

## FROM SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION TO ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

### Reconstructing Environmental Hermeneutics in Indonesian Qur’anic Exegesis

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#### Abstract

Amid the escalating global ecological crisis, religious discourse is increasingly expected to provide ethical and theological foundations for environmental responsibility. This article examines Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi as a pioneering effort to construct a coherent Islamic eco-theological paradigm. Employing a qualitative hermeneutical approach, this study analyzes how the tafsir systematically reinterprets key Qur’anic concepts—*taskhīr*, *tawhīd*, *khalifah-amānah*, and *mīzān-anti-fasād*—into a theologically grounded framework for ecological ethics. The findings reveal that the tafsir successfully bridges classical exegetical traditions and contemporary ecological concerns, shifting from an anthropocentric worldview toward a the-anthropocentric paradigm grounded in divine accountability and ecological restraint. This study contributes to the formulation of an “Islamic ecological hermeneutics” that is both authoritative and contextually rooted in the Indonesian Muslim experience. Moreover, the tafsir positions religious authority as a moral agent in addressing the planetary crisis by providing normative legitimacy for green transformation across multiple sectors. Nevertheless, its transformative impact ultimately depends on effective institutional translation into public policy, education, and religious norms, thereby offering a complex yet promising pathway for embedding ecological ethics within the Islamic public sphere in Indonesia and beyond.

**Keywords** Ecological Tafsir, Ecotheology, Environmental Ethics, Khalifah.

**Abstrak**

*Di tengah meningkatnya krisis ekologi global, wacana keagamaan semakin diharapkan mampu memberikan landasan etis dan teologis bagi tanggung jawab terhadap lingkungan. Artikel ini mengkaji Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi sebagai upaya awal yang penting dalam membangun paradigma eko-teologi Islam yang koheren. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan hermeneutika kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana tafsir tersebut secara sistematis menafsirkan kembali konsep-konsep utama Al-Qur'an—taskhīr, tawhīd, khalifah-amānah, dan mīzān—anti-fasād—ke dalam kerangka etika ekologi yang berlandaskan teologi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tafsir ini berhasil menjembatani tradisi tafsir klasik dengan persoalan ekologi kontemporer, sekaligus menggeser cara pandang antroposentris menuju paradigma teo-antroposentris yang berakar pada pertanggungjawaban kepada Tuhan dan pengendalian diri secara ekologis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada perumusan “hermeneutika ekologi Islam” yang otoritatif dan berakar pada pengalaman Muslim Indonesia. Selain itu, tafsir ini menempatkan otoritas keagamaan sebagai agen moral dalam menghadapi krisis planet dengan memberikan legitimasi normatif bagi transformasi hijau di berbagai sektor. Namun demikian, dampak transformatifnya sangat bergantung pada penerjemahan institusional yang efektif ke dalam kebijakan publik, pendidikan, dan norma keagamaan. Dengan demikian, tafsir ini menawarkan jalan yang kompleks, tetapi menjanjikan, untuk menanamkan etika ekologi dalam ruang publik Islam di Indonesia dan bahkan di tingkat yang lebih luas.*

**Kata kunci:** Khalifah, Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi, Ekoteologi, Etika Lingkungan

## Introduction

At present, the global ecological crisis has reached an alarming stage, marked by the accelerated advance of climate change, mass extinctions of biodiversity, and the degradation of life-support systems such as water, air, and soil. The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) unequivocally affirms that human activities—principally through greenhouse gas emissions from unsustainable energy systems, land-use change, and patterns of consumption—have caused a global temperature increase of approximately 1.1°C above the 1850–1900 baseline (IPCC 2023, 4). This warming, the fastest over any 50-year period in at least the last two millennia, has intensified extreme weather events, disrupted ecosystems, and deepened environmental inequities between and within nations. Beyond the empirical dimension, the environmental crisis also represents a crisis of worldview—a rupture in the moral and metaphysical foundations that once governed humanity’s relationship with nature (Febrianingsih, Arifi, and Sabarudin 2025, 1455). Modernity’s anthropocentric ontology, rooted in the dualism between subject and object, has desacralized the natural world, transforming it into a mere instrument for economic growth and human satisfaction. This paradigm positions humans as absolute rulers over nature, resulting in the exploitation of resources without regard for ecological limits and intergenerational justice (Droz 2022; Kopnina et al. 2018). In the Indonesian context, problems such as deforestation, river pollution, and the plastic-waste crisis have exacerbated these conditions, demanding responses that are not merely technical but transformative at the level of values and worldview (Adyasari et al. 2021).

Al-Qur’an, as the primary source of the Islamic worldview, offers a rich cosmological and ethical foundation for reconstructing the human–nature relationship. Key concepts such as *taskhīr* (the subjugation of nature, surah Al-Jāsiyah (45): 13), *khalīfah* (the trust of leadership, surah Al-Baqarah (2): 30), *mīzān* (cosmic balance, surah Ar-Rahman (55): 7–9), and the prohibition against *fasād* (corruption, surah Ar-Rūm (30): 41) form a network of meanings that affirm humanity’s position as an integral part of nature, not a sovereign external to it (Basri et al. 2024; Dien 1997). The numerous *ayāt al-kauniyyah* (signs of nature) dispersed throughout the al-Qur’an portray all creation as *āyah* (sign) that directs recognition toward the oneness and majesty of the Creator; to damage that creation is thus tantamount to denying the divine message contained within it (Bahri et al. 2025).

The discourse on Islam and ecology has developed rapidly over recent decades, spearheaded by seminal works such as *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust* (Foltz 2003) and Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s (1996) visionary reflections on sacred cosmology. This has been followed by foundational theoretical works 6/9/2026 9:34:00 AMexploring

theological and ethical frameworks (Dien 2000; Kamali 2012; Saniotis 2012) and more applied studies on *fiqh al-bī'ah* (environmental jurisprudence) and *maqāṣid*-based approaches (Gobaili Saged, Abu Alhaj, and Zulkifli Bi 2017; Mun'im 2022; al-Qaraḏāwiy 2000). Empirical and contextual studies have also emerged, examining Muslim environmental practices (Ives et al. 2024; Koehrsen 2021), conservation initiatives (Mangunjaya 2019; Mangunjaya and Elizabeth McKay 2012), and the role of religious leadership (Jakti et al. 2025; Maslani 2023). In Indonesia specifically, scholarship has addressed eco-theology in education (Febrianingsih, Arifi, and Sabarudin 2025; Rohman et al. 2024), local wisdom (I. Haq, L, and Amiruddin 2025; Maatoke, Ludji, and Adi 2024), and policy critique (Hidayatulloh et al. 2024; Nur et al. 2025). However, a consistent gap identified across this rich literature is the limited in-depth hermeneutical analysis of an authoritative, state-issued *tafsīr* dedicated explicitly to ecology. Studies such as Gade (Gade 2024) have begun to touch on practical-legal aspects, but a comprehensive study that dissects the conceptual architecture, hermeneutical method, and policy implications of an official exegesis like the Ministry of Religious Affairs' *Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi* (Reflita et al. 2025) remains absent. This article aims to fill that precise gap.

This article centers its analysis on *Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi: Membangun Kesadaran Ekoteologis Berbasis al-Qur'an* (Reflita et al. 2025) as the primary object. This *tafsīr* was selected because it represents the first and most comprehensive institutional product in Indonesia that explicitly frames ecology within a thematic Qur'anic exegesis. This study specifically explores the construction and manifestation of four conceptual pillars of Islamic ecotheology within that *tafsīr*: (1) the Reorientation of the Meaning of *taskhīr*, (2) *tauḥīd* as a Cosmological Foundation, (3) *khalīfah* and *amānah* as an Ethics of Responsibility, and (4) *mīzān* as an Imperative of Balance. These four concepts are positioned as load-bearing concepts that shape the ecotheological paradigm in this *tafsīr* (Nasir, Nair, and Ahmed 2022; Saniotis 2012).

Based on the research gaps identified, this article is formulated to answer the central question: How does *Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi* reconstruct and manifest an Islamic ecotheological paradigm through the reinterpretation of *taskhīr*, *tauḥīd*, *khalīfah*, and *mīzān*, and what epistemological and ethical contributions does it offer to the global ecotheology discourse? This question is elaborated to reveal not only the hermeneutic-textual dimensions of the *tafsīr* but also its normative implications for the formation of environmental ethics and sustainable public policy (I. Haq, L, and Amiruddin 2025). Academically, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic ecotheology studies by offering the first in-depth analysis of a contemporary authoritative *tafsīr* from Indonesia. Its conceptual findings are expected to enrich the

global discourse on religion and ecology, particularly by connecting sacred text with specific socio-ecological contexts. Practically, this analysis has direct relevance for policymakers, educators, and environmental activists in designing conservation and sustainable development strategies grounded in Islamic values and local wisdom, while simultaneously strengthening cultural legitimacy for collective action in the face of the ecological crisis (Hidayatulloh et al. 2024, 394; Maslani 2023, 1014; Nur et al. 2025, 365).

## Method

This study employs a qualitative hermeneutic approach focused on critical textual analysis. The primary data source is the book *Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi: Membangun Kesadaran Ekoteologis Berbasis al-Qur'an* (Reflita et al. 2025) published by the Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), Republic of Indonesia. The analysis is conducted through the following stages: (1) Descriptive-Explanatory Analysis: mapping the structure, methodology, and interpretive techniques used in the *tafsīr*; (2) Thematic Analysis: isolating and critically examining the four key conceptual pillars (*taskhīr*, *tauḥīd*, *khalīfah-amānah*, *mīzān-anti-fasād*) that form the core of its ecotheological paradigm; and (3) Critical-Evaluative Analysis: assessing the hermeneutical consistency, epistemological contributions, practical utility, and potential tensions within the *tafsīr*'s arguments. This tripartite method allows not only for a systematic exposition of the *tafsīr*'s content but also for a critical engagement with its assumptions, bridging textual interpretation with an evaluation of its significance for contemporary ecological ethics and policy discourse.

## Islamic Ecotheology as a Paradigm

Islamic ecotheology constitutes a conceptual and normative framework that reconstructs theological, ethical, and juridical foundations within Islam to respond to environmental crisis. The interpretation of verses concerning creation, balance, and prohibitions on corruption (*fasād*) in the classical *tafsīr* tradition has been extensively treated by major exegeses such as (Aṭ-Ṭabarī n.d.), (Al-Qurṭubiy 1964), and (Al-Rāziy 2000). They read nature as *āyāt* and address the moral implications of human actions toward creation. This historical approach provides a hermeneutical basis for mobilizing traditional norms in response to contemporary issues (Fatah and Taufiq 2019).

Muslim and interdisciplinary scholars have developed this into an explicit ecotheological paradigm. Hossein Nasr emphasizes the need for a “sacred science” that restores the metaphysical dimension to scientific knowledge so that understanding of nature is not eroded by modern reductionism (Nasr 1990). Mawil Izzi Dien formulates theological, ethical, *fiqh*, and socio-economic dimensions of Islam that are relevant to environmental policy (Dien 2000). Cross-disciplinary anthologies such as *Islam and*

Ecology (Foltz 2003) map Qur’anic principles—such as *tauḥīd*, *khalīfah*, *mīzān*, and *anti-fasād*—as normative foundations for environmental action. The *maqāṣid* approach offers a practical hermeneutical instrument. It evaluates textual interpretation against the objectives of *syarī’ah* (the preservation of life, property, and ecological balance) (Mun’im 2022, 197), enabling ecological *ijtihād* to be guided by clear normative ends (‘Āsyūr 2001; Gobaili Saged, Abu Alhaj, and Zulkifli Bi 2017; Kamali 2003). In practice and mobilization, initiatives such as Fazlun Khalid (IFEES) and Ibrahim Abdul-Matin’s Green Deen translate these principles into education, mosque audits, and concrete public campaigns (Abdul-Matin 2010).

Environmental science literature and religious studies also underscore the role of religion in shaping values toward nature. Cross-disciplinary reviews find that religion can influence ecological values and collective practices, but its effects depend on how texts are reinterpreted and institutionalized (Ives et al. 2024). Empirical studies on Muslims and climate change likewise highlight interpretive variation and the need for dialogue among ulama, scientists, and policy actors (S. N. Haq 2001; Koehrsen 2021). Against this background, *Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi* (Reflita et al. 2025) must be evaluated in terms of the extent to which it reactivates the reservoir of classical *tafsīr*, articulates *maqāṣid* and environmental *fiqh* principles, and bridges hermeneutics with public action (curriculum, fatwa, policy). Ideally, ecotheology as a paradigm connects theoretical dimensions (*tauḥīd*, *khalīfah*, *mīzān*) with practical dimensions (environmental *fiqh*, education, advocacy), so that an institutional *tafsīr* can become an engine of change while remaining textually and methodologically accurate. The following section will assess whether and how *Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi* fulfills these functions (Bsoul et al. 2022).

### **Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi by the Indonesia’s Ministry of Religious Affairs**

The proliferation of Islamic ecotheological discourse has often remained within the realms of normative philosophy or grassroots activism, lacking the authoritative hermeneutical foundation and institutional leverage necessary for broad-scale integration into public policy and national education systems. The publication of *Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi* directly addresses this lacuna, positioning itself as a strategic intervention that bridges state religious authority, classical exegesis, and the urgent national ecological agenda. (Reflita et al. 2025, ix and 12).

The volume implements a thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mauḍū’ī*) applied consistently to each entry through four stages. First, a Thematic Title states the key ecological concept and cites the foundational verse. Second, *Tafsir Mufradāt* is used to analyze etymological or semantic features of key terms, drawing on classical lexical references

(for example, Ibn Fāris; Rāḡib al-Isfahāniy). Third, Tafsir Ayat consists of a textual interpretation that synthesizes classical *mufasssīrīn* such as al-Ṭabariy, al-Qurṭubiy, and al-Rāziy, prophetic *ḥadīṣ*, and—selectively—findings from modern science. Crucially, the use of contemporary ecological phenomena (deforestation, habitat degradation) functions primarily as contextual illustration to affirm the moral relevance of the text, rather than as an independent scientific authority that determines the meaning of the verse itself. This maintains the hermeneutical primacy of the classical linguistic and exegetical tradition while engaging the modern context. Fourth, Messages and Reflections provide normative conclusions, often accompanied by pull quotes from authorities as the core idea. This approach enables a cohesive reading that connects close textual reading with normative synthesis and praxis-oriented recommendations (Rohman et al. 2024, 218). However, the methodological consistency of this four-stage template across diverse ecological themes warrants scrutiny—does it allow for nuanced treatment of each concept, or does it risk a formulaic application?

The interpretive orientation of the work is normative-ecothological: verses concerning the environment are treated not only grammatically but also functionally as the basis for an environmental ethic by linking *tauḥīd*, *khalīfah*, *mīzān*, and the concept of *fasād* to demands for conservation and ecological justice. The chosen methodology combines linguistic analysis, attention to *asbāb an-nuzūl* where relevant, and a *maqāṣidī* orientation to emphasize the objectives of *syarī'ah* that are pertinent to environmental policy (Chapra 2008; Gobaili Saged, Abu Alhaj, and Zulkifli Bi 2017; Reflita et al. 2025). A critical question emerges here: does the selective integration of 'findings from modern science' serve merely as illustrative support, or does it actively reshape the hermeneutical boundaries of the classical *tafsīr* tradition?

For example, in the rubric titled “Human as *Khalīfah*: The Stewardship Responsibility for the Earth”, the entry opens with surah Al-Baqarah (2): 30 as its foundation. In the *mufradāt* stage the book explicates the word *khalīfah* (root *kha-la-fa*; ref. Ibn Fāris; Rāḡhib al-Aṣfahāniy) as “successor/representative,” carrying connotations of responsibility, representation, and moral capacity. The analysis of *yufsidu fihā* related to the root *fa-sa-da* is explained as an action that removes something from balance—allowing a reading of *fasād* not only as violence but also as ecological damage (logging, pollution). The term *yasfiku* is presented lexically (connotations of “to spill,” often associated with blood) to underscore the socio-moral dimension of destruction. At the verse-interpretation stage, the angel–God dialogue is read as a reflection on human dual potential—to destroy and to build—and is contextualized with contemporary phenomena (deforestation, habitat degradation). The entry closes with Messages & Reflections that affirm the *amānah* of *khalīfah* as a practical basis: calls for conservation,

equitable policy, and environmental ethics education (Reflita et al. 2025, 76–79). This move from exegesis to exhortation is pivotal, yet it raises the question of operationalizability: are these reflections sufficient to guide concrete action, or do they remain at the level of normative aspiration requiring further translation into policy instruments?



Figure 1. Content of the Tafsir in the Book *Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi* (Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia)

### Hermeneutics of Nature: Thematic Analysis and Interpretation of Key Concepts

At the hermeneutical level, *Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi* exhibits an interpretive pattern that emphasizes the following points:

#### *Reconfiguring Taskhīr: Toward a Theocentric Ecological Ethic*

Analysis of the MoRA's ecological *tafsir* reveals an urgent need to reorient the prevailing understanding of *taskhīr*, a concept that has often been misread as a license for the exploitation of nature. The conventional, anthropocentric reading proves problematic when confronted with contemporary ecological crises (Heikkinen et al. 2024). This study reconstructs *taskhīr* as a theocentric-ecological concept in which the subjugation of nature is not a license to dominate but an *ilāhī amānah* (divine trust)

that entails moral responsibility (Reflita et al. 2025, 106). This perspective aligns with Lynn White's (1967) critique of anthropocentric paradigms in Judeo-Christian traditions, while placing particular emphasis on the distinctive Islamic worldview that frames nature as a network of divine signs (Minteer and Manning 2005).

The dialectic between *taskhīr* (subjugation of nature) and *khalīfah* (divine representation) elaborated in the second rubric forms a comprehensive ethical framework. *Taskhīr* as a divine gift must be understood within the horizon of *khalīfah* as a cosmological responsibility. This configuration shifts humanity's status from "ruler of nature" to "divine steward" accountable for maintaining ecological balance (*mīzān*) (Reflita et al. 2025, 114–15). The finding reinforces Hossein Nasr's (1996) thesis in *Religion and the Order of Nature*, which underscores the importance of restoring the spiritual dimension in human–nature relations, while offering a distinctly Islamic perspective through the conceptual integration of *taskhīr* and *khilāfah*.

Moreover, a linguistic-philosophical analysis of the particle 'min' (some/part of) in the phrase *min faḍlih* in surah Al-Jāsiyah (45): 12 uncovers an embedded principle of ecological restraint within the linguistic structure of the Qur'an. This implicit limitation represents an ethic of resource use that respects ecological boundaries and intergenerational justice (Reflita et al. 2025, 117). The finding corresponds to the concept of "planetary boundaries" developed by (Rockström et al. 2009) in global sustainability discourse, albeit grounded in a distinct theological motivation. Whereas secular approaches justify long-term anthropocentric stewardship on instrumental grounds, the *taskhīr* paradigm derives its normativity from obedience to the Creator and recognition of the rights of other creatures.

The elaboration of three tiers in human–nature relations—utilization, contemplation, and love—is relatively revolutionary: this hierarchy represents a progression of ecological consciousness from the instrumental to the relational-transcendental (Reflita et al. 2025, 119). The highest tier, in which nature is perceived as an expression of love for the Creator, echoes elements of "environmental virtue ethics" as developed by (Sandler 2009) but with an explicitly theological foundation. Positioning nature as *āyāt kauniyyah* that are commensurate with *āyāt qaulyyyah* (revelatory words) creates a moral imperative to treat the natural world with the same reverence accorded to sacred scripture (Febriani, Syahida, and Taufiq 2023).

The reorientation of *taskhīr* proposed by this volume makes a significant contribution to global ecotheology. While much Western literature frames religion and ecology in a dichotomous relation, the construction of *taskhīr* as a theocentric-ecological ethic integrates spiritual and ecological dimensions organically. This model is not only relevant for Muslim communities but also provides an alternative

perspective for global environmental debates that are often trapped in the polarities of anthropocentrism versus ecocentrism, offering a theocentric middle ground that combines responsible use with transcendental respect (Rizvi 2010). This theocentric ecology distinguishes itself from three dominant models: (1) from anthropocentric stewardship (e.g., Biblical dominion models) by placing ultimate accountability to God, not human interest, at the core; (2) from ecocentric/deep ecology by rejecting the intrinsic value of nature as self-derived, instead locating its sacredness in its status as creation (*āyah*) of the Divine; and (3) from secular environmental pragmatism by rooting the imperative for action in metaphysical truth and eschatological consequence, not merely in utilitarian or survivalist calculus. This synthesis positions the human as a morally accountable steward within a creation that is both subjugated (*taskhīr*) and sacred.

Nevertheless, this radical reorientation of *taskhīr* from dominion to trust carries inherent risks. It could be critiqued from traditionalist quarters as a dilution of the Qur'an's apparent meaning, or from pragmatic policymakers as an idealistic framework that underestimates the complex economic drivers of exploitation. Its success hinges entirely on its ability to be internalized within religious education and sermonizing to reshape deep-seated cultural attitudes.

#### *Tauhīd as a Cosmological Foundation*

Analysis of the ecological *tafsīr* rubrics reveals that the concept of *tauḥīd* functions as a cosmological foundation that transforms the human–nature relationship from mere physical interaction into a meaningful spiritual engagement. A deep understanding of *Rabb al-‘Ālamīn* (the Sustainer of the Worlds) does not only shape theological consciousness but also establishes a comprehensive eco-ethical framework (Reflita et al. 2025, 14–20). This concept radically de-anthropocentrism the Muslim worldview by affirming that the entire cosmos—not merely humanity—exists within an integrated network of divine sustenance (Rizvi 2010). The finding reinforces Seyyed Hossein Nasr's (1993) account of a “sacred cosmology” in the Islamic tradition and offers a theological response to Lynn White's critique regarding anthropocentric dominance in Abrahamic traditions (White 1967).

Elaborating *al-‘ālamīn* as the object of divine *rubūbiyyah* projects an inclusive, ecocentric cosmology. Interpreting all creation—from microorganisms to galaxies—as part of the *‘ālam* sustained by Allah generates a moral imperative to treat all natural entities with respect. This construction aligns with Aldo Leopold's (Zhang 2023) “land ethic” notion of ecocentric ethics, although motivated by a different rationale: whereas Leopold grounds ethical regard in ecological considerations alone (Leopold 1987), the *tauḥīd* paradigm derives reverence for nature directly from the recognition of Allah's

*rubūbiyyah*. Fakhr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī's reflections on *munkin al-wujūd*, cited in the rubric, reinforce the ontological claim that creatures are entirely contingent upon Divine will (Reflita et al. 2025, 15; Umar 2025).

The notion of a cosmic *amānah* in surah Al-Ahzāb (33):72, elaborated in the second rubric, shapes an anthropological responsibility within the framework of *tauḥīd*. This *amānah* encompasses not only vertical relations with God and horizontal relations among humans but also ecological relations with all creation. The configuration yields an environmental ethic grounded in the principles of *istikhlāf* (divine representation) and *imārah* (cultivation/prosperity), whereby the use of natural resources must be framed within ecological welfare (*maṣlahah*) corridors (Iswanto 2015, 1–12; Reflita et al. 2025, 19). The finding corresponds to “stewardship ethics” in Christian environmental discussions (Le Roux and College of Education, Department of Educational Foundations, University of South Africa 2016) but places special emphasis on the integration of *syarī'ah* as an operational guide, as developed by Ziauddin Sardar (1985) in *Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come*.

MoRA's ecological *tafsīr* also systematizes three interconnected dimensions of ecological injustice—spiritual, social, and environmental—within the *tauḥīd* framework. Its interpretation accurately identifies how modern forms of shirk—manifested in the worship of material wealth and power—have generated unrestrained exploitation of nature, ultimately leading to collective destruction as illustrated in surah Al-A'rāf (7) :4–5 (Reflita et al. 2025, 186). This analysis aligns with criticisms of the “modernity's disenchantment of nature” advanced by Charles Taylor (2007) in *A Secular Age* (Mellon 2016), albeit refracted through a distinctive Islamic theological lens. The confession *innā kunnā ḡālimīn* (truly we were wrongdoers) is positioned not only as a theological admission of sin but also as a reflexive acknowledgement of ecological wrongdoing (Reflita et al. 2025, 187).

Finally, the ethic of consumption articulated in the fourth rubric—based on halal-haram distinctions in surah Al-An'ām (6): 143—represents a practical implementation of *tauḥīd* in everyday life. Divine limitation in the utilization of livestock, for example, not only secures ecological sustainability but also fosters an “ecology of the mind” that resists modern consumerist logic (Reflita et al. 2025, 225). This approach recalls E.P. Thompson's (1971) notion of a “moral economy” (Kirk 2025), though its normative foundation is revelatory rather than socio historical. The integration of divine servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*), ecological leadership (*khalīfah*), and the cultivation of the earth (*imārah*) generates a model of sustainable development that is intrinsically religious.

The reconstruction of *tauḥīd* as a cosmological foundation offers a substantial contribution to contemporary environmental philosophy. Whereas many secular

approaches become mired in the anthropocentrism–ecocentrism dichotomy, the *tauḥīd* paradigm provides a synthetic, theocentric stance that marries reverence for nature with responsible utilization. This model is relevant not only to Muslim communities but also offers an alternative framework for global debates on sustainability in the Anthropocene. The potential tension in this *tauḥīd*-centric cosmology lies in its practical translation. While it de-centers the human theoretically, the operational responsibility for maintaining *mīzān* still falls entirely on humans. This could inadvertently reinforce a subtle form of managerial anthropocentrism, where humans are still the exclusive actors tasked with 'fixing' a system of which they are merely a part.

#### *Khalīfah and Amānah as Roots of Practical Ethics*

The analysis of *Tafsīr Ayat-ayat Ekologi* reveals that the concepts of *khalīfah* and *amānah* function as the theological foundation for a practical Islamic environmental ethic. The re-interpretation of these two terms transforms them from purely doctrinal propositions into an operational framework that demands ecological accountability. The construction of *khalīfah* as a “steward-in-duty” (rather than an absolute ruler) and *amānah* as a “cosmic covenant” radically revises the anthropocentric position of humanity, situating humans within a web of life that carries moral obligations for care (Reflita et al. 2025). This reconstruction resonates with the project of Islamic Environmental Ethics as proposed by Kamali (2012) and Khalid (2010), while placing stronger emphasis on the collective responsibility embedded in the Qur’anic linguistic-etymological readings (Wani and Azhar 2024).

The integration of these concepts produces a coherent paradigm of environmental ethics. *Khalīfah* defines the ontological role and standing of human beings on earth, while *amānah* supplies the ethical-spiritual framework intrinsic to that role. Their synergy overcomes the dichotomy between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism by proposing a teo-anthropocentric stance—one in which human beings are accountable to God for how they treat the natural world (Reflita et al. 2025). This finding corroborates Fachruddin Mangunjaya’s (2019) thesis in *Conserving Nature in the Islamic Tradition* on the necessity of integrating ecological *fiqh* with spiritual awareness, while complementing it with a robust hermeneutical foundation derived from an authoritative *tafsīr*.

What distinguishes this *tafsīr*’s treatment of *khalīfah* and *amānah* from earlier influential works is its hermeneutical systematization and institutional authority. While Nasr (1996) provided the philosophical and metaphysical groundwork, and Kamali (2012) elaborated the jurisprudential (*fiqh*) principles, this *tafsīr* offers a step-by-step exegetical derivation of these concepts from specific verses, making the theological

argument inseparable from its textual proof. Similarly, compared to Mangunjaya's (2019) focused work on conservation practice, this *tafsīr* provides the comprehensive doctrinal backbone from which such practices can be normatively justified and expanded. Its unique contribution lies in being an authoritative exegetical sourcebook that simultaneously does the work of theology, ethics, and policy advocacy.

One of the *tafsīr*'s most original contributions is its elaboration of the cosmic dimension of *amānah*. The narrative that the heavens, the earth, and the mountains refused to bear the *amānah* (Surah Al-Aḥzāb (33): 72) is read not merely as metaphor but as an index of cosmic awareness: every element of creation is part of a divinely ordered, obedient system (Reflita et al. 2025). This interpretation opens a productive dialogue with ecosophy or “deep ecology” (Drengson 2005), albeit grounded in a different theological premise. Whereas Næss's (2005) program arises from an immanent ecological awareness, the *amānah* paradigm situates respect for nature as derivative of recognition of a divinely ordained cosmic order. This theological grounding addresses a core weakness often attributed to deep ecology: the lack of a clear, binding normative foundation for why humans should obey ecological principles. The *amānah* paradigm provides this foundation in divine command and cosmic covenant. However, it also introduces a potential limitation: by making ecological duty contingent upon belief in a transcendent order, its ethical appeal may be circumscribed within the religious community, unlike deep ecology's aspiration for a universal, metaphysics-light ethic.

At the practical level, the *tafsīr* links *khalifah* to operational principles such as *ʿadl* (ecological justice), *zuhd* (moderation/ascetic simplicity), *i'tidāl* (balance), and *istiḥsān* (juristic preference for the better). These principles form an evaluative ethical framework for assessing natural-resource policy and contemporary consumption patterns (Reflita et al. 2025, 65–66). This orientation corresponds to Western notions of “environmental governance,” but its motivations and legitimating sources are rooted in *syarī'ah*. As Ziauddin Sardar (Ragozina 2023; Sardar 1985) has emphasized, the implementation of *amānah* must proceed through *syarī'ah* channels that secure *istislāh* (ecological welfare).

Furthermore, the *tafsīr*'s reading that differences in human capacity (as indicated in surah Al-An'ām (6): 165) are part of a divine design for mutual complementarity reframes distributive justice. Every advantage—whether in knowledge, power, or access to resources—is cast as a specific *amānah* that requires stewardship and accountability in sustaining ecological balance (Reflita et al. 2025, 82). This theological construction offers a response to ecological inequality debates (Agyeman 2008) and the notion of “just sustainability,” while adding an *ukhrawī* (eschatological/other-worldly) dimension that strengthens the moral imperative.

Finally, the placement of the prophetic tradition encouraging tree planting even if the Hour is imminent—articulated as an unconditional ethic—represents the ethical apex of *khalīfah*. Ecological action is no longer instrumentally motivated by worldly benefit but by commitment to the intrinsic value of safeguarding life as a form of devotion. Spiritualizing conservation in this way contributes significantly to the global “religion and ecology” discourse by demonstrating how theological doctrine can be translated into practical ethics that are both relevant to contemporary ecological crises and coherent with the intellectual traditions of Islam.

However, this framework risks remaining a 'soft' normative ethic without specific, measurable benchmarks for practical accountability. Principles like *'adl* and *zuhd* are subject to flexible interpretation, making them vulnerable to cosmetic appropriation without substantive change. Furthermore, its reliance on *ukhrawī* (otherworldly) motivation may limit its persuasive force in the pluralistic arena of public policy.

#### *Mīzān and Anti-Fasād*

*Tafsīr Ayat-ayat Ekologi* affirms that *mīzān* is not merely an abstract cosmological postulate but an ethical imperative that must be instantiated through concrete action. The concept acquires operational force through the injunction to “perfect measures and balances” (*aufū al-kaila wa al-mīzān*), which the *tafsīr* contextualizes as justice in natural-resource governance. The principle forbids forms of *tabkhus* (the withholding or diminution of rights) both in socio-economic transactions and in ecological domains—such as pollution that deprives communities of access to clean water or fresh air (Reflita et al. 2025, 149). This interpretation accords with the literature on environmental justice (Svarstad and Benjaminsen 2020), though its ontological grounding differs: justice here derives from the enforcement of divine *mīzān*, not solely from social consensus (Othman, Khalid, and others 2024).

The *tafsīr* critically expands the meaning of *fasād* beyond moral corruption to make it a central concept for understanding contemporary ecological crises. Land and sea-based degradation (*fi al-barr wa al-baḥr*) are read as direct outcomes of human agency (*bi mā kasabat aidī an-nās*) that disturb the balance God established (Reflita et al. 2025). This causal framing furnishes a theological basis for the ecological principle of interconnectedness (as in deep ecology), while privileging a vertical relation (human–God) as the foundation for horizontal ecological relations (human–nature) (Drengson 2005). Accordingly, environmental protection becomes integral to faith. The *tafsīr*'s analytic strength lies in its tight integration of *mīzān* and *anti-fasād* as two complementary poles. *Mīzān* functions as a positive principle guiding sustainable development and proportionate use, whereas the prohibition of *fasād* operates as a negative principle preventing excess and harm (Munib et al. 2022, 564). The synergy

generates an ethical circuit in which every policy and action is evaluated against two basic questions: does it support the restoration and maintenance of balance (*mīzān*), and does it avoid or cause *fasād*? This framework parallels the European Union’s “do no significant harm” approach in sustainability regulation but is broader in scope because it incorporates spiritual and eschatological responsibility (European Commission. Joint Research Centre. 2023).

Most visionary in this *tafsīr* is the shift from individual ethics to collective and structural responsibility. By analyzing verb forms such as *tufsidū* (“you [pl.] cause corruption”) and *ta’sau* (organized, large-scale destruction), the *tafsīr* emphatically illuminates structural sins and systemic harms perpetrated by corporations and state policies (Reflita et al. 2025). This emphasis corroborates the “structural sin” thesis in Christian environmental theology (Rasmussen 2013) while enriching it with an Islamic linguistic-hermeneutical analysis. Environmental damage is thus reframed from isolated individual fault to the product of unjust economic systems and political choices that require collective redress and structural reform.

*Tafsīr Ayat-ayat Ekologi* demonstrates its practical relevance by translating *mīzān* and *anti-fasād* directly into the Indonesian and global contexts. Deforestation, industrial pollution, and agrarian injustice are read as concrete manifestations of *fasād* that threaten *mīzān*. The *tafsīr*’s critique of “rationalized harm” in the name of development (*al-aṣw*) is a sharp theological response to developmentalist logics that often neglect ecological sustainability and social justice (Reflita et al. 2025, 126). This stance resonates with political-ecology critiques of global capitalism (Ajl 2023), but it derives its moral authority directly from the sacred text, thereby furnishing strong legitimacy for Muslim-community environmental movements (Saniotis 2012).

Overall, the construction of *mīzān* and *anti-fasād* in this *tafsīr* offers a substantive contribution to global ecotheological discourse. The concepts provide an operational “eco-ethos” that couples rigorous analysis of the roots of ecological crises with solutions grounded in spirituality and justice. While much Western literature separates anthropocentric and ecocentric positions, the *tafsīr*’s theocentric paradigm coherently unites them: humans are held responsible for preserving the balance of nature because the natural world is God’s creation and sign (*āyah*), and every act of corruption against it is a denial of the Creator. The model not only maps a pathway for environmental action in Muslim communities but also offers a rich alternative framework for global civilizations seeking a more meaningful, spiritually informed sustainability.

Nevertheless, expanding the concept of *fasād* too broadly risks diluting its analytical precision in distinguishing degrees and agents of harm. Additionally, there

exists an inherent tension in this *tafsīr*'s position as a structural critique produced by a state institution that may itself be implicated in the developmental logics it critiques.

### Epistemological Contribution: An Integrated Ecological *Tafsīr* Paradigm

*Tafsīr Ayat-Ayat Ekologi* does more than merely append environmental themes to the corpus of Qur'anic exegesis; it reorients interpretive attention toward the cultivation of ecological consciousness as a core moral concern. Rather than advancing a fully articulated operational or policy-oriented framework (Ali and Agushi 2024, 949), the *tafsīr*'s primary epistemological contribution lies in fostering ethical awareness rooted in theological reflection. This orientation is especially evident in the recurring “*Pesan dan Renungan*” (A message and reflection) sections, which function as contemplative spaces inviting readers to internalize ecological responsibility as a dimension of faith (Reflita et al. 2025). Through these reflective passages, concepts such as *taskhīr*, *tauḥīd*, *khalīfah*, *amānah*, *mīzān*, and *anti-fasād* are translated from abstract theological doctrines into moral exhortations that emphasize restraint, accountability, and reverence for creation. In this sense, the *tafsīr* privileges moral formation and spiritual orientation over prescriptive mechanisms for ecological governance, positioning itself as a work aimed primarily at shaping ethical subjectivity within the Muslim community rather than providing technical solutions to environmental crises (Jakti et al. 2025, 41).

Analytically, this approach invites comparison with Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's influential work *Ri'āyat al-Bī'ah fī Syarī'at al-Islām*, which represents a more juridically systematic articulation of Islamic environmental ethics. *Al-Qaraḍāwī* explicitly integrates environmental protection (*ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*) into the framework of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, grounding ecological responsibility within Islamic legal reasoning and positioning it as a necessary means (*wasīlah*) for safeguarding the core objectives of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. His formulation advances clear normative principles—such as justice, moderation, compassion, and stewardship—that translate theological commitments into legal-ethical obligations (al-Qaraḍāwī 2000, 10–33). By contrast, *Tafsīr Ayat-Ayat Ekologi* does not develop a comparable *maqāṣid*-based or *fiqh*-oriented framework. Nevertheless, this limitation is not merely a shortcoming; rather, it highlights the *tafsīr*'s distinct contribution as a foundational moral and theological intervention. It prepares the ethical and spiritual terrain upon which more formal juridical and policy-oriented frameworks, such as those proposed by al-Qaraḍāwī, may be meaningfully constructed within the Indonesian Muslim context.

A second, and more explicitly methodological, contribution of *Tafsīr Ayat-Ayat Ekologi* lies in its systematic and contextual ecological reading of the *āyāt kauniyyah*. The work does not simply assemble Qur'anic verses related to nature; instead, it actively

stages a dialogue between classical exegetical authorities—drawing on linguistic analysis and authoritative *tafsir* traditions—and concrete ecological challenges facing contemporary Indonesia, including deforestation, plastic pollution, and river degradation. Through this dialogical strategy, the *tafsir* bridges the normative authority of the sacred text with the urgency of lived ecological realities, producing what may be described as a form of contextual ecological hermeneutics. This approach offers a compelling alternative to rigid scripturalism that neglects context, as well as to overly liberal interpretations that risk diluting textual authority (Zainol, Majid, and Saad 2018). Moreover, as an institutional product of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the *tafsir* carries significant religious legitimacy, enabling preachers, educators, and policymakers to mobilize its moral authority in support of sustainable development and environmental advocacy in Indonesia (Haylor and Savage 2019).

### **Challenges and Areas for Development: From Text to Collective Action**

Despite its significant contributions, applying the paradigm advanced by Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi faces several substantive and strategic challenges. The first challenge is the translation of normative discourse into concrete public policy and economic practice (Abu-Rayash and Sabbah 2023). The book is rich in ethical principles but leaves room for more detailed elaboration on how *mīzān* and the prohibition of *fasād* should inform regulations on mining, spatial planning, energy policy, or circular-economy models (Hidayatulloh et al. 2024). The difficulty lies in converting a holistic theological framework into measurable policy instruments that can be implemented within complex political-economic systems.

As a concrete instance of policy translation, the Ministry's institutional authority could be channeled into an operational framework for the extractive sector—particularly coal and nickel—by issuing sector-specific guidance that operationalizes *mīzān* and the prohibition of *fasād* (e.g., environmental safeguards, community benefit-sharing rules, and binding ecological-impact thresholds for licensing). The proposal is especially salient given Indonesia's prominent role in global nickel production, which raises both the stakes and leverage for systemic change (Warburton 2024). Nickel and other extractive activities have produced substantial ecological harms—deforestation, coastal and marine degradation, and pollution—underscoring the need for rules that translate theological norms into concrete licensing conditions, reclamation obligations, and enforceable community-benefit clauses (Wahyono et al. 2024). The political opening for such an approach was widened by *Peraturan Pemerintah* (PP) No. 25/2024 (amending PP No. 96/2021), which creates a pathway for *Wilayah Izin Usaha Pertambangan Khusus* (WIUPK) to be prioritized for social and religious organizations (Indonesia 2024). Commentators view this change as presenting both opportunity and

governance risk: it could enable faith-based stewardship of extractive operations, but only if paired with rigorous environmental governance, transparency, and scientific benchmarks (carrying-capacity assessments, biodiversity baselines, and carbon accounting) embedded in operational rules (Fanani and Budiman 2024, 130; Prastika, Putri, and Tasya 2024, 218).

The second challenge is to overcome entrenched religious narratives that remain anthropocentric and exploitative. At the grassroots level, the view persists that nature is merely an object (*taskhīr*) available for unlimited exploitation. Shifting this understanding requires more than publication; it demands massive, creative dissemination strategies through existing channels—pesantren, Friday sermons—and integration into formal education curricula. Without strategic socialization efforts, this visionary *tafsīr* risks remaining an intellectual elite discourse with limited impact on popular consciousness (Djupe and Neiheisel 2022; Mehdi 2025).

Finally, there is scope for deeper engagement with modern ecological science and Nusantara local wisdom. While the *tafsīr* touches general ecological principles, integration with specific scientific data (e.g., environmental carrying capacity, carbon footprints, or Indonesia’s biodiversity metrics) could strengthen its arguments. Moreover, linking *mīzān* with local wisdom such as Bali’s Tri Hita Karana (Pramesti 2019) or Maluku’s Sasi (Maatoke, Ludji, and Adi 2024) could generate deeper cultural resonance and enhance practical relevance. By addressing these challenges, *Tafsīr Ayat-ayat Ekologi* has the potential not merely to be a monument of thought but to become a catalyst for a faith-based, transformative environmental movement in Indonesia.

## Conclusion

*Tafsīr Ayat-ayat Ekologi* by MoRA represents a significant epistemological achievement within contemporary Islam-and-ecology discourse. Its existence does more than enlarge the corpus of thematic *tafsīr*; it substantively transforms the human–nature paradigm within Indonesian interpretive tradition. Through reconstructing key concepts—*taskhīr*, *tauḥīd*, *khalīfah-amānah*, *mīzān* and *anti-fasād*—the *tafsīr* builds a coherent and systematic ecotheological framework. This construction shifts an exploitative anthropocentric worldview toward a theocentric-ecological vision that positions humans as integral parts of a larger life-web, endowed with moral and spiritual responsibility to maintain cosmic balance.

The work’s primary strength lies in its methodological integration: it tightly links profound linguistic-etymological analysis of the al-Qur’an with contemporary ecological challenges. While remaining anchored in classical *tafsīr* authorities, the *tafsīr* responds creatively and contextually to issues such as climate crisis, deforestation, and pollution, offering a model of “contextual ecological hermeneutics” that may serve as a

reference for future thematic exegesis. Its capacity to render theological concepts into the basis for practical environmental ethics—such as intergenerational justice, consumption simplicity, and distributive justice—demonstrates the enduring relevance of the al-Qur'an's message for addressing contemporary problems.

However, the *tafsīr's* transformative impact will depend on its ability to move beyond academic discourse into collective action. Its greatest challenge is translating this sophisticated normative framework into concrete public policy, effective educational curricula, and grassroots social movements. Without massive, creative dissemination through existing religious channels—*pesantren*, and Friday sermons—the *tafsīr's* ecological vision risks remaining an elite narrative detached from the lived practices of the broader community.

*Tafsir Ayat-ayat Ekologi* offers a unique contribution to global ecotheology by presenting a model that is simultaneously authentically traditional and progressively visionary. The work demonstrates that responses to ecological crisis need not sacrifice fidelity to religious tradition; rather, they can draw upon the spiritual depth and ethical resources embedded within that tradition. As an authoritative institutional product, the *tafsīr* not only charts a path for the future of Islamic ecotheology in Indonesia but also inspires other faith communities to undertake creative and responsible rereading's of their own traditions in the face of humanity's greatest existential threat.

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