



# Interpretation of Verses about Plants in the Qur'an: A Review of Ma'ānī, Bayān, and Sufism

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## ABSTRACT

Environmental degradation results from humans disobeying God's command to maintain harmony with nature. All elements of the universe reflect God's word and form an ecosystem. When humans disrupt this balance through selfish actions, nature reacts in ways harmful to human life, underlining that everything is subject to Allah's will. This study analyzes the concept of environmental damage in the Qur'an using Abdussatar Fathullah Said's maudu'i method and explores its connection with Yusuf Qardawi's idea of hifzhul bi'ah (environmental preservation). Using qualitative library research, it finds that the Qur'an's teachings on preventing environmental harm align with hifzhul bi'ah: 1) Humans, as earth's caliphs, must preserve and protect nature (QS Al-Baqarah 2:30); 2) The Qur'an commands maintaining and forbids destroying the environment, as in QS Al-A'raf 7:56 and other verses (QS Al-Baqarah 2:11-12, 60, 205; Al-A'raf 7:56, 74, 85; Hud 11:85; As-Syu'ara 26:150-152).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as the holy book of Muslims, contains a rich linguistic, theological, and spiritual dimension, particularly in verses describing natural phenomena. Of the 6,236 verses in the Qur'an, scholars estimate that more than 750 are directly related to natural phenomena, and of these, approximately 200 specifically address plants. The existence of these verses related to the world of plants not only conveys descriptive information but also contains a multidimensional message. This message ranges from linguistic aspects that emphasize the beauty of rhetoric, aesthetic aspects that demonstrate the harmony of language and meaning, to theological and spiritual aspects that affirm humanity's relationship with the Creator. All of these dimensions blend harmoniously, forming an integral structure of meaning within the framework of the Qur'anic worldview (Seyyed Hossein, 1993).

The relevance of these verses is increasingly pressing, particularly as the world faces a global ecological crisis and the need to design a sustainable development paradigm. Studies that highlight verses about plants are no longer merely theological discourse, but can also be positioned as ethical and epistemological inspiration for environmental conservation efforts. By exploring these verses, an ecological paradigm can be constructed that is rooted in the text of revelation, while also aligning with the principles of sustainability in modern discourse (Richard, 2003).

The development of Qur'anic interpretation and studies in the modern era demonstrates a trend that increasingly emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach. One pioneer in exploring this line of thought was Maurice Bucaille, with his monumental work, \*The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science\*. In his book, Bucaille describes the surprising harmony between the descriptions of the Qur'an and the discoveries of modern science, including in the field of botany, which deals with the growth processes and diversity of plants (Bucaille, 1979). This approach subsequently developed rapidly, giving rise to considerable interest in the scientific study of the Qur'an.

Despite its significant contributions, an overly heavy emphasis on a scientific approach often neglects other dimensions of the Quran, particularly its linguistic and spiritual aspects. Yet, the Quran's messages are not only intended to demonstrate its compatibility with science, but also to awaken spiritual awareness and reveal the beauty of its rhetoric. Therefore, a number of contemporary Muslim thinkers emphasize the importance of an approach that integrates diverse perspectives, including linguistic, aesthetic, and theological ones. Nasr, for example, argues that this integration allows for a more comprehensive and authentic understanding of the Quranic worldview (Mir, 1986).

The science of *balaghah*, which encompasses branches such as *ma'ānī* and *bayān*, actually provides a sophisticated analytical tool for revealing the beauty of the Quran's language. *Ma'ānī* functions to examine the appropriateness of expressions to the context of the communication situation, while *bayān* studies the various ways in which the Quran expresses meaning, whether through metaphors, similes, or other figures of speech. By combining the two, an interpreter can see how the sacred text not only conveys meaning but also presents captivating linguistic beauty (Seymen, 2025).

Sufism presents a different perspective. Through a Sufi approach, verses about plants are not only read in their literal context but also used as symbols that reveal inner realities. Plants growing from the soil, for example, are understood as symbols of the purification of the soul, or of human spiritual growth toward God. Thus, Sufism transforms intellectual understanding into a deeper and more transformative spiritual experience. However, the integration of linguistic analysis, rhetoric, and Sufism's spirituality in modern academic studies remains very limited.

Based on this gap, this study attempts to fill the void using a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive approach. In researching religious texts, the interpretivist paradigm is the right choice because it recognizes that texts are always open to a multiplicity of meanings. Thus, interpretations are not considered final but always dynamically evolving according to the reader's horizons and the traditions that underlie them (Moleong, 2014). This framework allows for the exploration of the layered meanings within the Quranic verses, both linguistically and spiritually (Creswell, 2013).

This research also emphasizes interdisciplinary methods, as only by integrating various perspectives can a comprehensive understanding be achieved. A linguistic perspective is necessary to analyze the structure of language, a rhetorical perspective helps uncover rhetorical style, and a Sufi perspective allows for inner experience, complementing the intellectual dimension. With this analytical model, the research is expected to provide a more comprehensive framework for understanding (Mahmudah, 2014).

The primary data source used in this study is the Qur'an, particularly the verses that discuss plants. In addition, this study also examines classical interpretations such as the works of al-Tabarī, al-Rāzī, and al-Qur'anṭubī, as well as contemporary interpretations highlighting themes of nature and the environment. Through these readings, the author attempts to capture how optimism, beauty, and spirituality are displayed in the Qur'anic text as it relates to flora. As supporting data, academic literature in the fields of thematic interpretation, *balaghah* (*balaghah*), Sufism, and interdisciplinary studies of Islam and science are used as secondary data (Seymen, 2025).

The data collection process was conducted through a literature review, involving the identification, selection, and analysis of relevant sources. This literature review enabled researchers to not only compare classical and modern interpretations but also examine the continuity of ideas across time. In-depth textual analysis was also conducted to capture the linguistic, symbolic, and spiritual nuances contained in the verses about plants. Therefore, the research results are expected to be not only descriptive but also interpretive, demonstrating the relevance of these verses to modern life (Sugiyono, 2017).

The analytical methodology in this study is integrative, consisting of several stages. First, a linguistic and stylistic analysis is conducted to examine the linguistic structure of the verses about plants, including how sentence structure, choice of diction, and rhetorical style are used to convey a specific message. The second stage is an analysis of the inner meaning from a Sufi perspective, in order to understand the spiritual dimension implied behind the verses. The third stage is synthesis, which combines the findings from the two

approaches to produce a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding. This model was chosen so that the research does not become trapped in a single approach but rather provides a comprehensive picture that is in accordance with the complexity of the Quran (Moleong, 2014).

The qualitative and exploratory nature of this research requires strong validity in the analysis. Therefore, triangulation was conducted by combining different sources of interpretation and diverse academic literature. With this approach, it is hoped that the research findings will not only reflect the researcher's personal interpretation but also be grounded in a broad scientific tradition (Creswell, 2013).

Based on these criteria, this study selected seven verses deemed most representative for in-depth analysis. These verses are Al-An'am verse 99, which describes the process of creating various plants; Al-An'am verse 141, which touches on the diversity of cultivated plants; Ar-Ra'd verse 4, which emphasizes the differences in crop yields even though they originate from the same water; An-Nahl verse 11 which presents plants as a sign of God's power, Al-Wāqi'ah verses 63-65 which presents rhetorical questions about the agricultural process, 'Abasa verses 27-32 which explains the stages of plant growth, and Al-A'rāf verse 58 which uses parables about good and bad soil.

These verses were selected using a purposive sampling method, based on criteria of relevance to the research theme. These seven verses exhibit high linguistic complexity, feature significant elements of rhetoric, and have Sufi interpretations in classical literature. Therefore, this study hopes to uncover the integration of linguistic, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects contained in the plant verses, thereby making new contributions to the development of interdisciplinary Qur'anic studies (Seymen, 2025).

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### • Analysis of Ma'ānī Science: Structure and Meaning

#### a. Complexity of Syntactic Structure

A close examination of the syntactic structure of the Qur'anic verses concerning plants reveals an extraordinary level of linguistic sophistication. One example is found in Surah Al-An'am, verse 99, where the sentence structure begins with the ismiyyah number: (And he is that He sent down) (and He it is Who sends down rain). From a religious perspective, the choice of the ismiyyah number has a strong meaning, namely, it shows the nature of tsubūt (determination) and dawām (permanence). This means that the fall of rain is not just a momentary phenomenon, but rather a sunnatullāh that continues in the system of His creation.

Usage dAmīr MufashThe pronoun "huwa," which refers directly to Allah SWT, is also not a normal grammatical choice. Theologically, the use of this pronoun is an explicit affirmation of God's oneness. He is affirmed as the sole authority entitled and capable of sending rain. On the other hand, the structure of ism maushūl "alladhi" which follows after it functions as shifah or attributive subordinate clause. This function gives a nuance of tāhsīl(specification), namely limiting that only God has these characteristics, while simultaneously denying all other entities that are considered to have power in the cosmic system (Dardiri & Fudhaili, 2025).

An interesting linguistic phenomenon in this verse is the emergence of iltifāt (grammatical person shift). Initially, the third-person singular pronoun "huwa" (He) is used, then it shifts to the first-person plural pronoun "akhrajnā" (We grow). This shift is not without significance. Az-Zamakhsyārī (1977) in Al-Kashshāf explains that this iltifāt contains several rhetorical messages. First, it functions as a form of ta'zīm (exaltation) of God, by using the pluralist majestatis style of language. This gives the impression of God's greatness and glory in arranging natural phenomena. Second, the use of the plural form can also be understood as an implicit signal about the involvement of angels in carrying out God's will, especially in regulating cosmic phenomena such as rain and plant growth. Third, this variation presents a stylistic dynamic that avoids monotony in the text, while keeping the reader's attention to the meaning contained (Ullah, 2013).

Al-Ālūsī (2005) divides Rūh al-Ma'ani adds another perspective. According to him, the change of person from singular to plural also indicates God's closeness to His creation. He is not only a distant transcendent being, but also an immanent being directly involved in the process of creation, maintenance, and regulation of nature. Thus, iltifāt is not merely a rhetorical device but also possesses theological depth, demonstrating the balance between God's greatness and closeness (Kagee, 2018).

In Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 4, Allah SWT says: (And faithful the earth to cut Adjacent) (and on earth there are adjacent parts). The syntactic structure of this sentence features the phenomenon of taqdīm al-khabar (precedence of the predicate before the subject). The phrase "wa fī al-ard" (and on earth) comes before the mention of the subject "qīṭā" (parts of the land). In the science of balāghah, this kind of

arrangement has a special rhetorical function, namely to produce meaning *hashr* (limitation). Thus, the message conveyed is not merely descriptive, but rather emphasizes that the diversity of plants growing from the same water source is a unique phenomenon that is indeed typical of the earth (Fadhlillah & Riyadi, 2025).

Fakhruddin ar-Rāzī (1309 AH) in *Mafātih al-Ghayb* provides a detailed interpretation of the sentence structure. According to him, the introduction of the adverb "on earth" is intended to emphasize the special nature of the earth as a *maḥ* (The arena where the sunnatullāh takes place). The Earth is a special place where Allah's power is manifest, allowing humans to directly observe the diversity of nature as a sign of His greatness. Ar-Rāzī also emphasized that this structure contains an epistemological dimension: it invites humans to observe, reflect, and utilize natural phenomena as lessons. In other words, the linguistic structure of the Qur'an not only conveys theological meaning but also stimulates human intellectual activity to read the verses of *kauniyyah* (Jaffer, 2014).

When analyzed more broadly, these two examples demonstrate that the Quran not only addresses empirical reality but also packages it with powerful, meaningful language. The number of *ismiyyah*, *iltifāt*, *taqdīm al-khabar*, and other syntactic forms serve as rhetorical devices that enrich the theological message. Natural phenomena such as rain, plants, and soil fertility are presented in language that connects the cosmic dimension with faith.

This syntactic analysis also shows that the sentence structure of the Quran cannot be viewed merely as a technical aspect of language. It is always closely linked to theological, philosophical, and even ethical meanings. The falling of rain, which then causes plants to grow, for example, is not only interpreted as a natural cycle, but as a sign of God's oneness and proof of the permanence of the sunnatullāh. Similarly, the diversity of plants on earth, nourished by the same water source, is positioned as a sign of God's power and an invitation to humanity to reflect and learn from it. An analysis of the syntactic structure of verses about plants in the Quran reveals the interconnectedness of linguistic and theological dimensions. Through its varied style, the Quran not only conveys empirical information but also guides humanity to a deeper understanding of their relationship with God and the universe.

#### b. Dynamics of *Khabar* and *Inshā'*

A study of the informative and performative dimensions of *khabar* (*inshā'*) in Qur'anic verses discussing plants reveals a highly refined and complex communicative strategy. The Qur'an does not simply present factual statements about the creation, growth, or function of plants but also links them to pedagogical and spiritual goals. Most verses about plants are *khabar*, that is, informative statements that, on the surface, appear to be descriptive. However, beneath this informative form, the Qur'an carries a dual, mutually reinforcing purpose.

First, the function of *fa'idah al-khabar*, which conveys new information that may not be known to the audience, especially early Arab society that did not have systematic scientific knowledge about biology or growth processes. Through these verses, the audience is introduced to the fact that the entire growth process comes from God's power, not merely from human effort. Second, the function of *lāzim al-fa'idah*, which provides reinforcement or reminders of knowledge that the audience actually already has. However, the Qur'an arranges it with a new perspective and emphasis so that it produces an effect of deep reflection. Thus, this informative function does not stop at the cognitive realm, but moves into the affective and spiritual realms: transforming knowledge into religious awareness (Sarif et al., 2025).

This communicative approach makes the Quranic text dynamic. It can touch those completely unfamiliar with knowledge, while simultaneously providing new reflective experiences for those already familiar with natural phenomena. This combination of *khabar* and *inshā'* is what allows the Quran to remain relevant across generations, as it speaks at various levels of depth of meaning.

One of the most prominent examples is found in Surat Al-Wāqi'ah verses 63-64, which reads:

"أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ \* أَنْتُمْ تَزَرَّعُونَ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْزَارِعُونَ"

This verse appears to be a question, but not one seeking information. The interrogative structure used is a form of rhetorical *istifham*, a question posed not to elicit an answer, but rather to provide confirmation (*taqrīr*). This type of question has far more persuasive power than a simple informative statement. This is because the audience not only receives information but also actively engages in a process of reflection. They are compelled to think, consider, and ultimately acknowledge the truth indicated by the verse.

The question structure in the verse also indicates a rhetorical crescendo. It begins with an invitation to pay attention to a very familiar phenomenon of cultivating the land (a-fa-ra'aytum mā tahruthūn) then moves on to the aspect of planting (a-antum tazra'ūnahu"), until finally confirming the role of Allah as the only true grower ("am naħnu al-zāri'ūn). This gradual escalation forms a dramatic arc that takes the listener from mere observation of everyday reality to theological awareness. From a communicative perspective, this strategy is highly effective; the audience is initially reminded of something familiar to them, such as the process of farming. All Arabs at the time were familiar with this activity, albeit in a rudimentary way. However, the Qur'an then leads them to a profound reflection: was it really humans who grew the seeds? Thus, this verse dismantles the linear and anthropocentric assumption that a successful harvest is solely the result of human hard work. It emphasizes that human effort is only part of the external causes, while the final outcome is determined by God's will.

This rhetorical implication demonstrates that the function of khabar (religious discourse) cannot be separated from the function of inshā' (instruction). Although informative, the delivery of the verses about plants is also performative. It raises awareness, strengthens faith, and directs behavior. The beautifully crafted rhetorical questions prevent the audience from being passive, but rather participatory in the process of understanding. It is at this point that the Qur'an demonstrates its nature as a living text; it is not merely read but demands the reader's spiritual involvement. Further analysis reveals two interwoven layers of messages: the empirical message, which acknowledges that plant phenomena follow the laws of cause and effect, observable in everyday life. And the transcendental message, which recognizes that behind these laws of cause and effect lies the absolute will of God. The union of these two messages creates a harmony between scientific reality and spiritual awareness.

Thus, the discussion of khabar and inshā' in the verses about plants confirms that the Qur'an employs a polyphonic style of language, speaking with both descriptive and normative voices. On the one hand, it conveys natural information that can be verified by human experience. On the other hand, it establishes a horizon of meaning that transcends facts, inviting its readers to strengthen their faith and acknowledge God's greatness. A linguistic study of the verses about plants focuses not only on sentence structure but also on the communicative strategies inherent within them. The Qur'an presents knowledge that is integrated with values, combining facts with wisdom. This approach explains why, despite being centuries old, these verses remain relevant, inspiring, and capable of touching both the intellectual and spiritual aspects of their readers.

#### c. Elements of Insha' talabī in the Amr Form

The Qur'an is known not only as a book of guidance, but also as a divine literary work with captivating rhetoric. One important aspect of Qur'anic rhetoric is the use of inshā' ṭalabi in the form of amr (command). This element serves not only a linguistic function but also emphasizes the communicative relationship between the divine text and its readers. Verses discussing plant phenomena, for example, are presented not only as khabar (information) but are also often interspersed with commands to pay attention, reflect, or learn lessons. This combination produces a text that is not only informative but also performative, guiding human spiritual awareness to see signs of God's greatness through nature:

"فَانظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرَهِ إِذَا أَنْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ"

(Look at the fruit when it bears fruit and when it ripens). This verse contains inshā'ṭalabī in the form of the sentence amr "unzurū" (pay attention). According to the theory of balāghah, the form of amr not only conveys a literal command, but can also function as irshād (guidance), ta'dīb (education), or even tazkīr (warning) (Hilmi, 2021). In this context, the command to "look" is not merely a physical activity, but rather a guide to the awareness to deeply reflect on Allah's creation.

Al-Ghazālī in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* explained that the command to observe the universe is a path to knowing the Creator. He emphasized that every sensory observation must be accompanied by contemplation of the heart so that humans do not stop at external beauty, but penetrate to inner meaning (Al-Gazzali, 1982). Thus, the word "unzurū" in this verse contains the dimension of tadabbur, a reflective process that guides humans to connect empirical phenomena with spiritual awareness. The uniqueness of Qur'anic rhetoric lies in its ability to create interactivity with the reader. When the verses about plants describe biological processes, such as the growth of seeds, the emergence of shoots, or the ripening of fruit, suddenly appears the command amr to pay attention. This rhetorical strategy makes the text lively and engaging. It is

as if Allah is speaking directly to the reader, inviting them not to stop at cognitive information, but to actively engage in contemplation (Abdul-Raof, 2013).

This shows that the function of *amr* is not only normative, but also hermeneutic. It serves as a bridge connecting the horizon of the text with the horizon of the reader, as explained by Gadamer in the concept of *wirkungsgeschichte*, that understanding is always formed in the interaction between the text's tradition and the reader's situation (Gadamer, 2004). Thus, the Qur'anic command opens up a dynamic dialogue. The sentence *amr* that appears in the verses about plants also has deep spiritual value. When Allah commands humans to pay attention to fruit, seeds, or the growth process, what is actually meant is to train the awareness of monotheism through empirical experience. (Izutsu, 2002) calls this phenomenon theocentric semantics in the Qur'an, where seemingly simple words actually contain a metaphysical orientation. In this case, *amr* "unzurū" is not just a call to observation, but a spiritual practice to read the signs of God (āyātullah) scattered throughout nature.

(Shihab, 2007) adds that Qur'anic commands always have an educational dimension. When Allah commands humans to care for nature, He is actually educating them to have both spiritual sensitivity and ecological awareness. Thus, the element of *insha'talabī* in the form of *amr* can also be understood as a Qur'anic educational strategy.

The Qur'an's command to pay attention to natural phenomena is becoming increasingly relevant, the call to "unzurū" can be read as a reflective invitation to revive the ecological awareness of mankind. Tadabbur on the verses of plants not only enriches the spiritual dimension, but also encourages people to maintain the sustainability of nature. (Abdul-Raof, 2013) emphasizes that the rhetoric of the Qur'an is multidimensional: it touches the heart, moves the mind, and shapes ethical behavior. Therefore, the element of *insha' tAlabī* in the form of *amr* can be seen as a theological and ethical instrument that guides humans towards a responsible attitude towards the environment.

## 2.2 Bayān Analysis: Rhetorical Beauty

### a. *Tashbīh* and *Majāz*

A study of the use of *tasybīh* (parables) and *majāz* (metaphors) in the verses of the Qur'an that talk about plants shows how complex, beautiful, and profound the rhetoric of this holy book is. The Qur'an not only conveys information in the form of factual statements, but also brings meaning to life through comparisons, metaphors, and symbols that encourage readers to reflect on the meaning behind the text. This is in line with the main function of the language of the Qur'an which not only provides information, but also touches the spiritual, moral, and aesthetic aspects of humans (Al-Hāshimī, 2000).

One prominent example of *tashbīh* can be found in Surah Al-A'rāf verse 58, where Allah SWT describes the difference between good soil and bad soil:

وَالْأَنْبَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَحْرُجُ نَبَاتَهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي حَبَّثَ لَا يَحْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكَدًا

"And the good land produces its crops by the permission of its Lord, but the bad land does not produce (yields) except a little."

This parable literally speaks of the quality of soil in producing plants. However, behind this literal meaning lies a profound spiritual message: fertile soil is analogous to a human heart that is broad and ready to accept God's guidance, while barren soil represents a heart that is hard and rejects the truth. This *tashbīh* serves not only to clarify natural phenomena but also to illustrate the spiritual condition of humans. In classical exegesis, exegetes such as al-Rāzī emphasize that this comparison also serves as a mirror for each human being to assess their readiness to receive guidance (Jaffer, 2014).

The use of *tashbīh* in the Quran regarding plants is not limited to explanation but also serves a persuasive function. When readers reflect on the difference between fertile and barren soil, they are indirectly guided to internalize its meaning in the context of religious life. In other words, the verse encourages humans to cleanse their hearts of harshness, envy, or arrogance, thereby becoming fertile for cultivating faith and righteous deeds.

The Qur'an is also rich in the use of figurative language in describing plants. A clear example is seen in Surah Al-An'ām, verse 99, where Allah states that He sends down rain from "السَّمَاءِ" (sky). Literally, the word "sky" refers to the space above the earth. However, in this context the word functions as a mursal *majāz* in the form of metonymy, where "sky" is used to refer to "clouds" as the source of rain. The relationship between

the sky and rain is the relationship of a place with the phenomenon that emerges from it, so its use enriches the meaning of the text and presents a deeper aesthetic nuance.

Another example is the phrase "كُلُّ شَيْءٍ" (everything) found in several verses regarding the creation of plants. This expression is not meant to literally encompass everything that exists, but is a form of rational figurative language, where the meaning of "everything" is directed at the diversity of plant species created by Allah. The use of this hyperbolic expression gives the impression of the vastness of God's creation, while maintaining the rhetorical beauty of the Qur'an (Al-Hāshimī, 2000). Thus, figurative language functions not only as a linguistic ornament, but also as a means of strengthening meaning, inviting humans to reflect on the vastness of Allah's power.

The presence of figurative language in the verses about plants also demonstrates the flexibility of the Quran's language. The metaphorical language used broadens the reader's understanding, as the verses speak not only on an empirical level but also symbolically. For example, rain falling from the sky is often associated with the descent of God's mercy and guidance. Plants that thrive from rainwater then become symbols of the faith that blossoms in the human heart. Thus, the figurative language in the verses about plants not only enriches linguistic meaning but also builds a symbolic framework that connects natural phenomena with spiritual experience.

From a stylistic perspective, tashbih and majaz (figurative language) in the verse about plants complement each other. Tashbih emphasizes explicit similarities between two things, such as soil and the human heart. Meanwhile, majaz is more subtle, presenting implicit meanings that demand further reflection from the reader. These two styles demonstrate the Quran's high communicative power; it speaks to the mind, touches the feelings, and simultaneously stimulates the imagination.

This analysis demonstrates that the verses about plants cannot be understood solely from a scientific or biological perspective. Their rhetorical beauty actually opens up a broader space for contemplation. These verses remind humans that natural phenomena are not merely physical events, but also signs (ayat) that point to the recognition of the Creator's greatness. It is within this framework that *tashbih* and *majaz* play a crucial role.

From a hermeneutical perspective, *tashbih* and *majaz* serve as bridges connecting the empirical world with the transcendent. When humans read the parable of the fertile soil, they not only understand the fact of the soil's fertility but are also invited to interpret its deeper symbolic meaning. Similarly, when hearing the word "sky" as the source of rain, readers do not stop at the physical meaning, but are encouraged to realize that God's grace descends from above, just as rain fosters life on earth.

The *tasybih* and metaphors in the verses about plants emphasize that the Qur'an is not simply an informative text, but rather a performative text that brings meaning to life. The metaphorical language it uses does not obscure the message, but rather enriches understanding, inviting people to see the world not only as a material reality but also as a window to spiritual truth.

#### b. *Isti'ārah and Kināyah*

The discussion of *isti'ārah* (specific metaphors) and *kināyah* (implied expressions) in the Qur'an, particularly in verses related to plants, reveals an aesthetic dimension as well as a depth of meaning that is not only literary but also touches on theological and spiritual aspects. The Qur'an does not merely present factual descriptions of plants as biological objects, but elevates them to symbols and signs (āyah) that convey divine messages for humanity.

One important example is in Surat An-Nāḥīn verse 11, God says: "It grows your" (He causes it to grow for you...). At first glance, this verse seems simple, simply describing God's growing of plants. However, when analyzed using the *isti'ārah* approach, the phrase carries a much deeper meaning. The word "yunbitu" seems to depict God acting like a cultivator or farmer who deliberately grows plants for the benefit of humanity. There is a metaphor here that makes the natural act of plant growth a direct representation of God's love and care for His servants.

With the addition of the phrase "lakum" (for you), the verse's message further emphasizes that every plant that grows on earth is not a product of chance, but rather a form of Divine grace intentionally bestowed upon humanity. This *isti'ārah* shifts our perspective on nature. Plants are not merely biological entities capable of scientific analysis, but also symbols of God's mercy and compassion. Through this metaphorical style, every time humans witness a sprouting seed, a fruiting tree, or a verdant field, they should see a reflection of Divine grace and will at work behind them (Al-Hāshimī, 2000).

(Al-Daghistani, 2025) explains that the diversity of plant species, from those with strong roots to those with delicate roots, from those that produce abundant fruit to those that are simple, is a manifestation of God's will in regulating the balance of nature. This expression can be understood as a form of *majāz 'aqlī*, where the act of "growing" does not merely mean a biological process that occurs mechanically, but is personified as the active will of God that is present in every process. In this way, every variety of plant reflects a cosmic harmony that is directed towards human well-being, thus emphasizing the close relationship between the natural order and the purpose of human life.

In addition to *isti'ārah*, other forms of the beauty of the language of the Qur'an are also present in *kināyah*. One example is found in Surat Al-An'ām verse 141, when Allah says about: *Gardens Arbors And others Arbours* (gardens that are vines and those that are not vines). This expression essentially refers to two types of plants: those that require vines, such as grapes, and those that grow without vines, such as wheat or dates. However, the style of *kināyah* in this verse carries a deeper message than simply classifying plants.

From a Qur'anic rhetorical perspective, the phrase symbolizes the diversity of farming techniques and human efforts in managing natural resources. *Ma'rūsyāt* and *ghayra ma'rūsyāt* not only describe types of crops but also represent human hard work, agricultural innovation, and efforts to utilize God's gifts.

This *kināyah* reveals the dialectical relationship between human endeavor and divine destiny, humans plant, care for, and regulate farming methods, but the success of the harvest is ultimately determined by the will of God who sends rain, fertilizes the soil, and gives vitality to the plants.

Ibn 'Asyur (1984) in the *Tafsir al-Ta'ifh* Ibn al-Tanwīr emphasized that the use of *kināyah* in this verse demonstrates how the Qur'an is able to convey a theological message through simple expressions. Beyond simply describing a garden, the verse reveals the reality that all human efforts in agriculture remain dependent on God's grace. The harvest is not merely the result of clever cultivation techniques, but rather a gift inseparable from the Creator's intervention (Ibn'Ashur, 1984).

The *isti'ārah* and *kināyah* in the verses about plants not only enrich the aesthetic aspects of Qur'anic literature but also lead humans to philosophical contemplation. First, these verses shape ecological awareness: humans are invited to view nature not merely as an object of exploitation, but as a divine sign that must be respected. Second, these verses emphasize the ethical relationship between humans and God: all human efforts in farming and other economic activities must always be accompanied by the awareness that ultimate success lies in the hands of God.

Figurative language such as *isti'ārah* and *kināyah* also teach that the Quran speaks in a way that is accessible to the human imagination. Metaphors and implied expressions make the divine message more touching, because it is presented not as a mere logical argument, but as a symbol that invites deep reflection. The language of the Quran is not only communicative but also transformative, conveying more than just information but also shaping human perspective and spiritual awareness.

The use of *isti'ārah* and *kināyah* in the verses about plants demonstrates the beauty of the Qur'anic rhetoric while simultaneously conveying a profound theological message. *Isti'ārah* in the phrase "yunbitu *lakum*" presents the image of God as the Giver of Grace who consciously grows plants for humans. Meanwhile, *kināyah* in the phrase "*jannātin ma'rūsyāt wa ghayra ma'rūsyāt*" symbolizes the integration between human effort and Divine grace in producing a harvest. These two figures of speech, when deeply reflected upon, teach humans to always be grateful, humble, and aware that behind every growing leaf or ripe fruit lies a Divine hand that governs all of life.

### 2.3 Analysis of Sufism: Spiritual Dimension

#### a. The Meaning of Inner Self in the Growth Process

From a Sufi perspective, the description of plant growth in the Qur'an is not merely a biological narrative, but is understood as a symbol of a believer's inner journey towards Allah. One famous Sufi interpretation is found in *Latā'if al-Ishārāt* by al-Qushayrī (Nguyen, 2012). He explains that the verses about plant growth in Surah 'Abasa (80:27–32) are an allegory of human spiritual development, which occurs gradually like a plant that grows from dry soil and then becomes green, bears fruit, and is beneficial to its surroundings.

Allah says in QS. 'Abasa verses 27-32:

أَنَا صَبَّيْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبَّاً • ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقَّاً • فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبَّاً • وَعِنْبَا وَفَصْبَّا • وَرَبِيْثُونَا وَنَخْلًا • وَحَدَائِقَ  
غُلْبَا • وَفَاكِهَةَ وَأَبَا • مَنَّاتِعًا لَكُمْ وَلَا نَعْلَمُكُمْ

Al-Qushayrī interprets this verse as a gesture (sufistic). According to him, the phrase "بَيْنَ الْمَاءِ صَبَّا" ("We pour down water from the sky in a torrent") symbolizes the abundance of mercy and God's guidance that flows into human hearts. The water here is not just outwardly rainwater, but a symbol of the fayḍilāhī (divine gift) that revives a heart that was previously hard, dry, and far from dhikrullah.

Then the phrase "ثُمَّ شَفَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَفَّا" ("Then We divided the earth properly") describes the opening of a heart that was previously closed. In the Sufistic view, the hard human heart is like a barren land. When touched by the outpouring of God's grace, the heart cracks open, ready to receive the seed of faith.

Then God said: "فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبْبًا" ("Then We caused the grain to grow therein"). Al-Qushayrī interpreted this as a symbol of the seed of faith that begins to grow in the heart of a believer. Faith is initially small, like a seed, but if it is nurtured with remembrance, worship, and patience, it will grow, bear fruit, and bring benefits.

The next stage, when the verse mentions "وَعَنْبَانَ وَقَصْبَانَ" ("and grapes and vegetables"), this illustrates the diverse forms of goodness that arise from a believing heart. Grapes, as a sweet fruit, symbolize righteous deeds that provide spiritual pleasure, while vegetables symbolize deeds that provide outward benefits for social life.

Next, the phrase "وَزَيْنُوتَانَ وَنَخْلَانَ" ("and olives and date trees") has a deep symbolic meaning. Olives are known as a source of light and oil, so they symbolize knowledge and wisdom that illuminates the heart. While dates, as the main nutritious fruit, symbolize the noble character that is a pillar in the life of a salik (walker of God's path).

The next verse says "وَحَدَائِقَ غَلْبًا" ("and shady gardens"). Al-Qushayrī interpreted this as a symbol of spiritual perfection, where a believer's heart has become calm, soothing, and provides shelter for others. At this stage, a seeker lives not only for himself but also brings blessings to those around him.

Finally, the phrase "وَحَدَائِقَ غَلْبًا" ("and fruits and grasses") symbolizes the abundance of God's grace that is continuously present in the life of a servant. Fruits are a symbol of spiritual joy, while grass symbolizes the basic needs that are always provided by God. All of them become eyes (pleasure) for humans and livestock, as the verse closes with "وَفَاكِهَةَ وَأَبَا" In Sufi interpretation, this means that the blessings of a living heart will radiate benefits not only to fellow human beings, but also to the entire universe.

A similar view also appears in the works of Ibn 'Arabī, a great Sufi of the 12th century. He sees the diversity of plants as a manifestation of Asmā' al-Husnā (The Beautiful Names of Allah) in the universe. According to him, every plant reflects one of Allah's attributes. The date palm symbolizes Al-Karīm (The Most Noble) because it provides a wide range of benefits, from its fruit, trunk, to its leaves. Grapes reflect Al-Laṭīf (The Most Gentle) because of its sweet and refreshing taste. Olives, with their oil that becomes light, represent An-Nāfi' (The All-Benefactor).

Ibn 'Arabī explained that by contemplating God's creation in the form of diverse plants, a believer is truly invited to witness tajallī (the manifestation of God's attributes). Nature is no longer seen as merely a physical phenomenon, but as an open book that reveals the secrets of divinity.

Thus, the verses about plants do not stop at ecological or agricultural dimensions, but rather contain a deep spiritual dimension. A Sufi, when observing the growth of a plant from seed to fruiting tree, will reflect on it as a reflection of his own journey: from a dead heart, then alive by God's grace, then growing with faith, bearing fruit with good deeds, until finally benefiting the universe (Al-Arabi, 1946).

The growth of plants in the Quran holds profound spiritual lessons. Al-Qushayrī emphasizes the inner process of a believer, from the abundance of grace, the opening of the heart, the growth of faith, to the fruition of righteous deeds. Meanwhile, Ibn 'Arabī expands the interpretation by viewing the diversity of plants as a reflection of the beauty of God's attributes. In this way, the verses about plants not only discuss the external universe but also serve as a map of humanity's spiritual journey toward spiritual perfection.

#### b. Symbolism of Water and Earth

In the Sufi exegesis, the elements of water (ماء) and earth (أرض), which are repeatedly mentioned in the verses of the Qur'an, especially when talking about plants, are understood not only in their physical meaning, but also contain deep spiritual symbolism. Sufis interpret these two elements as the key to understanding the inner journey of humans towards God. Outwardly, water is the main source of life for creatures on earth, as Allah says: "And from water We made every living thing" (QS. Al-Anbiyā' [21]: 30). However, at the inner level of meaning, water is seen as more than just a physical element..

According to Al-Qushayrī in Latā'if al-Ishārāt, water represents the knowledge and wisdom revealed by Allah to water the human mind and heart. This knowledge is a vital element that fosters awareness and revitalizes the previously dry heart. In other words, a heart without knowledge is like a barren land without

rain (Al-Qushayrī, 2000). Furthermore, in the Sufi tradition, water is also interpreted as *mahabbah* (محبّة) or divine love. This love is what fosters a servant's spiritual life, moving him from mere intellectual understanding to existential closeness with God..

Ibn Arabī associated water with the concept of *tajallī* (تجلي), the manifestation of God's attributes in human life. Through *tajallī*, water is understood as a symbol of the divine presence that flows life into the human soul (Ibn 'Arabī, 1999). From this perspective, water is no longer seen simply as a fluid that nourishes the earth, but as a sign of humanity's connection with God. Every drop of water that falls from the sky is seen as a symbol of the descent of grace, knowledge, and love that soothes the soul.

On the other hand, soil (أرض) also has rich spiritual significance in Sufi interpretation. If water is likened to knowledge, love, and divine grace, then soil is seen as a symbol of the *nafs* (النفس), or the human self. The human soul, like soil, has varying levels and qualities. Some soil is fertile, some is barren, and some is rocky. Likewise, some human souls are gentle, ready to accept guidance, while others are hard and reject the truth.

Sahl at-Tustarī emphasized that just as the land requires cultivation that must be plowed, loosened, and watered to produce good crops, the human *nafs* also requires *riyādah* (رياضة) or spiritual practice (Al-Tustarī, 2002). This *riyadh* is in the form of *mujahadah*, *dhikr*, *muraqabah*, and various forms of inner discipline that aim to cleanse the soul from reprehensible traits. Uncultivated land will remain barren, similarly a soul that is left without purification will find it difficult to receive the seeds of guidance.

This process aligns with the analogy of plant growth in the Quran. For example, when Allah states in Surah 'Abasa [80]: 25–32 about the stages of sending rain, splitting the earth, and producing seeds, fruits, and trees, Sufis interpret this as a depiction of humanity's spiritual journey. Rainwater represents the abundance of Divine grace, the splitting of the earth represents a softened heart, the seeds represent faith, and the fruits represent righteous deeds and noble morals. Thus, plants reflect spiritual life, growing from a cultivated soul and nourished with love and knowledge.

Ibn 'Arabī further emphasizes that the diversity of plants growing from the earth reflects the diversity of Divine attributes. Each type of plant represents one of the *Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* (beautiful names of Allah). For example, dates reflect the nature of Al-Karīm (The Most Gracious), grapes symbolize the nature of Al-Laṭīf (The Most Refined), and olives depict the nature of An-Nāfi' (The Most Beneficial) (Ibn 'Arabī, 1946). From this perspective, land is not only a symbol of the soul receiving guidance, but also a cosmic space where the manifestation of God's attributes is manifested.

The symbolic meaning of water and land also demonstrates the importance of synergy between the two. Abundant water will not foster life if there is no soil capable of receiving it. Conversely, fertile land will produce nothing without the outpouring of water. Within a Sufi framework, this illustrates that divine knowledge, love, and *tajallī* will only bear fruit when they encounter a soul cultivated through *riyādah*. This relationship emphasizes the importance of balance between divine gifts (*hidayah*) and human effort (*mujahadah*).

Therefore, the elements of water and land, from a Sufi perspective, cannot be understood in isolation. They complement each other in depicting the process of purifying the human soul. Water is a symbol of God's grace, knowledge, love, and *tajallī*; land is a symbol of the *nafs* (self), which must be tempered to receive all of these. When these two combine, a healthy spiritual life, noble morals, and profound knowledge of God are born. The Qur'an teaches that humans must continually purify their souls (*tazkiyatun nafs*) just as a farmer cultivates his land. Just as fertile soil will only produce crops with water, so too the human soul will only flourish with the light of knowledge, love, and the presence of God.

### c. Dimension of Contemplation

The command "انظروا" ("behold" or "look"), which appears in several Quranic verses about plants, is not simply an instruction for ordinary observation, but rather contains a depth of meaning that has been explored at length by Sufis. In the Sufi tradition of interpretation, this command is understood as an invitation to enter a deeper level of contemplation than mere sensory observation. This means that the vision in question is not only physical but also involves an inner dimension that can lead one to spiritual understanding. Sufis then developed the concept of three levels of *nazhar* (inner vision) which serve as a framework for understanding God's signs in the universe, including the phenomenon of plants.

The first level is *nazhar al-'ibrah*, which involves viewing natural phenomena as lessons. At this stage, a Muslim is asked to reflect on the phenomena of plants as signs of Allah's greatness and wisdom, which can serve as moral guidelines and inspiration for life. For example, the process of plant growth, which requires water, light, and fertile soil, teaches humans the importance of certain conditions in achieving success and blessings in life. Seemingly simple natural phenomena actually hold profound moral

messages, where every occurrence can be used as a reflection for self-improvement. According to Abdul Qadir (2006), nazhar al-'ibrah is the first form of inner vision which is reflective and educates the soul to be more sensitive to the Divine values hidden behind the reality of nature (Auda, 2022).

The second level is nazhar al-baṣīrah, namely vision using the eyes of the heart. At this stage, a believer penetrates the outer layers of plants and tries to understand the nature of the signs of Allah's greatness contained behind these phenomena. If at the previous stage a person still saw plants as objects of moral learning, then at the nazhar al-baṣīrah stage he began to witness the spiritual dimension of creation. A leaf, for example, is not only seen as part of a living organism, but as a verse from Allah that contains transcendent meaning. The process of photosynthesis that provides oxygen is seen as a Divine gift that supports the life of humans, animals and other creatures. In the Sufistic view, this vision broadens human horizons from mere empirical observation to witnessing the metaphysical meanings behind God's creation (Auda, 2022).

The third level, considered the highest, is nazhar al-mushāhadah. At this stage, a Sufi not only sees plants as lessons or signs of God's greatness, but also truly witnesses the Divine presence through these natural phenomena. In other words, plants are no longer seen as separate entities, but as mirrors reflecting Divine light. In mushāhadah, a servant attains a direct spiritual experience, feeling God's presence behind every phenomenon. This aligns with Ibn 'Arabī's view of tajallī, where the entire universe, including plants, is a manifestation of the Divine Being. Thus, to gaze at a tree, leaf, or fruit with full spiritual awareness is to witness the manifestation of God present in the form of His creation.

Al-Ghazālī in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* emphasized that contemplation of plants can be a "ladder of ma'rifah" that brings humans closer to Allah. For Al-Ghazālī, every detail in nature, from the structure of leaves, stem growth, to the biological processes that support life, is a verse or sign that points to Al-Khāliq. Thus, looking deeply at plants not only trains the mind to think, but also trains the heart to become more submissive and grateful. Reflection on plants, according to him, is one of the most effective forms of tafakkur in bringing humans closer to the Creator, because the nature of plants that live, develop and benefit other creatures is a reflection of Divine grace and wisdom (Al-Gazzali, 1982).

Sufis view these three levels of vows as gradual paths along the spiritual journey. The vow of obedience is the gateway for laypeople to become sensitive to the divine messages in nature. The vow of obedience is the intermediate stage, attained by those whose hearts have opened to the inner meaning of creation. The vow of obedience is the pinnacle, where one is able to directly experience God's presence through His creation. Within this framework, the commandment "انظروا" in the Qur'an is not a simple instruction, but rather a spiritual call that directs humanity toward a deeper understanding of monotheism.

The Sufi approach to the commandment "انظروا" also emphasizes the inseparability of knowledge and spirituality. Scientific observation of plants, as conducted in modern science, remains valuable. However, if it stops at the empirical aspect, humans will miss the depth of spiritual meaning contained behind it. Therefore, Sufi interpretation teaches that knowledge must be synergized with spiritual awareness. When a Muslim views a leaf not only as an object of photosynthesis, but also as a sign of God's life-giving love, this vision gives rise to gratitude and strengthens faith. This is the essence of the vow referred to in Sufism.

So the command "انظروا" contains a transformative meaning, and invites humans to move from mere sensory observation to inner awareness, from moral reflection to spiritual experience, and finally from rational knowledge to direct witnessing of the Divine presence. In the final stage, a servant no longer sees plants only as creations but as a way to know their Creator. So, the plant verses in the Qur'an are not only descriptive, but also pedagogical and spiritual, guiding humans on the journey towards *ma'rifatullah*.

#### d. *Integration of Perspectives: Holistic Understanding*

The integration of three perspectives in human science, bayan science, and Sufism yields a holistic and profound understanding of the verses about plants in the Qur'an. The findings of this study demonstrate that the precise linguistic structure of these verses not only serves to convey information but also evokes spiritual awareness and profound reflection on humanity's relationship with nature and the Creator.

From a human science perspective, the beauty of language and precision of expression in the verses about plants create a powerful communicative effect. Each word choice has profound meaning and relevance to both spiritual and social contexts. (Al-Hāshimī, 2000). For example, the use of definite and indefinite forms, or certain syntactic structures, aligns with the theological goal of instilling optimism and belief in God's

greatness. In the analysis of the science of *bayān*, the use of rhetorical devices such as *tashbīh*, *majāz*, and *kināyah* is proven to enrich meaning and provide depth to our understanding of plants as signs of God's power. This figurative language style brings the message of the verse to life in the reader's mind, conveying the values of monotheism and piety in a beautiful and impressive manner.

Meanwhile, the Sufi perspective opens up a spiritual dimension that transforms botanical descriptions into a means of spiritual journey. Every element in the plant's growth process, from rainwater and soil to seeds and shoots to fruit, becomes a symbol of the journey toward knowledge and closeness to God (Al-Sarrāj, 1914). This means that the Quran does not separate the external from the internal; natural phenomena, when explained scientifically, also contain moral and spiritual lessons if explored more deeply. By integrating these three perspectives, the Quran's message about plants can be understood more fully: encompassing scientific, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects simultaneously.

This research confirms that an integrative approach is not merely an academic trend but is in harmony with the character of the Quran itself as a book that combines various dimensions of truth. In the current era of global ecological crisis, the wisdom contained in the Quranic verses about plants offers an alternative paradigm that balances material progress with spiritual awareness. An interdisciplinary reading of these verses can enrich contemporary exegetical discourse, encourage dialogue between science and religion, and inspire environmental sustainability practices rooted in spirituality.

### 3. CONCLUSION

A study of the Qur'anic verses relating to plants demonstrates the richness and multidimensionality of the Qur'anic message. Linguistically, these verses display a meticulous syntactic structure, choice of diction, and rhetorical style. Elements such as the number of *ismiyah*, *iltifāt*, *tasybīh*, *majāz*, *isti'ārah*, and *kināyah* not only serve to beautify the language but also contain profound theological and pedagogical meanings. An analysis of the science of *ma'ānī* and the science of *bayān* reveals that each word arrangement has a communicative purpose that leads humans to reflect, learn lessons, and strengthen faith.

Beyond the linguistic dimension, the verses about plants also convey a spiritual depth, interpreted through a Sufi approach. The growth process of a plant is understood as an allegory of a believer's inner journey, from the descent of divine grace, the growth of the seed of faith, to the fruition of righteous deeds and noble morals. Water and soil, repeatedly mentioned in the Quran, are interpreted as symbols of love, knowledge, and the human *nafs* (self), which must be cultivated through spiritual practice. Thus, natural phenomena are not merely viewed empirically but also serve as a medium for witnessing the *tajallī*, or manifestation of God's attributes.

The integration of linguistic analysis, rhetoric, and Sufism yields a holistic understanding. The verses about plants are not merely ecological descriptions, but rather a vehicle for contemplation that connects humans with their Creator. This interdisciplinary approach confirms the Quran's relevance across time: it provides theological, ethical, and ecological inspiration simultaneously. Amid the global environmental crisis, the Quranic message about plants can serve as an alternative paradigm that balances material progress with spiritual awareness. Therefore, this research contributes to enriching contemporary exegetical discourse, opening up space for dialogue between science and religion, and providing a normative basis for sustainable life efforts rooted in Islamic spirituality.

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