

# The Solutions of Natural Environmental Degradation in the Perspective of Tafsir An-Nur

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## THE SOLUTIONS TO NATURAL ENVIRONMENT DEGRADATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *TAFSIR AN-NUR*



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### Abstract

This article examines the solutions to the natural environmental damage from the perspective of *Tafsir An-Nur* by Teungku Muhammad Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy. The study of natural environmental damage by a contemporary Indonesian *mufassir in bil-ma'tsur* and *bir-ra'yi* style is essential to understand the local interpretation of Al-Qur'an concerning such damage. Through literature study, this research used a descriptive analysis method to describe the perspectives of *Tafsir An-Nur* regarding verses on the natural environmental damage and the embedded solutions in *al-bī'ah* and *fasād* terms. This article argues that human objectification and greed toward the natural environment are the root of natural environmental damage. Humans' detachment from the moral-spiritual guidance taught by religion, especially Islam, has led humans to exploitative attitudes toward the natural environment. *Tafsir An-Nur* offers several solutions to overcome the natural environmental damage, namely interpreting the position of humans as caliphs fairly and wisely, cultivating the *qana'ah* character, eliminating hypocrisy in behaving, and building mutualistic relationships toward the natural environment. This article shows that efforts to end the damage to the natural environment begin with humans' attention to moral-spiritual aspects of ecology.

### Abstrak

Tulisan ini mengkaji solusi kerusakan lingkungan alam dalam sudut pandang *Tafsir An-Nur* karya Teungku Muhammad Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy. Kajian kerusakan lingkungan alam dari seorang *mufassir Indonesia kontemporer yang bercorak bil-ma'tsur dan bir-ra'yi* penting untuk dilakukan guna memahami penafsiran Al-Qur'an dengan corak lokal. Melalui studi literatur, tulisan ini menggunakan metode analisis deskriptif untuk mendeskripsikan pandangan *Tafsir An-Nur* tentang ayat-ayat kerusakan lingkungan alam dan solusi yang tersemat dalam term *al-bī'ah* dan *fasād*. Artikel ini mengargumentasikan bahwa objektifikasi dan keserakahan manusia terhadap lingkungan alam merupakan akar dari kerusakan lingkungan alam. Tercerabutnya manusia terhadap tuntunan moral-spiritual yang diajarkan agama, khususnya Islam, membawa manusia pada sikap eksploitatif terhadap lingkungan alam. *Tafsir An-Nur* menawarkan beberapa solusi untuk mengatasi kerusakan lingkungan alam, yaitu memaknai kedudukan manusia sebagai khalifah secara adil dan bijaksana, menumbuhkan karakter *qana'ah*, menghilangkan kemunafikan dalam berperilaku, dan membangun hubungan mutualisme terhadap lingkungan alam. Artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa upaya mengakhiri kerusakan lingkungan alam dimulai dari manusia dan perhatiannya pada aspek moral-spiritual ekologi.



## INTRODUCTION

The anthropocentrism paradigm has penetrated almost all technological and infrastructure development practices, as well as production and consumption in industrial economies that stimulate the natural environment degradation (Corlett, 2015; Samways, 2018). Anthropocentrism encompasses a mindset and attitude that perceives humans as superior and dominant compared to other creatures. It encourages humans to exhibit greed by exploiting other beings to maximize their benefits in life. Unconsciously, humans internalize the idea of their primary dominance over nature, relegating other creatures and entities to mere companions fulfilling human needs. This perspective becomes hazardous when humans fail to consider the life capacities of other beings that support their existence, potentially giving rise to natural disasters due to environmental damage.

Religion or spirituality is a crucial component in motivating human thoughts and behaviors based on ethical considerations for the intrinsic sustainability of other living beings. The spiritual and theological aspects of the environmental ethics allow humans to position themselves as fellow creations of God among other created beings in the ecosystem of life on Earth (Sesin, 2003). Spiritual values and religious teachings in treating other living beings should serve as a guide for fair treatment towards fellow creations (Damad, 2000). The crisis of human behavior disregarding environmental balance occurs because of the development of science, production technology, and industry that neglects the spiritual and religious moral aspects (Zuhdi, 2012).

From the perspective of Islamic studies, M. Yaacob et al., Munjed M. Murad, M. Ahmad, and Achmad Cholil Zuhdi highlight that the root of the environmental crisis lies in the lack of engagement with moral, environmental ethics, and spiritual aspects. They emphasize the significance of moral and religious aspects in holistically responding to environmental crisis issues (Ahmad, 2019; Murad, 2012; Yaacob et al., 2017; Zuhdi, 2012). Seyyed Hossein Nasr asserts that religious aspects are crucial in addressing complex environmental problems. He believes that nature is a symbol of God, so damaging the environment is equivalent to "harming" God (Nasr, 1996). Moral considerations should be a significant factor for humans in managing the natural environment rather than solely prioritizing economic gain and other needs. The religious perspective in the study of ecological crises enables the identification of the sources of environmental crises and offers solutions, primarily through the lens of human awareness and the attitudes they adopt in their interactions with nature (Rodin, 2017).

The religious or theocentric approach to preserve faith, morality, and righteousness can safeguard the natural environment and serve as the seed of environmental degradation itself. Religion offers messages of goodness for both humans and the Earth's ecosystems if humans have a comprehensive and balanced thought process. Islamic theocentric views that there is a unity between humans and nature; thus, humans have a responsibility towards nature that must be fulfilled correctly based on the teachings of the Qur'an and hadiths (Gulzar et al., 2021). Conversely, religion can also become a source of environmental damage when individuals interpret God's messages literally and prioritize their interests over the rest of God's creation (Qomarullah, 2014).

Theocentric approaches are prevalent in the works of translators of the Qur'an, ranging from classical to contemporary translators. They discuss it through various frameworks, such as environmental jurisprudence (*fiqh al-bi'ah*) and ecotheology. For instance, Yusuf al-Qardhawi explains that preserving the natural environment is part of

the goals of religious law (*maqāsid al-syarī'ah*), which include *hifzu al-nafs* (protecting life), *hifzu al-'aql* (protecting intellect), *hifzu al-māl* (protecting property), *hifzu al-nasb* (protecting lineage), and *hifzu al-dīn* (protecting religion). Therefore, damaging the natural environment means attempting to harm these five objectives (Al-Qaradhawi, 2001). *Fiqh al-bi'ah* provides practical explanations based on jurisprudential reasoning on Qur'anic texts and hadiths, making it easily acceptable in the consciousness of the Islamic community (Al-Jābiri, 1993).

The ecotheology framework puts religious beliefs as the foundation for understanding environmental degradation. In this context, religion serves as a guide for restoring and managing the damaged natural environment, considering the environment's well-being as taught by religious principles. Ecotheology views the relationship between God, nature, and humans as a systemic relationship, where God is the creator of the natural environment and humans, as well as their owner and caretaker (Mujiono, 2001). Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, an ecotheologian, in his work *Risālah al-Nūr*, argues that the degradation of the natural environment stems from human materialism, which rejects the transcendental and spiritual aspects of understanding and treating the natural environment (Ozdemir, 2000). Nursi believes that the natural environment reflects the beauty of God with a sacred dimension; therefore, it is impermissible for anyone to cause damage to it. Human stewardship is not a theological justification for exploiting the natural environment but rather a responsibility to preserve it (Barghuth, 2000).

This article employs a theocentric approach to understand verses in the Qur'an related to environmental degradation, explored through the term "*fasād*" (degradation). The term "*fasād*" refers to something that is out of balance and has detrimental environmental impact. This word is mentioned around 50 times and encompasses various meanings, including environmental damage caused by factors involving the soul, physical elements, and other aspects that disrupt the intended balance (Al-Asfahani, n.d.). Quraish Shihab argues that environmentally harmful behavior refers to actions that eliminate some or all the functions of something that should provide full benefits.

Teungku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddiqey, an Indonesian *mufassir*, used a scientific approach to interpret the Al-Qur'an verses in one of his books, "*Tafsir An-Nur*" (1966). *Tafsir An-Nur* is an academically oriented interpretation book (Nusantara exegesis) utilizing the methods of interpretation through transmitted knowledge (*bil-ma'tsur*) and rational reasoning (*bir-ra'yi*). Teungku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddiqey was also able to infuse the Indonesia local nuances and the socio-cultural context into his interpretations (Ash-Shiddiqey, 2000). Approaching environmental damage from a theocentrism angle with the scientific pattern is a crucial component in initiating analysis and formulating solutions. Research on environmental damage with an Islamic Quranic and interpretative approach is essential because a religious perspective can offer moral-based solutions for addressing environmental damage while complementing the existing scientific solutions.

The position of Teungku Muhammad Hasbi ash-Shiddiqey's interpretation lies at the intersection of *fiqh al-bi'ah* and ecotheology. He drew inspiration from al-Maraghi's exegesis, jurisprudential books, and Islamic cultural history while explaining them theologically. Hasbi's goal in producing *Tafsir an-Nur* was to convey Quranic interpretations, which were dominated by the Arabic language at the time, in a way that Indonesian society could access following the social and cultural context of religious practices in Indonesia. Hasbi supplemented the Quranic verses in this commentary using



the Latin language during a period when there was a debate on translating the Quranic verses into non-Arabic languages ('*ajam*). Ibn Taymiyyah was one of the commentators who believed that translating the Quran into other languages was not permissible, as it could not accurately convey the intended meanings in accordance with the Arabic language of the Quran (Shiddiqi, 1997).

The data in this paper were collected using a literature review method, which involved examining written documents from sources such as books, Quranic interpretations, and scholarly journal articles. Additionally, a thematic (*maudhu'i*) interpretation method was employed. This method involves gathering Quranic verses with themes related to environmental damage that contain "*fasād*" terms and analyzing the interpretations based on *Tafsir An-Nur* to describe the mitigation implicitly stated in *Tafsir An-Nur*.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AL-QUR'AN

The perspective of the Quran addresses the concept of the environment using various terms, such as the environment as all species (*al-'alamīn*), space (*al-samā'*), the surrounding environment (*al-bi'ah*), and the earth (*al-ardūn*) (Shomali, 2008). This paper focuses on the Quranic perspective regarding the surrounding environment (*al-bi'ah*) to describe environmental degradation. The term *al-bi'ah* is mentioned 18 times in the Quran, but specific verses addressing the environment as a living space are al-A'raf/7:74, Yūnus/10:93, Yūsuf/12:56, an-Nahl/16:41, and al-Ankabut/29:58. Terminologically, Yusuf al-Qaradawi defines *al-bi'ah* as an environment where humans, animals, plants, and other biotic creatures reside and live (Rodin, 2017, p. 398).

The Quran employs several terms to describe environmental degradation, including *fasād*, *halaka*, and *sā'a*. In this text, the author concentrates on the term "*fasād*," which signifies deviating from balance. The word "*fasād*" encompasses deviations in both the spiritual and physical realms and anything else that contradicts established balance or norms (Rodin, 2017, p. 399). The term *fasād* and its various derivations are mentioned 50 times in the Quran, covering a range of meanings. These include deviant and unproductive behavior (in Surah al-Baqarah/2:11 and al-A'raf/7:56), disorder (in Surah al-Anbiya'/21:22), destructive behavior (in Surah an-Naml/27:34), neglectful or indifferent attitudes (in Surah al-Baqarah/2:220), and environmental degradation (in Surah ar-Rūm/30:41). When the term *fasād* takes the form of a noun (*maṣḍar*), it generally indicates physical damage, such as air pollution, floods, landslides, and so on. Furthermore, when *fasād* is in the form of a verb (*fi'l*) or a noun (*maṣḍar*) follows a verb, it generally points to non-physical damage, such as disbelief, polytheism, hypocrisy, and others. In other words, physical damage typically originates from non-physical damage (Al-Qur'an, 2009).

Classical commentators, such as Ibn Katsir, interpret the term *fasād* in these verses as referring to social and spiritual corruption, including acts of polytheism, disobedience, murder, and other actions that violate God's commands. (Kathir, n.d.) Examples of verses addressing environmental degradation such as Surah al-Ankabut/29:14, an-Najm/53:50, al-Hud/11:68, al-Qaf/50:12, an-Naml/27:54, as-Saba/34:16, and al-Qasas/28:40, frequently overlap with social-spiritual corruption and are characterized as punishment for humanity. On the other hand, contemporary

interpreters like Yusuf al-Qardawi interpret *fasād* as physical environmental degradation leading to disasters affecting all species on Earth. These may include pandemics, food crises, resource crises, climate change, seasonal changes, and environmental pollution. Examples of verses that discuss environmental degradation as a disaster for humanity include Surah al-Zalzalah/99:1–2, al-Ankabut/29:37 and 40, al-An'am/6:65, al-A'raf/7:78 and 130, al-Waqiah/56:4, al-Mulk/67:16, Fussilat/41:16, and an-Nahl/16:112. In general, these verses emphasize that the root cause of environmental degradation is the crisis of human behavior, which disregards the sustainability of living and non-living entities essential for environmental balance. (Rodin, 2017, p. 400) This is explicitly emphasized in Surah Hud/11:117, with the phrase "بما كسبت ايدي الناس" which indicates that environmental damage is the result of human behaviour.

The emergence of disasters is essentially a consequence of the disruption of human morality and mentality towards environment. This mental breakdown sometimes drives individuals to engage in destructive actions, both those directly impacting environmental damage, such as illegal logging, deforestation, and construction in water catchment areas, as well as actions that are indirectly related, such as corruption, bribery, abuse of power, arrogance in governance, economic crimes, and more. When deviant behaviour not directly linked to environmental damage becomes the norm in society, Allah may respond, one of which is through the occurrence of natural disasters. It has been an enduring principle since ancient times, as experienced by previous communities. This phenomenon is called "*sunnatullah*," a constant principle that never changes. This study focuses on examining the term "*fasād*" in the interpretation of verses related to environmental degradation in the *Tafsir An-Nur* by Teungku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy. The discussion is also scrutinized through its references to other classical and contemporary interpretations.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *TAFSIR AN-NUR*

Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy explains about natural environment ecosystems both geologically and theologically. He describes the creation of all living beings in the universe containing humans, animals, plants, microbes, and even the solar system, as stated in Surah ad-Dukhan/44:38. Hasbi interprets this verse to mean that Allah created these creatures with their specific functions for the life ecosystem, rather than in vain (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000, p. 3784). In Surah al-Ahqaf/46:3–4, which discusses Allah's decree in creating the heavens and the earth with justice and wisdom, Hasbi interprets that Allah's justice toward His creatures lies in making them complementary to one another. From the smallest to the enormous creatures, they are interconnected and can benefit or harm each other (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000, pp. 3820–3821). Hasbi also concurs with Ibnu Jarir ath-Thabari in the idea that nature is interconnected. For instance, the relationship between the heavens and the earth is analogous to a building, with the heavens serving as the roof and the earth as the dwelling place. The heavens are likened to a roof because of their higher position. It is mentioned that the heavens and the earth are the primary sources of Allah's blessings, as they provide sustenance and livelihood. Allah mentions all these blessings to remind humanity to worship Him in obedience, including not harming the environment, and not associating any partners with Him (Ath-Thabary, 1994).

In the context of *Tafsir An-Nur*, Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy interprets environmental degradation as a condition rooted in the actions of those who deviate from what Allah has decreed. For example, in Surah Yunus/10:40, Allah describes His profound knowledge of those who cause corruption. Hasbi interprets the phrase "among them are those who deny it, but the believers are those who are aware of it when it is recited to them" by stating that some individuals, who are considered the believers of Allah, deny Him when the interpretation of the Quran comes, and the reality of it becomes evident after they have struggled against and rejected it. Then, Hasbi defines corruption as knowing what is right but failing to act accordingly. Furthermore, environmental degradation also originates from the attitudes of those who obstruct others from the path of righteousness (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000, pp. 1812–1813).

Identification using the *Mu'jam Mufahras li al-Fazil Qur'an al-Karim* by the author shows that the term "*fasād*" and its derivatives appear 50 times in 47 verses of the Quran. These verses carry various meanings depending on the forms of the word *fasād* used. The author classifies the term *fasād* related to the natural environment based on the forms of the word in line with *Tafsir An-Nur*, aiming to understand the context of the verses. The word "*fasād*" in its *masdar* form, which signifies a form of corruption, is found in Surah al-Baqarah/2:205, Hūd/11:116, Qashash/28:77, and ar-Rūm/30:41. The word "*fasad*" in its *fi'il mudari'* form, meaning to commit corruption, appears in Surah al-Baqarah/2:11, al-Baqarah/2:30, al-Baqarah/2:205, al-A'raf/7:56, al-A'raf/7:85, Muhammad/47:22, and asy-Syu'ara'/26:152. Meanwhile, the word "*fasād*" in the form of *fi'il madhi*, signifying the consequence of corruption, can be found in Surah Mu'minun/23:71. Furthermore, the term "*fasād*" in its *jama'* form is also present in Surah al-Baqarah/2:12, al-Baqarah/2:60, al-A'raf/7:74, Qashash/28:77, and asy-Syu'ara'/26:183.

The classification above indicates that the *fi'il mudhari'* form has more "*fasād*" terms than the *fi'il madhi* form. It suggests that environmental damage is currently happening and will continue to occur. The "*fasād*" term in the *jama'* form appears in five verses, indicating that those engaged in environmental damage are numerous. When the "*fasād*" term is in the *masdar* form and stands alone, it signifies physical damage, such as air pollution, ecosystem destruction, floods, and so on. If it appears in the *fi'il* form or *masdar* but with a preceding verb in a sentence, it indicates non-physical forms of damage, such as disbelief, hypocrisy, polytheism, disobedience, and the like. This analysis provides an understanding that physical damage is rooted in non-physical or mental issues.

There are several non-physical causes of environmental damage, namely *tabzīr*, *isrāf*, and *itrāf*. According to ar-Rāzi, *tabzīr* is when someone impairs the function of their wealth and excessively squanders it. There is also an understanding that *tabzīr* behavior encompasses all actions concerning wealth, whether it involves spending on purposes not blessed by Allah or inefficient utilization of wealth. It also includes the use of one's body to commit sinful acts, causing harm to the Earth, and leading others astray.

The word *isrāf* and its derivatives are mentioned 23 times in the Quran, which refers to an attitude of excessiveness in every action, overindulgence in God's creations and blessings, and otherworldly excessiveness. This attitude is discouraged by Allah because it can lead to arrogance. The attitude of *isrāf* is also related to matters of faith,

deviant behavior, eating and drinking habits, charity, and spending wealth. In the context of faith, *isrāf* appears in Surah Thahā/20:127, which discusses attitudes like disbelief, following one's desires, polytheism, and not heeding the signs of Allah.

Furthermore, as a cause of environmental damage, there is *itrāf* or *mutrāf* mentioned eighth times in the Quran that refers to individuals who recklessly behave because they possess luxuries and grandeur, as well as the power to force others. *Mubīt* (Al-Fairuzabadi, n.d.) Al-Asfahānī describes *mutrāf* in Surah al-Fajr/89:15-16 as individuals who use the luxuries and worldly pleasures as a yardstick to assess a person's dignity and status. (Al-Asfahani, n.d.) Examples of *mutrāfīn* are mentioned in Surah Saba'/34-35 regarding disbelievers who enjoy many worldly pleasures, making them feel favored by God and not deserving punishment in the Hereafter. Additionally, it is found in Surah az-Zukhrūf/43:23 concerning those who follow the religious practices of their ancestors.

The argument here is that the discussion of environmental damage in the Quran is not directly and specifically stated because human behaviors directly harm the environment. Instead, there is a connection between environmental damage and human behaviors or mentalities that demonstrate a disposition to harm Allah's creation. Based on the dominance of the term "*fasād*" in the plural form, it implies that the humans' mental or destructive behavior collectively is the root cause of environmental damage. Human mental damage is not at the personal level or related to an individual's beliefs but concerns the massive unproductive behaviors of humans toward the environment.

Based on *Tafsir An-Nur*, the author identifies 15 specific verses (from 50 *fasād* derivatives in 47 verses) that touch on environmental damage. In these 15 verses, various forms of environmental damage can be observed: Damage associated with human awareness can be found in Surah al-Baqarah/2:30 and al-A'raf/7:74; Damage linked to greed is present in Surah al-Mu'minun/23:71, al-Baqarah/2:60, and al-Qashash/28:77; Damage related to hypocrisy is evident in Surah al-Baqarah/2:11-12 and al-Baqarah/2:205; Damage associated with mutualistic relationships can be observed in Surah al-A'raf/7:56, al-A'7:85, and Surah asy-Syu'ara/26:183; Damage resulting from a lack of reprimand or prohibition is discussed in Surah Muhammad/47:22, asy-Syu'ara/62:152, Hud/11:116, and ar-Rum/30:41. Along with these environmental damage causes, Hasbi also offers the solution to the environmental problem itself.

## THE SOLUTION TO ENVIRONMENT DEGRADATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *TAFSIR AN-NUR*

*Tafsir An-Nur* contains 15 verses that explicitly interpret the solutions to address environmental damage, which include: (1) Raising human awareness of the blessings of Allah *Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala* by interpreting the human role as a Steward (*khalifah*); (2) Cultivating contentment (*qanaah*); (3) Eliminating hypocrisy; and (4) Establishing a mutualistic relationship with other living beings.

### 1. Interpreting the Human Role as a Steward by Protecting the Environment Justly and Wisely

Sensitivity and self-awareness are essential qualities when it comes to preserving the natural ecosystem. Even though humans are considered stewards (*khalifah*) on Earth, it doesn't mean they have the freedom to exploit the environment. As stated in



the Quran Surah al-Baqarah/2:30, Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy interprets this verse as Allah's command to Prophet Muhammad to remind his people that God informed the angels to create humans as successors to those who perished or as a continuous succession or to appoint an agent to carry out God's commands. This divine statement implies that there were other creatures inhabiting the Earth before the creation of Adam. However, due to their disobedience to Allah, they were subsequently destroyed, and humans replaced their position (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000).

Quraish Shihab contends that in the mentioned verse, the term "*khalifah*" denotes an individual appointed as a representative of Allah to carry out tasks and obey the established regulations. This interpretation does not imply that Allah is incapable of fulfilling His duties or that humans are deemed gods. Instead, Allah tests humans and honors them as rational beings capable of fulfilling entrusted responsibilities. *Khalifah* is a right and responsibility granted by Allah so that individuals chosen as caliphs must wisely execute their duties. Failure to do so would contradict the meaning and purpose of the appointment of a caliph (Shihab, 2009).

According to Hasbi, the appointment of humans as stewards (*khalifah*) on Earth involves two aspects. First, being a steward means that humans are chosen to receive divine revelations and follow His laws. Second, the elevation of all humans as distinguished and noble creatures compared to others is based on their intellectual capacity. The wisdom behind granting humans a higher status than other creatures through the gift of intellect is that by utilizing their intellect, humans can discover the virtues and secrets present in the rest of Allah's creations. Due to their extraordinary intelligence, humans could both use and care for the environment (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000).

Mustafa Abu-Sway discusses the relationship between humans and the environment into two categories, namely stewardship (*khilafah*) and mastery (*taskhīr*). The first category perceives humans as representatives of God on Earth. Their role as stewards has been proclaimed before the creation of the first human (Surah al-Baqarah/2:30-31). With this position, humans are responsible for preserving and protecting their surroundings, accompanied by rewards and punishments. In this role, stewardship can also serve as a test to evaluate how individuals treat their environment (Surah al-An'ām/6:165), whether they fulfill their duties according to God's rules or contribute to its degradation. If a group or community causes harm, this responsibility might be passed on to the next generation (Surah al-A'rāf/7:69 and 74). Another duty of humans as stewards is to observe the universe (Surah Yūnus/10:14) to develop knowledge that enables them to care for their living environment (Abu-Sway, 1998).

The human responsibility as stewards endowed with intellect is to care for and preserve the natural environment. The objective is to ensure that the blessings bestowed by Allah are not lost or revoked due to human error. As found in the Quran, Surah al-A'rāf/7:74, Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy interprets the verse as a reminder of Allah's blessings and generosity bestowed upon humanity when He designated them as stewards on Earth. In this verse, Hasbi consistently interprets the term "*khalifah*" or "*khulafa*" as "successors." (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000) According to Quraish Shihab, in this verse, the Thamud people were able to build an advanced and prosperous civilization. However, their success and prosperity led them to become complacent, causing them to forget their responsibilities on Earth and return to idol worship, like the beliefs of the 'Ad people. Consequently, Allah sent Prophet Saleh to warn the Thamud people to return to

worshipping Allah, but Thamud people ignored the presence of Prophet Saleh (Shihab, 2009).

In the context of *fiqh*, Sheikh Ali Jum'ah argues that environmental preservation is a personal obligation that every responsible individual must fulfill, which cannot be waived. Sheikh Ali Jum'ah also categorizes forms of protection for the natural environment by safeguarding its supporting elements, such as humans, animals, plants, water, and air.(Abdullah, 2010) Protection for humans in Islam emphasizes humans' role as stewards, which includes carrying responsibilities, trust, and cultivation toward the environment. It means that humans should not see themselves as free rulers who can exploit the environment without considering ethical morals and responsibilities. As stewards, humans are responsible for nature but are also granted permission to utilize natural resources. This responsibility is regarded as connected right and duty (Jum'ah, n.d.).

Hasbi interprets *khalifah* not only for individuals but also for the public. Human as *khalifah* also means the nation's leader accountable for all creatures throughout their territory. In Surah Hud/11:116, Hasbi interprets the verse by stating that it is concerned with calling for goodness and forbidding evil. Hasbi elaborates in detail: "*Why, among the communities of the past that have been narrated, was there not found a group that was obedient, rational, and possessed foresight? A group that prevented harm on Earth, enjoined righteous deeds, and was not afraid of disasters due to their virtuous deeds.*"(Ash – Shiddieqy, 2000) Hasbi's statement above indirectly points to religious figures who comprehend and care about the concepts of good and evil as outlined by their religion. The mentioned verse depicts the condition of past communities that seemingly allowed for wrongdoing without anyone prohibiting their unjust actions. Such a situation highlights the efforts made by a religious leader to prevent wrongdoing and enjoin righteousness. Ibn Kathir also states that there should be people who control wrongdoing and enjoin righteousness because they are the chosen people whom Allah has saved from His punishment.

## **2. Fostering the Virtue of Contentment (*Qana'ah*) with What Exists in the Natural Environment**

Hasbi Ash – Shiddieqy asserts that if the Quran were to satisfy the desires and materialistic inclinations of the idolatrous groups, it would lead to the corruption of the entire heavens and the earth. If the Quran permitted injustice, enmity, and the plundering of wealth, it would result in a state of disorder similar to the condition of the Arabs before the advent of Islam. Allah has revealed the Quran to elevate the status of the idolaters and place them in an honorable position, even renewing their existence, making them a disciplined and civilized community. However, they mocked the Quran and ridiculed it, eventually turning away from it. From this trait of greed, all forms of extravagance and oppression can emerge, as mentioned in Surah al – Mu'minin/23:71. Hasbi interprets this phenomenon by explaining that the Quran identifies a characteristic of idolaters, which is their constant adherence to their materialistic desires and inclinations (Ash – Shiddieqy, 2000).

Humanity's insatiable greed causes the source of the Earth's degradation, as people often feel they lack what they already possess. The opposite of greed is contentment (*qana'ah*). The quality of contentment entails refraining from coercion, not seeking charity, and not infringing upon the rights of others, as the trait of greed drives these actions.(Hamka, 1990) The attribute of *qana'ah* is the willingness to accept what

one possesses and the discontinuation of the desire to forcefully accumulate more of what is already owned.

In this context, several positive impacts are associated with the attribute of contentment. The first positive impact is achieving peace of mind because contentment brings inner tranquility and satisfaction. It helps reduce stress, anxiety, and the worries that often accompany materialistic competition (Fabriar, 2020). The impact of contentment also fosters a frugal lifestyle because contentment encourages individuals to live modestly and appreciate what they have. It can lead to a thrifty and prudent approach to managing finances, differentiating between wants and needs. By not succumbing to excessive consumer trends, one can save money and avoid unnecessary debt (Hamka, 2015). The attribute of contentment can also place individuals in a position of flexibility or freedom in the face of changing times. Contentment makes people not dependent or tied to their possessions for happiness or worthiness. It liberates individuals from materialistic slavery and insatiable desires. Consequently, individuals can focus on more meaningful aspects of life, such as personal relationships, self – development, and social contributions (Hakim, 2019).

Thus, the sustainability of ecological balance can be realized, as exemplified in the instance provided by Allah to the people of Prophet Moses, which is documented in Surah al – Baqarah/2:60. Hamka explained that the 12 springs bestowed by Allah upon Prophet Moses and his community are a great blessing that should be acknowledged and appreciated by the Bani Israel, especially after experiencing a period of drought. However, humans tend to complain in times of hardship and become arrogant when bestowed with blessings, frequently forgetting the origin of those blessings. (Hamka, 1990) Allah does not prohibit people from amassing wealth in the world. Still, it is crucial to remember that such wealth should not lead individuals to forget their responsibilities on Earth. It aligns with Surah al – Qasas/28:77, interpreted by Hasbi through the story of Qarun as a warning against his arrogance regarding his riches. (Ash – Shiddieqy, 2000) The author highlights Hasbi's perspective on leading a simple life, avoiding excessiveness while still appreciating the blessings of the world. The verse serves as a reminder to Qarun not to be arrogant due to his wealth, as the world is temporary, riches will fade, and everything in the world is like a loan that will be returned to its rightful owner, Allah.

### **3. Eliminating Hypocrisy in Environmental Behavior**

In the context of environmental issues, hypocrisy is highly dangerous because individuals or groups may claim to be working towards environmental improvement while, on the other hand, engaging in actions that cause harm for personal gain. Companies and industrial players are responsible for mitigating environmental damage from their industrial activities. Presently, capitalist entities often focus solely on economic aspects without considering the harm they may cause, even though such actions can lead to destruction (Heath & Gifford, 2006).

As mentioned in Surah al – Baqarah/2:205, Hasbi Ash – Shiddieqy interprets the verse by highlighting the behavior of hypocrites, which is frequently opposite to what they express when facing others. Like most hypocritical individuals, they have two faces—one when they are in front of their adversaries and another when apart. If they are forbidden from causing harm, they always claim to do good or portray their actions as virtuous, but it is nothing more than destructive deceit (Ash – Shiddieqy, 2000). An example is greenwashing as a practice where businesses or individuals attempt to portray themselves or their products as environmentally conscious and friendly yet at the same



time, they engage in environmental destruction practices such as large-scale deforestation for land clearing, illegal mining, or the use of chemicals with waste that can pollute and contaminate the surrounding ecosystems (Boon & Prahalad, 2017). This involves false claims, the use of counterfeit labels, and industrial players concealing the adverse environmental impacts of their operations (Valencia et al., 2021).

Just as the characteristics of hypocrites outlined in Surah al-Baqarah/2:11, Hasbi interprets that the prohibition in this verse encompasses not only destructive intent but also actions that have the potential to cause harm. Hypocrisy is like a snowball effect, meaning that its impact grows over time and can lead to further damage. For example, starting with an environmental crisis can have repercussions in other sectors such as the economy, politics, culture, and more. Hasbi likens the nature of hypocrisy to wrapping poison in sugar, which continues to harm humanity with its sweet slogans and promises.

Ibn Jarir at-Thabari explains that the hypocrites referred to in al-Baqarah/2:11 are the hypocrites who formed alliances with the Jewish community during the time of Prophet Muhammad. Even though the hypocrites were mentioned during Prophet Muhammad's time, their characteristics remained consistent until the Day of Judgment. As for the term "corruption" in the verse, it refers to individuals who engage in actions forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (Ath-Thabary, 1994). Then, in Surah al-Baqarah/2:12, Hasbi further emphasizes the characteristics of hypocrites, *"Indeed, they are the ones who cause corruption, not the people they talk about. The hypocrites do not perceive themselves as causing corruption because it has become a habitual part of their behavior."* It explains that hypocrites continuously exhibit destructive behaviors in their daily lives, leading these behaviors to become ingrained in their subconscious. Human behaviors rooted in the subconscious have the potential to make individuals believe they are justified in their actions, even though, in reality, these behaviors are harmful and cause suffering to other beings. Ibn Jarir at-Thabari also cites the opinion of Abu Ja'far, stating that hypocrites always consider themselves righteous in all their destructive actions. Moreover, they may even perceive acts of disobedience as efforts to bring about improvement in line with religious teachings (Ath-Thabary, 1994).

#### **4. Fostering Mutualistic Relationships with Fellow Living Beings**

Mutualistic relationships are essential for establishing a harmonious coexistence between humans and other entities on Earth. Mutualism is a form of symbiotic relationship between two different organisms, where both benefit each other for survival (Berkes, 2018). Humans depend on natural resources for their livelihood, and the environment, in turn, relies on humans for its preservation. Moreover, the relationship between humans and the natural environment is also expected to serve as a wellspring of knowledge. Humans have a significant opportunity to gain life lessons from the natural environment. The relationship between humans and the natural environment, particularly regarding knowledge, has been evident since the early days of human civilization. As mentioned in the Quran Surah Al-Maidah/5:31, it highlights the burial procedure of the deceased Qabil and Habil, which involved the presence of a crow. It demonstrates how nature can provide valuable insights and knowledge to humanity (Ath-Thabary, 1994).

Humans must care for and rectify the environmental damage because God created the Earth reasonably and orderly. As found in Surah al-A'raf/7:56, Hasbi explains that humans are prohibited from causing corruption on Earth because Allah has perfected the Earth by creating various living beings within it. Implicitly, this commands humans to maintain a harmonious relationship with nature. Moreover, Allah has also determined



how to utilize the environment. Hasbi mentions that the damage referred to encompasses all physical and non-physical aspects. The evident damage includes actions such as killing or harming other humans, damaging their property through theft or robbery, and harming the environment. Non-physical damage encompasses what occurs within humans, such as undermining faith, corrupting religion through disbelief and sinful behavior, and engaging in actions that can harm human intellect, such as consuming intoxicating substances (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000). Hasbi further adds that the prohibition of corruption mentioned in Surah asy-Syu'ara'/62:183 is related to the ban of infringing on the rights of others, whether in terms of weight, measure, number, or size. It also includes prohibitions against killing, robbery, looting, and other actions that can cause harm. It means that Hasbi distinguishes between two types of harm to fellow humans, namely material harm and harm to the human soul (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000).

At-Thabari asserts that Allah sends His messengers to rectify the conditions on Earth after the polytheists have marred them (Ath-Thabary, 1994). Similarly, Hamka states that Prophet Muhammad SAW was sent to the Earth to repair the damage that had occurred. According to him, causing harm after it has been rectified is a much worse deed compared to damaging something that was already in a state of disrepair. (Hamka, 1990) In line with these two scholars, Wahbah az-Zuhaili also contends that the term "rectification" in the al-A'raf/7:56 refers to the sending of prophets and messengers by Allah. The concept of causing harm encompasses damaging religion through disbelief, harming the soul through killing and mutilation, damaging property through theft and robbery, impairing reason through the consumption of intoxicating substances, undermining lineage through adultery, homosexuality, and spreading the slander of adultery (Az-Zuhaili, 2016).

In conclusion, Hasbi underscores the importance of human relations with the natural environment through the rules set by Allah. It involves avoiding harm to the environment by preserving the ecosystems created by Him and improving relationships with fellow humans. This improvement extends to both trade practices and daily interactions. If a person's faith is weak, they are susceptible to the misguided desires of worldly temptations, leading to environmental degradation. Conversely, a strong faith contributes to the realization of a balanced life.

## CONCLUSION

The prevailing anthropocentric paradigm in technological and economic spheres has led to widespread environmental degradation, rooted in the perception of human dominance over nature. Religious and theocentric approaches, particularly within Islamic studies, emphasize the integration of moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions to address environmental crises comprehensively. Scholars such as Teungku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddiqiey demonstrate how to bridge the gap between religious teachings and practical solutions by incorporating local context into interpretations. A theocentric perspective complements scientific solutions, urging a harmonious coexistence between religious principles and scientific knowledge to achieve a balanced and sustainable relationship with the natural world.

In *Tafsir An-Nur*, Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy interprets 15 verses about natural environment degradation that contain the term "*fasād*." The interpretation underscores the crucial role of human stewardship in justly and wisely safeguarding the environment, especially for humans as nation leaders or preachers. The advocacy for contentment serves as a powerful antidote to greed, promoting a frugal lifestyle. The

caution against hypocrisy underscores the importance of sincerity in environmental behavior. Emphasizing mutualistic relationships and learning from nature, the text emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans and their environment. Ultimately, humans are the core solution to preserve the environment which moves from their understanding of Islamic values regarding God's existence internally that shall be expressed into morally based ecological practice.

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