions, but their meanings are context-dependent. For example, Islamic *mīzān* refers to a divinely ordained cosmic balance, while in Confucian thought, harmony is tied to social and familial order. Without nuanced translation and mutual learning, interfaith dialogue risks flattening these meanings into superficial generalizations.

Practical gaps also hinder collaboration. Many religious leaders lack ecological literacy, while environmental activists may not understand religious language or values. This disconnect limits the ability of faith-based communities to participate meaningfully in environmental policymaking. Institutional inertia, resource constraints, and limited public awareness further restrict the reach of interfaith ecological programs.

Moreover, environmental issues are sometimes politicized, especially in areas facing land disputes, indigenous rights tensions, or climate-induced migration. In such settings, religious engagement with environmental issues can be seen as political alignment or betrayal, particularly in regions with histories of sectarian conflict. Efforts at interfaith cooperation must therefore navigate complex identities and historical grievances carefully.

Despite these challenges, they are not insurmountable. What is needed is interreligious literacy, sustained trust-building, and inclusive dialogue. Successful collaboration requires creating safe spaces where theological distinctiveness is respected, shared ethical ground is discovered not imposed and where ecological action serves as both planetary care and a step toward interreligious reconciliation.

The strategic role of islam in leading global religious ecology

Islam holds a unique and strategic position in shaping global religious responses to the environmental crisis. With over 1.9 billion followers and a global presence, it combines demographic influence with deep theological and ethical teachings on environmental responsibility (Nasr 1996; Saniotis 2012). In the face of ecological collapse and climate injustice, Islam offers more than doctrinal principles it provides a spiritual and communal force capable of mobilizing large-scale ecological consciousness.

At its core, Islam's theocentric worldview anchored in *tawhīd* (divine unity) rejects anthropocentrism and promotes the Earth as a trust (*amānah*) from God, not a possession. Humans are *khalīfah* (stewards), accountable for maintaining balance (*mīzān*) and avoiding *fasād* (corruption) on Earth (Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41). Islamic values of moderation (*wasatiyyah*), justice ('*adl*'), and responsibility (*hisāb*) form a spiritual framework for environmental ethics that directly addresses contemporary ecological degradation (Auda 2008, Kamali 2010).

Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh al-bī'ah*) offers detailed legal and moral norms related to water, land, waste, and animal welfare. Classical systems such as *hima* (protected lands) and principles of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) provided guidelines for sustainable resource use. These traditions, though often overlooked today, can inform modern environmental governance in Muslim-majority countries where secular legal systems may lack cultural legitimacy.

Institutionally, Islam is woven into daily communal life through mosques, *madrasah*, religious holidays, and social structures like *zakat*. These platforms are ideal for ecological outreach mobilizing behavior change through sermons, green mosque programs, eco-friendly Ramadan campaigns, and faith-based NGOs. Initiatives like the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change 2015 (United Nation Climate Change 2015), fatwas on environmental protection, and youth-led conservation programs demonstrate growing momentum within the *ummah* (Al-Hafiz 2017; Hassani 2021).

Geographically, the Muslim world spans highly diverse and vulnerable ecosystems from deserts and rainforests to urban deltas positioning Muslim communities at the frontline of climate risk and ecological adaptation. This diversity also creates opportunities for innovation, from sustainable urban planning to community-based conservation rooted in local traditions and Islamic ethics.

In global interfaith dialogue, Islam can play a bridging role. By affirming its own ecological teachings while engaging respectfully with Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous ethics, Islam contributes to a pluralistic and cooperative environmental movement. This is not a call for religious supremacy but for shared moral leadership. Islam's prophetic mission to be a *rahmah li al-'ālamīn* (mercy to all creation) aligns with the urgent task of ecological restoration.

Islam's strategic contribution to global environmental ethics is not only possible but imperative. By reclaiming its ecological heritage and embracing collaborative leadership, Islam can help reshape a more just, balanced, and sacred relationship between humanity and the Earth.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DA'WAH AND ISLAMIC OUTREACH

In response to growing ecological crises, Islamic da'wah must evolve by integrating environmental consciousness as a central element of religious life. This shift is not an innovation, but a return to the Qur'anic and

Prophetic legacy that frames the Earth as a trust (*amānah*) and humanity as its steward (*khalīfah*). Embedding ecological themes within da'wah fulfills Islam's mission of *rahmah li al-'ālamīn* a mercy for all creation (Q.S Al-Anbiya[21]: 107).

Traditional da'wah focuses on personal piety and social ethics, but the urgency of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss demands broader moral engagement. Sermons (*khuṭbah*) and *pengajian* can incorporate Qur'anic verses that emphasize nature's sanctity such as the balance (*mīzān*) in Surah ar-Rahmān, the prohibition of *fasād* (corruption) in Surah al-Baqarah, and depictions of flora and fauna as signs of God. Placing these themes in contemporary context makes Islamic teachings both spiritually deep and environmentally relevant.

Practically, ecological da'wah involves promoting sustainable behavior and community initiatives. Islamic schools (*pesantren*) can implement *eco-pesantren* models that combine environmental awareness with spiritual practices like composting, water conservation during *wuḍū'*, or tree planting as *ṣadaqah jāriyah*. These visible actions make ecological ethics tangible within Muslim life.

Digital platforms offer new avenues to spread eco-Islamic values. Muslim preachers and influencers can reach young audiences through content on green Ramadan, ethical fashion, or zero-waste hajj. In Southeast Asia, movements like Islamic Eco-Movement Indonesia (IEMI) and Green Halaqah demonstrate how environmental literacy can be effectively disseminated through social media within a faith framework.

However, ecological da'wah must avoid becoming mere sloganism. It should address structural issues such as consumerism, climate injustice, and ecological inequality, grounded in Qur'anic ethics of justice ('*adl*'), humility (*tawāḍu'*), and balance. The Prophet Muhammad exemplified an ecologically responsible lifestyle—marked by simplicity, compassion, and restraint—which now inspires Islamic eco-spirituality and systemic change.

In multicultural societies, Islamic da'wah can bridge faith communities by promoting shared ecological ethics while maintaining theological clarity. In doing so, da'wah becomes a public good—offering spiritual insight and practical solutions to humanity's collective environmental responsibility.

Islamic education serves as the foundation for shaping ethical consciousness and daily behavior, making it essential for fostering environmental awareness within the Muslim community. While da'wah expresses Islamic values outwardly, education provides the spiritual and intellectual infrastructure that underpins meaningful ecological engagement (Abdelzaher et al. 2019).

Central to Islamic pedagogy is *tarbiyah*, a holistic nurturing of intellect, morals, spirit, and society. Within this framework, environmental ethics should be integrated not just in specialized courses like *fiqh al-bi'ah*, but across core disciplines such as tafsir, hadith, and *usuluddin*. For instance, Qur'anic verses highlighting natural signs (Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41; Q.S Al-Aan'am[6]: 99; Q.S An-Nur[24]: 41-45) offer opportunities to explore ecological meanings

beyond linguistic analysis revealing how nature functions as divine communication.

Madrasahs and pesantren are pivotal institutions for embedding environmental consciousness in Muslim youth. These schools can integrate modules on sustainability, waste reduction, and climate ethics, complemented by hands-on practices like school gardens, eco-sanitation, and energy conservation. Such initiatives embody Islamic values like *ṭahārah* (purity), *ḥalāl-ṭayyib* consumption, and local wisdom ('urf), turning campuses into models of eco-Islamic living.

At the university level, faculties of *sharī'ah*, *da'wah*, and *tarbiyah* can offer interdisciplinary courses linking Islamic teachings to environmental science, public policy, and green economics. These programs prepare future scholars, teachers, and leaders to tackle ecological challenges with a grounded Islamic worldview. Research centers and student groups can further enrich this ecosystem through green campaigns, environmental audits, and publications on Islamic environmental ethics.

Teacher training is equally vital. Many Islamic educators lack familiarity with environmental topics or pedagogical tools to teach them. National curriculum bodies should promote the inclusion of Islam and the Environment in formal syllabi, alongside capacity-building programs that provide Qur'anic exegesis on ecological themes, case studies, and access to teaching resources.

Outside formal settings, non-formal education including *halaqah*, *majelis taklim*, mosque youth circles, and Islamic camps—offers dynamic, context-sensitive platforms for lifelong environmental learning. These programs can adapt messages to local ecological realities such as deforestation, water scarcity, or urban waste. By integrating themes into *muḥāḍarah*, Qur'an competitions, and Islamic arts, they cultivate cultural affinity for *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* (environmental preservation).

Ultimately, Islamic education must go beyond cognitive instruction to nurture an eco-spiritual character—where reverence for creation is rooted in *taqwā*, love of God, and prophetic responsibility. With proper investment, Islamic education can raise a generation that not only understands Qur'anic teachings but embodies ecological ethics as part of their religious identity.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Islam offers a comprehensive ecological ethic rooted in foundational theological principles *tawḥīd* (divine unity), *khilāfah* (trusteeship), *amānah* (responsibility), and *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* (environmental preservation) which are embedded in Islamic jurisprudence and the prophetic tradition. Through the framework of *fiqh al-bi'ah*, environmental care is seen not as peripheral but integral to worship, ethics, and justice. Comparative perspectives from other religions Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism—demonstrate that while theological expressions vary, many share commitments to the sanctity of nature, moral restraint, and stewardship, creating a basis for interfaith ecological

collaboration in education, advocacy, and community action. However, obstacles such as exclusivist theology, institutional imbalances, cultural misunderstanding, and politicization of environmental discourse must be navigated through mutual respect, shared literacy, and spiritual humility. Islam's global presence, ethical depth, and living traditions position it not only as a participant but as a potential leader in religious environmentalism. This leadership must extend beyond law and theology into the realms of *da'wah* and education—through sermons, digital platforms, school curricula, and grassroots movements that promote sustainability as a form of worship. Islamic education, from *madrasah* to university, has a vital role in nurturing environmentally conscious Muslims who live by Qur'anic ethics and enact prophetic compassion. At its core, the environmental crisis reflects a deeper crisis of meaning and morality. Religions—especially Islam do not merely offer ecological rules but provide sacred stories, symbols, and ethical visions that can guide humanity toward gratitude, balance, and mercy. In a world fractured by consumerism and ecological neglect, Islam reminds us that to care for the Earth is not only an act of survival, but an act of devotion.

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