


## The Qur’anic Normative Approach to Human Intervention in the Environment

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article type:</b> Research Article</p> <p><b>Article history:</b>  <b>Received</b> 27 November 2024  <b>Received in revised from</b> 05 December 2024  <b>Accepted</b> 20 December 2024  <b>Published online</b> 28 January 2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Holy Qur’an, environment, intervention, corruption on earth (fasād fi al-ard), hierarchical clustering.</p>	<p>Environmental crises are among the most pressing contemporary challenges, stemming largely from extensive human intervention in the natural world. Population growth, industrial development, and the desire to dominate nature have led to the overexploitation of natural resources, posing serious threats to the sustainability of life on Earth. The Holy Qur’an, as a comprehensive guide for humanity, offers principles and frameworks for responsible conduct toward creation. Examining the Qur’an’s perspective on human interaction with the environment provides critical insights for fostering a sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature. This study employs hierarchical (agglomerative) clustering to investigate the central question: Does the Qur’an permit human intervention in natural processes, or does it restrict such actions through specific conditions and limits? A thorough survey identified 192 verses directly or indirectly related to human interaction with the environment, which were categorized into 32 key concepts. These concepts were grouped into nine primary clusters based on semantic relationships, with closely related clusters further merged to form a top-level category labeled “Intervention.” Accordingly, the verses were classified into three categories: (1) those indicating the permissibility of human intervention in the environment, (2) those indicating prohibition, and (3) those affirming the permissibility of human use of natural resources and phenomena. The findings show that 132 verses support responsible human use of nature, 69 verses denote prohibition of intervention, 18 indicate conditional human intervention, and 16 refer to absolute divine intervention in nature.</p>
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## Introduction

In the past, the concept of “environment” was limited to physical elements such as soil, air, and water, and was primarily used to denote the state of being “surrounded.” Over time, this definition expanded to include living organisms and their interactions with nature, since the environment cannot be fully understood without considering these relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a relatively balanced coexistence existed between humans and nature. However, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, this balance was disrupted as human domination replaced mutual interaction with nature. The adherents of the Romantic<sup>2</sup> movement had previously warned against the consequences of scientism, yet these adverse effects became more tangible in the twentieth century<sup>3</sup>.

The term *modern* was used from the fifteenth century to mean “current” or “new,” but it entered European intellectual and philosophical discourse in the seventeenth century<sup>4</sup>. The term *modernity* was first introduced by Hegel to describe a civilization that had brought about an unprecedented transformation in human history. Modernity is characterized by secularism, liberal democracy, capitalism, humanism, individualism, and rationalism, and its origins can be traced to the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution<sup>5</sup>.

Some Western intellectuals attribute environmental crises to the religious view of nature. For example, M. White argues that religion has contributed to the destruction of natural blessings<sup>6</sup>. Others, however, believe that modern culture itself has led to the collapse of everyday human values and that, paradoxically, the more humans have dominated nature, the less they have understood themselves. Hence, it can be argued that human beings are inherently inclined to exploit and dominate nature, perceiving it as a means to achieve personal goals and comfort.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to these perspectives, an interdisciplinary approach to the environment has emerged, suggesting that environmental issues must be examined from multiple dimensions<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Merk, *Self-Learning Environmental Science*, trans. Mohammad Taqi Taqipour (Tehran: Taimaz, 2010). P.4-5.

<sup>2</sup> "The principles of the Romantic school were religious and idealistic. One of the intellectual characteristics of this school was that nature is inherently sacred and a manifestation of God. Its followers took pleasure in an emotional connection with the landscape, and the old perspective of 'man versus nature' transformed into 'man within nature' (Porteous 85)."

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Porteous, *Environmental Aesthetics: Theories, Policies, and Planning*, trans. Mohammad Reza Masnavi (Mashhad: Jihad Daneshgahi, 2010). P. 11

<sup>4</sup> Zygmunt Bauman et al., *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).p 25.

<sup>5</sup> Mohammad Moqtada Damad, *Environmental Ethics in Islamic Thought* (Tehran: Center for Islamic Studies, 2015). P. 27–28.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Fahimi, “Religion and Environmental Crisis,” *Journal of Environmental Studies* 7, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Moqtada Damad, *Environmental Ethics in Islamic Thought*. p.29.

<sup>8</sup> Zahra Ahmadi, Ali Rezaei, and Fatemeh Karimi, “An Interdisciplinary Approach to Environmental Issues: A Qur’anic Perspective,” *Journal of Islamic Environmental Studies* 12, no. 1 (2024).

Within this framework, examining the Qur'anic perspective on human intervention in the environment can contribute to forming a proper worldview and modifying Muslims' behavior toward nature.

Accordingly, the key research questions are as follows:

Does the Qur'an permit human intervention in the environment and the disruption of natural processes, or does it impose specific restrictions and conditions? What distinguishes human intervention from the mere utilization of natural resources? Are the interventions of the prophets themselves bound by divine objectives and by respect for the natural order? Finally, what boundaries and ethical considerations does the Qur'an set for human involvement in nature, and how are these articulated in the verses?

Addressing these questions may provide a normative and ethical framework for human interaction with nature, helping to prevent the exploitation and destruction of natural resources. Given the exploratory nature of this study, no prior hypothesis has been proposed.

## 1. Theoretical Foundations

Since understanding fundamental concepts is one of the essential pillars in Qur'anic studies, it is first necessary to provide concise definitions of the key terms related to the subject. Following the clarification of these concepts, the *normative approach of the Qur'an* will be discussed as the main theoretical framework of this research.

### Key Terms Definition

The term *environment* (Persian: *mohit zist*) is a combination of two words: *mohit* (environment) and *zist* (life). Linguistically, *mohit* refers to what surrounds or encompasses, a habitat, a dwelling place, or even a great sea, and is also one of the names of God<sup>1</sup>. In technical terms, its origin lies in French, and it refers to what surrounds an entity or object and affects it, including physical or social factors influencing the life of living beings<sup>2</sup>. In the Qur'an, the word *mohit* is derived from the root meaning "encompassing" and signifies God's complete encompassing of existence. From this perspective, God is recognized as the ultimate environment for humans.<sup>3</sup>

The term *zist* (life) has two meanings: 1) life and vitality, 2) pertaining to living beings.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the environment is not merely a collection of resources; it represents a reciprocal relationship between living beings and their surroundings. Every human action affects not only one's own environment but also the environment of other living beings. Consequently, in environmental discussions, it is necessary to specify which organism's environment is being

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Mo'in, *Farhang-e Farsi* [Persian Dictionary] (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1985), 3929; Hassan Anvari, *Farhang-e Bozorg-e Sokhan* [Sokhan Great Dictionary] (Tehran: Sokhan, 2002), 6775

<sup>2</sup> S. Reber, *Dictionary of Psychology* (London: Penguin, 2011), p. 308.

<sup>3</sup> Damad, *Environmental Ethics in Islamic Thought*. p.85.

<sup>4</sup> Hasan Anvari, *Bozorg Farhang Sokhan* (Tehran, 2002). P. 3939

considered, as an action beneficial for one entity may be harmful to another—for example, draining a swamp benefits humans but harms mosquitoes<sup>1</sup>.

*Exploitation and utilization* refer to employing the capabilities of an entity to achieve benefit or profit, focusing on its function and application<sup>2</sup>. *Use* implies seeking benefit, and if accompanied by the word *good*, it indicates proper and justified utilization, whereas *misuse* denotes improper, unlawful, or inappropriate exploitation<sup>3</sup>. *Intervention* refers to any act or method designed to disrupt, interfere with, or alter an ongoing process<sup>4</sup>. Intervention in nature or the environment typically disturbs natural conditions, and post-intervention, many natural functions may no longer exist, resulting in environmental damage.

Based on these definitions, the concept of *environment* extends beyond physical resources to encompass reciprocal interactions between living beings and their surroundings. Human actions impact not only their immediate environment but also other living beings. Within this framework, distinguishing between *use and exploitation* and *intervention* is crucial: *use* involves employing the capabilities of a phenomenon to achieve benefit and can be proper or improper, whereas *intervention* disrupts or alters an ongoing process and usually results in damage. This distinction allows the research to focus specifically on harmful interventions, limiting the analysis to normative and ethical dimensions.

In this study, to avoid the dichotomy between “absolute permissibility of intervention” and “complete prohibition of intervention,” the term *conditional intervention* is employed. *Conditional intervention* refers to the deliberate and guided involvement of certain humans or prophets in nature within the framework of divine will; its purpose is the cultivation of the earth, the establishment of justice, and the preservation of the trust of creation. The Qur’an indicates that God permits intervention, but such intervention is always constrained by the limits of divine mission and guidance. Even prophets like Solomon (peace be upon him) and David (peace be upon him), despite their extensive powers, act solely within the boundaries established by God and do not exceed the authority granted to them. Thus, *conditional intervention* signifies deliberate, responsible, and guided action aimed at the development of the earth and the realization of divine justice and interests.

Furthermore, the concept of ownership is consistently distinguished between God’s absolute ownership and human temporary or conventional ownership. Mentioning God’s absolute ownership in this study serves to clarify the distinction between divine ownership and human authorized possession and the framework of conditional intervention. According to this perspective, humans, as vicegerents or heirs of the earth, may exploit and intervene in natural resources; however, this authorized ownership is limited and constrained.

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<sup>1</sup> John Benson, *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction with Readings* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> S. Reber, *Dictionary of Psychology*, p. 1002.

<sup>3</sup> Mo’in, *Farhang-e Farsi* [Persian Dictionary], p. 253- 254

<sup>4</sup> S. Reber, *Dictionary of Psychology*, p. 465.

### 1-1. Research Method (Hierarchical Clustering)

This research employs the Knowledge Discovery in Databases (KDD) or data-mining method, which encompasses three main categories: classification, association rule mining, and clustering. The hierarchical clustering technique is implemented in two forms: *agglomerative* and *divisive*.

In agglomerative clustering (bottom-up), each object initially constitutes a separate cluster; subsequently, the clusters most similar to one another are gradually merged to form a more general cluster. In contrast, divisive clustering (top-down) begins with all objects grouped into a single cluster, which is then progressively subdivided into smaller clusters. Clustering has a wide range of applications, including text recognition and data analysis.<sup>1</sup>

This study was conducted within a qualitative research framework. Its primary objective was to identify and analyze the concepts related to *human intervention in the environment* as reflected in the text of the Qur'an. The methodological stages were as follows:

1. Verses referring—explicitly or implicitly—to human intervention in the environment were extracted from the Qur'an and compiled in an Excel file.
2. For each verse, a keyword was assigned in a reproducible manner.
3. Under each verse, the permissibility or impermissibility of human intervention in the environment was specified.
4. Finally, clusters were completed based on the assigned keywords. Higher-order clusters were generated by linking the previously formed clusters. This iterative process continued until a single comprehensive cluster was obtained. The final clusters emerged from the interrelationships among clusters and the resulting thematic tree.

### 1-2. Literature Review

- Abdollah Javadi Amoli (2015), in *Islam and the Environment*, regards nature as a manifestation of divine beauty and interprets the human–nature relationship as one of *taskhīr* (subjugation). Drawing on Qur'anic verses, he introduces the cultivation (*imārah*) of the earth as a human duty and considers human behavior to directly influence the state of nature.
- Mostafa Moqtada-Damad (2015), in *Theology of the Environment*, approaches environmental issues from a theological perspective. He discusses topics such as the negative consequences of scientism, the role of religion, jurisprudence, and tradition in environmental preservation, emphasizing that adherence to divine commands is the path to an environmentally peaceful world.
- Fazlun Khalid (1999), in *Islam and the Environment*, presents a collection of seven essays, three of which deal directly with environmental issues—“Islam and the Environment”

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<sup>1</sup> Mahdi Ghazanfari, Somayeh Alizadeh, and Babak Teimourpour, *Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Iran University of Science and Technology, 2013). P. 16

(Hafiz B. A. Masri), “Islamic Ethics and the Environment” (Ma’vīl Younis ‘Izz al-Din), and “Natural Resources in Islam” (Yasīn Dutton).

- The book *Islam and the Environment* by Foltz et al., translated into Persian from the original Harvard University Press edition, offers a comprehensive overview of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars’ perspectives on environmental issues, with each chapter discussing relevant Qur’anic verses. However, the multiple translations—from Arabic to English and then to Persian—may have introduced semantic inaccuracies.
- Abolqasem Ya ‘qubi (2001), in *Islam and the Environment*, argues that human exercise of power as *God’s vicegerent (khalīfat-Allāh)* poses a major threat to nature if divine commandments are ignored.
- Ebrahim Karimi (2008), in the article *Factors of Environmental Degradation and Qur’anic and Hadith-Based Solutions*, asserts that the only way to overcome environmental crises is to return to religion and accept its truths.
- Hamid Faghfoor-Moqarabi (2009), in *Islamic Ethical Principles of the Environment*, identifies principles such as justice, cultivation, and protection as Islamic strategies to prevent environmental destruction.
- Ali Najarpourian (2011), in *The Environment from the Perspective of the Qur’an and Sunnah*, explains environmental elements in religious sources, the causes of their degradation, and offers practical solutions.
- Karimi and Jamalnejad (2012), in their study *The Environment from the Perspective of the Holy Qur’an*, emphasize the necessity of transforming human behavior based on environmental ethics, presenting the Qur’an as the primary source of understanding in this field.
- Seyyed Hassan Eslami (2013), in the article *Environmental Ethics*, refutes critics of Abrahamic religions and attributes the environmental crisis to modernity and the altered human attitude toward nature.

Despite these valuable contributions, most previous works have addressed the ethical and theological dimensions of environmental issues in general terms, without systematically examining the limits of human intervention in nature. In the aforementioned studies, Qur’anic verse analysis is often presented as scattered topical selections or narrow exegetical discussions, with limited conceptual differentiation among key terms.

The present research, employing a data-mining and verse-based analytical approach, seeks to reinterpret Qur’anic concepts through semantic clustering. This method delineates conceptual boundaries between *use* and *intervention* in nature, thereby providing added analytical value compared to existing studies.

## 2. Identification of Concepts and Cluster Categorization

Through a systematic examination and analysis of the Qur'anic verses relevant to the research topic, 192 verses and 32 key lexical concepts were identified. The extracted keywords include: *mulk* (kingdom, dominion), *li-llāh* (belonging to God), *ja'ala* (to make, appoint), *khalaqa* (to create), *wada'a* (to place, establish), *ansha'a* (to originate, bring forth), *bawwa'a* (to settle, assign a place), *dhara'a* (to bring into being, scatter), *alqa* (to cast, throw), *makkan* (to establish, enable), *farasha* (to spread out), *madda* (to extend), *fajjara* (to cause to flow, burst forth), *qādirūn* (those possessing power), *sakhhara* (to subdue, make subject), *dhalūl* (pliant, tractable), *yuzjī* (to drive gently), *āyah* (sign), *'ibrah* (lesson), *dhikr* (reminder), *mīrāth* (inheritance), *akl* (consumption), *ḥarām* (forbidden), *al-amānah* (trust), *karrama* (to honor), *khalīfah* (vicegerent), *'aduww* (enemy), *'aṣā* (to disobey), *sarafa* (to waste, exceed), *'ataw* (to act arrogantly), *ghayyara* (to alter), and *fasada* (to corrupt).

The identified concepts were grouped into semantic clusters based on their interrelationships, and each cluster was assigned a title corresponding to its thematic content. Each cluster represents a distinct dimension of the human–nature interaction in the Qur'anic worldview. The following sections present a detailed examination and analysis of these clusters and their conceptual relationships.

### 2-1. Cluster One: “Owner of the Heavens and the Earth” — Encompassing the Concepts of *al-Amānah*, *Karrama*, and *Khalīfah*

The first cluster, entitled “Owner of the Heavens and the Earth,” is identified through the keywords *li-llāh* and *mulk*, which occur in 14 verses<sup>1</sup>. This cluster emphasizes the true, absolute, and exclusive ownership of God over the entire cosmos. The Qur'an describes God with the attribute of *Mālik* (Owner, Sovereign), and this ownership is expressed either through the lam of specification (*li-llāh*, “belonging to God”) or through the noun *mulk* (dominion, kingship).

Linguistically, the term *mulk* in the Qur'an denotes sovereignty and governance, as in *Āl Imrān* (3:189), *al-Baqarah* (2:102), and *al-Hashr* (59:23). In these contexts, it refers to a ruler possessing absolute authority within his domain. The word also carries the meanings of “possessor of authority” and “possessor of property,” both implying *ṣāhib al-milk*—the one who holds ultimate possession<sup>2</sup>.

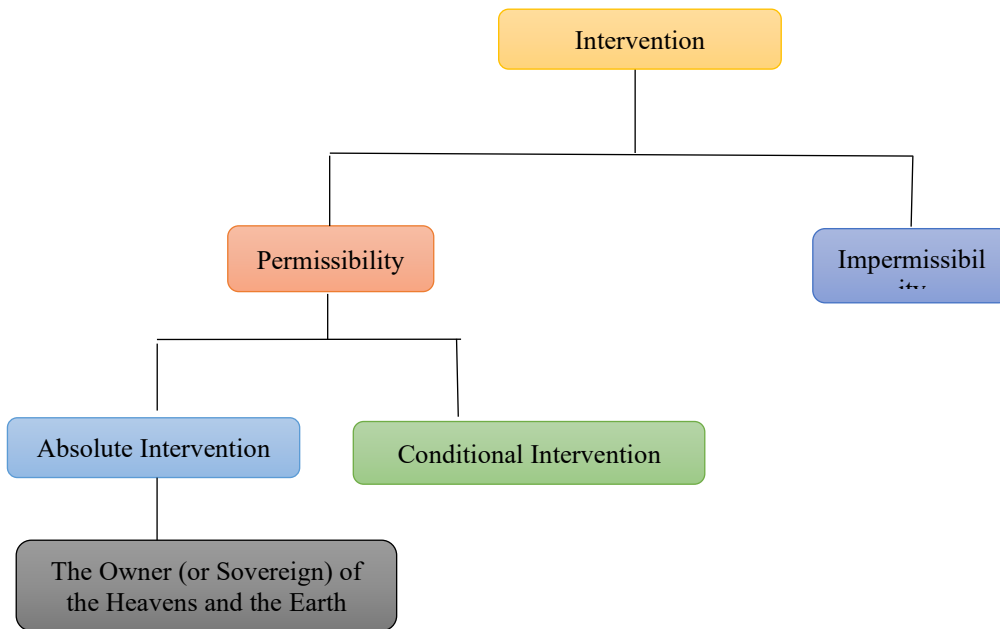
Accordingly, the restriction of ownership to God alone signifies His unrestricted dominion over creation and His absolute power to bring about transformation within it—implying that no one shares in this ownership or authority.

Following the methodological design of this study, a conceptual tree diagram was constructed, with *intervention* placed as the foundational root of the model. This root bifurcates

<sup>1</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:107; Al-Imran 3:26, 189; An-Nisa 4:126, 132; Al-Ma'idah 5:120; Al-A'raf 7:128; At-Tawbah 9:116; An-Nur 24:42; Al-Furqan 25:2; Luqman 31:26; Al-Hadid 57:5, 2; Al-Buruj ...

<sup>2</sup> Ali Akbar Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Bonyad-e Ba'that, 1996). Vol:6, p. 274

into two primary branches: permissible intervention and impermissible intervention. Within the permissible branch, two forms of intervention can be identified: absolute intervention and conditional intervention. Among the extracted concepts, the verses containing the keywords *li-llāh* and *mulk* are categorized under the absolute divine intervention in nature, forming the cluster designated as “Owner of the Heavens and the Earth.”



**Figure 1:** A Segment of the Hierarchical Tree Diagram

## 2-2. The “Vicegerency” Cluster: Encompassing the Concepts of *Al-Amānah* (Trust), *Karram* (Dignity), and *Khalīfah* (Vicegerent)

The second cluster identified in this study is the “Vicegerency” cluster, which comprises sixteen Qur’ānic verses centered on the concepts of trust (*amānah*), dignity (*karāmah*), and vicegerency (*khalīfah*). This cluster addresses the nobility of humankind within the cosmic order, the human being’s position as God’s representative (*khalīfah*) on earth, and his responsibility toward the divine trusts entrusted to him.

The most prominent verse regarding human dignity is Qur’ān 17:70 (Sūrat al-Isrā’). The term *karāmah* (dignity) denotes greatness and honor<sup>1</sup> and is interpreted as nobility, generosity, and moral excellence<sup>2</sup>. Some lexicographers maintain that when the term *karīm* describes God, it

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad ibn Mukarram ibn ‘Ali Abu al-Fadl Jamal al-Din Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-‘Arab* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma‘arif, n.d.).

, vol:12. P.504

<sup>2</sup> Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:6. P. 103

signifies benevolence and munificence, whereas when it describes a human being, it refers to virtuous morals and noble actions<sup>1</sup>.

The word *amānah* (trust) occurs six times in the Qur'ān, the most significant instance being Qur'ān 33:72 (Sūrat al-Aḥzāb). Classical exegetes have offered various interpretations of the term. Some have defined it as religious obligations and divine commandments<sup>2</sup>, others as reason and the faculty of discernment of divine unity<sup>3</sup>, and still others as divine authority (*wilāyah*) and the human capacity to receive the truths of revelation<sup>4</sup>. According to Makārem-Shīrāzī<sup>5</sup>, *amānah* represents the moral responsibility entrusted to humankind in light of free will and volition, serving as the basis for either human elevation or moral decline.

Etymologically, *amānah* is the antonym of *khiyānah* (treachery)<sup>6</sup>. Derived from the root 'm-n, it conveys meanings of security, peace of heart, and assurance. It is called *amānah* because the trust-giver feels secure from betrayal by the trustee<sup>7</sup>

The criterion for Adam's suitability for vicegerency (*khilāfah*) on earth was his acquisition of knowledge, as expressed in Qur'ān 2:33, "And He taught Adam all the names..."<sup>8</sup>. Linguistically, *khilāfah* denotes deputyship, succession, or representation<sup>9</sup>. Rāghib interprets it as succession in the absence of the original possessor—due to death, incapacity, or the honor of the deputy<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the term *khalīfah* (vicegerent), exegetes have proposed multiple views:

1. Some interpret it as the succession of human beings in place of angels who once inhabited the earth.
2. Others understand it as the succession of humankind after previous beings on earth.
3. Still others view it as the succession of human generations, where each generation replaces the previous<sup>11</sup>

According to the Qur'ān, two forms of human vicegerency may be distinguished:

1. Specific Vicegerency (*Khilāfah Khāṣṣah*) – in which humankind serves as God's vicegerent on earth.
2. General Vicegerency (*Khilāfah 'Āmmah*) – in which humankind succeeds previous nations, whether corrupt rulers or peoples who failed to uphold the divine trust.

<sup>1</sup> Hossein ibn Moḥammad Rāghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Shāmiyah, 1992). P.707.

<sup>2</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ālūsī. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm wa-al-Sab' al-Mathānī*. Vol. 11. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1994

<sup>3</sup> Rāghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. P. 90-91

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad Hossein Tabatabaī, *Al-Mizan fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-'Alamī lil-Maṭbū'āt, 2011). P. 384.

<sup>5</sup> Naṣer Makarim Shiraz, *Tafsīr Namūneh*, 1st ed. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1992). P.200

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Manzūr, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 13:21

<sup>7</sup> Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsīr Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:1. P. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Mahmoud Rajabi, *Anthropology* (Tehran: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute, 2007). P. 152

<sup>9</sup> Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsīr Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:2. P. 284 & Rāghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. P.294

<sup>10</sup> Ibid P.294

<sup>11</sup> Makarim Shiraz, *Tafsīr Namūneh*, p. 172

Certain verses also indicate the prophets' exercise of delegated authority in appointing successors. For instance, Moses appointed Aaron as his deputy during his absence<sup>1</sup>.

If humankind is understood as God's vicegerent on earth, then beyond inherent dignity (*karāmah dhātiyyah*), humans may also acquire moral and functional dignity (*karāmah iktisābiyyah*) through righteous action and proper use of divine guidance. In this view, divine favor enables humankind—like the prophets—to engage in conditional intervention (*al-tadakhkhul al-mashrūt*) within creation, but always within the bounds of divine permission and will. Such intervention is thus guided, purposive, and ethically constrained.

Alternatively, if *khilāfah* signifies the succession of human communities, whereby God replaces a destroyed nation with another endowed with new opportunities, then humankind cannot be deemed *Khalīfat Allāh* (the Vicegerent of God) in an absolute sense. In that interpretation, vicegerency is a sociological rather than a theological concept, and it bears no direct relation to human intervention in nature.

Analysis of the selected verses indicates that sixteen of them pertain to the permissibility or impermissibility of human intervention in the natural environment. Among these, Qur'ān 33:72 (on *amānah*) delineates humanity's role and the burden of divine responsibility. This trust extends beyond legal obligations to encompass the responsible protection and sustainable use of the earth and its resources, for humankind—endowed with intellect and volition—is capable of preserving creation and preventing corruption<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, the intrinsic dignity (*karāmah dhātiyyah*) of humankind, affirmed in Qur'ān 17:70, forms the moral foundation for assuming this trust. Dignity is not confined to innate distinction; its ethical realization depends on fidelity to the trust. Neglect of this duty demotes humankind to the state described as *ẓalūm* (unjust) and *jahūl* (ignorant) in Qur'ān 33:72. Thus, in this framework, *karāmah* expresses the capacity for moral responsibility, while *amānah* defines its operational scope and ethical criteria.

### **2-3. The “Inheritance” Cluster: Encompassing the Concept of *Mīrāth* (Heritage)**

The third cluster identified in this study is the “Inheritance” cluster, associated with the keywords *yarith* (“inherits”) and *al-wāriṭhūn* (“the inheritors”), which appear in eleven Qur'ānic verses. The term *wāriṭh* (heir) is mentioned in the Qur'ān as one of the divine attributes of God<sup>3</sup>. Although the application of *irṭh* (inheritance) in non-material contexts varies among lexicographers<sup>4</sup>, most agree that the core meaning involves the involuntary transfer of property

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'ān 7:142

<sup>2</sup> Qur'ān 4:58

<sup>3</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.863

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.864

from a deceased person to another<sup>1</sup>. Rāghib also notes the use of this term with the preposition 'an, implying transmission "from" someone or something<sup>2</sup>.

According to Anwarī<sup>3</sup>, *mīrāth* refers to property remaining after the death of its possessor, which is distributed among heirs according to specific legal rules, even though the property may not have been produced by the deceased himself.

An analysis of the Qur'ānic verses containing this concept indicates that human ownership of the earth is temporary and transferable. Unlike the absolute and eternal ownership of God, human possession is limited in scope and duration and may change through factors such as death, the destruction of nations, or generational succession. Based on the thematic content, the verses concerning inheritance can be grouped into three primary categories:

1. Verses<sup>4</sup> describing God as the ultimate heir (*al-wārith*) of the heavens and the earth.
2. Verses<sup>5</sup> depicting the destruction of a people and the inheritance of the land by their successors, i.e., the transfer of the earth's possession from one nation to another without explicit reference to their moral characteristics.
3. Verses<sup>6</sup> emphasizing divine bestowal of the earth to specific servants, as expressed in the verse:

*"Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah; He grants it as an inheritance to whomever of His servants He wills."*<sup>7</sup>

These verses affirm that the earth is inherited by the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*), the pious (*muttaqūn*), and the oppressed (*mustaḍ'afūn*). Thus, this category represents the inheritance of the earth from God to His chosen servants.

Accordingly, the Qur'ānic notion of inheritance establishes that human ownership of the earth is neither absolute nor perpetual, but delegated and conditional. The Qur'ān explicitly states that the earth is granted to specific groups—the righteous, the God-conscious, and the oppressed—implying that human engagement with nature is permissible only within divine boundaries.

Moreover, the concept of *khilāfah* (vicegerency) parallels *mīrāth* in that it denotes succession under divine authorization, not autonomous sovereignty. Even the prophets, such as Solomon (Sulaymān) and David (Dāwūd)—despite their vast authority—intervened in nature only within the parameters of divine mission and justice.

Hence, both "inheritance" (*mīrāth*) and "vicegerency" (*khilāfah*) in the Qur'ān do not signify absolute license for intervention but rather indicate conditional permissibility (*al-jawāz al-*

<sup>1</sup> Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:7. P. 195

<sup>2</sup> Ibid . P. 195

<sup>3</sup> Anwarī, *Bozorg Farhang Sokhan*, p. 319

<sup>4</sup> Al-Imran 3:180; Al-Hijr 15:23; Maryam 19:40; Al-Hadid 57:10

<sup>5</sup> Al-A'raf 7:100; Al-A'raf 7:137; Al-Ahzab 33:27; Ash-Shu'ara 26:59; Ad-Dukhan 44:28

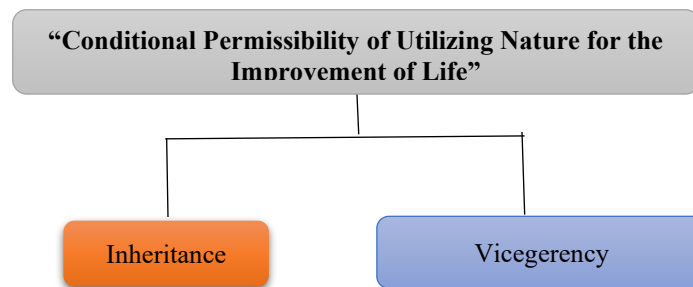
<sup>6</sup> Al-A'raf 7:128; Al-Anbiya 21:105; Al-Qasas 28:5

<sup>7</sup> Qur'ān 7:128

*mashrūf*). These clusters thus converge conceptually, forming a unified cluster that may be designated as:

“Conditional Permissibility for the Utilization of Nature in the Service of Human Well-Being.”

This synthesis highlights a distinctly Qur’ānic ethical framework in which human use of natural resources is legitimate only insofar as it aligns with divine justice, stewardship, and the collective flourishing of creation.



**Figure 2:** A Segment of the Hierarchical Tree Diagram

#### 2-4. The “Preparedness of the Earth for Life” Cluster: Encompassing the Concepts of *Ja’ala*, *Khalaqa*, *Wadha ‘a*, *Ansha’a*, *Bawwa’a*, *Dhara’a*, *Makkana*, *Alqā*, *Farasha*, *Madda*, and *Fajjara*

The fourth cluster identified in this study, titled “Preparedness of the Earth for Life,” addresses the structural readiness and intrinsic order of the earth to support human habitation. Unlike other celestial bodies in the solar system, only the Earth possesses suitable conditions for human life, survival, growth, and development. The Qur’ān, in precise and diverse expressions, describes the characteristics of the Earth and the governing laws, employing a variety of lexical terms. Within this cluster, a total of 52 verses has been identified, each highlighting a specific aspect of the Earth’s preparedness for life. The primary concepts are as follows:

- The term *Ja’ala* (“He made/placed”) appears in 26 verses<sup>1</sup>, indicating a purposeful, divinely guided placement within the structure of the Earth<sup>2</sup>
- The term *Khalaqa* (“He created”) appears in seven verses<sup>3</sup>, referring to the original creation of the Earth and its initial order<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:22; Al-A’raf 7:10; Ar-Ra’d 13:3; Al-Hijr 15:20; An-Nahl 16:80-81; Ta-Ha 20:53; Al-Anbiya 21:31; Al-Furqan 25:47; An-Naml 27:61; Ya-Sin 36:80; Ghafir 40:64-79; Fussilat 41:10; Az-Zukhruf 43:10-12

<sup>2</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān*. p.169 & Makarim Shiraz, *Tafsīr Namūneh*.vol: 1, P.118

<sup>3</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:29–164; Al-A’raf 7:54; Ibrahim 14:32; Al-Furqan 25:49; Ya-Sin 36:42; An-Nahl 16:5–8

<sup>4</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān*. p.280 & Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsīr Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:2. P. 40

- The term *Wadha'a* ("He set/established") occurs in three verses<sup>1</sup>, signifying the placement or stabilization of the Earth within a specific balance and system<sup>2</sup>
- The verb *Ansha'a* ("He brought into existence/established") appears in six verses<sup>3</sup>, indicating the creation and formation of various phenomena on Earth<sup>4</sup>
- The term *Bawwa'a* ("He assigned/appointed") appears in only one verse<sup>5</sup>. Lexically, it implies preparation or provision, but primarily conveys equity and suitability<sup>6</sup>
- The term *Dhara'a* ("He spread/scattered"), appearing in Qur'an 16:13, refers to creation accompanied by abundance and diversity. Lexicographers interpret it as creation and multiplication, emphasizing the Earth's capacity to host varied life forms<sup>7</sup>
- The verb *Alqā* ("He cast/placed") appears in four verses regarding<sup>8</sup> the placement of mountains, indicating the Earth's stability and order. Lexically, *Alqā* is synonymous with *Ja'ala* ("He made/placed").
- The term *Farasha* ("He spread/extended") appears in two verses<sup>9</sup>; once referring to spreading a garment or surface (Dhāriyāt, 48) and once as a descriptor of the Earth (Baqarah, 22)<sup>10</sup>
- The term *Madda* ("He extended/stretched") occurs in two verses<sup>11</sup>, with the derivative *Muddāt* referring to duration over time, implying extension or expansion of the Earth, conceptually linked with other cluster terms<sup>12</sup>.
- Finally, the verb *Fajjara* ("He split/sprang forth") appears in two verses<sup>13</sup>, referring to the cleaving of the Earth and the emergence of water, a fundamental feature enabling life. According to Qāmūs al-Qur'ān, *Fajjara* implies splitting, with some interpreters emphasizing extent and abundance<sup>14</sup>.

This lexical and semantic diversity reflects the Qur'an's holistic and purposeful perspective on the Earth, emphasizing its role as a prepared environment for human life, growth, and civilization.

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<sup>1</sup> Ar-Rahman 55:10–12

<sup>2</sup> Mirza Hasan Muṣṭafawi, *Al-Taḥqīq fī Kalimāt al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, n.d. vol: 13. P.143

<sup>3</sup> l-An'am 6:141; Hud 11:61; Al-Mu'minun 23:19–22

<sup>4</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.807 & Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:8. P. 63

<sup>5</sup> Al-A'raf 7:74

<sup>6</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.265 & Makarim Shiraz, *Tafsir Namūneh*.vol: 1, P.245.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*. P. 79

<sup>8</sup> An-Nahl 16:15; Luqman 31:10; Al-Hijr 15:19; Qaf 50:7

<sup>9</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:22; Adh-Dhariyat 51:48

<sup>10</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.622 & Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:2. P. 40

<sup>11</sup> Al-Hijr 15:19; Qaf 50:7; Ar-Ra'd 13:3

<sup>12</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.736

<sup>13</sup> Ya-Sin 36:34; Al-Qamar 54:12

<sup>14</sup> Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:2. P. 152

## 2-5. The “Responsiveness of Nature to Human Needs” Cluster: Encompassing the Concepts of Sakhar, Dhallul, Qādirūn, Tamkīn, and Yuzjī

The fifth cluster, titled “Responsiveness of Nature to Human Needs,” comprises terms such as *Sakhar* (سَخَّرَ), *Dhallul* (ذَلَّلَ), *Qādirūn* (قَادِرُونَ), *Tamkīn* (مَكَّنَ), and *Yuzjī* (يُزِجِي) occurring in 40 Qur’ānic verses.

- The term *Sakhar* (“He made subservient/subjected”) appears in 34 verses. Lexicographers largely agree that *Sakhar* implies humiliation, subjection, or performing a task without recompense<sup>1</sup>. Mustafawī interprets *Sakhar* as bringing under total dominion and obedience, governing, or imposing mastery and control, either naturally (*takwīnī*) or legislatively (*tashrī‘ī*)<sup>2</sup>. These verses can be categorized into three types:
  1. Subjugation of humans for the benefit of other humans<sup>3</sup>,
  2. Subjugation of natural phenomena by God<sup>4</sup>, and
  3. Subjugation of the world for particular individuals.<sup>5</sup>
- The concept of *Dhallul* (“tamed, made subservient”) appears in four verses as *dhallūl*, *dhululan*, or *dhallala*. Lexically, *al-dhull* denotes humiliation under pressure or coercion, while *al-dhill* refers to gentle submission after initial resistance, such as an animal becoming obedient after prior defiance<sup>6</sup>. Ibn Fāris defines *dhull* as submission in the face of superiority<sup>7</sup>
- The term *Yuzjī* (“He causes to move/propels”) appears in two Qur’ānic verses and is connected to this cluster. *Yuzjī* means gently causing something to move<sup>8</sup> or driving or moving with moderation and care.
- The term *Qādirūn* (“able/powerful”) refers to capability and power. When applied to humans, it signifies limited ability to act, whereas when applied to God, it denotes the absolute, unlimited, and perfect power of God, meaning He can perform any act according to His wisdom; this attribute is unique to Him alone<sup>9</sup>. Two verses in this cluster illustrate this concept.

<sup>1</sup> Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:3. P. 243 & Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-‘Arab*, 4: 353

<sup>2</sup> Muṣṭafawī, *Al-Tahqīq fī Kalimāt al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, vol:5, p.76.

<sup>3</sup> Az-Zukhruf 43:32

<sup>4</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:164; Al-A‘raf 7:54; Ar-Ra‘d 13:2; Al-Ankabut 29:61; Luqman 31:20, 29; Al-Fatir 35:13; Az-Zumar 39:5; Ibrahim 14:32-33; Al-Haqqah 69:7; An-Nahl 16:12, 13, 14, 79; Al-Hajj 22:36-37; Saba 34:12; Luqman 31:20; Az-Zukhruf 43:13; Al-Jathiyah 45:12

<sup>5</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:60; Al-Imran 3:49; Al-Ma‘idah 5:110; Al-Anbiya 21:79-81; Sad 38:18, 19, 36

<sup>6</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān*. p.330

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad ibn Fāris ibn Zakariyā al-Qazwīnī al-Rāzī, *Maqāyīs al-Lughah* (n.p.: n.d.). vol. 2. P. 335

<sup>8</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān*. p.380

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.657

- The concept of *Tamkīn* (“empowerment, enabling”) appears in three verses. Within the context of the Earth, *Tamkīn* refers to having authority and capacity to act on the Earth, signifying sovereign and discretionary control<sup>1</sup>.

This cluster collectively reflects the Qur’ān’s emphasis on nature’s responsiveness and usability for human purposes, illustrating how divine empowerment and subjugation of natural phenomena render the Earth both functional and cooperative to meet human needs.

## 2-6. The “Contemplation in Nature” Cluster: Encompassing the Concepts of *Āyah*, *Dhikr*, and *‘Ibrah*

The sixth cluster, “Contemplation in Nature,” is represented by the keywords *Āyah* (آية / آيات), *Dhikr* (ذکر), and *‘Ibrah* (عبرت) appearing in 26 Qur’ānic verses<sup>2</sup>.

- Verses containing the keywords *Āyah* or *Āyāt* indicate the presence of the true Owner of the heavens and the Earth. The term *Āyah* lexically means a sign, a mark, or evidence and can also refer to a high tower or structure<sup>3</sup>. In the Qur’ānic context, *Āyah* signifies divine signs manifest in creation that invite human reflection and recognition of God’s authority<sup>4</sup>.
- The concept of *Dhikr* denotes remembrance or recollection, whether through the tongue, the heart, or both, often after forgetting or invoking something in the mind<sup>5</sup>. Ibn Manzūr defines *Dhikr* as the act of remembering something and verbalizing it<sup>6</sup>. A comprehensive understanding of *Dhikr* encompasses remembrance in both heart and speech.<sup>7</sup> One Qur’ānic verse employing the keyword *Dhikr* highlights the remembrance of God’s blessings, emphasizing the human duty to acknowledge divine providence.
- The keyword *‘Ibrah* (“lesson, moral insight”) appears in two verses alongside the above concepts. In these verses, quadrupeds serve as signs and lessons, and humans are expected to utilize them properly. Lexically, *‘Ibrah* refers to the cognitive process by which one derives understanding from observed phenomena, linking present perception to past events that may have been overlooked<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, vol:3. p 360

<sup>2</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:164; Al-Imran 3:49; Al-A'raf 7:58, 73, 133; Yunus 10:24; Hud 11:64; Ar-Ra'd 13:2-3; An-Nahl 16:11, 12, 13, 67, 69, 79; Ash-Shu'ara 26:8; Al-Isra 17:59; Ta-Ha 20:54; Ar-Rum 30:46; Ya-Sin 36:41; Fussilat 41:39; Ash-Shura 42:32-33; Al-Jathiya 45:4, 1

<sup>3</sup> Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, *Qur'an Studies*, vol. 1, 4th ed. (Tehran: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute, 2012). P. 48

<sup>4</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.328

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.328

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*. P. 308

<sup>7</sup> Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:3. P. 15

<sup>8</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.328

The three clusters— “Preparedness of the Earth for Life,” “Responsiveness of Nature to Human Needs,” and “Contemplation in Nature”—were consolidated into a broader cluster titled: “Permissible Human Utilization of Nature for the Enhancement of Life.”

This synthesis emphasizes that the Qur’ān frames human engagement with nature as both a functional and ethical enterprise, where the observation, reflection, and responsible exploitation of natural resources are grounded in divine guidance and moral accountability.

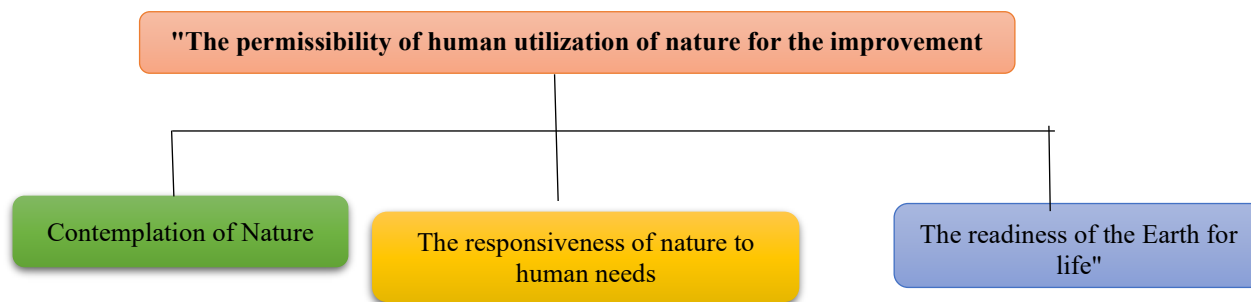


Figure 3: A Section of the Tree Diagram

## 2-7. The “Extent of Human Utilization of Nature” Cluster: Encompassing the Concepts of *’Akl* and *Ḥarām*

The seventh cluster, titled “Extent of Human Utilization of Nature,” examines the limits and frameworks of consumption as delineated in the Qur’ān. This cluster emerges from the aggregation of two sub-clusters: one addressing permissible consumption (*Mawārid-e Jawāz dar Khordan*) with the keyword *Kulū* (كُلُوا), and the other concerning prohibited consumption (*Mawārid-e ’Adam-e Jawāz dar Khordan*) with the keyword *Ḥarrama* (حَرَّمَ).

The term *’Akl* (أَكَلَ) primarily denotes the act of eating food, though it also appears in figurative expressions, such as “*أَكَلَتِ النَّارُ الْحَطَبَ*” (“the fire consumed the wood”). Derivatives include *’Ukul* (أُكُل), meaning fruit or food, and *’Akīl* (أَكِيل), denoting gluttonous consumption or prey.<sup>1</sup>

In some Qur’ānic verses, the imperative *Kulū* is understood as general utilization of divine blessings, not restricted solely to eating. For example, in verse 87 of *Sūrat al-Mā’ida*, some Muslims had prohibited themselves from eating, marriage, and sexual activity<sup>2</sup>. *Tabāṭabā’ī* interprets eating as a form of exercising dominion over God’s provision, whereas other scholars regard it merely as a permissive allowance, not an obligatory exercise of utilization.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān*. p.56

<sup>2</sup> Abdullah Javadī Amolī, *Humankind from Beginning to End*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Isra Publications, 2011). P. 415.

<sup>3</sup> Abdullah Javadī Amolī, *Tafsīr Tasnīm* (Tehran: [Publisher], 2009). P. 476

Consequently, 27 Qur'anic verses<sup>1</sup> are classified within this cluster for the purposes of the present study.

The term *Harām* (حَرَام) denotes prohibition, as opposed to *Halāl* (permissible). Its application varies: sometimes as a normative, prescriptive injunction, and other times as a coercive or naturally imposed restriction. In some instances, prohibition signifies divine subjugation and the exercise of God's power, while in other cases it reflects natural law embedded within creation.<sup>2</sup> Nine Qur'anic verses exemplifying this concept were incorporated into this cluster.

The two sub-clusters—permissible consumption and prohibited consumption—were thus consolidated under the overarching cluster “Extent of Human Utilization of Nature.” This framework emphasizes that human engagement with natural resources is bounded by divinely mandated limits, reflecting both ethical and legal dimensions of stewardship.

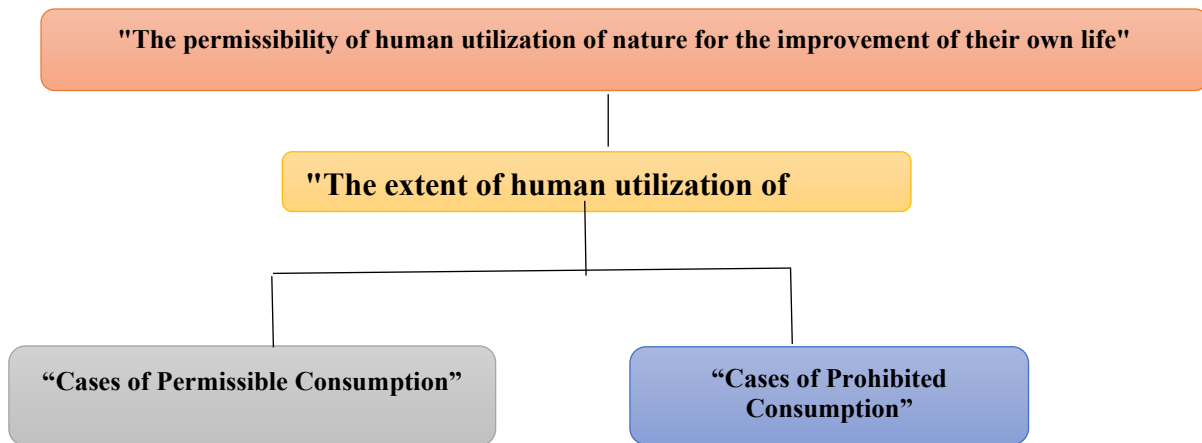


Figure 4: A Section of the Tree Diagram

## 2-8. The “Transgression of Divine Limits” Cluster: Encompassing the Concepts *Sarafa*, *‘Adaw*, *‘Asiya*, *‘Aqar*, *Ghayyara*

The eighth cluster, titled “Transgression of Divine Limits,” is represented in 15 Qur'anic verses through keywords such as *Sarafa* (سَرَفَ), *‘Adaw* (عَدَوَ), *‘Aqar* (عَقَرَ), *‘Asiya* (عَصَى), and *Ghayyara* (غَيَّرَ). It addresses human actions that exceed the divinely prescribed boundaries in utilizing nature, constituting a form of rebellion against the inherent order of creation.

<sup>1</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:57, 58, 60, 168, 172; Al-Ma'idah 5:88; Al-An'am 6:118, 141, 142; Al-A'raf 7:31, 160, 161; As-Sajda 32:27; Yusuf 12:47; An-Nahl 16:114; Ta-Ha 20:54, 81; Al-Fatir 35:12; Ghafir 40:79; Ya-Sin 36:72; Al-Mulk 67:15; Al-Hajj 22:28, 36; Al-Mu'minun 23:19, 21; Saba 34:15; Fussilat 41:10

<sup>2</sup> Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:2. P. 122

The term *Sarafa* appears in five relevant verses<sup>1</sup>. Lexically, *Israf* (سراف) denotes exceeding limits or transgressing boundaries in any act performed by a human<sup>2</sup>. Such transgression violates boundaries established by reason, divine law, and societal norms, indicating disregard for moral and legal ordinances<sup>3</sup>.

The term '*Adaw* (العَدُو) signifies transgression and exceeding limits<sup>4</sup> and appears in seven verses<sup>5</sup> in this context.

The concept '*Asiya* (عَصَى) conveys disobedience to God's commands and exceeding divinely established limits<sup>6</sup>. In Sūrat al-Baqarah, verse 61, it appears alongside '*Adaw*, emphasizing the intertwining of rebellion and transgression.

The term '*Aqar* (عَقَرَ), meaning to cut or sever<sup>7</sup>, is employed in Qur'ānic passages related to Ṣāliḥ's she-camel<sup>8</sup>. In Sūrat al-A'rāf, verse 77, it is mentioned alongside '*Ataw* (عَتَو). Lexicographers note that '*Aqar* can also denote the root or core, as in expressions such as "'*Aqartu al-nakhl*" (I cut the dates from the palm) or "'*Aqartu zahr al-ba'ir fa-in 'aqara*" (I wounded the camel's back), illustrating physical severance or harm.<sup>9</sup>

'*Ataw* (عَتَو), with its first and second vowels, conveys gross transgression, disobedience to divine injunctions, extreme cold, senility, or ultimate old age<sup>10</sup>.

The term *Ghayyara* (غَيَّرَ), derived from the root *ghayr*, signifies transformation or alteration. In the Qur'ān, it indicates transgression of divine limits and disobedience, as in the verse: "...Indeed, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves..."<sup>11</sup>. This illustrates that the transformation of blessings into afflictions results from human alteration of behavior and conduct.

Thus, this cluster underscores that human overreach in exploiting natural resources constitutes moral and cosmic transgression, violating the divinely established balance and ethical order of creation.

<sup>1</sup> Ash-Shu'ara 26:151; Al-Imran 3:147; Al-Ma'idah 5:32; Al-An'am 6:141; Al-A'raf 7:3

<sup>2</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.408 & Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:3. P. 257-258.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 3:257

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 4:305

<sup>5</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:61, 65; Al-Ma'idah 5:87, 94; Al-A'raf 7:77, 163; An-Nahl 16:116

<sup>6</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.570

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 5:27

<sup>8</sup> Al-A'raf 7:77; Ash-Shu'ara 26:157

<sup>9</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.577

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 4:290

<sup>11</sup> Ar-Ra'd 13:11 & Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 5:138

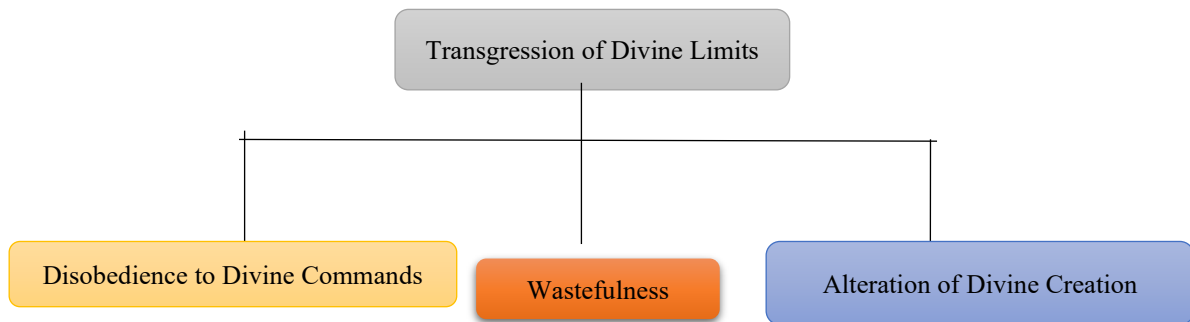


Figure 5: A Section of the Tree Diagram

## 2-9. The “Corruption on Earth” Cluster: Encompassing the Concept *Fasād*

The ninth cluster, identified by the keyword *Fasād* (فَسَادٌ), one of the most frequently cited Qur’ānic terms related to environmental degradation, is titled “Corruption on Earth”. This cluster comprises 23 verses<sup>1</sup>. Among the concepts appearing alongside this term in the relevant verses is ‘Athā (عَثَى), which signifies intensity or extremity in corruption.

Lexically, *Fasād* denotes spoilage, decay, or the opposite of rectitude<sup>2</sup>. It also refers to anything that departs from the state of balance or proper measure, whether slightly or significantly. This notion applies to the soul, the body, and objects that have deviated from their stable condition.

The word *al-Arḍ* (الأرض, “the earth”) is the most frequent collocate of *Fasād*.<sup>3</sup>

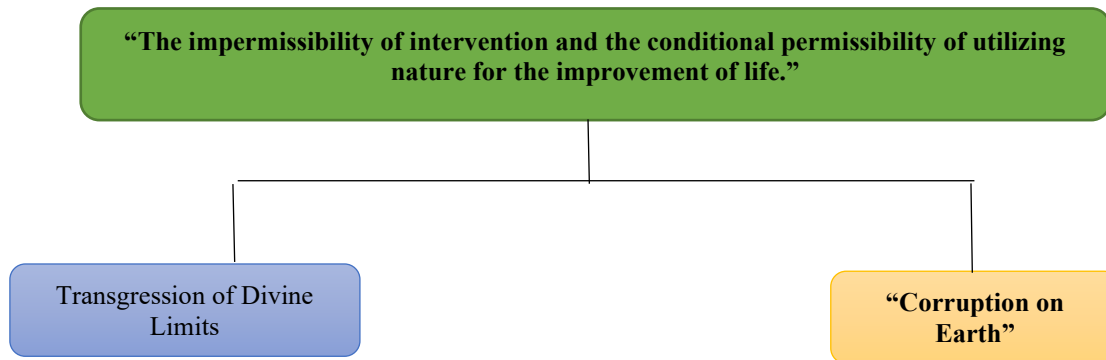
The “Transgression of Divine Limits” cluster and the “Corruption on Earth” cluster were merged to form the broader cluster titled:

“Prohibition of Intervention and Conditional Permission for Utilization of Nature to Enhance Human Life.”

<sup>1</sup> Al-Baqarah 2:11, 12, 27, 30, 60, 205, 251; Al-Ma'idah 5:32; Al-A'raf 7:56, 74, 85, 142; Hud 11:85, 116; Ar-Ra'd 13:25; Al-Kahf 18:94; Ash-Shu'ara 26:152, 183; An-Naml 27:34, 48; Ar-Rum 30:41; Al-Fajr 89:12

<sup>2</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. p.634 & Qorashi Banabi, *Tafsir Ahsan al-Hadith*, vol:5. P. 174-258. Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 3:335.

<sup>3</sup> S hirdel et al., *Fasād al-Arḍ: A Study on Environmental Corruption*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2018).



**Figure 6:** A Section of the Tree Diagram

### 3. Analysis of the Verses

In the present study, 192 Qur’ānic verses related to human intervention in the environment were extracted and categorized into 32 keywords across nine primary clusters. The analysis of these verses demonstrates that the Qur’ān adopts a distinct normative approach toward human intervention in the environment, which can be examined at three discernible levels:

1. Verses indicating the permissibility of intervention (either absolute or conditional),
2. Verses relating to the legitimate utilization of natural resources, and
3. Verses indicating the prohibition of intervention in the environment.

#### 3.1. Absolute Divine Intervention in Nature (16 Verses)

The verses within the “Owner of the Heavens and the Earth” cluster (al-Baqarah, 107; Āl ‘Imrān, 26, 189; An-Nisā’, 126, 132; al-Mā’ida, 120; al-A‘rāf, 128; at-Tawba, 116; an-Nūr, 42; al-Furqān, 2; Luqmān, 26; al-Ḥadīd, 2, 5; al-Burūj, 9), along with select verses from the “Inheritance” cluster that describe God as the heir of the heavens and the earth (al-A‘rāf, 128; al-Anbiyā’, 105; Qasas, 5), indicate God’s absolute intervention in nature.

#### 3.2. Legitimate Human Utilization of Natural Resources (132 Verses)

The majority of the analyzed verses pertain to the permissibility of responsible and legitimate human utilization of nature. Such utilization is structured to maintain ecosystem balance and avoid irreversible changes. The primary clusters in this category include:

- The “Stewardship/Caliphate” Cluster (al-Ahzāb, 72; al-Isrā’, 70),
- The “Preparedness of Earth for Life” Cluster (al-Baqarah, 22; al-A‘rāf, 10; ar-Ra’d, 3; al-Ḥijr, 20; an-Naḥl, 80-81; Tāhā, 53; al-Anbiyā’, 31; al-Furqān, 47; an-Naml, 61; Yāsīn, 80; Ghāfir, 64-79; Fuṣṣilat, 10; Az-Zukhruf, 10-12; al-Mulk, 15; Nūḥ, 19; al-Mursalāt, 25-27; an-Naba’, 6-7; al-Furqān, 47; al-Baqarah, 29-164; al-A‘rāf, 54; Ibrāhīm, 32; al-Furqān, 49; Yāsīn, 42; an-Naḥl, 6-8; ar-Raḥmān, 10-12; al-An‘ām, 141; Hūd, 61; al-Mu‘minūn, 19-22; al-A‘rāf, an-Naḥl, 15; Luqmān, 10; al-Ḥijr, 19; Qāf, 7; al-Baqarah, 22; adh-Dhāriyāt, 48),

- The “Responsiveness of Nature to Human Needs” Cluster (al-Baqarah, 164; al-A‘rāf, 54; ar-Ra‘d, 2; al-‘Ankabūt, 61; Luqmān, 20-29; Fāṭir, 13; az-Zumar, 5; Ibrāhīm, 32-33; al-Ḥāqqah, 7; an-Naḥl, 12-14, 79; al-Ḥajj, 36-37; Saba’, 12; Luqmān, 20; az-Zukhruf, 13; al-Jāthiyah, 12-13),
- The “Reflection/Contemplation in Nature” Cluster (al-Baqarah, 164; Āl ‘Imrān, 49; al-A‘rāf, 58, 73, 133; Yūnus, 24; Hūd, 64; ar-Ra‘d, 2-3; an-Naḥl, 12-13, 67, 69, 79; ash-Shu‘arā’, 8; al-Isrā’, 59; Tāhā, 54; ar-Rūm, 46; Yāsīn, 41; Fuṣṣilat, 39; ash-Shūrā, 32-33; al-Jāthiyah, 4, 13),
- The “Permissible Consumption” Cluster (al-Baqarah, 57-58, 60, 168, 172; al-Mā’ida, 88; al-An‘ām, 118, 141-142; al-A‘rāf, 31, 160-161; as-Sajdah, 27; Yūsuf, 47; an-Naḥl, 114; Tāhā, 54, 81; Fāṭir, 12; Ghāfir, 79; Yāsīn, 72; al-Mulk, 15; al-Ḥajj, 28, 36; al-Mu‘minūn, 19-21; Saba’, 15; Fuṣṣilat, 10).

These clusters collectively demonstrate a Qur’ānic framework that balances human entitlement to utilize natural resources with the maintenance of ecological and moral order.

### 3-3. Conditional Human Intervention (18 Verses)

Some verses indicate conditional human intervention in nature, a permissibility that is restricted to righteous individuals or prophets. Within the “Stewardship/Caliphate” cluster, verses containing the phrase **لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ** refer to the succession of specific individuals on earth—those who are righteous and for whom God establishes stability and tranquility in the land. It appears that conditional intervention is specifically related to this type of individuals (an-Nūr, 55).

The second category comprises verses from the “Inheritance” cluster, where God states that “the earth is inherited by particular groups such as the pious, the righteous servants, and the oppressed”. These verses explicitly describe the attributes of these groups (al-A‘rāf, 128; al-Anbiyā’, 105; Qasas, 5).

Additionally, the “Responsiveness of Nature to Human Needs” cluster includes verses that indicate the subjugation of nature by particular individuals (Saba’, 12; al-Anbiyā’, 18; Ṣād, 36-37; al-Anbiyā’, 79; Ṣād, 18-19; al-Kahf, 84). These verses suggest that this group of individuals can intervene conditionally and purposefully, but only within the framework of specific circumstances and by divine will.

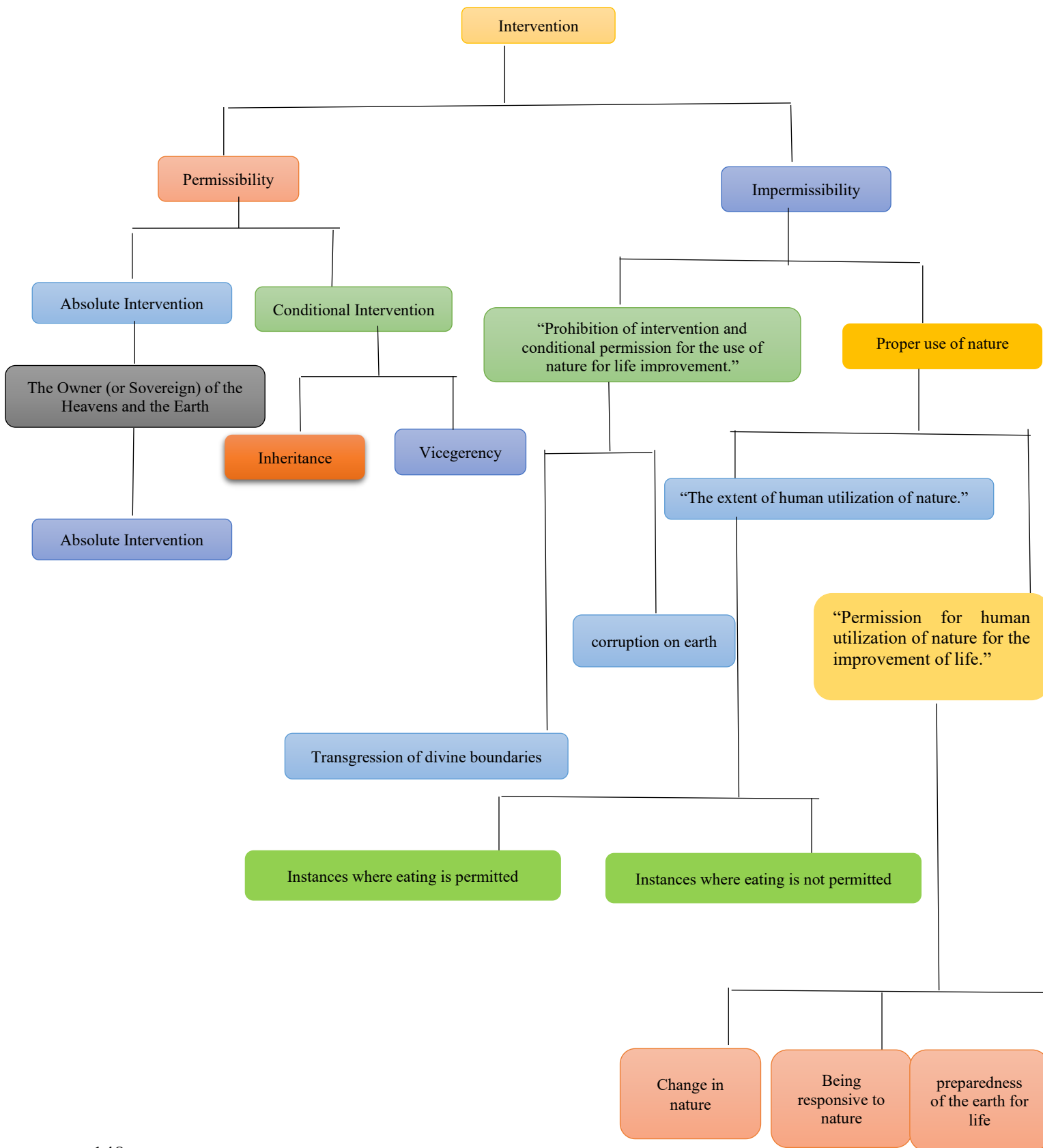
### 4-3. Prohibition of Absolute Human Intervention (69 Verses)

This category includes:

- The third part of the “Inheritance” cluster (al-A‘rāf, 100, 137; al-Ahzāb, 27; ash-Shu‘arā’, 59; ad-Dukhān, 28),
- The “Prohibited Consumption” cluster (al-Baqarah, 173; an-Nisā’, 160; al-Mā’ida, 1, 3, 87; al-An‘ām, 119; an-Naḥl, 115; al-Ḥajj, 30),

- Verses from the “Transgression of Divine Limits” cluster (ash-Shu‘arā’, 151, 157; Āl ‘Imrān, 147; al-Mā’ida, 32; al-An‘ām, 141; al-A‘rāf, 31, 77; al-Baqarah, 61; ar-Ra‘d, 11), and
- Verses from the “Corruption on Earth” cluster (al-Baqarah, 11, 12, 27, 30, 60, 205, 251; al-Mā’ida, 32; al-A‘rāf, 56, 74, 85, 142; Hūd, 85, 116; ar-Ra‘d, 25; al-Kahf, 94; ash-Shu‘arā’, 152, 183; an-Naml, 34, 48; ar-Rūm, 41; al-Fajr, 12).

These verses collectively establish the Qur’ānic principle that absolute human intervention in nature is prohibited, distinguishing it from conditional and divinely sanctioned intervention.



## Conclusion

The normative approach of the Qur'an regarding human intervention in the environment, based on the extracted keywords, the relationships among concepts, and the clustering of themes, can be summarized as follows:

1. True ownership of nature belongs to God. Human ownership, in comparison, is secondary, non-inherent, and contingent. Therefore, humans are entitled to utilize natural resources only within the limits permitted by God.
2. God created the earth and its elements and made them subservient for humans and other creatures. This subjugation occurs by God's will, and He is the ultimate agent. Subjugation means that the earth is tamed and usable by humans, not that humans have the right to intervene arbitrarily or alter it. Consequently, humans are allowed to use nature responsibly, but not to create disorder, impose harmful changes, or engage in improper interventions.
3. Another critical insight from the Qur'an is that nature does not belong solely to humans. Humans must respect the rights of other living beings, as the Qur'anic verses explicitly affirm the rights of plants and animals.
4. Nature and its phenomena are manifestations of God's power and creativity. Human use of nature should be guided by wisdom, as this approach not only enables the discovery of nature's wonders but also encourages reflection on its essence and purpose.
5. God's being the "Heir" signifies the permanence and absolute reality of His ownership over all creation.
6. In the Qur'an, concepts such as corruption (*fasād*), extravagance (*isrāf*), and transgression of divine limits define the boundary between proper and improper use of resources.
7. Exceeding divine limits and extravagance lead to the destruction of natural resources. Unrestrained exploitation damages the earth and its resources and, according to the Qur'an, results in corruption and disorder on earth.

Considering these points, the Qur'anic normative approach to human intervention in the environment is conditionally permissible. Human activities in nature should avoid causing irreversible changes, allowing the environment to retain its regenerative capacity, while ecosystems remain balanced and sustainable. Therefore, absolute intervention belongs solely to God, whereas conditional intervention in nature is permitted only for prophets and individuals whose qualities are specifically highlighted in the Qur'an.

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