

Islamic reflections on climate crisis and human responsibility in the qur'anic perspective

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Abstract. Febriyanti S, Wulandari P, Haq RQ. 2025. *Islamic reflections on climate crisis and human responsibility in the qur'anic perspective.. Dakwah & Islamic Outreach 1: 15-25.* This article explores the Qur'anic worldview on climate change and ecological responsibility, emphasizing the integration of Islamic theology, ethics, and da'wah in addressing the global environmental crisis. Drawing upon classical and contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an, the study highlights how environmental degradation is framed not merely as a physical or technical issue but as a spiritual and moral disruption. Key concepts such as *khalīfah* (stewardship), *mīzān* (balance), *fasād* (corruption), and *amānah* (trust) are examined as foundational principles for an Islamic environmental ethic. The analysis includes discussions on the theological significance of nature as divine signs (*āyāt kauniyyah*), the role of *musibah* and *bala'* as divine warnings, and the incorporation of *hifz al-bi'ah* (environmental protection) into *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law). Furthermore, the study proposes a holistic Islamic environmental framework that integrates theology, law, spirituality, and community engagement. The article also investigates the implications for contemporary Islamic preaching and education, advocating for the inclusion of ecological themes in da'wah strategies and Islamic curricula. It concludes that restoring environmental balance is not only a scientific or policy matter but a theological mandate that calls for renewed commitment to the Qur'anic vision of justice, harmony, and mercy toward all creation.

Keywords: Climate change, da'wah, *eco-theology*, Islamic environmental ethics, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, prophetic practices, Qur'anic ecology

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges (Iqbal and Gahuri 2021), with increasingly devastating consequences such as extreme weather events, rising sea levels, prolonged droughts, biodiversity loss, and socio-economic instability. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2023), the accumulation of greenhouse gases caused primarily by human activity has led to a rise in global average temperatures beyond 1.1°C, nearing the critical threshold of 1.5°C. While scientific approaches have dominated efforts to understand and mitigate climate change, there is growing recognition that this crisis is not merely environmental or technological, but also deeply moral and spiritual in nature (Al-Kalbani 2021).

Within the Islamic worldview, nature is not seen as a random assemblage of matter but as a purposeful and sacred creation that reflects divine wisdom (Hanif 2024). The Qur'an consistently affirms that the natural world is full of *āyāt* signs pointing to God's existence, power, and mercy (Muhamad et al. 2020). Environmental degradation, therefore, is not merely a technical problem but a sign of ethical failure and spiritual alienation. The Qur'an warns that corruption (*fasād*) has appeared on land and sea due to human hands (Qur'an Ar-Rum[30]: 41), and it calls on believers to act responsibly as stewards (*khalīfah*) of the Earth (Qur'an 2:30). In this light, the climate crisis becomes a reflection of deeper theological issues: a

breakdown in the relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator.

The Muslim world, home to more than 1.9 billion people (Lugo et al. 2011), is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change from desertification in the Sahel and water scarcity in Central Asia, to flooding in Southeast Asia and sea-level rise affecting archipelagic nations such as Indonesia (Elasha 2010). Yet, Islamic responses to this crisis have often remained underdeveloped, fragmented, or marginal in global climate discourse. Despite the abundance of Qur'anic teachings on environmental ethics, many Muslim communities have yet to integrate these values into daily practices, institutional frameworks, and public awareness campaigns. This gap between ethical knowledge and ecological action underscores the need for a renewed theological and da'wah-based engagement with climate issues (Nasr 1996; Foltz 2003).

Scholarly efforts in the emerging field of Islamic ecotheology have begun to address these concerns (Karman et al. 2023). However, much of the existing literature either remains confined to abstract theological discussions or lacks integration with contemporary climate realities. What is needed is a framework that not only interprets climate change through Qur'anic categories such as *fasād*, *musibah*, *isrāf*, and *khalīfah*, but also translates these insights into actionable guidance for Muslim individuals, communities, and leaders. Islamic environmental ethics must evolve from moral idealism to practical outreach bridging classical *tafsīr* with community-based

environmental education and policy advocacy (Zuhdi et al. 2024).

This article aims to contribute to that development by examining the climate crisis through the lens of the Qur'an, while drawing on key theological, ethical, and da'wah principles. Using a thematic approach to Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsīr mawdhū'ī*), the study explores how core Qur'anic concepts illuminate the moral dimensions of ecological collapse and provide a foundation for Muslim engagement in climate mitigation and adaptation. It interrogates the role of human agency in environmental corruption (*fasād*), the meaning of divine tests and disasters (*musibah*) in the context of climate change, and the mandate of stewardship (*khilāfah*) as a moral responsibility. Moreover, it offers pathways for integrating Islamic ethics into environmental da'wah, proposing that imams, educators, and activists can play a vital role in fostering ecological consciousness among Muslim communities.

The structure of the paper proceeds as follows (i) section 2 explores the Qur'anic worldview of nature and its underlying cosmological principles, (ii) section 3 delves into the notion of *fasād* as a conceptual key to understanding ecological degradation, (iii) section 4 discusses the human role as both steward and transgressor, elaborating on the ethical framework of *khilāfah* and *amānah*, (iv) section 5 addresses the theological interpretation of natural disasters and climate-related calamities in the Qur'an, (v) section 6 develops a comprehensive Islamic environmental ethic grounded in Qur'anic teachings and classical scholarship, (iv) section 7 considers how these insights can inform contemporary da'wah and environmental outreach, finally (vii) section 8 concludes with a summary of key findings and their implications for future research and Islamic public discourse.

In a time when the climate crisis threatens the well-being of humanity and the balance of creation, Islamic teachings offer not only a critique of human excess and negligence but also a hopeful vision of renewal through faith, responsibility, and ecological justice (Gada 2024, Ismail and Firas 2024). By re-engaging the Qur'an as a source of ecological wisdom, Muslims can contribute meaningfully to the global effort of environmental stewardship grounded in divine purpose (Widiastuty and Anwar 2025).

THE QUR'ANIC WORLDVIEW ON NATURE AND CREATION

Nature as signs of God (*Āyāt Kauniyyah*)

In the Qur'anic worldview, nature is not merely a collection of physical entities governed by mechanical laws but a network of divine signs (*āyāt kauniyyah*) that reflect God's presence, wisdom, and mercy (Hassan 2016). The term *āyah* commonly translated as *sign* or *verse* appears repeatedly in the Qur'an to refer both to textual revelations (scriptural signs) and to natural phenomena (cosmic or creational signs) (Rahem 2014). This dual usage suggests a

unified epistemology wherein the Book of Revelation (*al-Qur'an al-mastūr*) and the Book of Nature (*al-kitāb al-manzhūr*) are complementary sources of divine knowledge (Nasr 1996; Foltz 2006).

Numerous verses call upon humans to observe the natural world with reflection and humility (Syamsudin 2017). For example *Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, are signs (āyāt) for those of understanding* (Q.S Ali-Imran[3]: 190). Similarly, the processes of rainfall, plant growth, the movement of celestial bodies, and the diversity of creatures are presented as *āyāt* meant to awaken spiritual consciousness and gratitude (Qur'an Al-Baqarah[2]: 164; Q.S Ar-Rum [30]: 20-25; Q.S Az-Zariyat[51]: 20-21). These verses form the basis of what scholars call *Qur'anic cosmology* a vision of the universe as intrinsically meaningful and theocentric (Izutsu 2002).

Theologically, this view emphasizes *tawhīd* (the oneness of God) not only as a doctrinal principle but as an interpretive lens for viewing reality (Al Mahmud 2023). Nature is not autonomous or random; it is part of a dynamic system that operates under divine will and reflects divine names (*asmā' Allāh*) (Badron 2023). The regularity of natural processes sunrise and sunset, seasons, reproduction is an expression of God's *rubūbiyyah* (lordship), while their beauty and intricacy reveal His *jamāl* (beauty) and *ḥikmah* (wisdom) (Khalid 2002; Özdemir 2013).

This Qur'anic view also rejects secular or materialist readings of nature that reduce it to a resource for exploitation (Akib 2024, Hasibuan and Bahri 2024). Instead, it invites a sacred ecological consciousness that blends observation with reverence. The natural world, in this sense, becomes not only a *signpost* to the divine but a *trust* (*amānah*) that demands respect and care (Abdul-Matin 2010; Al-Kalbani 2021). The failure to recognize these signs leads to *ghaflah* (heedlessness), a spiritual condition that underlies much of modern ecological apathy (Sutikno 2014, Furehaug 2020).

Furthermore, this concept provides the foundation for an Islamic environmental ethic (Gulzar 2021). Recognizing nature as a field of *āyāt* implies that environmental destruction is not only harmful in material terms but also constitutes a disruption of the communicative relationship between God and humanity. When forests are clear-cut, rivers polluted, or species driven to extinction, the signs through which God speaks to humanity are silenced. This makes environmental degradation not just a physical crisis but a moral and theological one (Saniotis 2012; Ziauddin 2020).

In conclusion, the Qur'anic concept of *āyāt kauniyyah* reorients our understanding of nature from a utilitarian to a spiritual perspective (Aminullah 2017). It affirms that environmental awareness is not a secular add-on to Islamic belief, but a direct extension of Qur'anic faith (Yusuf 2021). Any da'wah or public discourse on climate change within the Muslim community must begin with this foundational insight that to harm nature is, in effect, to turn away from God's signs (Mangunjaya 2019).

Balance (*Mīzān*) and human-nature relations

The concept of *mīzān* meaning balance, proportion, or equilibrium is central to the Qur'anic depiction of the natural world (Shaker 2015). It reflects a divine order in which all elements of creation function within precise limits, contributing to the harmony and sustainability of the universe. The Qur'an states, *And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance (mīzān) so that you do not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance* (Q.S Ar-Rahman[55]:7-9). This passage reveals that balance is not only a physical law but a moral imperative. Humanity is warned against disturbing this equilibrium, as doing so constitutes both ecological and ethical violation (Shehab 2024).

In the Qur'anic worldview, *mīzān* governs everything from the rotation of celestial bodies to the cycles of water, reproduction in plants and animals, and even social justice. The idea that all things are created *in measure (bi-qadr)* (Q.S Al-Qamar[54]:49) reinforces the theme of calibrated order. This cosmological precision implies that every creature has a role, function, and place in the grand system of creation. Disturbance of this order—through pollution, overexploitation, or unjust behavior—represents a form of *fasād* (corruption), disrupting not only ecosystems but also the spiritual symmetry between humans and their environment (Khalid 2002; Foltz 2006).

The human role in this balanced system is that of an entrusted steward (*khalīfah*) endowed with *reason, choice, and accountability*. Humans are not passive observers but active participants whose actions can maintain or disturb the balance. The Qur'an warns against *isrāf* (excess) and *tabdhīr* (waste), both of which are common causes of environmental degradation. "Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils" (Q.S Al-Isra[17]: 27) illustrates how moral irresponsibility toward consumption leads to spiritual corruption. Recognizing *mīzān* thus requires an ethic of moderation (*wasatiyyah*), responsibility (*mas'ūliyyah*), and restraint (*zuhd*) values deeply embedded in Islamic teachings (Özdemir 2013; Sadeq 2021).

Moreover, *mīzān* is inherently relational. It binds humans not only to the Creator but also to the rest of creation (Al Sehlawi 2020). Every disruption of balance in nature eventually reflects back upon human well-being. For example, the breakdown of climate regulation systems due to excessive carbon emissions is not just a violation of atmospheric equilibrium but a form of injustice (*ẓulm*) toward both present and future generations. In this way, *mīzān* connects ecology to ethics, biology to theology, and sustainability to accountability (Nasr 1996; Mohamed 2025).

Understanding *mīzān* as a divine principle has profound implications for Islamic environmental education and da'wah ('Izz al-Din 2000). Rather than framing climate action purely in secular or scientific terms, Muslim communities can be invited to re-engage with their spiritual heritage recognizing environmental stewardship as a form of worship (*'ibādah*) and justice (*'adl*). By restoring awareness of *mīzān*, believers are called to realign their lifestyles with the rhythms of creation, living not as

dominators but as caretakers of God's earth (Marpaung 2023).

ECOLOGICAL FASĀD AND ENVIRONMENTAL CORRUPTION IN THE QUR'AN

Linguistic and qur'anic meaning of *Fasād*

The term *fasād* in Arabic linguistically connotes corruption, spoilage, disorder, or the breakdown of what is wholesome (Campbell 2018). In the Qur'an, *fasād* is often employed to describe both moral and material corruption as an indication of its integrative ethical and ecological meaning. The verb *fasada* and the noun *fasād* appear in multiple contexts, ranging from social injustice to ecological disruption, signifying a condition in which things are no longer in their rightful place or function (Izutsu 2002; Haleem and Haleem 2010).

One of the most cited verses on this subject is Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41, *Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, so that He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done, so that they might return [to righteousness]*. This verse presents *fasād* as a direct outcome of human actions, linking environmental degradation to moral failure. The use of the phrase *on land and sea* suggests that the scope of this corruption is both widespread and systemic, cutting across terrestrial and marine ecosystems (Matin adn Alwi 2020).

What distinguishes Qur'anic *fasād* from secular understandings of corruption is its theological dimension. It is not merely the disintegration of order, but the betrayal of a trust (*amānah*) bestowed upon humanity. When humans act in arrogance, excess, or heedlessness, they violate the balance (*mīzān*) established by God, resulting in chaos that affects both society and the natural world. Thus, *fasād* is not a neutral outcome; it is a moral category with divine accountability (Khalid 2002; Al-Mahmoud 2019).

Importantly, the Qur'an often contrasts *fasād* with *islāh* reformation or restoration. In QS Al-Baqarah[2]: 11-12, it is stated *When it is said to them, 'Do not cause corruption on the earth,' they say, 'We are but reformers.' Truly, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive it not*. This passage warns against the illusion of development or progress that conceals deeper harm. It underscores the need for discernment in distinguishing between genuine improvement and superficial gain that leads to destruction.

In the environmental context, this critique is profoundly relevant. Modern industrial activities, while often justified as progress, have led to ecological collapse: deforestation, species extinction, pollution, and climate change. The Qur'anic concept of *fasād* thus provides a framework for diagnosing the spiritual roots of ecological crises. It moves beyond technocratic or legalistic analyses to probe the human condition—our desires, values, and ethical orientation (Foltz 2006; Ziauddin 2020).

In sum, *fasād* in the Qur'an is a multilayered concept that encompasses environmental, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. It reflects a disruption not only of ecosystems but also of the divine-human covenant. Recognizing and

responding to *fasād* is therefore not only an ecological duty but a theological imperative. It calls Muslims to re-evaluate their impact on the Earth and to seek *iṣlāḥ* as both repentance and restoration.

Causes and types of ecological corruption

The ecological corruption (*fasād fi al-ardh*) described in the Qur'an is not merely incidental but rooted in identifiable patterns of human behavior that violate the natural order established by God. Among the foremost causes is the excessive exploitation of natural resources beyond what is needed or sustainable. The Qur'an condemns *isrāf* (extravagance) and *tabdhīr* (wastefulness), warning that those who engage in such acts are aligned with the forces of destruction (Qur'an Al-Isra[17]: 26-27). Modern forms of consumerism, deforestation, overfishing, and fossil fuel dependence reflect this moral failing, where the pursuit of economic growth overrides ecological limits (Khalid 2002; Özdemir 2013).

A second cause of ecological *fasād* is technological arrogance and anthropocentric dominance, wherein humans view themselves as masters of nature rather than stewards (*khalīfah*). The Qur'an critiques those who act arrogantly on the earth without justification (Q.S Al-Qasas[28]: 83), framing hubris as a spiritual disease that blinds individuals to the interconnectedness of life. In contemporary terms, this manifests in large-scale industrial agriculture, pollution-intensive manufacturing, and extractive mining—all driven by a worldview that commodifies the earth and disregards its sanctity (Nasr 1996; Ziauddin 2020).

Environmental corruption also stems from political and economic systems that institutionalize injustice. The Qur'an often associates *fasād* with tyrannical rulers and unjust societies (Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]:205; Q.S Al-Qasas[28]: 4), suggesting that ecological harm is not only individual but systemic. When policies prioritize short-term profits over long-term stewardship, or when environmental degradation disproportionately impacts the poor and vulnerable, the principles of *ʿadl* (justice) and *amānah* (trust) are violated. This structural dimension of *fasād* highlights the need for collective moral reform and institutional accountability (Saniotis 2012; Sadeq 2021).

The types of ecological corruption are diverse and interrelated. Atmospheric pollution, such as greenhouse gas emissions, leads to global warming, which disrupts climatic balance (*mīzān*). Deforestation erodes biodiversity and soil integrity, while water contamination affects aquatic ecosystems and human health. Species extinction, often caused by habitat destruction and poaching, constitutes a rupture in the biological harmony willed by the Creator. Each of these reflects a different mode of *fasād*, yet all share a common root in human negligence, greed, or moral failure (Foltz 2006; Al-Kalbani 2021).

Ecological *fasād* is not limited to external destruction but includes internal spiritual decay the loss of awe (*khawf*) and gratitude (*shukr*) toward God's creation. When nature is stripped of its symbolic and sacred meaning, humans become desensitized to its violation. Thus, the crisis is not only environmental but existential: it reflects a disoriented humanity alienated from both nature and revelation. In this

regard, environmental corruption becomes a mirror of spiritual corruption, and restoring ecological balance necessitates a return to divine guidance (Izutsu 2002; Abdul-Matin 2010).

This Qur'anic analysis of causes and types of ecological *fasād* offers not only diagnosis but direction. It calls for a reorientation of human attitudes, behaviors, and systems toward principles of balance, justice, and stewardship. Without such transformation, ecological corruption will only intensify both in its physical manifestations and in its spiritual consequences.

Moral decline and the contemporary relevance of *fasād*

The Qur'an presents a deeply interconnected relationship between morality and ecology, wherein the decline of ethical values directly contributes to environmental degradation. The concept of *fasād* (corruption) operates across spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions, signaling a civilizational imbalance when human behavior strays from divine guidance. Environmental collapse is thus not merely a technical failure but a visible manifestation of inner spiritual disarray (Khalid 2002; Foltz 2006).

The Qur'an recounts the downfall of past nations such as 'Ād, Thamūd, and the Pharaoh's Egypt not only as divine punishment, but as natural consequences of arrogance, injustice, and systemic moral failure (Q.S Al-A'raf[7]: 74-79; Q.S Al-Qasas[28]: 3-6). These narratives reveal that when societies normalize greed, excess, and injustice, they lose their ethical compass and their ability to maintain harmony with nature (Izutsu 2002, Sulthoni and Amrulloh 2023).

The loss of virtues such as *shukr* (gratitude), *ḥayā'* (modesty), and *ʿadl* (justice) facilitates behavior that leads to pollution, overexploitation, and irreversible ecological damage (Özdemir 2013; Abdul-Matin 2010). When contentment (*qanā'ah*) is replaced by consumerism, and stewardship by domination, humanity begins to unravel the divine balance (*mīzān*) of creation (Nasr 1996; Ziauddin 2020).

Modern environmental discourse often relies on scientific and legal frameworks, using terms like climate impact and ecological injustice (Schlosberg and Collins 2014). While valuable, such approaches tend to overlook the moral roots of the crisis. The Qur'anic *fasād* enriches these narratives by reintroducing ethical and spiritual accountability. It bridges ancient wisdom with contemporary climate science, emphasizing that corruption on land and sea is a consequence of human transgression (Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41).

Fasād also includes structural injustice embedded in global systems, where those least responsible for climate change especially the poor—suffer its harshest impacts. The Qur'an condemns such *ẓulm* (injustice), urging reflection and reform (Izutsu 2002; Al-Kalbani 2021). It also critiques false narratives of progress: Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]: 11-12 warns against those who cause destruction while claiming to reform, echoing critiques of unsustainable development cloaked in modernity (Abdul-Matin 2010; Özdemir 2013).

Addressing environmental collapse, therefore, requires more than policy reform it demands moral awakening (Riedy 2013). Islamic teachings call for *islāh* (restoration) paired with *tazkiyah* (inner purification). The vocabulary of *fasād* becomes a powerful tool in da'wah and education, fostering ecological responsibility grounded in faith (Alam et al. 2024). Imams and educators can guide communities toward ethical consumption, conservation, and sustainable living.

Integrating *fasād* into modern climate narratives affirms that ecological destruction is not just a material crisis but a rupture in the divine-human covenant. Through this lens, Muslims are empowered to view environmental action as a sacred duty restoring not only nature, but also the spiritual balance that sustains life.

HUMAN AGENCY AND ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

Khilāfah and *amānah*: Ethical mandates

The Qur'anic conception of the human being as *khalīfah* (vicegerent or steward) on Earth establishes the foundational ethic of responsibility and care toward all of creation. This designation, found in verses such as Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]: 30 and Q.S Al-An'am[6]: 165, conveys not power for exploitation but a divine trust (*amānah*) that requires humans to act in accordance with God's will. The role of *khalīfah* entails a moral obligation to preserve the balance (*mīzān*) and integrity of the natural world, which has been entrusted to humanity not as owners, but as caretakers (Nasr 1996; Khalid 2002).

As *khalīfah*, the human being is endowed with reason, volition, and moral discernment—tools to manage the earth's resources wisely and justly. However, this agency is bounded by the limits of divine law (*hudūd*) and moral accountability (*mas'ūliyyah*). The earth is described as a place of sustenance for all beings, not solely for human benefit (Q.S Ar-Rahman[55]: 10). Therefore, the misuse of nature for selfish or destructive ends constitutes a breach of the divine trust. The Qur'an repeatedly condemns those who spread corruption (*fasād*) while claiming righteousness, as in Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]: 11-12, demonstrating the gap between superficial progress and moral failure (Foltz 2006; Al-Mahmoud 2019).

The notion of *amānah* is further reinforced in Qur'an Q.S Al-Ahzab[33]: 72, which states *Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it; but man undertook it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.* This verse encapsulates the gravity of human responsibility. Unlike other creatures, humans have the capacity to fulfill or betray this trust, making them uniquely accountable for environmental stewardship. The failure to uphold this *amānah* leads to widespread *fasād*, not only materially but spiritually and socially (Izutsu 2002; Özdemir 2013).

Contemporary ecological crises highlight the misuse of *khalīfah* and the betrayal of *amānah*. Industrial expansion, excessive consumption, and pollution are driven by anthropocentric ideologies that ignore the sacredness of creation. In contrast, the Qur'anic view places humans

within, not above, the natural order. Being a *khalīfah* means acting with humility, foresight, and justice, ensuring that future generations inherit a planet capable of sustaining life (Sanjotis 2012; Ziauddin 2020).

In Islamic ethics, *khalīfah* and *amānah* are not theoretical concepts but practical imperatives (Rendi et al. 2025). They demand that individuals and communities adopt lifestyles that honor ecological limits through moderation, conservation, and sustainable development. These values can inform public policy, community-based environmental programs, and educational curricula that link faith with ecological responsibility.

Ultimately, reclaiming *khalīfah* and *amānah* as central ethical mandates can reorient Muslim engagement with the environment. It frames ecological care as an act of worship (*'ibādah*) and a fulfillment of one's covenant with God. When properly understood and implemented, these Qur'anic principles offer a transformative basis for confronting the climate crisis with integrity, humility, and spiritual resolve.

Wastefulness and moral responsibility in environmental stewardship

Islamic ethics condemns *isrāf* (extravagance) and *tabdhīr* (wastefulness) as serious moral violations with destructive ecological consequences. These behaviors disrupt the balance (*mīzān*) established by God and contribute directly to environmental degradation, including climate change and pollution. The Qur'an warns, "Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils" (Q.S Al-Isra[17]: 27), signaling the spiritual gravity of excess and its link to moral decline (Khalid 2002; Özdemir 2013).

Modern lifestyles—marked by mass consumption, energy overuse, and disposable goods—exemplify institutionalized *isrāf*. Such wastefulness is not ethically neutral; it reflects disregard for both God's creation and the well-being of marginalized populations. Overconsumption in affluent societies often worsens the vulnerability of those least responsible for ecological harm. This constitutes *ẓulm* (injustice), violating the Qur'anic principles of *'adl* (justice) and *rahmah* (compassion) (Foltz 2006; Sadeq 2021; Ziauddin 2020).

Islamic teachings emphasize that resisting wastefulness requires cultivating *qanā'ah* (contentment) and *zuhd* (simplicity). These values promote sustainable lifestyles rooted in moderation and gratitude. The Prophet Muhammad exemplified such behavior, practicing minimal waste even when using abundant resources and promoting conservation as a form of worship (*'ibādah*) (Abdul-Matin 2010; Al-Kalbani 2021).

Beyond personal conduct, the Qur'an upholds *al-mas'ūliyyah al-jamā'iyyah* collective responsibility in managing the Earth. Every individual is accountable for their ecological footprint (Qur'an Az-Zalzalah[99]:7 -8), while leaders and institutions are entrusted with environmental justice (Q.S An-Nisa[4]: 58). Historically, Islamic societies institutionalized ecological ethics through *waqf* systems and sustainable resource management, offering valuable models for modern governance (Nasr 1996; Sanjotis 2012).

Faith-based organizations today can revive this legacy by championing energy efficiency, ecological education, and ethical consumption (Rifat et al. 2020). Mosques, universities, and da'wah groups can become exemplars of environmental stewardship aligning their practices with both spiritual integrity and ecological responsibility.

In essence, environmental care in Islam is both an individual virtue and a collective obligation. Combating *isrāf* and fulfilling *amānah* (trust) require a moral awakening rooted in divine guidance (Hassan et al. 2025). By uniting personal ethics with institutional action, Muslims can live out their role as *khalīfah* stewards committed to justice, balance, and the protection of creation.

DIVINE SIGNS AND NATURAL DISASTERS: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Musibah, bala', and divine warnings

The Qur'an employs a rich vocabulary to describe trials, disasters, and afflictions that befall individuals and communities. Among the most significant terms are *musibah* and *bala'*, both of which carry theological, moral, and existential weight. While often translated as calamity or affliction, these terms are not interpreted as random events but as part of divine wisdom and intentionality. In the Qur'anic worldview, natural disasters, hardships, and crises serve as signs (*āyāt*) and warnings (*nadhīr*), inviting reflection, repentance, and moral realignment (Izutsu 2002; Abdel Haleem 2010).

The term *musibah* denotes a misfortune or loss that strikes a person or society, either as a consequence of their actions or as a divinely ordained test. Q.S At-Tagabun[64]: 11 affirms, *No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah-He will guide his heart.* This verse underscores the theological dimension of *musibah* while it may appear destructive, it is ultimately a means of spiritual correction and growth. Whether in the form of floods, droughts, pandemics, or storms, *musibah* confronts human arrogance and reminds believers of their vulnerability and need for divine guidance (Nasr 1996).

Closely related is the concept of *bala'*, often used to describe severe trials meant to test faith and character. In Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]: 155, God says, *And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits—but give good tidings to the patient.* Unlike punishment (*'iqāb*), *bala'* is pedagogical it aims to refine the soul, build resilience, and cultivate humility. In environmental terms, *bala'* can be seen in the form of prolonged droughts, ecosystem collapse, or climate volatility that challenges societal endurance. When approached with patience and moral consciousness (*taqwā*), these experiences become transformative rather than destructive (Khalid 2002; Özdemir 2013).

However, the Qur'an also speaks of calamities as divine warnings in response to moral and ecological corruption. In Qur'an 7:94, it is stated, *“And We did not send a prophet to any city except that We seized its people with poverty and hardship that they might humble themselves.”* This verse

highlights the function of hardship as a wake-up call. When communities become heedless of God's guidance, indulge in injustice and *fasād*, or exploit the earth without restraint, disasters serve to break the illusion of permanence and stimulate repentance (*tawbah*) (Foltz 2006; Ziauddin 2020).

Environmental calamities, then, are not merely natural occurrences but are spiritually and ethically charged. They reveal the consequences of collective actions and the disruption of divine balance. From an Islamic perspective, such events should not provoke despair, but rather a return (*rujū'*) to God, a recommitment to ethical living, and a renewed effort to restore justice toward both humanity and the environment.

The challenge for contemporary Muslim communities is to interpret disasters not through fatalism but through moral awakening (Aksa 2020). By understanding *musibah* and *bala'* as divine messages rather than blind misfortunes, believers are called to self-critique, social reform, and ecological restoration. In this sense, calamities become opportunities not only for survival, but for spiritual renewal and collective healing.

Ecological disasters in moral and spiritual perspective

From a Qur'anic perspective, ecological disasters are not solely physical phenomena but events embedded within a moral and spiritual context. The environmental crisis manifested in floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and droughts serves as both a consequence of human misdeeds and a divine sign meant to reorient ethical consciousness. The Qur'an does not isolate environmental collapse from human behavior; instead, it consistently links natural order with moral order, presenting a worldview in which ethical decay and ecological decline are deeply intertwined (Izutsu 2002; Nasr 1996).

At the core of this understanding is the principle of *mīzān* (balance), which reflects the harmonious design of the cosmos. Q.S Ar-Rahman[55]: 7-9 proclaims, *And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance. That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance.* The violation of this balance through greed, injustice, or wastefulness leads not only to spiritual distortion but also to ecological consequences. When humanity breaches this balance, the result is often a breakdown of climate systems, the loss of biodiversity, and the collapse of vital ecosystems (Foltz 2006; Özdemir 2013).

The Qur'an portrays this disruption not as divine vengeance in a punitive sense, but as a reflection of human arrogance and disconnection from divine guidance. This is particularly evident in narratives such as that of Pharaoh, whose moral tyranny was mirrored by environmental degradation in Egypt (Q.S Al-A'raf[7]: 130-133). These accounts suggest that moral corruption often carries ecological consequences: when justice is absent and divine limits are ignored, the earth itself reacts with instability and suffering. Hence, ecological disasters are not merely natural but have moral and metaphysical dimensions (Khalid 2002; Al-Mahmoud 2019).

This moral framing of disasters challenges contemporary secular responses that treat environmental damage as merely technical or policy-based. While science is critical in identifying causes and proposing solutions, the spiritual roots of ecological problems must also be acknowledged. Disasters become moments of theological reflection, pressing humanity to examine not only carbon footprints but also ethical footprints our collective tendencies toward excess, injustice, and denial of divine stewardship (*khilāfah*) (Abdul-Matin 2010; Ziauddin 2020).

Moreover, ecological disasters test not only societal infrastructure but also the moral fabric of communities. Qur'an 6:165 reminds humans of their elevated position as trustees on Earth, emphasizing accountability *He it is Who made you successors on the earth and raised some of you above others in degrees, that He may test you in what He has given you*. In the face of disasters, this test becomes visible in how individuals and nations respond whether with solidarity or selfishness, reform or repetition of error. Moral resilience, environmental justice, and spiritual humility are thus essential virtues in responding to ecological collapse (Saniotis 2012; Sadeq 2021).

By viewing ecological disasters through the lens of Qur'anic ethics, Muslims are encouraged to see beyond despair and toward transformation. These events can catalyze a collective return to God, foster environmental compassion, and renew social responsibility. In this way, calamities, while painful, can open the door to moral awakening and ecological restoration rooted in divine wisdom.

TOWARD AN ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC

Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah and the inclusion of environment

The classical framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* the higher objectives of Islamic law has traditionally emphasized the protection of five essential values: religion (*dīn*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*māl*). However, in the context of contemporary ecological challenges, scholars have argued for the expansion of this framework to include environmental protection (*ḥifẓ al-bi'ah*) as a sixth essential objective. This reinterpretation is not merely a theoretical innovation, but a necessary ethical development in response to the pressing need for sustainable planetary stewardship (Kamali 2010; Khalid 2002).

Environmental integrity is closely tied to each of the original five *maqāṣid*. For instance, the protection of life cannot be fulfilled without clean air, safe water, and fertile soil. Likewise, safeguarding intellect and religion becomes meaningless in a world afflicted by ecological collapse, displacement, or disease due to environmental degradation. Therefore, integrating *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* into the *maqāṣid* framework not only complements the classical objectives but reinforces their enduring relevance in a rapidly changing world (Foltz 2006; Sadeq 2021).

Qur'anic principles support this expansion. The concept of *mīzān* (balance) in nature, as described in Q.S Ar-

Rahman[55]: 7-9, underscores the moral obligation to avoid transgressing ecological limits. Similarly, the command to avoid *fasād* (corruption) on Earth (Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41) calls for systemic action to address environmental degradation. These verses highlight the interdependence between divine will and human responsibility, making the inclusion of environmental protection within Islamic legal objectives both justified and urgent (Nasr 1996; Özdemir 2013).

This approach is gaining traction among contemporary scholars and environmental ethicists who advocate for a dynamic, context-responsive reading of Islamic legal maxims. According to Auda (2008), *maqāṣid*-based thinking enables a shift from literalism to purposive reasoning (*ta'līl*), allowing Islamic law to serve the public good (*maṣlaḥah*) in evolving contexts. In light of this, environmental sustainability becomes not an external concern but an internal legal and moral imperative embedded within the Islamic worldview.

Practical implications of this expanded framework are far-reaching. Environmental justice becomes a component of *'adl*, conservation aligns with *ḥifẓ al-māl* through protection of communal resources, and health-related environmental policies support *ḥifẓ al-nafs*. This integrative vision empowers Islamic institutions mosques, schools, courts, and NGOs to advocate for green policies, promote ethical consumption, and engage in ecological restoration as expressions of fulfilling the *maqāṣid* (Khalid 2002; Ziauddin 2020).

Including *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* in the higher objectives of *sharī'ah* does not undermine classical jurisprudence; rather, it revives its spirit of mercy (*rahmah*) and justice in addressing new realities. In an age where climate change threatens the very conditions of life, such inclusion reaffirms Islam's commitment to protecting both creation and the Creator's intent. It provides a coherent theological and legal framework to guide Muslim engagement in environmental ethics, rooted in both revelation and reason.

Eco-theological reflections from tafsīr and prophetic practice

Islamic traditions offer a rich tapestry of eco-theological insights drawn from both classical *tafsīr* and the lived example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). While early exegetes such as Al-Ṭabarī, Al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn Kathīr emphasized theological and legal themes, many of their interpretations reveal ecological implications. Verses on moderation (Q.S Al-An'am[6]: 141), corruption on land and sea (Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41), and balance (*mīzān*) in nature underscore a divine order rooted in justice, restraint, and interdependence (Nasr 1996; Foltz 2006).

Modern scholars have revisited these verses through the lens of environmental ethics, highlighting nature as a dynamic repository of divine signs (*āyāt kauniyyah*). The frequent Qur'anic mention of rain, trees, animals, and celestial cycles is not ornamental but instructional calling for reflection on the interconnectedness of creation and Creator (Q.S An-Nahl[16]: 10-14; Q.S An-Nur[24]: 43-45). Scholars like Nasr and Özdemir emphasize that

environmental care is not an add-on but intrinsic to Islamic spirituality (Özdemir 2013; Khalid 2002).

This spiritual lens is further deepened through the Prophet's *sunnah*, which embodies eco-consciousness through moderation, humility, and compassion. His use of minimal water, even from abundant sources, exemplifies ethical restraint; his care for animals and plants reveals a theology of *rahmah* (mercy) extended beyond humans. Notably, he promoted sustainability in agriculture, stating, *If the Hour comes while you have a palm-cutting in your hand... plant it* (Musnad Ahmad, Hadith 12491) a call to action rooted in hope and ethical duty.

The Prophet's lifestyle marked by *zuhd* (simplicity), non-accumulation, and ecological mindfulness—offers a counter-narrative to modern consumerism. His teachings discourage wastefulness (*israf*) and encourage contentment (*qanā'ah*), aligning spiritual integrity with ecological sustainability (Sadeq 2021; Al-Kalbani 2021).

Revisiting *tafsīr* through eco-theological interpretation, and revitalizing prophetic practices as models of environmental ethics, affirms that sustainability is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings (Furehaug 2020). This integrated approach not only critiques anthropocentric exploitation but repositions humans as humble stewards (*khalīfah*) within the divine order. As climate crises intensify, drawing from these traditions can guide Muslims toward faith-based environmental engagement that is both spiritually transformative and ecologically responsible.

Toward a holistic Islamic environmental framework

A holistic Islamic environmental framework must integrate theology, ethics, law, spirituality, and community practice into a coherent system that addresses the multifaceted nature of the ecological crisis. Rather than treating environmentalism as a peripheral concern, such a framework situates care for the earth at the heart of Islamic life as a manifestation of *tawhīd* (divine unity), *khilāfah* (stewardship), *ʿadl* (justice), and *rahmah* (mercy). It draws upon Qur'anic teachings, Prophetic traditions, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and the legacy of Islamic civilization to construct an actionable ethical vision responsive to contemporary challenges (Nasr 1996; Khalid 2002).

The starting point is theological integration that affirming that creation is not separate from revelation but is itself a form of divine communication. The Qur'an repeatedly invites believers to reflect on nature as *āyāt*, or signs of God (Q.S Az-Zariyat[51]: 20-21). Thus, environmental awareness becomes an act of faith, and ecological destruction is not merely material loss, but a disruption of the spiritual order. This perspective nurtures reverence and accountability, encouraging Muslims to align their behavior with divine intention (Foltz 2006; Özdemir 2013).

Ethically, the framework emphasizes *mīzān* (balance), *amānah* (trust), and *taqwā* (God-consciousness) as guiding principles for sustainable living. These values provide the foundation for environmental justice ensuring that the burden of ecological degradation does not fall disproportionately on the poor, marginalized, or future generations. Islamic ethics calls for *ihsān* (excellence) in

dealings with both people and the planet, demanding restraint in consumption, fairness in resource distribution, and compassion in environmental policies (Kamali 2010; Sadeq 2021).

Legal structures, particularly through the expanded *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, offer institutional legitimacy to environmental action. Recognizing *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* (protection of the environment) as a higher objective enables the formulation of laws and fatwas that prioritize ecological sustainability. Islamic jurisprudence can support eco-friendly urban planning, green *waqf* projects, ethical finance, and conservation-based zoning rooted in both tradition and innovation (Auda 2008; Ziauddin 2020).

Spirituality plays a vital role by cultivating inner transformation. The revival of *zuhd* (asceticism), *shukr* (gratitude), and *tawakkul* (trust in God) encourages lifestyles that are simple, content, and resilient. These virtues counter the consumerist mentality driving environmental exploitation. Mosques, Islamic schools, and *taṣawwuf* traditions can foster eco-spirituality that nurtures mindfulness, interdependence, and environmental healing (Saniotis 2012; Abdul-Matin 2010).

Finally, this holistic framework must manifest in collective action and policy engagement. Islamic civil society, NGOs, and da'wah institutions can translate principles into practice—through climate advocacy, renewable energy initiatives, zero-waste programs, and Islamic environmental education. Such action embodies the Qur'anic imperative to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong (Q.S Ali-Imran[3]: 104), applying it to the ecological domain with urgency and purpose.

By harmonizing belief, ethics, law, and activism, a holistic Islamic environmental framework offers not only critique of the current crisis but also a constructive path forward. It reaffirms that ecological responsibility is not an optional addendum to faith, but a core obligation a trust that must be honored as part of our covenant with God, with creation, and with each other.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DA'WAH AND ISLAMIC OUTREACH

Ecological themes in contemporary da'wah

Contemporary *da'wah*—the call to Islamic values and way of life—must respond to the realities of the ecological crisis with relevance and theological depth. Climate change, environmental degradation, and resource depletion are not just scientific or political concerns; they are spiritual and ethical challenges that affect the integrity of creation, the dignity of life, and the justice of human societies. As such, Islamic preaching must evolve to include environmental consciousness as an essential element of its message, rooted in Qur'anic teachings and Prophetic practice (Khalid 2002; Kamali 2010).

Incorporating ecological themes into *da'wah* requires a paradigm shift: from preaching that is solely centered on ritual correctness or personal piety to one that emphasizes comprehensive ethics (*akhlāq*) and social responsibility. The Qur'an frames humanity as stewards (*khalīfah*) on

Earth (Q.S Al-Baqarah[2]: 30), accountable for the balance of nature (*mīzān*, Q.S Ar-Rahman[55]: 7-9) and forbidden from spreading corruption (*fasād*, Q.S Ar-Rum[30]: 41). These concepts should inform *khutbah* (sermons), lectures, media campaigns, and Islamic curricula transforming *da'wah* into a platform for eco-theological awareness and sustainable action (Foltz 2006; Özdemir 2013).

Successful examples have emerged globally. In Indonesia, *pesantren* and *majlis taklim* have begun introducing climate issues in sermons and local programs, sometimes integrating tree-planting into Islamic festivities. In East Africa and the Middle East, imams supported by Islamic Relief and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation have delivered *khutbah* on water conservation, reforestation, and clean energy as expressions of *ibādah* and justice. These initiatives demonstrate that environmental *da'wah* can mobilize communities, reshape behavior, and foster local resilience when anchored in faith-based principles (Abdul-Matin 2010; Al-Kalbani 2021).

Moreover, digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for ecological *da'wah*. Social media, YouTube sermons, podcasts, and online learning can reach young Muslim audiences with content that integrates environmental science and Islamic values. The use of storytelling, Qur'anic metaphors, and visual symbolism rooted in creation can inspire deeper emotional and spiritual connections to nature. This is crucial in countering apathy or fatalism and in cultivating hope and responsibility (Saniotis 2012; Ziauddin 2020).

However, challenges remain. Many preachers lack ecological literacy, and environmental discourse may be seen as secondary or even politicized. Therefore, training programs for *dā'ī*, religious teachers, and mosque leaders are essential to equip them with both theological arguments and practical knowledge. Institutions of higher Islamic learning must embed environmental ethics into their curricula, linking *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and *sīrah* to ecological themes (Khalid 2002; Sadeq 2021).

Ecological *da'wah* thus becomes a means of *tajdīd* revival not only of religious practice, but of our collective relationship with creation (Dallh 2024). It reaffirms that addressing climate change is not a distraction from faith but a fulfillment of it. By placing environmental themes at the heart of contemporary Islamic preaching, the ummah can reawaken its prophetic mission: to protect the Earth as a trust, uphold justice among its inhabitants, and reflect the mercy of the Creator in every action.

Building environmental awareness through islamic education

Islamic education plays a foundational role in shaping values, behavior, and worldviews across Muslim societies. As the ecological crisis deepens, there is an urgent need to integrate environmental awareness into Islamic educational institutions from primary schools and *pesantren* to madrasahs, universities, and informal study circles (*halaqah*). This integration ensures that sustainability is not viewed as a foreign concept but as an organic extension of Islamic ethics and theology (Khalid 2002, Kamali 2010).

The Qur'an repeatedly invites believers to reflect on nature as a source of knowledge and spiritual insight. Verses such as Q.S Al-Ghasiyah[88]: 17-20 *Do they not look at the camels, how they are created?...* and Q.S Al-An'am[6]: 99 *Look at how We produce the crops...* exemplify the pedagogical value of the natural world. These *āyāt kauniyyah* serve as open classrooms, encouraging observation, curiosity, and humility. Incorporating these themes into the curriculum fosters not only scientific literacy but a sacred appreciation for the environment as part of divine revelation (Foltz 2006; Al-Kalbani 2021).

At the primary and secondary levels, Islamic schools can embed ecological principles into existing subjects such as *fiqh*, *akhlāq*, and *tafsīr* by linking them to environmental issues. Lessons on *ṭahārah* (purity), for instance, can include water conservation, while teachings on *ḥalāl* food can explore ethical farming and local sourcing. Simple activities like school gardens, recycling projects, and eco-friendly mosque practices provide practical experience that reinforces spiritual teachings with real-world action (Saniotis 2012; Ziauddin 2020).

At higher levels, Islamic universities and faculties of *sharī'ah*, *usuluddin*, and *da'wah* can develop interdisciplinary courses that bridge environmental science and Islamic ethics. Topics such as Islamic environmental jurisprudence (*fiqh al-bi'ah*), eco-theology, and sustainability in Islamic civilization could be mainstreamed into curricula. These courses equip future scholars, imams, and activists with the tools to engage ecological issues with both religious authority and scientific understanding (Auda 2008; Özdemir 2013).

Teacher training is also critical. Without knowledgeable and committed educators, curriculum reform will remain superficial. Specialized training modules should be developed to help Islamic educators understand climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development from Islamic perspectives. Collaboration between environmental NGOs and religious education departments can enrich this process and ensure relevance and accuracy (Abdul-Matin 2010; Sadeq 2021).

Beyond formal institutions, Islamic education also takes place in informal settings mosques, online platforms, community events, and parent-child interactions. These spaces offer powerful avenues to normalize ecological values and embed them into everyday life. For example, mosque youth groups can organize clean-up drives as acts of *ṣadaqah*, or online *halaqah* can discuss Qur'anic verses related to creation and conservation. These practices foster a culture of environmental stewardship that is spiritually grounded and socially relevant (Khalid 2002; Al-Mahmoud 2019).

By embedding environmental awareness into the fabric of Islamic education, the Muslim ummah can raise a generation that sees no divide between faith and sustainability. This approach cultivates not only knowledge but consciousness—a heart-centered engagement with creation that upholds the trust (*amānah*) bestowed by God. Islamic education thus becomes a catalyst for ethical transformation, equipping learners not only to understand

the world, but to care for it with wisdom, justice, and compassion.

In conclusion the Qur'anic worldview offers a holistic ethical and spiritual foundation for addressing today's ecological crisis. It links natural balance (*mīzān*), corruption (*fasād*), and calamities (*musibah*, *bala'*) to human moral conduct, framing environmental degradation as a spiritual rupture rather than a mere technical failure. Humans are entrusted as *khalīfah* and *amīn*, bearing responsibility for upholding divine justice on Earth. Prophetic traditions rooted in simplicity, compassion, and moderation—provide living models for ecological ethics. The incorporation of *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* into *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, alongside eco-theological interpretations and environmentally conscious da'wah and education, reflects a paradigm shift within Islamic thought. Rather than being imposed from outside, sustainability emerges as a rediscovery of Islam's intrinsic values. When integrated into faith-based institutions, Islamic environmentalism fosters moral transformation, communal resilience, and a meaningful contribution to global ecological justice.

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