Integrating Islamic Teachings: Enhancing Environmental Awareness in the Digital Era Through Qur'anic Interpretations

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the contributions of classical and contemporary Qur'anic interpretations to environmental ethics and to evaluate their relevance and application in the context of modern environmental challenges. Employing a qualitative analysis, the study reviews key interpretations from eminent scholars such as Imam Ar-Razi, Al-Maraghi, and M. Quraish Shihab. The analysis is grounded in their exegeses of specific Qur'anic verses related to environmental stewardship, integrating both classical and contemporary perspectives. The interpretations collectively underscore the Qur'anic advocacy for an integrated approach to environmental care, emphasizing balance, justice, and the moral implications of human interactions with the environment. Imam Ar-Razi's interpretations highlight the spiritual causation of environmental harm, while Al-Maraghi and Shihab focus on the principles of balance and justice as central to ecological stewardship. The study reaffirms that Qur'anic teachings provide a profound ethical framework for addressing the environmental crisis, advocating for a holistic approach that incorporates spiritual, moral, and practical dimensions. These findings suggest the need for greater integration of religious teachings in environmental education and policy-making. Promoting a deeper understanding of ecological ethics among religious communities could foster more sustainable environmental practices.

Keywords: Environmental, Stewardship, Al-Qur'an


Introduction

The environment is often compared to the human body, which comprises physical elements requiring equilibrium for effective functioning. Just as damage to one part of the body can disrupt the entire system, environmental degradation adversely impacts the entire ecosystem. Allah has created the environment to sustain human life, necessitating a clean and healthy setting for essential resources such as water, air, and food. Thus, preserving these natural elements is crucial for maintaining ecological balance. The environment is analogous to the human body, comprising physical elements that must physiologically balance each other. Damage to any part disrupts the entire system. Allah created the environment to meet the needs of human life, which depend on a healthy environment—especially for essentials like water, air, oxygen, and the biotic components necessary for human existence.¹

Human life hinges on how well we manage our environment because the earth and soil are fundamental to our existence, providing space for agriculture, food production, and access to clean water and air. It is imperative that we maintain and preserve these to sustain the balance of nature itself.² Nature and all its components are interconnected; they require and complement each other. A meaningful life benefits the living creatures within its fabric, where every organism can generate energy, facilitating survival. Thus, human existence on earth is envisioned as a caliphate, tasked with managing and preserving the earth.

The current environmental crisis has garnered attention from religious leaders worldwide, as evidenced by a G20 religious forum initiated by Nadlatul Ulama (NU) and the Muslim World League (MWL). Participants, including religious leaders from G20 members and other nations, recognized the global challenge posed by environmental degradation resulting from global warming, air pollution, deforestation, and methane emissions from agriculture and livestock. If unchecked, these issues will lead to ecological disasters like rising sea levels and severe weather events.³ According to a survey by Indonesia's Digital Literacy, religious leaders are highly trusted sources of

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² Nuralim.
information, with a trust rating of 61.7 percent. Their influence is crucial for effecting change to address environmental challenges. However, the reality often falls short, with many religious leaders having minimal impact on public attitudes toward environmental issues. This discrepancy highlights a gap in understanding environmental challenges from a spiritual (religious) perspective. The implementation of Qur'anic verses related to environmental stewardship remains inadequate, often overlooked by those who view the Qur'an solely as a guide for the afterlife rather than a source of practical guidance for earthly stewardship. This oversight is particularly self-critical for Muslims, given that non-Muslim countries often rank higher in environmental stewardship.

As technology advances, the challenges it poses to the environment multiply, threatening to disrupt the environmental order. Hence, alongside technological progress, it is imperative to foster awareness through Qur'anic guidance. The Qur'an offers teachings about protecting the environment, framing environmental conservation as a manifestation of righteous deeds. Neglecting environmental care, according to divine law (Sunnatullah), leads to detrimental outcomes for both the environment and its inhabitants. Islamic Sharia provides a comprehensive legal framework that encompasses both minor and significant rules aimed at ensuring prosperity, happiness, and dignity. By dedicating themselves to Allah and embracing the command to promote good and prevent evil, humans fulfill their role as stewards of benefit.

This article aims to elucidate the enduring relevance and applicability of Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship as interpreted by scholars such as Imam Ar-Razi, Al-Maraghi, and M. Quraish Shihab. It explores how these interpretations can guide contemporary environmental ethics and bridge the gap between traditional religious teachings and modern challenges. Employing a comparative textual analysis of their Tafsirs, this study highlights the continuity and evolution of Qur'anic exegesis on environmental issues.

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5 Rodin.
7 Muhammad.
Classical and Contemporary Interpretations: Bridging Traditions and Modernity

Imam Ar-Razi stands out as a significant classical interpreter, jurist, theologian, mufassir, and philosopher, noted for his expertise in several scientific fields. Utilizing the Tahlili method, Ar-Razi compiles interpretations that include insights from earlier interpreters such as Ibn Abbas, Ibn Al-Kalabiyy, and Mujahid. His interpretative works extensively cite scholars like Muqatil bin Sulaiman Al-Marwaziyy, Abu Ishak Ats-Tsa'labiyy, and Abu Al-Hasan Ali bin Ahmad Al-Wahidi. Ar-Razi’s theological-philosophical approach, coupled with his Asy'ari kalam style, enriches the fiqh discourse by incorporating Shafii’s fiqhi explanations.8

In the realm of contemporary interpretation, Al-Maraghi emerges as a key figure, known for his extensive literary contributions that encompass a broad range of Islamic scholarship. Al-Maraghi’s Tafsir, characterized by its non-militaristic tone and relevance to modern Muslim contexts, bridges Islamic teachings with contemporary life challenges. His interpretations are notably socially and culturally oriented, combining the bil Ma’thur method with the bil Ra’yi method—also known as the bil Iqtirani method—to organize discussions systematically from Surah Al-Fatihah to An-Nas using the Tahlili technique.9

Shifting focus to Indonesia, M. Quraish Shihab, born on February 16, 1944, in Rappang, South Sulawesi, has significantly impacted the field of Qur’anic interpretation. As a prolific writer, his works, particularly the Tafsir Al-Misbah: Message, Impression, and Harmony of the Qur’an, serve as vital references in Qur’anic and Tafsir studies in Indonesia. His interpretative style, known as tartib mushafi, adheres to the sequential arrangement of the mushaf, enriching Indonesian intellectual discourse with practical and applicable insights for daily life.10

Tafsir Al-Misbah exemplifies Shihab’s modern interpretative contributions, employing the bil Ra’yi method opposed to the traditional bil Ma’thur approach. This

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method emphasizes logical explanations and groups verses based on the main idea of the surah, using the Tahlili approach. Written in an Adabi-Ijtima'i style, Tafsir Al-Misbah integrates literary, linguistic, and social considerations, highlighting its broad appeal and utility in addressing contemporary issues.\textsuperscript{12}

Interpretations Relating to Environmental Stewardship

\textit{Tafsir Mafatih Al Ghaib}

Tafsir Mafatih Al-Ghaib highlights the environmental implications embedded within Qur'anic verses. Surah Ar-Rum verse 41:

\begin{quote}
ظَهَرَ الْقَسَادَ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيْقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الْسَّبَتْ اِبْنَ بَحْرِ بِمَا كَوَّنَهُ قَوْمُهُمُّ بِاِلْهَوَّامِ وَالْفَسَادُ فِى الْظَّهَرَ الْمَيْرَ عَمِلُوهُ مَعَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُتَرَكَوْنَ
\end{quote}

“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness].”

This verse, according to Fakhruddin al-Razi, indicates that environmental degradation is due to human activities, represented by the term al-fasad, which denotes a shift from order to chaos. Al-Razi interprets environmental damage as encompassing land and water, where hurricanes symbolize the physical manifestation of such disruptions due to significant changes in air pressure. Additionally, al-Bahr is variably interpreted as a large city with a sea-like population or metaphorically as the Sahara Desert or an urban area near significant water bodies, emphasizing the reduction in water sources which crucially impacts community needs such as irrigation and sanitation (Fakhruddin al-Razi, 1981).

Moreover, al-Razi discusses the spiritual causation of environmental harm, attributing it to shirk (associating partners with Allah) not only in a religious sense but also in the disobedience by humans, categorized into fasiq (corruption) and ma'siyah (sin). He argues that such actions, while not harming God, result in substantial losses for humanity itself, highlighting the direct consequences of environmental neglect evident in the increasing global challenges like temperature rises, deforestation, and pollution (Fakhruddin al-Razi, 1981).

Tafsir Al Maragi

Tafsir Al Maraghi analyzes verses related to the divine creation and the intrinsic balance within, as seen in Surah Al-Mulk verses 3-4 and Al-A'raf verse 56. The verses from Surah Al-Mulk:

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الذِّينَ خَلَقَ مِنْ فَاطِرِ الْقُرْءَانِ، هُمْ هُنَّ أَهْلُ الْقُرْءَانِ
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“[And] who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return [your] vision [to the sky]; do you see any breaks? Then return [your] vision twice again. [Your] vision will return to you humbled while it is fatigued.”

This verse underlines the idea of balance and harmony in all creations, pointing out that disruptions caused by human actions are against the divine order. Al-Maraghi specifically addresses human-caused damage as not only physical but extending to the spiritual and moral realms, referring to actions like theft, alcohol consumption, and adultery which collectively disrupt the natural order (Al-Maraghi, 1365 H).

Tafsir Al Misbah

Tafsir Al Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab provides a modern interpretation, particularly through Surah Ar-Rahman verses 7-9 and An-Nisa' verse 58, which focus on the principles of balance (mizan) and justice (adl). These verses metaphorically discuss the balance of the universe, established by Allah, and the necessity for humans to uphold this balance in their stewardship of the earth. Shihab emphasizes that justice in dealings and the maintenance of balance are not merely physical but also extend to ethical dimensions involving interpersonal relationships and environmental interactions. The interpretation suggests a holistic approach to environmental ethics, linking the physical balance of nature with moral and spiritual responsibilities.13

These interpretations collectively underscore the Qur'anic advocacy for environmental stewardship, highlighting the need for an integrated approach that includes theological, moral, and practical dimensions in addressing the contemporary environmental crisis.

13 Nuralim, “Menjaga Ekosistem Alam Dalam Al-Qur’an Studi Penafsiran Muhammad Quraish Shihab Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah.”

Contextualization of Increasing Environmental Awareness in the Digital Era

Discussing justice is common in life's processes, where each individual is expected to act justly towards others, especially in environmental contexts. The environment facilitates the interaction of all living things on Earth, and its inequitable and inefficient management can disrupt the natural order of life. A well-maintained environment ensures the proper functioning of all living creatures, including humans, whereas poor environmental conditions lead to numerous challenges caused by the environment itself. Environmental justice, as defined by Collin, encompasses the fair distribution of environmental rights and benefits across a society's race, class, and income levels, considering procedural rights like public participation in decision-making as substantive aspects of the judiciary.

Human rights to life and health, work, education, and equitable management of the natural resources bestowed by Allah SWT are profoundly influenced by environmental conditions. This concept of justice for natural and human rights was underscored at the Union Conference of Nations in Stockholm, Sweden, on June 5-6, 1972, which emphasized environmental sustainability as fundamental to fulfilling human rights. The Amendment to the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, specifically Article 28h Paragraph 1, states: "Every person has the right to live in physical and spiritual prosperity, to dwell in a good and healthy living environment and has the right to receive health services." This includes rights to both the physical and social environment, as detailed in Article 65, paragraphs 1-5, which outlines the environmental rights such as the right to a beneficial living environment, environmental education, access to information, participation, justice, the ability to submit proposals or objections to potentially environmentally impactful activities, and the right to play a role in environmental protection and management.

These fundamental rights to environmental justice greatly influence the survival of humans and other living creatures, helping to mitigate unhealthy environmental impacts. Ethics and morality are crucial in fostering a robust concept of environmental justice and natural law. As Arne Ness has expressed, "Humans need environmental ethics when dealing with nature and their activities towards it," which significantly impacts both humanity and the environment.\textsuperscript{18} The justice concept for natural rights is closely tied to human rights as managers of Earth's ecosystem. Environmental justice aims to maintain a natural balance, preventing internal and external losses due to poor environmental management. The role of government is pivotal in shaping justice for natural and human rights. As a country valuing high moral norms, Indonesia is expected to provide a firmer direction toward justice in environmental management, especially in this digital era, leveraging technological advancements to preserve the environment.\textsuperscript{19}

We live in a time where environmental challenges—such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and degradation of water and air quality—are increasingly pressing. Addressing these challenges necessitates an understanding of the moral values involved in protecting the environment. Firstly, safeguarding the environment is a primary moral responsibility. The environment, a divine gift, must be maintained for the beauty and sustainability of nature for future generations.

The implications of moral values in environmental protection include respect and appreciation for nature. Every living creature has intrinsic value and the right to live and develop in its environment. Humans are responsible for maintaining ecosystem balance and respecting the rights of all living creatures. Moreover, protecting the environment involves ethical consumption and sustainable living, requiring mindful consideration of our actions' impacts on the environment. Are the products we consume environmentally friendly? Are we using resources wisely? Such moral considerations are essential due to the positive and negative impacts of our consumption on the environment and others' lives.

Respecting the rights of future generations is also a critical moral value in environmental protection. Today's decisions and actions will determine the world we

\textsuperscript{18} Wahono, “Ramah Lingkungan Demi Menjaga Keseimbangan Alam (Moral Terhadap Alam Semesta).”

\textsuperscript{19} Nurkamilah, “Etika Lingkungan Dan Implementasinya Dalam Pemeliharaan Lingkungan Alam Pada Masyarakat Kampung Naga [Environmental Ethics and Its Implementation in Maintaining the Natural Environment in the Kampung Naga Community].”
leave for our children and grandchildren. Failing to preserve a sustainable environment infringes on their right to a healthy world. Therefore, we must adopt sustainable practices now to ensure the environment's protection for future generations.

Fakhruddin Ar-Rozi, in Mafatih Al-Ghaib, highlights that environmental damage has been a concern since ancient times, emphasizing the ongoing need for environmental awareness. The teachings in the Tafsir Al-Maraghi and Tafsir Al-Misbah underscore that the principles found in Islamic texts remain highly relevant today, guiding us to improve environmental management. As stewards of Earth, humans are tasked with upholding these principles to enhance environmental consciousness effectively, utilizing modern digital platforms to spread this critical message.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the intersection of religious teachings and environmental stewardship presents a comprehensive framework for addressing the contemporary environmental crisis. The analysis of classical and contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an, particularly through the works of Imam Ar-Razi, Al-Maraghi, and M. Quraish Shihab, highlights the enduring relevance of these teachings. These interpretations underscore the necessity of preserving the environment as an integral part of human responsibility and divine command.

Imam Ar-Razi's Tafsir Mafatih Al-Ghaib emphasizes the direct correlation between human actions and environmental degradation, urging humanity to recognize the spiritual and physical implications of their deeds. Al-Maraghi's interpretations further reinforce the concept of balance and harmony in creation, highlighting the moral and spiritual dimensions of environmental care. Shihab’s Tafsir Al-Misbah provides a modern perspective, integrating ethical, moral, and practical considerations, and advocating for justice and balance in environmental interactions.

The discussion also contextualizes the increasing environmental awareness in the digital era, emphasizing the role of technology in promoting environmental education and advocacy. The principles of environmental justice, as articulated in various legal frameworks and ethical discourses, are crucial for ensuring equitable management of natural resources. The ethical imperatives of respect, appreciation for nature, and sustainable living are central to this discourse, emphasizing the responsibility to protect the environment for future generations.
Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of integrating theological, moral, and practical dimensions in environmental stewardship. By leveraging the profound teachings of the Qur’an and utilizing modern technological platforms, humanity can enhance its environmental consciousness and work towards a sustainable future. The role of religious leaders and the integration of Qur’anic guidance in environmental education are pivotal in fostering a deeper understanding and commitment to preserving the natural world.

Bibliography


