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Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**The Sea in the Qur'an: A Thematic Exegesis of Maritime Verses****Izharullah Chishti**

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[rifshakhann@gmail.com](mailto:rifshakhann@gmail.com)**Abstract**

*This paper is a thematic exegesis (Tafsīr Mawdūdī) that examines the role of the sea as a theological, symbolic, ethical and ecological system within the discourse of the divine in Quranic maritime verses. Based on the classical and contemporary schools of tafsīr, the paper classifies the verses that relate to the sea under four major categories, namely descriptive, symbolic, historical and legal/ethical. The verses representing the descriptive side of this poetry contain the aspects of natural occurrence in the environment like the waves, sea animals, and the line where the fresh and the salty water meet, whereas symbolic verses show the sea as an allegory of human weakness and Godliness. Narratives in history show how the sea is used as a form of deliverance and punishment, such as the account where there is the story of prophets such as Noah and Moses. Legal and ethical sources stress the acceptability of marine resources and the fact that moderation must be exercised in the utilization of the resources. The paper also looks at the way classical exegetes such as al-Tabari, al-Razi, and Ibn Kathir read maritime verses with emphasis on linguistic, historical and juristic contexts but modern scholars such as Sayyid Quṭb and al-Maraghi have entertained the psychological, theme and environment issues. Drawing a parallel between the Quranic mention and the current knowledge in oceanography and ecological ethics, the paper demonstrates the timelessness of the Quran in helping to solve the current environmental problems. The sea, which is described in the Quran, is more than just a demonstration of power of God; it is a reminder to be good stewards. The end result is that this thematic journey helps to emphasize the Quranic Sea as a complex and evolving symbol, which straddles spirituality, morality, and science.*

**Keywords:** Qur'an, Sea, Thematic Tafsīr, Maritime Verses, Symbolism, Environmental Ethics, Islamic Exegesis, Oceanography, Divine Signs, Stewardship.

**Introduction**

The Quran presents a rich cosmological framework that integrates natural elements into its spiritual discourse. Nature is not a passive backdrop but a dynamic canvas filled with divine signs (*āyāt*), constantly inviting human reflection. The Quran describes the creation of the heavens and the earth in six stages and emphasizes the deliberate design and harmony within creation. Verses such as:

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ﴾

"It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six days" (Quran 32:4) reflect this worldview. The cosmology of the Quran includes a layered structure of seven heavens (Quran 67:3) and various natural phenomena, such as wind, rain, lightning, and seas that serve theological purposes. These manifestations are not random but systematically point to divine order, authority, and mercy (Nasr, 2006). In the Islamic intellectual tradition, nature is viewed as a "visible Quran," and the study of the cosmos

complements the study of scripture (Sardar, 1989). This theological link forms the foundation for understanding elements like the sea in the Quranic text.

Among the numerous natural motifs in the Quran, the sea (*al-baḥr*) stands out for its frequency, diversity of context, and symbolic depth. The sea is depicted as a domain of God's power and a realm of both sustenance and danger. One verse states:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ﴾

*“And He is the One who enables you to travel through land and sea”* (Qur’ān 10:22). The Quran also highlights the miracle of two seas meeting:

﴿مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ ﴿١٩﴾ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ﴾

*“He released the two seas meeting [side by side]; between them is a barrier they do not transgress”* (Quran 55:19–20). These verses have been interpreted both literally as reference to estuarine and saline phenomena and metaphorically, as allusions to divine balance and limitation (Ibn Kathīr, 2003). The sea also serves as a scene of divine testing and mercy, as in the story of Prophet Jonah, or when it becomes a passage for Moses and a trap for Pharaoh. Hence, the sea in the Quran operates on multiple registers: physical, symbolic, and spiritual (Mir, 1986).

The aim of this study is to explore the motif of the sea in the Quran through three key dimensions: theological, ethical, and symbolic. Theologically, the sea reflects the might of God in both its tranquility and tempestuousness, reinforcing human dependence on divine grace. The Quran states:

﴿إِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ﴾

*“When they board a ship, they call upon Allah, sincere to Him in religion”* (Quran 29:65). Theologically, the sea reminds humans about their existence, as stewards (khalīfah) and how they should not be arrogant when it comes to the randomness of nature. The marine resources are displayed as a divine blessing to be consumed with gratitude and equilibrium (Quran 16:14). On the symbolic level, the sea reflects the ideas of danger, submission, and change that act as the reflection of the human soul trying to find its salvation. It is within this tripartite context that this research undertakes to know the role of the sea within the Quranic theology and discourse (Safi, 1996).

The theme-based methodology used in the present text is the one of thematic tafsir (tafsir mawdud) which consists of the study of Qur’anic verses by subject rather than by order. This procedure enables one to cover all aspects of the sea by gathering and classifying the verses referring to seas, vessels, waves, storms and water-zones. The paper also examines such verses linguistically and in context based on the classical exegesis (e.g. al-Tabari, al-Razi, Ibn Kathir), as well as on modern interpretative works (e.g. Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, and Nasr). In such a thematic focus, we realize that beyond being a natural phenomenon, the sea serves as a theological symbol that has features of revelation. In addition to this, this means of approach allows interaction between scriptural interpretation and modern knowledge in oceanography, moral philosophy, and environmental science, basing Quranic interpretation in both values and modern times (Kamali, 2010).

### Methodological Framework

This paper uses the approach of thematic exegesis (tafsir mawdduii), which organizes and groups related verses under a single theme in order to have a unified approach to analysis. Thematic exegesis does not move through a text sequentially as traditional analytic exegesis (tafsir tahlli) does, but rather as an exegesis through subject that allows one to understand how a generality presented in the Quran is developed. Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (2003) was

one of the first to formally discuss this practice, and he features the ability to capture ideological integrity and wholeness, within the Quran, through thematic exegesis. The procedure involves gathering the pertinent verses on a given subject, examining their effect on language, historical background, and their themes, and then making composite conclusions about Quranic angles of approach to this matter. It is most successful when used in conjunction with natural things like the sea, which are used in many contexts of the text including historical passages, law and the comparison of the two in a theological way. In this light, the sea is not just a piece of flesh; it is an emblem that has great theological, ethical, and spiritual connotations. Thematic tafsir therefore allows a multiperspectival comprehension of the sea, placing it as a theme of divine authority, spiritual introspection and environmental awareness.

In order to enhance the discussion, the study uses classic and contemporary tafsir works, accompanied by the linguistic and semantic analyses. Tafsir al-Tabari, Tafsir al-Razi and Tafsir Ibn Kathir propose classical interpretations of sea-related verses and therefore these classical works can shed light on historical and grammatical contexts of the Quran. These early exegetes offer insights into lexical roots (such as *b-h-r* for sea, *m-w-j* for wave) and often draw upon prophetic traditions (*ahādīth*) and Isra'iliyyat narratives to provide depth to their commentary. Contrary to this, contemporary exegetes such as Sayyid Quṭb, Muhammad 'Abdullah Draz, and Abu al-A'la Mawdudi provide thematic and socio-political reflections, which amount to aligning Qur'anic cosmology with ethical and contemporary realities. Their interpretation of sea-related verses, on the other hand, focuses more on the psychological and moral aspect of the maritime experiences fear, hope, and surrender in the connection to the divine dependence and moral development. With respect to linguistics, the paper will use root analysis, semantic field mapping and syntactic analysis to categorize literal descriptions and metaphorical usages. As an example, Quranic descriptions of the troubled seas may refer to the inner unrest of the human being (Quran 24:40), whereas calm seas are an indication of divine power and benevolence (Quran 31:32). These are the tools which can be used to interpret the multilayered language of the Quran so that the interpretations are contextual and hermeneutically efficient.

The selection of sea-related verses for this study is justified by the Qur'an's frequent and multifaceted references to the sea and its elements. Maritime imagery appears in a variety of theological, moral, and narrative contexts, ranging from creation and divine signs to stories of prophets and natural laws. Verses such as:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُسِيرُكُم فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ﴾

"He is the One who enables you to travel through land and sea" (Qur'an 10:22), or:

﴿وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ﴾

"The two seas are not alike" (Qur'an 35:12). This depicts the significance of the sea in the Quranic concept. These references are numerous and varied enough to make it an interesting theme to treat in thematic tafsir. In addition, the sea serves as a metaphor of the ambiguity in life, divine test, and the power of human beings that are very pertinent in the religious as well as ecological discussions. According to Nasr (2002), the Quranic discourse about nature promotes a divine cosmology whereby things such as the sea are the symbols of the Divine wisdom, and that place of moral introspection. The modern thinkers like Sardar (1989) and Kamali (2010) go further and show that in Islamic environmental thought, the Quran must be invoked through such symbols as the sea in order to develop a theology of responsibility and

sustainability. In this way, thematic choice of maritime verses is not only textually strong but also theologically and ethically relevant both to the classic and modern Islamic thought.

### Classification of Maritime Verses

The Qur'ān refers to the sea (*al-baḥr*) and its related phenomena in various theological, moral, and narrative contexts. These references can be grouped into four primary categories: descriptive, symbolic, historical, and legal/ethical. Each category offers a distinct perspective on how the sea serves as a theological sign, spiritual metaphor, or ethical directive within the Qur'ānic worldview.

Descriptive verses present the sea as part of the natural order created and governed by Allah. These verses emphasize the awe-inspiring characteristics of marine phenomena, often pairing the sea with other cosmic elements such as the heavens, mountains, and wind. A striking example is:

﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ الْجَوَارِ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ﴾

*"And of His signs are the ships sailing in the sea like mountains"* (Qur'ān 42:32).

Such verses highlight the balance between human activity e.g., sailing and divine regulation of nature. Another reference underscores the divine provision found in marine life:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ حَمًا طَرِيًّا﴾

*"It is He who subjected the sea for you so that you may eat from it tender meat"* (Qur'ān 16:14). These verses contribute to an ecological theology where the sea is both a sign (*āyah*) of divine power and a resource granted under divine mercy (Nasr, 2002). The consistency of these natural signs calls believers to reflection and gratitude (Kamali, 2010).

The sea also functions as a profound symbol of human vulnerability, spiritual transformation, and God's mercy. Verses in this category often involve images of storms, waves, or drowning as metaphors for existential crisis and divine deliverance. For instance:

﴿وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوَّجٌ كَالظُّلِّ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ﴾

*"And when waves cover them like canopies, they supplicate Allah, sincere to Him in religion"* (Qur'ān 31:32). Here, the terrifying force of the sea compels sincerity and submission to God. Another powerful image appears in:

﴿أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ جَبِّي يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ﴾

*"[Or their deeds] are like darkness in a vast deep sea, overwhelmed by a wave, above which is a wave"* (Qur'ān 24:40). This verse uses multilayered maritime imagery to symbolize spiritual ignorance and distance from divine light. Symbolic verses such as these convey deep psychological and theological meanings. Scholars like Sardar (1989) and Mir (1986) have emphasized the Qur'ān's layered metaphors as essential tools for both self-awareness and divine recognition.

The sea plays a crucial role in Qur'ānic historical narratives, often serving as a setting for miraculous deliverance or divine punishment. Among the most prominent is the story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh:

﴿فَأَنجَيْنَاكَمُ وَآغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ﴾

*"We saved you and drowned the people of Pharaoh while you were looking on"* (Qur'ān 2:50). This event marks the sea as both a vehicle of divine mercy and divine justice. Similarly, in the story of Noah:

﴿فَقَارَ النَّوْؤُ فَفُلْنَا اِحْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اِثْنَيْنِ﴾

*"And when the oven gushed forth, We said: Load into it [the Ark] two of each kind"* (Qur'ān 23:27). Here, the sea becomes an agent of purification and new beginnings. In both stories, the sea is not a neutral environment but a divine instrument, directed by God's will. According to Draz (1935), such narratives underscore the recurring Qur'anic theme of salvation through submission and destruction through arrogance.

The Qur'ān also includes direct references to the legal and ethical dimensions of the sea, offering rulings on permissible food sources and guidance on travel. For example:

﴿أَحَلَّ لَكُم صَيْدَ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامَهُ﴾

*"Lawful to you is the game of the sea and its food"* (Qur'ān 5:96). This verse establishes the permissibility of seafood, particularly relevant during pilgrimage when certain terrestrial hunting is restricted. Another practical verse addresses sea travel:

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ فِيهِ﴾

*"It is Allah who has subjected the sea for you so that ships may sail upon it"* (Qur'ān 45:12). These rulings are embedded in ethical considerations, reminding humanity that marine resources are both a gift and a test. Modern scholars like Kamali (2010) have emphasized the importance of such verses in framing an Islamic environmental ethic, grounded in responsibility, moderation, and gratitude.

#### **Human Relationship with the Sea in the Qur'an**

The Qur'an portrays the sea not merely as a geographical or ecological reality, but as a theological and existential space through which human beings encounter divine power, provision, and testing. Across numerous verses, the relationship between humans and the sea is framed through motifs of blessing, dependence, danger, submission, and ethical responsibility. These themes reflect the Qur'an's broader vision of nature as a site of interaction between the Creator and the created, where human experiences especially at sea provoke spiritual reflection and moral accountability.

The Qur'an frequently associates the sea with mobility, commerce, and divine facilitation, reminding humanity that their ability to travel and trade across oceans is a gift from God. One verse states:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ﴾

*"He is the One who enables you to travel through land and sea"* (Qur'an 10:22).

This framing emphasizes divine agency in what humans may mistakenly perceive as personal or technological achievement. Maritime navigation is described not merely as a logistical or economic act but a journey that occurs under God's will and protection. Another verse explicitly links seafaring with commercial benefit:

﴿وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَازٍ لِّتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ﴾

*"And you see the ships plowing through it, that you may seek of His bounty"* (Qur'an 35:12). Here, the act of seeking provision from the sea whether in goods, trade, or fish is positioned as a divinely granted opportunity, underscoring the dependence of human civilization on God's permission to harness nature (Nasr, 2002). In Islamic history, such verses helped shape a spiritual outlook on economic activity, where profit and labor are sanctified through divine attribution (Kamali, 2010).

Despite its utility, the sea is also depicted as a space of immense danger and vulnerability, where human beings confront their powerlessness. One of the most vivid depictions is:

﴿إِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلْكَ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ﴾

*"When they board a ship, they call upon Allah, sincere to Him in religion"* (Qur'an 29:65).

This verse captures the paradox of human behavior: turning to God in moments of helplessness, particularly when overwhelmed by the forces of nature. Similarly:

﴿وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوَّجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ﴾

“When waves cover them like canopies” (Qur’an 31:32) presents the sea as an overpowering force that eclipses human control, reducing even the most confident traveler to a state of submission. According to Mir (1986), these verses evoke not only external peril but internal spiritual awakening. The Qur’an’s maritime imagery, in this light, becomes a tool to expose the illusion of human autonomy and reinforce the centrality of divine reliance. Experiences at sea are not merely trials, but opportunities for spiritual growth and grateful remembrance. The Qur’an repeatedly calls believers to respond with humility and thankfulness after deliverance from danger:

﴿فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ﴾

“But when He delivers them to the land, at once they associate others with Him” (Qur’an 29:65). This verse critiques those who forget their vulnerability once they reach safety, implying that the true purpose of maritime testing is to instill enduring monotheism and gratitude. For the sincere, however, surviving the sea becomes a spiritual milestone. The Qur’an thus positions marine travel not only as a physical experience but as a moral encounter that reveals human limitations and calls for a transformed relationship with God. According to Draz (1935), the emotional arc of fear, prayer, and deliverance at sea encapsulates the Qur’anic vision of how divine signs operate within human life.

Lastly, the Qur’an calls for ethical reflection on human interactions with the sea as part of a broader ecological ethic rooted in stewardship (*khilāfah*) and trust. The permission to benefit from marine resources comes with implied responsibility:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِنَآكُلُوا مِنْهُ حَمًّا طَرِيًّا﴾

“It is He who subjected the sea so that you may eat from it tender meat” (Qur’an 16:14). This verse speaks to both divine generosity and human accountability. Modern Islamic environmental thinkers like Sardar (1989) and Kamali (2010) emphasize that exploitation without ethical boundaries contradicts the Qur’anic ethos. The sea, as part of the divine trust, must be used with moderation, balance, and recognition of future generations. Overfishing, pollution, and maritime injustice, therefore, are not merely technical or legal issues, but spiritual failings. Ethical conduct at sea, as with all aspects of creation, must align with the Qur’anic values of justice (*‘adl*), balance (*mīzān*), and gratitude (*shukr*).

### Comparative Insights from Tafsīr Traditions

The traditional exegesis schooling, exemplified by the works of al Ṭabarī, Fakhr al Razī, and Ibn Kathīr, tends to take an absolute and contextual interpretation of Quranic passages concerning the sea. The Transmission of the Prophet and the Companions is constantly taken into account in the works of Al-Ṭabarī and, to refer to the verses of the sea, they are placed within the historical context of the stories of the Prophet himself. As an example, when he writes on Sūrah Yūnus (10:22) (And He is the One who enables you to travel through land and sea) he brings to the fore the experiential and miracle quality of navigating the seas and bases that on the sovereignty of the divine (Al Ṭabarī, 1987). The Tafsīr al Kabīr by Fakhr al Rāzī is a mixture of grammatical interpretation and cosmology in theology where a verse such as Sūrah al Raḥmān (55:19-20), which tells of the meeting of two seas, thinking it was a physical phenomenon of saline stratification, but also considering as a metaphysical order (Al Razi, 1988). In his commentary, Ibn Kathīr (2003) often favors the report of the actions of prophets (e.g., Moses parting the sea, the Ark of Noah), and places the emphasis on the continuity with

the Sunnah, viewing the sea as a place where God acts. Taken together, classical tafsirs are inclined to literal-historical interpretation on the basis of linguistic and juridical, and anecdotal material, which may not have a lot of symbolic overlay, but which nevertheless still recognizes the existential importance of the sea.

On the contrary, contemporary theorists of tafsīr like Sayyid Quṭb, Mahmud al-Maraghi, and contemporary theorists of theology in the environment are more inclined to symbolic, theme-oriented, and ethical delegation of maritime verses. Sea imagery storms, deep waters, and perilous waves are interpreted in the Faizul al Quran, written by Qutb, to represent spiritual disturbances, the destruction of the ego and the ultimate dependence of the believer to the mercy of the divine. In his commentary of S 31:32, when waves envelop them like canopies, they would pray to Allah, His description of the sea is not just a physical danger but rather it is a symbol of crisis within and a wake-up call to spirituality (Quṭb, 1964). Likewise, al Marghi tafsir provides cogitations on environmental responsibility and environmental-related interconnectedness and many instances of environmental injunctions such as Sora Nahl (16:14) (He subjected the sea, so that you may eat thereof" tender meat) reflect ethical injunctions regarding sustainable consumption and community wellbeing (al Marghi, 1976). Modern scholars are even more interested in developing maritime themes as the embodiment of environmental ethics, the justice of marine resources and existential theology pertaining to the sea as an integrative myth of oneness, frontier, nourishment and human limitation (Nasr, 2002; Kamali, 2010). Throughout the contemporary tafsirs, we observe a distinct tendency towards theme, meaning, and moral, and existential application beyond the literal sense.

Among the most enlightening dissimilarities between symbolic and literal interpretation is also the manner, in which both interpretations approach storm-related passages and creation imagery. Literallist tafsīrs interpret S 24:40 literally and mainly read it as an exuberant metaphor of utter ignorance or spiritual danger, which relates to ancient conventions regarding night and deep-surface water. According to Ibn Kathr (2003) it was used as a moral-historical application ignorance that is identified as black waves, since it pertains to spiritual obliviousness in apocalyptic understandings. According to modern symbolic interpreters, however, this verse is metaphoric language of successive psychological detachment to divine direction each wave a metaphor of detachment or misdirected devotion. In such a fashion what the classical commentary perceives in physical terms of sea-depth physicality as a symbol of ignorance contemporary scholarship re-reads as allegorical: a spiritual condition of internal darkness (Sardar, 1989; Mir, 1986). This difference highlights a more general exegetical disjunction: literalists anchor verses to external reality and historical context, whereas modernists emphasize internal meanings and thematic echo. Through the symbolic interpretation, maritime imagery can be related to the general anxiety, reflection, and transformation of human experience, which makes Quran adaptive text capable of modification depending on the context.

Considered together, these comparative observations demonstrate that the sea-related Quranic verses are a center of interest in the context of general exegetical developments. The traditions of tafsīr that have been classical are strong in terms of maintaining linguistic accuracy, historical orientation, and the autobiographical account of the prophet, but they are enriched in modern times by a sophisticated symbolism, moral application, and a coherence of theme. Both streams are used today by scholars who attempt to create a new integrated approach to tafsir that would entail both literal truthfulness and metaphorical richness to help solve spiritual, ethical, and environmental issues of the modern world. The

ocean then, is more than a natural phenomenon it is a theological canvas: a place where God, man and the universe meet and where the meaning of life is defined.

### Intersections with Modern Science and Environmental Thought

Modern scientific discoveries in oceanography have uncovered several phenomena that correspond remarkably with Qur'anic references to the sea, supporting the view that the Qur'ān invites both spiritual reflection and empirical inquiry. One such verse states:

﴿مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ ﴿١٩﴾ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ﴾

*"He released the two seas, meeting [side by side]; between them is a barrier they do not transgress"* (Qur'ān 55:19-20). Contemporary marine science has confirmed that estuarine systems, such as where fresh and saltwater meet, exhibit distinct temperature, salinity, and density gradients, creating a boundary *barzakh* that limits mixing, just as the Quran describes. Oceanographers have studied this phenomenon in regions like the Strait of Gibraltar and estuaries globally, recognizing a natural thermohaline barrier (Pickard & Emery, 1990). Similarly, the verse:

﴿أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ جُمِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ﴾

*"[Or their deeds] are like darkness in a vast deep sea, covered by waves, upon which are waves, above which are clouds"* (Qur'ān 24:40). As interpreted by some commentators and scholars of science and religion as aligning with oceanic conditions at great depths, where sunlight does not penetrate, and internal waves occur beneath surface turbulence (Nasr, 2002). While the Qur'ān is not a science textbook, its verses reflect a profound harmony with natural law that invites modern scientific exploration without undermining its spiritual authority.

The Qur'ān also articulates a robust ethic of stewardship, especially concerning marine resources. It teaches that nature is a divine trust (*amānah*) given to humankind, not for exploitation but for ethical interaction. One verse emphasizes:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا﴾

*"He it is who subjected the sea to you... and from it you extract ornaments which you wear"* (Qur'ān 16:14). The idea of taskhir God placing nature under the control of man is not a to-go-as-you-please rule and it is a stewardship to act as a khalifah (vicegerent) on earth (Quran 2:30). This involves the preservation of the balance (*mizān*) that God has prescribed in the universe (Quran 55:7-8). In the history of Islamic jurisprudence, rights to marine animals were acknowledged and pollution against the water was discouraged (Foltz, 2003). Contemporary Muslim thinkers like Kamali (2010) believe that the Quran requires anthropocentric usage to be changed to the concept حفظ البيعة (preservation of the environment). Therefore, the over-fishing, destruction of the coral reefs and pollution of the seas are not only ecological issues but the transgression of the divine limits that threaten the trust put in the care of humanity. Amidst an increasing number of environmental crises, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and biodiversity, there is a new push to apply Quranic ethics to environmental thinking. The Quranic guidance does not only give abstract values, but it presents a view of the world in which nature, the sea being part of it, can be regarded as an array of divine disclosures and a divine charge. As the Quran states:

﴿سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

*"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves"* (Qur'ān 41:53). According to this verse, external nature and human conscience may be the ways of divine revelation. The assimilation of such instruction into the modern ecological activities entails the rekindling of an Islamic cosmology where respect of the creation cannot be separated with respect of the



Creator. Scholars such as Sardar (1989) and Denny (1998) argue that education about the environment should take the form of eco-theological education that teaches Muslims to perceive the environment in religious terms. Such a combination in practice can consist of environmentally sustainable fisheries guided by fiqh, advocacy of policy based on Islamic teachings, and of curriculum that bridges Quran passages with scientific evidence and environmental justice. Through integrating the ecological science with the scriptural morals, the Quran is transformed into not only a guide but a means of environmental change through divine duty.

### Conclusion

In the Quran, the sea becomes a multidimensional motif which goes beyond the literal meaning to a theological, symbolic, ethical and existential context. A thematic exegesis of the Quran materials has proved that the sea descriptions by the Quran are not independent accounts of the nature but parts of a larger divine dialogue. The sea is used as analogy of the power and compassion of God, the analogy of human helplessness and the realm where the moral meaning is challenged and the spiritual discernment is aroused. The Sea is brought out as a source of livelihood, a means of exchange and even as the destination of divine provocation and intervention, which overrides the human pride and thrusts at submission to the Almighty in the Quran. Maritime imagery of waves, storms, and darkness is a symbolic language with the purpose to talk about the sophistication of human spiritual conflict and the way to God dependence. Historic accounts, such as those about Noah and Moses embed the sea into the moral aspect of revelation, in which salvation and destruction are found in the same medium of nature and the element of divine justice and mercy.

In addition, the Quranic Sea cannot be viewed only through theological and literary prism; there is a practical ethical aspect as well. The sea is portrayed as something we have been entrusted and must therefore respond in a responsible way. In a time of ecological destruction and global warming, Quranic doctrine of the sea can be a source of a new environmental ethic that makes the environmental ethic ontologically grounded on the concepts of reverence, balance, and accountability. This paper has demonstrated how different classical and contemporary schools of tafsīr of verses referring to the sea have been shaped by the literal historical approach to reading the Quran until the symbolic and ecological one currently addressing contemporary issues. Whereas classical interpreters focused on the linguistic accuracy and the prophetic speech, the contemporary interpreters have related Quranic themes with human psychology, environmental duties, and science. Such variety helps us to enhance our understanding and to see the resilience of the Qur'an. Ultimately the treatment of the sea in the Quran makes it necessary to the believers to meditate on themselves in the creation and obey the signs and the moral obligations that accompany the gifts of the Divine. The Quran gives wisdom, however, and not only theological, but also a system of worldview, where faith, reason and action are intertwined as a whole of the responsibility of life and planetary life.

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