

The Esoteric Ratio of Ecological Verses in the Perspective of Islamic Religious Education: An Interpretative Study of *Tafsīr al-Kabīr Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by Imam al-Rāzī

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Abstract : This study explores the esoteric ratio of ecological verses within the framework of Islamic Religious Education by analyzing Imam al-Rāzī's monumental work, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. The research seeks to uncover how al-Rāzī's interpretative method integrates rational inquiry with spiritual insight to address ecological themes in the Qur'an, particularly in relation to human responsibility toward nature as a manifestation of divine trust (*amānah*). Using a qualitative approach with interpretative textual analysis, the study examines selected verses that highlight ecological balance, environmental ethics, and the metaphysical dimensions of creation. The findings reveal that al-Rāzī not only provides a theological explanation of ecological verses but also emphasizes a philosophical-esoteric dimension where nature functions as a sign (*āyah*) pointing toward divine wisdom. This integration of rationality and esotericism offers a pedagogical implication for Islamic Religious Education by promoting ecological awareness rooted in spiritual values. Furthermore, the study concludes that al-Rāzī's interpretation presents a holistic model of ecological consciousness, bridging the gap between rational exegesis, esoteric reflection, and contemporary environmental ethics. Such insights are highly relevant to current educational discourse, as they encourage a paradigm that unites faith, reason, and ecological responsibility. In conclusion, this research contributes to the enrichment of Islamic Religious Education by framing ecological issues not merely as

environmental concerns but as integral to the spiritual and rational development of learners.

Keywords: Esoteric Ratio; Ecological Verses; Islamic Religious Education; Imam al-Rāzī; *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*.

Abstrak : Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi rasio esoteris ayat-ayat ekologis dalam kerangka Pendidikan Agama Islam dengan menganalisis karya monumental Imam al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr Mafātīh al-Ghayb*. Penelitian ini berusaha untuk mengungkap bagaimana metode interpretatif al-Rāzī mengintegrasikan penyelidikan rasional dengan wawasan spiritual untuk membahas tema-tema ekologis dalam Al-Qur'an, khususnya dalam kaitannya dengan tanggung jawab manusia terhadap alam sebagai manifestasi kepercayaan ilahi (amānah). Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis tekstual interpretatif, penelitian ini meneliti ayat-ayat terpilih yang menyoroti keseimbangan ekologis, etika lingkungan, dan dimensi metafisik penciptaan. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa al-Rāzī tidak hanya memberikan penjelasan teologis tentang ayat-ayat ekologis tetapi juga menekankan dimensi filosofis-esoteris di mana alam berfungsi sebagai tanda (āyah) yang menunjuk ke arah kebijaksanaan ilahi. Integrasi rasionalitas dan esoterisme ini menawarkan implikasi pedagogis untuk Pendidikan Agama Islam dengan mempromosikan kesadaran ekologis yang berakar pada nilai-nilai spiritual. Lebih lanjut, studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa interpretasi al-Rāzī menyajikan model holistik kesadaran ekologis, menjembatani kesenjangan antara penafsiran rasional, refleksi esoterik, dan etika lingkungan kontemporer. Wawasan semacam itu sangat relevan dengan wacana pendidikan saat ini, karena mendorong paradigma yang menyatukan iman, akal, dan tanggung jawab ekologis. Kesimpulannya, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengayaan Pendidikan Agama Islam dengan membingkai isu-isu ekologis tidak hanya sebagai masalah lingkungan tetapi sebagai bagian integral dari perkembangan spiritual dan rasional peserta didik.

Kata Kunci: Rasio Esoterik; Ayat-ayat Ekologis; Pendidikan Agama Islam; Imam al-Rāzī; *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*.

Introduction

The relationship between religion and ecology has become an increasingly urgent discourse in contemporary scholarship, particularly in the field of Islamic Religious Education. Environmental degradation, climate change, and the exploitation

of natural resources have raised concerns not only in scientific and policy domains but also in theological and pedagogical frameworks. Within Islam, the Qur'an contains numerous ecological verses (*āyāt kauniyyah*) that emphasize balance, sustainability, and human responsibility as *khalīfah* (vicegerents) on earth (Attar, 2014). These verses invite believers to contemplate the metaphysical dimension of nature, where the environment is not merely a resource but also a divine sign (*āyah*) reflecting God's wisdom (Adamson, 2017; Britannica, 2023; Street, 1997). Islamic Religious Education, therefore, bears the responsibility of embedding ecological consciousness into the values and practices of learners, uniting rational knowledge and spiritual reflection. In this respect, classical exegesis such as Imam al-Rāzī's *Tafsīr al-Kabīr Maḥāṣin al-Ghayb* offers a profound source of interpretation, providing esoteric insights into how ecological verses can be understood beyond their literal meaning. His approach integrates rationality (*'aql*) and esotericism (*bāṭin*), which can enrich contemporary educational discourse on sustainability and faith-based ecological ethics (Al-Rāzī, 1999).

Despite the Qur'an's emphasis on environmental stewardship, the problem lies in the inadequate integration of these teachings into Islamic Religious Education. Many curricula and pedagogical approaches emphasize ritualistic and dogmatic dimensions while neglecting ecological awareness as a spiritual and rational necessity. Previous studies have examined this issue in various contexts. For instance, Mukhlis (2022) explored ecological paradigms in Qur'anic interpretation, while Hapid and Hidayat (2025) investigated Qur'anic perspectives on environmental preservation in education. These works highlight the importance of embedding ecological themes in Islamic pedagogy. However, they primarily address ecological issues from a thematic exegesis perspective rather than engaging deeply with esoteric interpretations. Furthermore, Alijaya, Maulida, and Nurhayati (2025) emphasized theological education patterns in *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, but without direct linkage to environmental ethics. In other contexts, global discourses on eco-theology stress the urgency of integrating religion into environmental ethics, yet often fail to explore classical Islamic hermeneutics. Thus, the urgency of this research lies in bridging the gap between ecological education, Qur'anic

exegesis, and esoteric reasoning, thereby contributing to both pedagogical innovation and ecological sustainability.

The novelty of this study emerges from its focus on the esoteric ratio of ecological verses as interpreted by Imam al-Rāzī. While previous research has addressed ecological paradigms in Qur'anic interpretation (Mukhlis, 2022) and Qur'anic views on environmental education (Hapid & Hidayat, 2025), none have comprehensively explored the esoteric rationality (*ratio esoteris*) embedded in al-Rāzī's tafsīr. Furthermore, studies such as Salsabila (2024) have examined al-Rāzī's esoteric-literal interpretative method on *ḥurūf muqatta'ah*, and Azhari (2013) investigated al-Rāzī's concept of science education. However, both works stop short of connecting his interpretive methodology to ecological issues within Islamic Religious Education. This creates a gap in understanding how esoteric interpretations can inform contemporary ecological pedagogy. This study, therefore, aims to fill that gap by systematically analyzing al-Rāzī's interpretation of selected ecological verses, highlighting how his rational-esoteric synthesis provides an alternative educational framework. Such novelty not only contributes to tafsīr studies but also enriches the discourse on eco-pedagogy within Islamic education by framing ecology as both a rational responsibility and a spiritual mandate.

The objective of this research is to examine how Imam al-Rāzī's *Tafsīr al-Kabīr Maḥfūṭ al-Ghayb* conceptualizes the esoteric ratio of ecological verses and how these interpretations can be integrated into Islamic Religious Education. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the indicators of esoteric rationality in ecological verses, analyze their pedagogical implications, and contextualize them within contemporary environmental challenges. The scope of this research is limited to selected ecological verses that emphasize human responsibility, balance, and harmony with nature. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative, interpretative textual analysis, focusing on the hermeneutical and philosophical dimensions of al-Rāzī's tafsīr. By narrowing the scope, the research avoids the broad generalizations often present in thematic ecological studies and instead offers a focused exploration of esoteric pedagogy in Islamic education. In doing so, this study provides a theoretical foundation

for educators to develop curricula that unite rational inquiry, esoteric reflection, and ecological awareness, thereby advancing both Qur’anic studies and educational practices.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with an interpretative design (Creswell & Creswell, 2014; Latifnejad Roudsari, 2019; Seixas et al., 2017) focused on textual analysis of Imam al-Rāzī’s *Tafsīr al-Kabīr Maḥāṣin al-Ghayb*. The qualitative interpretative method was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of esoteric meanings within ecological verses of the Qur’an, where both rational (*‘aqlī*) and esoteric (*bāṭinī*) dimensions are emphasized (Mihas, 2023; Tariq, 2025; Wiesner, 2022). The design of this study is descriptive-analytical, aiming to describe, interpret, and critically evaluate al-Rāzī’s exegetical reasoning in relation to Islamic Religious Education. Qualitative research of this kind is widely used in tafsīr studies (Alijaya et al., 2025; Mukhlis, 2022), as it prioritizes hermeneutical interpretation over statistical generalization. To clarify the research design, this study operationalized its focus on four key competencies—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative thinking—in analyzing the educational implications of ecological verses, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of Analytical Framework

Analytical Aspect	Criteria – Very Good	Criteria – Good	Criteria – Not Good
Rational Analysis	Interpretation reflects strong logical-philosophical reasoning consistent with Qur’anic context	Interpretation reflects general reasoning with limited depth	Interpretation lacks rational consistency
Esoteric Interpretation	Reveals deep spiritual and symbolic dimensions beyond literal meaning	Provides some spiritual insights but lacks depth	Limited to literal explanation only
Educational Implication	Provides clear pedagogical value relevant to Islamic	Provides partial educational relevance	No clear educational

	Religious Education and ecology		relevance identified
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This framework provides a structural guide for evaluating how esoteric interpretations in al-Rāzī's tafsīr can be transformed into educational indicators relevant to contemporary ecological pedagogy.

Research Subject

The subject of this study is the classical tafsīr text *Tafsīr al-Kabīr Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb* authored by Imam al-Rāzī (d. 606 H/1210 CE). The selection of this text was based on purposive sampling (Breitmayer et al., 1993; Wiyanda Vera Nurfajriani, 2024), given its comprehensive and philosophical treatment of the Qur'an. Among the thirty volumes of *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, this study focuses on selected ecological verses, particularly those discussing human stewardship (*khilāfah*), cosmic order, and divine signs in nature. These include, but are not limited to, verses from *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, *Sūrah al-An'ām*, and *Sūrah al-Rūm*. The rationale for selecting these verses lies in their direct relevance to environmental ethics and theological anthropology. Unlike empirical studies that engage human participants, the research subjects here are textual phenomena—al-Rāzī's commentaries, arguments, and esoteric reasoning embedded in the tafsīr. The purposive nature of the selection ensures that the study remains focused on ecological dimensions within al-Rāzī's corpus while maintaining academic rigor and theological relevance.

Instruments and Procedures

The primary research instrument used in this study was a document analysis framework developed by the researcher, adapted from hermeneutical models of tafsīr analysis (Banerjee (Chatterjee), 2019; Salmia, 2023; Steleżuk & Wolanin, 2023). The instrument consisted of coding categories that classified ecological verses based on three indicators: (1) rational analysis (*ratio*), (2) esoteric interpretation (*esoteris*), and (3) educational implication for Islamic pedagogy (Hodgkinson, 2005; Kalisdha, 2023; Yasmin et al., 2024). To establish validity, the coding categories were cross-checked with existing studies on al-Rāzī's methodology (Azhari, 2013; Salsabila, 2024). Reliability was ensured through repeated coding of the same texts at different times to

confirm consistency. The procedure began with identifying ecological verses, followed by extracting al-Rāzī's interpretations, coding them according to the framework, and then interpreting the results within the scope of Islamic Religious Education. This systematic procedure enabled a coherent understanding of how esoteric ratio contributes to ecological awareness in education.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this research applied qualitative content analysis with a hermeneutical approach (A. Mackey, 2013; Baxter, 2009; Neuendorf & Kumar, 2016; Price, 2010; Tunison, 2023). After the data were collected and coded, thematic categorization was performed to identify recurring motifs in al-Rāzī's interpretation. Three major themes were extracted: (1) nature as divine signs (*āyāt kauniyyah*), (2) human responsibility as *khalīfah*, and (3) ecological ethics as spiritual pedagogy. These themes were then analyzed in relation to the research problem and objectives, particularly regarding how esoteric reasoning enriches ecological pedagogy in Islamic Religious Education. The analysis followed an iterative cycle: reading, coding, interpreting, and synthesizing (White & Marsh, 2006). The criteria for interpretation were grounded in theological, philosophical, and educational perspectives, ensuring that findings were contextualized both textually and pedagogically (Bass & Semetko, 2021; Madugu & Ibrahim, 2025). The arrangement of results and discussions followed the analytical framework illustrated in Figure 1, which shows the cyclical process of text analysis, coding, thematic synthesis, and educational implication.

Result and Discussion

Biographical Context of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī (1149–1209 M) was a major Islamic scholar, theologian, and exegete born in Ray, Persia. He is recognized as the author of *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (*Tafsīr al-Kabīr*), often described as an encyclopedic commentary of the Qur'an (Britannica, 2023). Al-Rāzī's intellectual legacy is characterized by the integration of rational theology (*ilm al-kalām*), philosophy, and Qur'anic hermeneutics. His tafsīr is considered distinctive due to its rational

engagement with both classical Islamic traditions and philosophical reasoning (Adamson, 2017).

Although affiliated with the Ash'arite school, al-Rāzī's approach often bridged kalām and philosophy, which sparked both admiration and controversy among later scholars (Street, 1997). Despite criticism of his argumentative style, his contributions continue to influence Islamic thought, particularly in Southeast Asian Islamic education and Qur'anic studies.

The biographical sketch of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī underscores his unique position as both a traditional Ash'arite theologian and a rational philosopher who sought to harmonize kalām with metaphysical reasoning. His encyclopedic tafsīr, *Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb*, reflects not merely exegetical commentary but also a synthesis of disciplines, ranging from logic and cosmology to ethics and theology. This multidimensional approach illustrates al-Rāzī's intellectual ambition to present Islam as a comprehensive worldview capable of engaging with diverse strands of knowledge (Al-Rāzī, 1999).

In the context of ecological hermeneutics, his rational-dialectical style becomes highly relevant. By integrating reason with revelation, al-Rāzī provides a methodological framework that modern scholars can employ in addressing contemporary issues, including environmental degradation and sustainability. While critics often highlight his tendency toward excessive rational speculation, such critiques overlook the constructive possibilities his works offer for bridging classical Islamic thought with modern academic discourse. Thus, al-Rāzī's biography is not merely historical but also a living intellectual legacy that can inform interdisciplinary engagements in theology, philosophy, and ecology.

Table 2. Intellectual Profile of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

Aspect	Description
Period of Life	1149–1209 M (6th–7th century H), born in Ray (Persia), lived during Abbasid era
Major Works	<i>Maḥṣūl al-Ghayb (Tafsīr al-Kabīr)</i> , <i>al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya</i> , <i>al-Maḥṣūl fī ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl</i> , <i>al-Arba‘īn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn</i>
Exegesis Traits	Encyclopedic tafsīr; integration of kalām, philosophy, and Qur’anic hermeneutics; rational-dialectical method
Influence	Impact on Ash‘arite theology, Qur’anic studies, Islamic philosophy; extended influence in Southeast Asian Islamic education
Criticism	Considered overly argumentative and speculative; criticized by some traditionalists for overreliance on rationalism
Ecological Contribution	Interprets <i>āyāt kauniyyah</i> (cosmic verses) as signs of divine order; links corruption (<i>fasād</i>) to moral and ecological imbalance (Q 30:41); emphasizes tawḥīd and human responsibility (<i>khilāfah</i>) as foundations for environmental ethics

The inclusion of ecological contributions in al-Rāzī's intellectual profile shows that his exegesis of *āyāt kauniyyah* extends beyond theological abstraction to practical ethical implications. By interpreting environmental corruption (*fasād*) as inseparable from moral and spiritual decline, al-Rāzī provides a framework where ecology is deeply embedded in *tawḥīd* and *khilāfah*. This perspective not only enriches classical Islamic scholarship but also offers valuable insights for modern ecological discourse, especially within the framework of Islamic Religious Education.

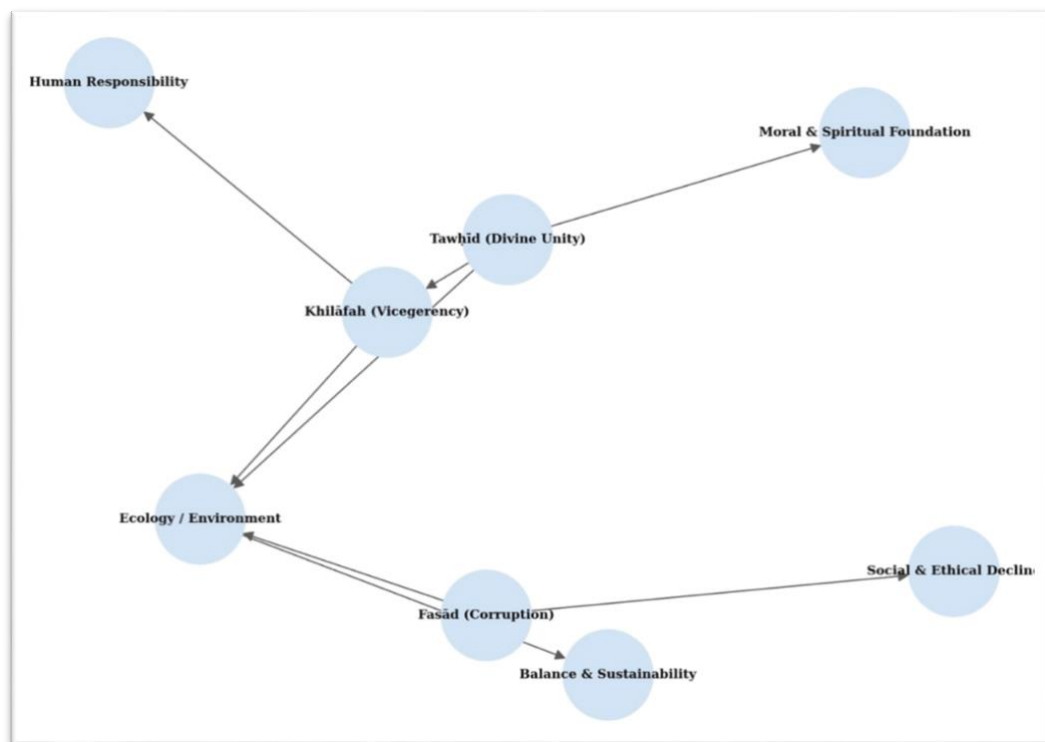


Figure 1. (Mind Map: Tawḥīd – Khilāfah – Fasād – Ecology in al-Rāzī's Tafsīr)

The mind map above illustrates how al-Rāzī's exegetical framework interconnects the theological principle of **tawḥīd** (divine unity), the ethical responsibility of **khilāfah** (vicegerency), the destructive consequences of **fasād** (corruption), and the broader implications for **ecological balance**. By positioning *tawḥīd* as the central axis, al-Rāzī emphasizes that all dimensions of human existence—including environmental stewardship—are ultimately rooted in divine oneness. *Khilāfah* emerges as the operationalization of *tawḥīd* in social and ecological contexts, where humans are entrusted with responsibility for maintaining harmony (Al-Rāzī, 1999).

Conversely, *fasād* reflects the moral and spiritual failures that disrupt this balance, leading to ecological degradation. The ecological dimension, represented in earthy tones, integrates these concepts into a holistic vision that links theology, ethics, and sustainability. This synthetic model demonstrates the relevance of classical *tafsīr* to modern ecological discourse, affirming that solutions to environmental crises are inseparable from spiritual reform and ethical consciousness.

The *Isyārī* (Esoteric) Method of Exegesis

The *tafsīr isyārī* method, rooted in Sufi traditions, emphasizes uncovering the inner or spiritual meanings of the Qur'an through symbolic interpretation (Misbakhudin et al., 2025; Zuherni, 2017). Historically, this hermeneutical approach emerged in the 3rd/9th century, with notable contributions such as al-Qushayrī's *Laṭā'if al-Isyārāt* (Firmansyah et al., 2021; Suci, 2025).

This method is accepted when it remains consistent with the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning, does not contradict *sharī'a*, and is supported by valid textual evidence (Hs & Isnaini, 2020; Reflita & Syatri, 2020). The approach highlights the Qur'an's layered dimensions, such as interpreting "light" (Q 24:35):

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Allāhu nūru al-samāwāti wa-al-arḍ —

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth."

Here, light is not only physical illumination but also symbolizes divine guidance. Although contested by some scholars (Al-Rāzī, 1999), *tafsīr isyārī* provides a spiritual complement to exoteric readings, thereby maintaining relevance in modern ethical and spiritual discourse (Wiharya, 2020).

The *tafsīr isyārī* approach in al-Rāzī's hermeneutics demonstrates how the Qur'an accommodates multiple layers of meaning without undermining its *ẓāhir* authority. This method allows a spiritual reading of verses—such as interpreting "light" (Q 24:35) as divine guidance—that enriches theological discourse and offers a mystical dimension to understanding revelation. By remaining faithful to the principles of

coherence with *sharī'a* and textual validity, al-Rāzī situates *isyārī* hermeneutics within a legitimate framework of Qur'anic exegesis (Britannica, 2023; Hs & Isnaini, 2020).

Such a perspective is highly relevant in contemporary contexts, where ethical and ecological challenges demand not only rational-legal but also spiritual responses. Through esoteric interpretation, the Qur'an speaks to the inner transformation of human beings, positioning spirituality as an integral foundation for ecological literacy and sustainable living. Thus, al-Rāzī's hermeneutical contributions can be seen as a bridge between classical exegetical traditions and modern spiritual-ethical discourses.

Esoteric Interpretation of Ecological Verses

Al-Rāzī interprets Q 30:41 (*ẓahara al-fasād fī al-barr wa-l-baḥr*) as highlighting shirk (idolatry) and sinful acts as the ultimate source of corruption on earth (Al-Rāzī, 1999; Britannica, 2023):

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (الروم: 41)
Ẓahara al-fasādu fī al-barri wa-al-baḥri bimā kasabat aydī al-nās li-yudhīqahum ba'da alladhī 'amilū la'allahum yarjī'ūn.

For him, ecological corruption is not merely environmental but also spiritual. This interpretation is reinforced through Q 25:43:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ (الفرقان: 43)
Ara'ayta mani-ttakhadha ilāhahu hawāhu —
“Have you seen the one who takes his own desire as his god?”

Thus, disobedience (*ma'ṣiya*) is a form of shirk since it stems from ego rather than submission to God. This esoteric reading provides an integrative bridge between al-Rāzī's rational exegesis and contemporary ecological ethics. By framing ecological degradation as both a material and spiritual crisis, al-Rāzī's hermeneutics encourage a paradigm where environmental reform is inseparable from theological and ethical reform. In modern discourse, this offers a profound implication: sustainable ecological balance requires not only technological and policy solutions but also spiritual renewal and ethical consciousness grounded in *tawḥīd* and human responsibility (*khilāfah*).

Typologies of Corruption (*Fasād/Ifsād*) in al-Rāzī's Exegesis

Drawing on *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, al-Rāzī categorizes corruption into five dimensions with direct ecological implications (Al-Rāzī, 1999):

- a. **Destruction of life (*ifsād al-nufūs*)** – killing and violence disrupt communal and ecological harmony (Q 5:33; Q 2:30):

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ... فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا (المائدة: 32)

- b. **Corruption of wealth (*ifsād al-amwāl*)** – exploitation, theft, and unjust economic practices foster ecological destruction (Q 2:188):

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ

- c. **Religious corruption (*ifsād al-adyān*)** – shirk and bid'ah undermine humanity's responsibility as khalīfa (Q 30:41).

- d. **Destruction of lineage (*ifsād al-intisāb*)** – zina and disruption of kinship weaken intergenerational responsibility (Q 25:54; Q 24:2).

- e. **Corruption of intellect (*ifsād al-'uqūl*)** – intoxicants impair rational capacity (Q 5:90):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْوَاجُ رَجْسٌ

These categories demonstrate that ecological imbalance is inseparable from moral, theological, and social corruption. Drawing on *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, al-Rāzī identifies five typologies of corruption—destruction of life (*ifsād al-nufūs*), corruption of wealth (*ifsād al-amwāl*), religious corruption (*ifsād al-adyān*), destruction of lineage (*ifsād al-intisāb*), and corruption of intellect (*ifsād al-'uqūl*)—all of which bear direct ecological implications. For instance, violence and bloodshed disturb communal and

ecological harmony as affirmed in *فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا* (Q 5:32), while unjust economic exploitation fuels resource depletion (*وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ*, Q 2:188). Religious deviation through shirk and innovation undermines human responsibility as *khalīfa* (Q 30:41), sexual immorality erodes intergenerational trust (Q 25:54; Q 24:2), and intoxicants impair rational stewardship (*يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ* (Q 5:90). These typologies highlight al-Rāzī's theological vision that ecological imbalance is inseparable from moral, social, and spiritual corruption, thereby framing environmental degradation not merely as a material crisis but as a manifestation of comprehensive human failure in fulfilling divine trust.

Remediation through Faith and Piety

In al-Rāzī's esoteric hermeneutics, the root of ecological crises is not merely material mismanagement but the weakening of human consciousness of God (*tawhīd*), faith (*īmān*), and piety (*taqwā*). He argues that true environmental reform (*iṣlāḥ*) begins with spiritual renewal, since human corruption (*fasād*) in the natural order is directly linked to moral and theological deviation (Adamson, 2017; Al-Rāzī, 1999). The Qur'an affirms this causal relationship:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ (الأعراف: 96)

This verse shows that ecological blessings—symbolized by the “*barakāt* of heaven and earth”—are conditioned upon human faith and piety. According to al-Rāzī, the esoteric dimension of this verse implies that harmony between human beings, society, and the environment is restored only when divine guidance is internalized and practiced. Consequently, ecological reform cannot be separated from spiritual and ethical reform, positioning Islam's theological framework as the normative foundation for sustainable living. This perspective aligns with Nurman's (2023) argument that ecological crises in Muslim societies must be addressed through a faith-based paradigm that integrates moral consciousness with environmental stewardship.

Table 2. Typologies of *Fasād* (Corruption) in *Mafāṭih al-Ghayb* of Imam al-Rāzī

No	Typology of Corruption	Qur'anic Verse	Translation (EN)	Ecological-Moral Meaning
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	(<i>Fasād/Ifsād</i>)	(Arabic)		
1	Destruction of life (<i>ifsād al-nufūs</i>)	مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ... فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا (Q 5:32)	Whoever kills one soul ... it is as if he has slain all humanity.	Violence and killing disrupt social and ecological harmony.
2	Corruption of wealth (<i>ifsād al-amwāl</i>)	وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ (Q 2:188)	Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly.	Unjust exploitation fosters ecological imbalance.
3	Religious corruption (<i>ifsād al-adyān</i>)	ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ (Q 30:41)	Corruption has appeared on land and sea by what people's hands have earned.	Shirk and sin undermine humanity's role as khalīfa.
4	Destruction of lineage (<i>ifsād al-intisāb</i>)	وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا (Q 25:54)	He created from water human beings and made them of lineage and marriage.	Disruption of family ethics weakens intergenerational responsibility.
5	Corruption of intellect (<i>ifsād al-‘uqūl</i>)	إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رَجَسٌ (Q 5:90)	Wine, gambling, idols, and divining arrows are filth.	Intoxicants and irrational acts undermine ethical environmental stewardship.

This typology demonstrates that, for Imam al-Rāzī, ecological corruption (*fasād al-bī’ah*) cannot be separated from spiritual, moral, and social corruption. Each dimension of *fasād* points to the interconnectedness of faith, ethics, and ecological balance. Thus, addressing environmental crises requires not only technological and political solutions but also a theological and spiritual renewal grounded in the Qur’an (Al-Rāzī, 1999; Britannica, 2023).

In order to strengthen the relevance of Imam al-Rāzī's esoteric ecological interpretation with contemporary discourses, the following table compares his framework with modern studies in Islamic education and ecological ethics. This comparison highlights how classical tafsīr continues to inspire present-day approaches to ecological literacy, especially in the integration of theology, pedagogy, and environmental awareness.

Table 3. Comparison between al-Rāzī's Interpretation and Contemporary Studies on Ecological Literacy

Aspect	al-Rāzī's Interpretation (<i>Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb</i>)	Contemporary Studies (e.g., Taufikin & Yusdani, 2025; Oktafiani et al., 2025)
Ontology of Nature	Nature as <i>āyāt kauniyyah</i> (divine signs) reflecting God's wisdom.	Nature as a pedagogical medium to develop <i>ecological literacy</i> in Islamic education.
Human Role	Humans as <i>khalīfa</i> entrusted to avoid <i>fasād</i> (corruption) and preserve balance.	Tauhid-based ecological responsibility, integrating environmental stewardship into curriculum and pedagogy.
Typology of Corruption	Fivefold <i>ifsād</i> : life, wealth, religion, lineage, intellect.	Thematic systematization: <i>iṣlāḥ</i> , <i>fasād</i> , and <i>'imārah</i> as ethical categories for sustainability.
Pedagogical Implication	Ecological preservation is inseparable from spiritual-moral education.	Ecological literacy aims to form awareness and practice of sustainability in students.
Epistemological Basis	Esoteric hermeneutics: inner wisdom (<i>bāṭin</i>) guiding exoteric practice (<i>ẓāhir</i>).	Integration of Islamic theology with contemporary environmental sciences.

The comparison reveals that al-Rāzī's esoteric reasoning provides a deep theological foundation for ecological ethics, while contemporary studies operationalize these insights into educational frameworks. Both converge on the urgency of integrating

faith and environmental awareness, although al-Rāzī emphasizes spiritual-moral roots, whereas modern scholars focus on practical pedagogical applications. This indicates a complementary relationship that enriches both classical tafsīr scholarship and contemporary Islamic education.

Theoretical Reconstruction: Tawḥīd, Khilāfah, Fasād, and Ecological Ethics in al-Rāzī's Tafsīr

The reconstruction of theory derived from al-Rāzī's esoteric hermeneutics presents an integrated framework that connects theology, ethics, and ecology. This framework demonstrates that ecological ethics in Islam is inseparable from theological consciousness and spiritual practice, forming a holistic paradigm that bridges classical exegesis with modern ecological literacy.

1. Fondasi Teologis: Tawḥīd sebagai Poros

Tawḥīd in al-Rāzī's tafsīr functions not only as a theological doctrine but as an ontological principle linking God, humanity, and the cosmos. Ecological corruption, therefore, represents a violation of divine order. Ecological consciousness is thus seen as a direct extension of tawḥīd.

2. Etika Khilāfah: Tanggung Jawab Manusia

The concept of khilāfah is interpreted as humanity's existential mandate to safeguard cosmic balance. For al-Rāzī, being khalīfa is not a privilege but a responsibility that requires moral and ecological accountability. Environmental degradation is therefore viewed as a failure to uphold the mandate of khilāfah.

3. Tipologi Fasād: Sumber Kerusakan Ekologis

Al-Rāzī categorizes fasād into multiple dimensions—spiritual, social, economic, moral—which directly and indirectly contribute to ecological destruction. Ecological imbalance (fasād al-bi'ah) is only one manifestation of broader corruption in human-divine, human-human, and human-self relations, revealing the interconnectedness between social ethics and ecological ethics.

4. Prinsip Reformasi Ekologi: Remediation through Faith

Ecological remediation, according to al-Rāzī, cannot be achieved solely through technocratic or material approaches. It requires a return to divine guidance

through faith (īmān) and piety (taqwā). Strengthening spirituality restores harmony between humans, society, and the natural world. Thus, ecological sustainability in Islam is grounded in theological reform.

5. Sintesis Klasik-Modern: Ecological Literacy

By contextualizing al-Rāzī's insights with contemporary ecological literacy, his classical tafsīr can serve as a normative and ethical foundation for Islamic education today. This synthesis positions tafsīr isyārī as not only relevant to medieval scholarship but also vital in shaping ecological awareness, curriculum, and activism in modern contexts.

Researcher's Note:

This theoretical reconstruction reveals that al-Rāzī's exegesis offers a comprehensive ecological paradigm: *tawḥīd* ensures metaphysical balance, *khilāfah* defines human responsibility, *fasād* diagnoses multidimensional corruption, and *faith-based remediation* provides the path toward ecological harmony. When integrated with modern ecological literacy, it contributes to a transformative Islamic eco-theology that remains deeply spiritual yet socially practical.

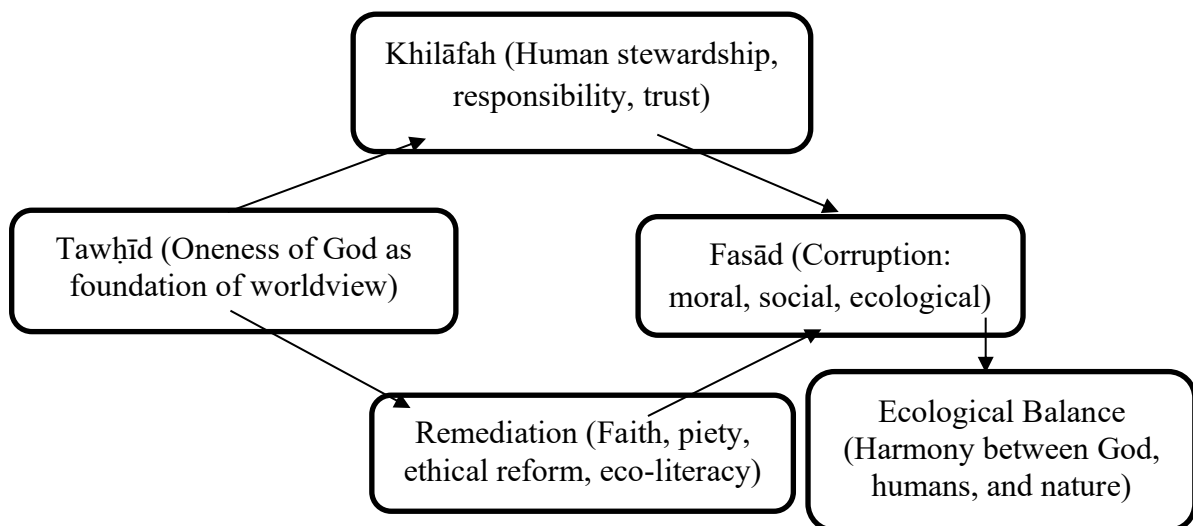


Figure 2. Theoretical Reconstruction Model (Tawḥīd – Khilāfah – Fasād – Remediation – Ecological Balance)

Researcher's Commentary

The reconstruction model above illustrates how al-Rāzī's theological exegesis can be synthesized into a structured ecological theory. The starting point, *tawhīd*, frames human and ecological relations within divine unity, preventing a purely anthropocentric worldview. From this foundation, *khilāfah* emerges as humanity's ethical stewardship, emphasizing accountability for environmental sustainability. When stewardship is neglected, *fasād* occurs, manifesting in moral, social, and ecological corruption as categorized by al-Rāzī.

However, al-Rāzī's hermeneutics also provide a pathway of *remediation* rooted in *īmān* (faith), *taqwā* (piety), and ethical reorientation toward divine guidance. This process not only restores spiritual and moral balance but also realigns human behavior with ecological integrity. The culmination of this cycle is *ecological balance*, a state where the relationship between God, humanity, and nature is harmonized.

This theoretical reconstruction demonstrates that ecological thought in Islam is not peripheral but deeply embedded in Qur'anic cosmology. By linking theology (*tawhīd*), anthropology (*khilāfah*), pathology (*fasād*), and therapy (*remediation*), al-Rāzī's tafsīr contributes to a holistic paradigm of sustainability. In modern discourse, this framework resonates with ecological literacy movements by integrating ethical, spiritual, and practical dimensions of environmental care.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* provides a profound theological foundation for ecological ethics through the integration of *tawhīd* (divine unity), *khilāfah* (stewardship), the typologies of *fasād/ifsād* (corruption), and the process of remediation via *īmān* (faith) and *taqwā* (piety). Rather than treating environmental crises merely as material issues, al-Rāzī situates them within a wider theological and moral pathology, making ecological balance inseparable from spiritual and ethical reform.

The main implication of these findings is that Islamic theology offers not only normative guidance but also a conceptual framework for sustainability, where ecological preservation is an extension of faith-based responsibility. This research

contributes to contemporary discourse by bridging classical Qur'anic hermeneutics with modern ecological literacy movements. Future studies may expand this framework by comparing al-Rāzī's exegetical approach with other classical scholars, or by empirically exploring how his thought can be applied in environmental education and policy.

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