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The Cosmology of Love in the Qur'an: A Taoist-Sufistic Reading of Cosmic Verses through Sachiko Murata

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Abstract

Purpose – This article aims to examine the cosmology of love in the thought of Sachiko Murata and to explore its application to Qur'anic cosmic verses concerning the sky, the earth, and rain. While studies on Qur'anic cosmology and Murata's intellectual contributions have expanded considerably, limited attention has been given to integrating her Taoist-Sufistic framework into the interpretation of cosmic verses. The study argues that love (*maḥabbah*) constitutes an ontological foundation that underlies the structure and harmony of the cosmos. **Design/methods/approach** – This research employs a qualitative library-based methodology. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources related to Qur'anic cosmology, Sachiko Murata's writings, Taoist philosophy, and Islamic mysticism, particularly Ibn Arabi's metaphysics. The analysis utilizes thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) combined with philosophical hermeneutics to uncover symbolic and relational meanings embedded in selected cosmic verses. **Findings** – The study reveals that the Qur'anic representation of the cosmos reflects a dynamic relational structure grounded in love. The sky symbolizes an active-transcendent principle, the earth embodies a receptive-immanent principle, and rain functions as a mediating element that animates their interaction. These cosmic relations illustrate *maḥabbah* as a unifying ontological force that sustains creation and cosmic order. **Research implications/limitations** – The study is limited to textual and philosophical analysis and does not incorporate empirical or ecological field data. Consequently, its conclusions are primarily interpretive and theoretical, providing a foundation for further interdisciplinary research on Qur'anic cosmology and environmental ethics. **Originality/value** – This article offers a novel integration of Murata's Taoist-Sufistic cosmology with Qur'anic studies and proposes a "cosmology of love" as a model of relational ontology. It contributes to Islamic ecological spirituality by reorienting the human-nature relationship from anthropocentrism toward relational cosmocentrism.

Keywords: Cosmology of love; Qur'anic cosmic verses; Sachiko Murata; Sufism; Taoism.

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Introduction

The Qur'an as the holy book of Muslims is not only the main source of religious teachings, but also the foundation for various intellectual and spiritual traditions in the history of Islamic civilization. Since the beginning, this sacred text has been read, interpreted, and interpreted to answer the evolving needs of humans, both in the dimensions of faith, moral, social, and cosmology. Therefore, the study of the Qur'an always gives birth to new perspectives according to the challenges of the times, including in interpreting verses that speak about the relationship between humans and the universe.

Within that framework, the Qur'an presents many cosmic signals that direct humans to read the signs of Allah's greatness in the universe. The sky, earth, rain, day, and night are not only displayed as physical reality, but also as metaphysical symbols that hold profound spiritual messages. This cosmic symbolism is one of the important entrances to understanding how the Qur'an builds a bridge between everyday human experience and the awareness of God's presence.

The cosmic verses in the Qur'an that talk about the sky, earth, rain, or other natural phenomena are generally interpreted in two main patterns. First, theologically, it is understood as a sign of the power and greatness of Allah (*āyāt kauniyyah*) which serves to strengthen human faith. Classical commentaries such as al-Ṭ abarī and al-Rāzī often emphasize this aspect by interpreting cosmic phenomena as evidence of God's *qudrah* (omnipotence) and *ḥikmah* (wisdom) in creating and governing the universe. For example, in interpreting QS. al-Rūm: 48 "Allah sends the wind and moves the clouds and spreads them in the sky according to His will, and makes them clumpy, so you see rain coming out of its gaps", al-Ṭ abarī affirms that this process is a tangible proof of Allah's power to bring people back to life on the Day of Resurrection, just as He sends rain to revive the dead earth [1]. Al-Rāzī in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* adds that rain is not just a meteorological phenomenon, but a sign of God's *rubūbiyyah* (maintenance), because from the rain are born various forms of life that show the perfection of the divine order [2]. Thus, theological interpretations place rain, sky, and earth as rational and spiritual arguments that strengthen man's belief in the Creator's existence and power.

Second, scientifically, especially in modern and contemporary interpretations, where cosmic verses are often positioned in harmony with scientific findings, for example about the process of rain, the water cycle, or the theory of the origin of the universe. This pattern is evident in commentators such as *al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by Ṭ antāwī Jawharī, who seek to prove the relevance of the Qur'an to modern science. In interpreting QS. al-Mu'minūn:

18 "And We sent down water from the sky according to a certain measure, and We made it dwell on the earth, and indeed We have the power to remove it", Ṭantāwī attributes it to the theory of hydrological cycles, that rainwater comes from the evaporation of seawater, is carried away by the wind, then condenses into clouds and comes down again as rain [3]. He also interprets QS. al-Anbiyā': 30 "And from water We made all living things" referring to the findings of modern biology that affirm that water is the main element of life, from plant cells to the most complex organisms [3]. In fact, in talking about QS. al-Dhāriyāt: 47 "And the heavens We built with power, and indeed We enlarged them", Ṭantāwī interprets it in harmony with the theory of expanding universe initiated by 20th-century cosmological scientists [3]. Thus, the scientific style in modern interpretation emphasizes the correspondence of the Qur'an with science, making the sacred text a book that contains scientific cues that can only be understood as human knowledge develops.

Thus, there is a need to go beyond the mere proof-oriented horizon of interpretation, towards a more poetic and symbolic approach in capturing the depth of the cosmic meaning of the Qur'an. A number of contemporary scholars have tried to read the cosmic symbolism in the Qur'an with a philosophical and cross-tradition approach. This is in line with the development of modern hermeneutics that makes room for symbolic, metaphorical, and spiritual readings of religious texts, not just literal or purely formal-law [4]. One of the prominent figures in this approach is Sachiko Murata through his work *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relations in Islamic Thought*. Murata draws on the conceptual tools of Taoism – particularly the idea of cosmic harmony of Yin and Yang – to deepen understanding of Islamic sufistic cosmology [5].

In the framework of Sachiko Murata's reading, the relationship between heaven and earth as presented in the Qur'an is not enough to be read as a cosmological account or merely a natural phenomenon; but rather as a personal-cosmic relationship that is rahmānī and erotic-sufistic – a "pairing" that resembles the dynamics of conjugal love, in which the sky acts as the principle of giving (active, transcendent) and the earth as the principle of receiving (receptive, imanen) [5]. Murata draws on Daoist (yin-yang) categories to explain how this polarity is not antagonistic but complementary; The rain that falls is seen not merely as a hydro-meteorological process but as a manifestation of cosmic affection that nourishes and animates – a symbolic language that is in harmony with the Sufism tradition that considers water and rain to be symbols of grace, love, and rebirth (البعث) [6]. This kind of interpretive principle finds support in classical Sufistic treasures, where mystics (e.g. Ibn al-ʿArabī, Rūmī) reads creation as signs of Divine love and makes the rain/water metaphor the key to interpreting the relationship between the Giver and the receiver of existence [7].

[8] Thus, Murata's approach opens up the possibility of integrative interpretation; tying the textual reading of the Qur'an with Sufistic tradition and cross-cultural wisdom to uncover the meaning of rain as a theologically, morally, and ecologically productive "language of love."

This perspective opens up a new space in the study of interpretation, namely how the Qur'anic verses about the cosmos can be understood through *a cosmological framework of love* that brings together sacred texts, sufistic traditions, and cross-cultural wisdom. Thus, the cosmological interpretation of love seeks to capture the relational dynamics of the cosmos in the Qur'an that are inseparable from human ethical and spiritual experience; Rain is understood as a symbol of love that sustains and renews, while the alternation of day and night is read not only as a marker of time, but as a rhythm of cosmic balance that invites humans to reflect on the interconnectedness of all beings. This approach not only enriches the map of Islamic hermeneutics, but also opens up the possibility of transnational and cross-tradition dialogue, in which the understanding of the cosmos as *a network of love* becomes a bridge between the spiritual vision of Islam and the cosmological wisdom in other traditions, such as Taoist philosophy and universal mysticism.

In line with the above explanation, it is necessary to analyze the verses of the Qur'an with the Taoist-Sufistic Murata approach to uncover the symbolic dimension that rarely receives attention in the pattern of theological and scientific interpretation. With this framework, the sky, the earth, and rain are understood as metaphorical language that reveals the dynamics of cosmic love between the transcendent (sky) and immanent (earth) principles. This approach is also in line with modern hermeneutics that opens up space for symbolic and intertextual readings, thus allowing for creative dialogue between Qur'anic texts, sufistic cosmology, and Taoist categories such as yin–yang. Thus, this research seeks to present the cosmology of love as an alternative offer in understanding the cosmic verses of the Qur'an.

The study of the cosmic verses in the Qur'an has so far been largely done with two main tendencies. First, the theological pattern, as seen in the classical commentaries of al-Ṭabarī and al-Rāzī, which emphasizes natural phenomena as evidence of God's power and wisdom. Second, the scientific pattern, which develops in modern commentaries such as Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī through *al-Jawāhir*, in which cosmic verses are interpreted in line with the findings of modern science. Contemporary studies that emphasize aspects of sufistic symbolism have also been carried out by several thinkers, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the study of Islamic cosmology. In addition to these traditions, several studies have also examined Sachiko Murata's thought in the context of cosmology and dialogue across traditions. For example, Nurlita and Al-Walid discuss Murata's

perspective on Islamic cosmology, particularly the use of the concept of yin–yang to understand cosmic relations in *The Tao of Islam*, including its proximity to the loving and majestic names of Allah [9]. This study of Nurlita and al-Walid shows how Murata translated cosmic symbols within the metaphysical framework of Islam and Taoism, especially through the use of the concept of yin–yang as a conceptual device for reading cosmic relations in *The Tao of Islam*. In recent developments, the study of the cosmology of the Qur'an tends to move towards integration with modern science, both in the form of scientific interpretation and epistemological reconstruction based on contemporary cosmology. Some recent studies emphasize the relationship between cosmic verses and modern astrophysical findings as well as attempts at synthesis between revelation, science, and philosophy [10], while others have criticized reductionist tendencies in scientific interpretations that have the potential to narrow the symbolic meaning of the Qur'an [11]. In addition, recent literature mapping shows that the study of cosmic verses is still dominated by scientific and descriptive approaches, particularly in the context of astronomy and astronomy cosmology [12], [13].

On the other hand, studies departing from symbolic and cross-tradition approaches, including those inspired by the thought of Sachiko Murata, tend to be limited to conceptual mapping and tracing of metaphysical equivalence between traditions. Some studies have highlighted the use of the concept of yin–yang in reading cosmic relations in the framework of Taoism and Sufism, but have not directly applied it in the analysis of the cosmic verses of the Qur'an. Similarly, the studies in *Inklusiva: Journal of Religious Studies* [14] and the *Scientific Journal of Ushuluddin Sciences* [15] place Murata's thought more in the context of gender relations and cosmic harmony, rather than in a specific reading of natural verses. Meanwhile, various studies on the cosmology of the Qur'an such as "A Novel Approach to the Comparative Study of the End Times in the Quran and Modern Cosmology" [16], "Physics, Metaphysics and Cosmology in the light of Holy Quran" [17], about rainwater in the Qur'an "Rainwater Perspective of the Qur'an: Analysis of the Interpretation of the Interpretation of the Ministry of Religion's Scientific Interpretation" [18], "The Verses of Rain in the Perspective of Wahbah Az-Zuhaili" [19], "Rain in the Perspective of the Qur'an Surah Al-Anfal Verse 11: An Analysis of the Tafsir of Tahlili of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia" [20], "The Creation of Heaven and Earth in Q.S. Al-Anbiya' [21] Verse 30: Study of Ma'nā cum Maghzā," [21], "The Concept of Separation of Heaven and Earth (An Analytical Study of Fakhruddin Ar-Razi's Interpretation of Mafatih Al-Ghaib on Q.S Al-Anbiya' Verse 30)" [22] – whether related to the creation of heaven and earth, the phenomenon of rain, or the relationship of the cosmos – generally still operates within the framework of theological, scientific, or thematic analysis that is descriptive. This research goes

further by directly applying the Taoist-Sufistic Murata framework in the reading of Qur'anic verses about the sky, earth, and rain, in order to reveal the relational structure of the cosmos as *a cosmology of love* that has contemporary spiritual, ethical, and ecological implications.

Departing from this gap, this research seeks to fill the gap between theological, scientific, and sufistic interpretations by presenting an intertextual perspective that combines the treasures of Islam and the wisdom of Taoism within the framework of the cosmology of love. In this context, the novelty of this research lies in two main aspects. First, methodologically, this research does not stop at the conceptual mapping of Murata's thought, but directly applies the Taoistic-Sufistic framework in the reading of the cosmic verses of the Qur'an through thematic interpretation and philosophical hermeneutics approaches. Second, theoretically, this study develops the concept of *the cosmology of love* as a model of relational ontology for reading the structure of the cosmos in the Qur'an, which has not been explicitly formulated in previous studies.

In the contemporary global context, the study of the cosmology of the Qur'an cannot be separated from the increasingly worrying ecological crises, such as climate change, environmental degradation, and the exploitation of natural resources. The discourse on *sustainability* encourages the need for a new paradigm in understanding the relationship between humans and nature, no longer based solely on anthropocentric dominance, but on ethical and spiritual relationships. In this context, the cosmological reading of the Qur'an through a relational framework—such as that offered by Sachiko Murata—becomes relevant as an effort to present an alternative perspective that places nature as part of a network of living and meaningful cosmic meanings. Thus, this research not only expands the study of Qur'anic cosmology, but also offers a conceptual contribution to the development of Islamic ecological spirituality, by opening new horizons in understanding human-nature relations as part of a relational network of cosmic meanings.

Method

The research method in this study is qualitative with a thematic interpretation approach (*maudhu'y*). The main primary source is the Qur'an itself, specifically the cosmic verses that talk about the relationship between heaven, earth, rain, and other natural phenomena.

To trace how these verses have been understood throughout history, this study also refers to a number of authoritative interpretive works. Among them are *al-Ṭabarī's Jāmi' al-Bayān* which represents a classical style of interpretation with an emphasis on theological and historical aspects, as well as *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Qur'ā ṭubī which presents an approach to legal interpretation

with a strong attention to the normative dimension and practical implications of the verses the Qur'an, including the recitation of cosmic verses; *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Mafātīḥ* al-Ghayb which places great emphasis on rational arguments and evidence of Allah's power; and Ṭaṭṭ ṭāwī Jawharī which attempts to connect cosmic verses with the discoveries of modern science. These three interpretations are important primary sources for mapping the dominant pattern of interpretation, both theological and scientific.

In addition, this study places Sachiko Murata's works as conceptual primary sources, notably *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*, and *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light*, as well as several of his academic articles that discuss symbolic cosmology and cross-tradition approaches. Murata's works became the main guide in reading the cosmic verses of the Qur'an through the Daoist-Sufistic framework, which emphasized the principle of love (*maḥabbah*) as the ontological and ethical foundation of cosmic relations.

Secondary sources include contemporary works on Qur'anic hermeneutics, the study of cosmology in the Islamic tradition, and the intertextual study between Islam and other traditions. For example, Nasr's writings on Islamic cosmology, Fazlur Rahman's research on hermeneutics, and studies on the relationship between Sufism and cosmic symbolism. These secondary sources are used to strengthen the framework of the analysis, provide historical and theoretical context, and place this research within the broader academic discourse.

Operationally, this research was carried out through several stages of systematic analysis. First, the identification and selection of verses, namely collecting cosmic verses that are thematically related to the sky, earth, and rain through a thematic interpretation approach. Second, symbolic classification, which is to group the cosmic elements in the verse into categories of relational symbols, such as the active-receptive, transcendent-immanent principles, and cosmic mediation. Third, comparative analysis of interpretation, which is comparing classical, theological, and scientific interpretations to see the spectrum of meanings that develop in the tradition of interpretation. Fourth, the hermeneutical-philosophical interpretation, which is to reread the verses through the Taoistic-Sufistic framework with reference to Murata's thought, in order to reveal the relational structure of the cosmos based on *maḥabbah*.

With the integration of primary and secondary sources and the stages of analysis, this study takes a philosophical and sufistic hermeneutic approach in reading cosmic verses. Analytically, this process moves in layers, namely: first, understanding literal meaning and conventional interpretation through comparative analysis of classical and modern sources of interpretation; second,

examining readings from a scientific perspective to identify descriptive-empirical tendencies; and third, to develop symbolic-relational interpretations through the Taoistic-Sufistic framework by emphasizing the principle of complementarity between heaven and earth.

Thus, this approach does not stop at theological or scientific proof, but moves towards a deeper reading in uncovering the structure of the cosmos as spiritually and philosophically meaningful relationships.

Result and Discussion

The Cosmology of Sachiko Love in the Perspective of Taoism and Sufism

Sachiko Murata is known as one of the leading scholars in the field of Islamic philosophy and cross-tradition studies who consistently pays attention to symbolic cosmology as the key to understanding religious reality. Murata's intellectual formation was formed through an academic journey that did not depart from the tradition of textual interpretation of the Qur'an directly, but through a serious deepening of Islamic metaphysics, especially the Sufism thought of Ibn 'Arabī and the tradition of philosophy of wisdom [5]. His interest in cosmology stemmed from the ontological question of how reality is understood and interpreted in the classical Islamic intellectual tradition, which viewed the universe not as a neutral material entity, but rather as a symbolic order that reflected the structure of Divine relationships [23].

Historically, Murata's direction of thought developed as he engaged in intense dialogue with Eastern philosophy, especially Taoism. In this cross-tradition encounter, Murata finds a symbolic equivalence between Islamic sufistic cosmology and Daoist principles such as *yin-yang* and *Dao*, both of which emphasize balance, relation, and cosmic dynamics [24]. This dialogue is not intended to equate Islam and Taoism, but rather to provide a comparative conceptual language that can re-reveal the cosmological dimensions of Islamic thought that are often marginalized in rationalistic and positivistic modern readings [25].

Through this historical trajectory of thought, Murata places himself in the ranks of scholars who seek to revitalize classical cosmology as a structure of meaning and relations, rather than as an ahistorical metaphysical speculation. The cosmos, in Murata's reading, is a space of meaning, a space of meaning, where active and receptive, transcendent and immanent principles, as well as divine beauty and majesty, intertwine. This cross-tradition approach allowed Murata to develop a cosmological framework of love, in which love was understood as an ontological principle that connects all levels of existence and

forms the basis of cosmic order, as well as an implicit critique of modern scientific reductions to natural reality [26], [5].

In Murata's frame of thought, love (*love* or *mahabbah*) is not understood as an individual psychological emotion, but rather as an ontological principle underlying the existence of the cosmos. Love serves as a force that enables the relationship between God and creation, as well as a cause of order and continuity of reality. This understanding is deeply rooted in the Sufistic tradition of Islam, which sees love as the origin of creation and the driving motor of all manifestations of existence [27]. Whereas the Cosmos, in this perspective, is understood as a manifestation of love that is structured and meaningful. Each cosmic element is present not randomly, but occupies a certain position in a network of complementary relationships. Love is the connecting force between the transcendent and immanent dimensions, between active and receptive principles, and between the masculine and the feminine in the symbolic-metaphysical sense [28]. Thus, differences in the cosmos are not interpreted as conflicts, but rather as expressions of relational diversity that allow for harmony [5], [29].

This kind of relational framework finds its symbolic equivalent in Taoism which provides an important symbolic foundation in the cosmology of love as developed by Sachiko Murata, especially through the concept of *yin-yang* as the basic structure of reality. In Murata's reading, *yin* and *yang* are not understood as two principles that negate each other or face each other in conflict, but rather as cosmic pairs that complement each other and move in dynamic reciprocal relationships. Each principle contains the potential of the other principle, so that existence is never singular, closed, or static [30]. This understanding allows Murata to read the cosmos as a living relational process, in which meaning is born from connection, not from the dominance of one element over another.

Drawing on the symbolism of Taoism, Murata underlined that the order of the cosmos is not mechanistic or coercive, but rather arises from a balance of relationships that are constantly moving and adapting. The *yin-yang relationship* reflects the way the cosmos works through the rhythms of receiving and giving, silence and movement, and potential and actualization. This perspective reinforces the idea that the cosmos, in Murata's cosmology of love, is a dynamic field of relations that is constantly lived by the principles of balance and connectedness, rather than just a collection of independent entities.

This dynamic and interconnected understanding of the cosmos is rooted in the metaphysical foundations of Islamic Sufism, in particular Ibn 'Arabi's thought on the concept of *tajalli* or divine manifestation as an ontological principle of reality. In Ibn 'Arabi's thought, the existence of the cosmos is not

understood as something that stands autonomously outside God, but as a continuous process of the appearance of the Divine name and attributes at various levels of existence. The cosmos is the *field of tajallī*, where God "reveals Himself" in diverse, structured, and hierarchical forms, ranging from the spiritual to the material realm [31]. Thus, cosmic plurality does not negate the Divine oneness, but rather becomes a means for that oneness to be known and experienced in various forms.

Within this framework, love (*maḥabbah*) occupies a central position as the cause as well as the goal of creation. The Sufistic tradition to which Ibn 'Arabī refers asserts that creation is rooted in the Divine will to be known - a will that is loving, not a need or lack - Love being the driving force of *the tajallī*, allowing Divine attributes such as beauty (*jamāl*) and majesty (*jalāl*) to appear in a balanced and complementary relationship [8]. The cosmos, therefore, is not merely the result of arbitrary will, but an expression of Divine love articulated in a meaningful relational order.

Murata's synthesis utilizes Taoism as a conceptual tool and comparative symbolic language to explain the structure of Islamic sufistic cosmology in terms that emphasize cosmic relations, balance, and dynamics. Within this framework, Sufism remains the primary ontological source, while Taoism serves as a hermeneutical medium to clarify the symbolic structure of the cosmos [24]. The *yin-yang* relationship in Taoism is paralleled by Murata with the concept of *jamāl-jalāl* in Islamic Sufism as two symbolic ways of explaining the deepest structure of cosmic reality. *Yin* and *yang* represent the principles of acceptance and giving, gentleness and firmness, silence and movement, which acquire meaning only to the extent that they are present in unity. Similarly, *jamāl* (beauty) and *jalāl* (majesty) in Sufism are not understood as mutually negating divine attributes, but rather as two dimensions that together allow for the full knowledge of God [5]. In both traditions, equilibrium is not a static state, but a dynamic process that continues in reciprocal relationships.

On this basis, Murata emphatically rejects the modern rationalistic and scientific approach that reduces the cosmos to a mere material object subject to the laws of mechanistic causality. Such reduction, according to him, eliminates the symbolic, meaningful, and relational dimensions that are at the heart of the understanding of the cosmos in the classical religious tradition. By reading the cosmos through the lens of *yin-yang* and *jamāl-jalāl*, Murata reaffirms that reality cannot be understood in its entirety without acknowledging the role of love as the principle that unifies, organizes, and lives the entire cosmic order.

This affirmation of love as the unifying principle of the cosmos has direct implications for the way Murata understands the order and disruption in the

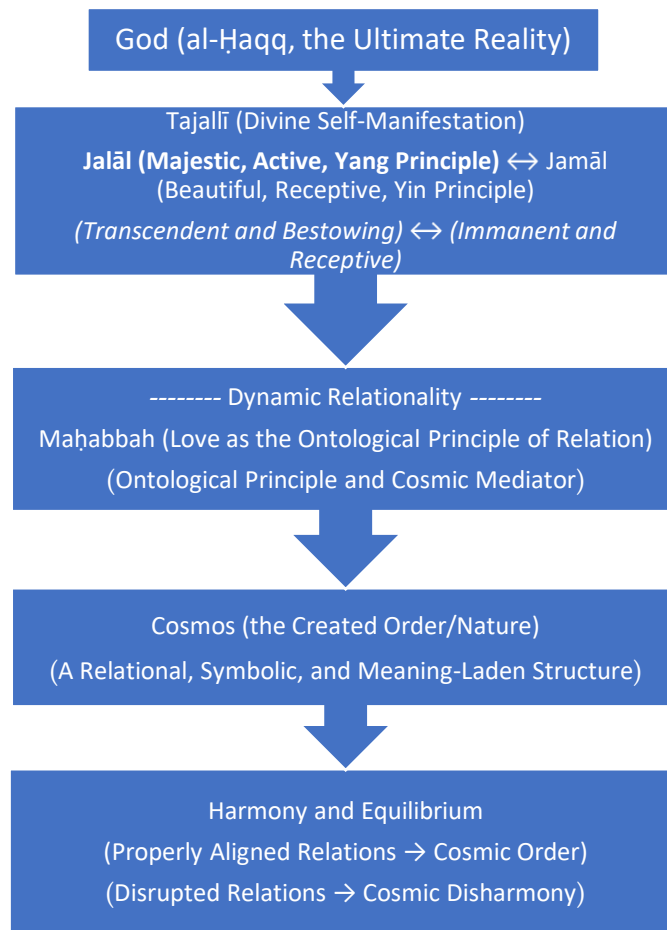
cosmic order. Imbalances in the cosmos are not understood as structural failures, but rather as relational disruptions. In other words, cosmic problems arise when the relationship between the elements does not go in harmony with the underlying principle of love. This perspective emphasizes that the order of the cosmos depends on the quality of relationships, not solely on mechanistic laws [26].

Love, in Murata's cosmology, is not the source of chaos, but rather the principle of cosmic order. Harmony arises from the balance of relationships between different but complementary principles. Life is understood as the fruit of a dynamic encounter between cosmic elements that move in the rhythm of love. Thus, the cosmos is not only a space of existence, but also an expression of meaning that lives and continues to evolve [5].

Based on this description, the cosmology of love in Sachiko Murata's thought can be formulated as a model of relational ontology that places love (*maḥabbah*) as the connecting principle of the entire structure of reality. In this model, the cosmos is understood as a network of dynamic relations between the active–receptive principle (which in Taoism is represented through yin–yang and in Sufism through *jamāl–jalāl*), which is constantly moving in the process of Divine manifestation (*tajallī*) as described by Ibn Arabi. Thus, the order of the cosmos does not originate from causal mechanisms alone, but from the quality of relationships based on love as an ontological principle. This model also affirms that cosmic reality is dynamic, symbolic, and interconnected, where harmony arises from relational equilibrium, not from the dominance of one principle over another.

The following is the structure of the conceptual diagram of the relational ontology model in Sachiko Murata's thought:

Picture 1: Schematic Diagram of the Relation Ontology Model of Sachiko Murata's Cosmology of Love



Source: Developed by the Author based on Sachiko Murata's Cosmology of Love.

Mapping Qur'anic Cosmic Verses: Heaven, Earth and Rain

Cosmic verses occupy a very significant position in the structure of the Qur'an and are widespread in both the Makkiyah and Madaniyah surahs. Themes such as heaven and earth, rain, the circulation of night and day, and the process of creation are repeatedly presented as an integral part of the call to monotheism and human existential reflection. In classical commentary, al-Ṭabari asserts that the mention of cosmic phenomena is aimed at directing human reason and consciousness to the recognition of the oneness and power of God, not to explain the structure of nature technically [1]. The Qur'an ṭabi also emphasizes that cosmic verses function as *dalā'il* (evidences) that awaken the consciousness of faith through contemplation of the order and harmony of creation [32]. This view is in line with Fazlur Rahman, who asserts that cosmic verses shape human moral and spiritual consciousness by placing nature as a

medium of relations between God and man, rather than merely an object of empirical observation [33]. Thus, the presence of cosmic verses in the Qur'an must be understood as part of the discursive strategy of revelation to build a reflective monotheistic consciousness, in which the cosmos serves as a field of divine signs that invite reading, contemplation, and appreciation of meaning.

In the Qur'an, the heavens (*al-samā'*) represent the dimensions of transcendence, order, and divine law that govern the entire cosmos. The mention of the heavens is almost always associated with an affirmation of God's power and wisdom, as it is stated that "*He created the seven heavens in layers; you will not see in the creation of the Most Merciful God anything unbalanced*" (QS. al-Mulk: 3). This verse shows that the sky is not understood as a mere physical space, but as a sign (*āyah*) that directs human consciousness to the order and perfection of the divine will. In another verse it is affirmed, "*And We built the heavens with (Our) power, and indeed We have indeed enlarged them*" (QS. al-Dhāriyāt: 47), which is understood by the mufasir as an affirmation of God's creation and maintenance of the cosmos. Al-Ṭ abarī interprets the verses about the creation of the heavens as an affirmation of the order and harmony of creation that is completely subject to the will of God, as well as an invitation for man to contemplate the signs of His power through the cosmos [1].

The understanding of the order of creation as emphasized by al-Ṭ abarī then gained conceptual deepening through the Qur'an's discussion of the layered structure of the heavens. The concept of the seven heavens (*sab' samāwāt*) reinforces this symbolic understanding. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī asserts that the mention of the layering of the heavens in the Qur'an is not intended to provide a technical astronomical description, but rather to direct the human mind to an understanding of the stratified and layered cosmic order. In *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, al-Rāzī explains that such layered structures indicate the existence of a hierarchy of existence (*marātib al-wujūd*), in which each level has a specific function and position in the overall order of creation [2]. This emphasis shifts the reader's attention from the search for the physical details of the sky to an ontological reflection on the divine order and wisdom that underlies the cosmos. This kind of symbolic interpretation is in line with Ibn Kathīr's approach, who views the concept of the seven heavens as a marker of the perfection of creation and the order of divine law (*sunnat Allāh*) that operates consistently in the universe [34]. Ibn Kathīr emphasizes that the layering of the heavens indicates the absence of chaos in creation, but rather the continuation of God's will that governs the cosmos with a certain size and balance. Thus, the concept of the seven heavens in the Qur'an affirms that cosmic reality is understood as an orderly, meaningful, and fully subject structure to the divine order, thus encouraging man to see the

cosmos not as a random reality, but as a system of signs that contain profound ontological and theological meaning.

The symbolic understanding of the heavens was then deepened in the Islamic philosophical and cosmological traditions through a dialogue between revelation, ratio, and metaphysical intuition. In this framework, the sky is not only understood as part of the structure of nature, but as a symbol of the higher level of reality that overshadows the material world. Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains that the sky serves as a symbol of intellectual and spiritual principles that connect metaphysical reality with the sensory world, so that the cosmos is understood as a layered and meaningful order [35]. The Qur'an itself affirms this dimension through the statement that "*We did not create anything except in a certain measure (qadar)*" (Qur'an. al-Qamar: 49), and that everything was sent down from the sky according to the stipulations (Qur'an. al-Ḥijr: 21). These verses show that the heavens are understood as a space of cosmic law-fixing, size, and balance, not just a physical expanse.

Thus, the sky not only represents a transcendence far from human life, but also becomes a source of order that allows the continuity and harmony of life in the material world. Through the symbolism of the heavens, the Qur'an and the intellectual tradition of Islam affirm the interconnectedness between the metaphysical and the sensory in a whole and meaningful cosmic order.

The earth (*al-ard*) in the Qur'an appears as a receptive space that supports life, fertility, and the sustainability of the existence of creatures. The Qur'an describes the earth as a reality that *is spread out and prepared*, as affirmed in the statement, "*And the earth We spread, We placed on it solid mountains, and We made everything grow in it according to its measure*" (QS. al-Ḥijr: 19). In the tafsir al-Ṭabari, the spread of the earth (*madadnāhā*) is understood as a form of divine ease and grace so that the earth can sustain the lives of humans and other creatures in a balanced [1]. Thus, the earth is not positioned as purely passive matter, but rather as an active part of a cosmic order designed to a certain size and purpose.

The dimension of balance and suitability of the earth is also emphasized by classical mufasir. The Qur'an ṭabī interprets the verses about the earth as affirming that the structure and function of the earth are in accordance with precise divine provisions, thus allowing the continuation of life [32]. Ibn Kathir added that the provision of the earth as a dwelling place for man has moral implications, since man lives in a system of creation that has been harmoniously arranged and was not created to be corrupted [34]. This perspective shows that the earth is not just a geographical setting, but a space of trust that contains ethical demands.

In a symbolic framework, the earth represents the principle of acceptance, openness, and actualization of the divine will in concrete form. If the sky is often associated with gifts and decrees, then the earth appears as a receiving space that allows these decrees to be transformed into real life. This symbolic pattern is seen in the verses about the encounter of heaven and earth through rain, where the earth is described as "coming back to life" after previously dying (QS. al-Rūm: 24). This relationship shows that fertility and life are born of cosmic connectedness, not of a single, stand-alone principle.

The ethical understanding of the earth is strongly affirmed by Fazlur Rahman, who emphasizes that the relationship between man and the earth in the Qur'an is trustworthy, not domination. According to Rahman, the concept of the caliph does not give legitimacy to the exploitation of nature, but rather demands moral responsibility to maintain the balance of creation [33]. Contemporary commentaries such as *M. Quraish Shihab's Tafsīr al-Mishbāḥ* also affirm that the earth should be treated as a partner in life, as it is part of a system of divine signs that contain value and purpose [36]. Thus, the cosmic pairing of heaven and earth in the Qur'an forms a relational structure that requires and complements each other. The sky is meaningless without the receiving earth, and the earth does not live without the order that is descended from the heavens. This relationship does not reflect the opposition of the conflict between top and bottom, but rather the cosmic reciprocity that sustains the order, life, and sustainability of meaning in the order of creation.

Rain occupies a very important symbolic position in the Qur'an as a mediator between heaven and earth. It almost always appears in a relational context; something that *comes* down from above and *is accepted* by the earth to live, grow, and organize life. The Qur'an affirms, "*It is He who sends down water from the sky, and with that water We bring forth all kinds of vegetation*" (QS. Ṭāhā: 53). Thus, rain is not understood as a neutral natural phenomenon, but rather as part of a divine mechanism that connects the two cosmic realms.

The function of rain as a means of livelihood is explicitly affirmed in many verses of the Qur'an, especially through the metaphor of "*reviving the dead earth*" as mentioned in QS. al-Rūm: 24 and Fuṣṣilat: 39. This metaphor not only describes ecological processes, but also contains a strong theological and eschatological dimension. Al-Ṭabarī interprets these verses as an affirmation of Allah's absolute *qudrah* in bringing life out of seemingly impossible conditions, as well as as a rational postulate (*hujjah 'aqliyyah*) for the resurrection of man after death [1]. According to him, just as a dry and dead earth can come back to life with the rain, so will man be resurrected by the will of Allah on the last day.

A similar interpretation is also found in the commentary of Ibn Kathīr, who asserts that the repetition of the image of the resurrected dead earth aims to inculcate eschatological beliefs in a concrete and easily understood manner by the human mind [34]. Ibn Kathīr emphasizes that the Qur'an uses empirical experience – witnessed directly by humans – as a bridge to understand the supernatural reality of the resurrection. Thus, rain serves as a divine pedagogical medium that connects sensory experience with faith conviction. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī expands the meaning of these verses by highlighting their argumentative dimension. In *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, he explains that the life that emerges from the dead earth through rain shows a cause-and-effect order that is completely under God's control [2]. The relationship between rain and life does not stand as an autonomous law of nature, but rather as a repeatable and measurable manifestation of the divine will. Therefore, the resurrection of man cannot be considered impossible, because he is in the same cosmic pattern as the process of life in nature.

Thus, rain in the verses of the Qur'an serves as a cosmic sign (*āyah kauniyyah*) that bridges empirical reality and eschatological beliefs. He taught that life, renewal, and resurrection are not separate events, but part of one consistent and meaningful divine order. Through the symbol of rain, the Qur'an directs human consciousness to read nature as an open text that contains messages about the origin, purpose, and end of life.

The cosmic verses in the Qur'an are almost always presented in the form of relationships and processes, rather than as descriptions of independent and separate entities. Heaven, earth, water, light, plants, and human life appear in interconnected narratives, often in a series of verses that affirm the interconnectedness of cause, function, and purpose. For example, rain is not understood to be a part of the heavens as its origin and the earth as its receiver, just as human life is not detached from the cosmic rhythms of day and night. This pattern shows that the cosmos in the Qur'an is built as an interdependent system, where each element acquires its meaning through relationships with other elements.

This relational approach is also evident in the Qur'an's emphasis on balance (*mīzān*) and dependence between cosmic elements. The verses about creation often end with the affirmation that everything is created "in measure" (*bi qadar*) and does not go beyond its own limits (QS. al-Qamar: 49; QS. al-Raḥmān: 7-9). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī interprets this concept as a sign that the order of the cosmos is not a coincidence, but is born from the harmony of the relationships between the elements established by the divine will. Thus, the relational pattern in the cosmic description of the Qur'an shows that the universe is understood as a living and dynamic field of connection. The cosmos is not a collection of neutral

passive objects, but a network of relationships that are full of theological and existential meaning. This perspective leads humans to read nature as a system of signs that refer to each other, where the understanding of one element always demands awareness of other elements that surround it.

The Cosmology of Love in Murata's Taoist-Sufistic Perspective

The Daoist-Sufistic symbolic analysis of the cosmic verses in the Qur'an occupies a different methodological position from the tradition of *riwāyah* and classical *dirāyah* interpretation. This approach does not aim to trace the causes of the descent of verses, differences in *qirā'āt*, or the legal debates inherent in the text, but rather focuses on the reading of the cosmic and symbolic meanings contained in the language structure and natural imagery of the Qur'an. Thus, this analysis moves on the realm of philosophy and religious cosmology, not on historical reconstruction or juridical argumentation.

Within this framework, cosmic verses are understood as symbolic expressions of deeper ontological reality. Symbols are not used just to embellish expressions, but as a language of meaning that connects the sensory world with metaphysical reality. This kind of symbolic-philosophical approach is in line with the thought of Sachiko Murata, who asserts that the cosmos in the Qur'anic perspective should be understood as "*a web of meanings rather than a collection of things*," i.e. a network of meanings and relationships, not a collection of material objects that stand alone [5]. The cosmos is understood as a structure of meaning and relationships, in which the sky, earth, and rain serve as markers of ontological principles such as giving and receiving, order and renewal, and transcendence and immanence. In this way, the Qur'an is read as a cosmological text that articulates the relationship of reality, not simply as a description of natural phenomena.

This methodological position at the same time affirms the critical distance of two extreme tendencies in the reading of cosmic verses: literalistic and scientific-reductionistic. The literalist approach tends to limit meaning to the descriptive aspect of the text, while the scientific approach forces the verses of the Qur'an to be read as scientific propositions that must be empirically verified. Daoist-Sufistic symbolic analysis rejects both reductions by placing cosmic verses as mediums of ontological and spiritual reflection, in which meaning emerges through the relationships, processes, and balances that the cosmos lives on. Thus, the methodological position of this analysis can be understood as an attempt to read the Qur'an through the lens of cosmological meaning, which combines the depth of Islamic metaphysics with symbolic wisdom across traditions. This approach is not intended to replace classical interpretation, but rather to broaden the horizon of understanding by revealing the cosmological

and relational dimensions of Qur'anic verses that are often overlooked in normative readings.

In Daoist–Sufistic symbolic analysis, the Qur'an is understood as a text of revelation that not only contains normative guidance and historical narratives, but also articulates a deep structure of cosmic meaning. Verses about the sky, the earth, the rain, and the rhythms of nature do not exist as physical descriptions of the universe, but rather as symbolic language that reveals the order, relationships, and purpose of creation. In this way, the Qur'an serves as a cosmological map that connects sensory reality with metaphysical principles, as well as directs human consciousness to read nature as a series of meaning-laden signs (*āyāt*). This kind of approach rejects the reduction of the Qur'an to a mere source of legal *code* or a chronicle of historical events. Although the normative and historical dimensions are an integral part of revelation.

It is within this framework that Sachiko Murata's intellectual position needs to be understood. Murata does not position himself as a normative mufassir who is in charge of determining the valid meaning of the verse or determining the legal implications of the text. Instead, he plays the role of a *reader of cosmological symbols*—a reader who seeks to uncover the patterns of cosmic meaning contained in the language of the Qur'an through dialogue with Islamic metaphysical traditions and cross-cultural symbolic wisdom. Murata himself asserts that his approach aims to read the Qur'an as "*a text that speaks in the language of cosmic symbols rather than technical doctrines* [5], that is, a text of revelation that articulates meaning through the symbolic structure of the universe, not through a purely systematic theological concept. Murata's focus lies on the relational structure and ontological principles expressed by cosmic symbols, rather than on textual interpretations in the classical sense.

In the Daoist–Sufistic symbolic perspective, the cosmic verses of the Qur'an are understood as the language of meaning that reveals the ontological structure of reality through the relationship between the elements of nature. The sky, earth, and rain are not presented as stand-alone physical entities, but rather as cosmic symbols that represent the basic principles that govern the order and dynamics of life. This symbolic mapping allows the reading of cosmic verses as expressions of active–receptive, transcendent–immanent, and giving–receiving relationships that are the foundation of the cosmic order.

The sky (*al-samā'*) in the verses of the Qur'an symbolizes the active, giving, and transcendent principles. It is often described as the source of the descent of commandments, provisions, and grace, which affirms its function as an initiator in the cosmic process. In the symbolic framework of Taoism, this function corresponds to *the principle that it is the active force that initiates motion and gives*

direction. In the Islamic Sufism tradition, the principle can be paralleled with the nature of *jalāl*, which represents the majesty, power, and determining aspects of Divine reality. Thus, the sky becomes a symbol of the dimension of reality that initiates and regulates, without having to be reduced to mere physical space.

On the contrary, the earth (*al-arḍ*) represents the principles of receptiveness, acceptance, and immanence. The Qur'an describes the earth as a space that is stretched, prepared, and turned on to sustain life, thus affirming its role as a medium of actualization. In Taoist symbolism, this character is in line with *the yin* principle, which is the receptive power that allows for growth and sustainability. In Islamic Sufism, the earth can be paralleled with *the nature of jamāl*, which signifies beauty, tenderness, and love that gives space for life to flourish. The Earth, thus, is not a passive element, but rather an essential component in the cosmic balance through its reception capacity. Sachiko Murata states that "*the heavens are consistently associated with activity, dominance, and giving, while the earth is associated with receptivity and acceptance*", so that the relationship between the two forms a repeating ontological pattern in the structure of the cosmos [5].

Rain occupies a symbolic position as a mediator that connects heaven and earth. It is a means of meeting between active and receptive principles, as well as between transcendent and immanent dimensions. In the verses of the Qur'an, rain is described as a blessing that gives life to the dead earth and fosters the diversity of life, thus showing the dynamics of cosmic relations in a concrete way. Within the cosmological framework of Murata love, rain reflects cosmic love as a force that flows, unifies, and sustains the entire order of reality, not as a subjective emotion, but as an ontological principle that allows relationships, balance, and life itself. He said that "*love is the invisible energy that brings the opposites together and allows the cosmos to display harmony rather than chaos*" [24].

Through this symbolic mapping, the cosmic verses of the Qur'an display the cosmos as a relational structure based on balance and integration. Heaven and earth are not positioned as oppositions of conflict, but rather as complementary symbolic pairs, while rain is an expression of encounter that actualizes life. Thus, the Daoist-Sufistic symbolic reading of the cosmic verses confirms that the cosmos in the Qur'an is understood as a network of living meanings, nourished by the principle of love that unites and governs the entire order of creation.

In the framework of symbolic cosmology, love (*maḥabbah*) is not understood solely as a subjective emotion, but rather as an ontological principle underlying existence itself. The Sufism tradition views that the form is present because of the encouragement of Divine love to appear and introduce Himself

[37]. Thus, love serves as a metaphysical cause that allows for relationships, differences, and diversity in the cosmos without negating the unity of its origin. Reality does not stand on mechanical forces, but rather on the dynamics of love that is constantly flowing. As an ontological principle, love also functions as a cosmic connecting force that establishes relationships between the elements of nature. In the cosmos of the Qur'an, there is no entity that is completely autonomous or independent of the other; Heaven, earth, rain, and life are interconnected through a pattern of giving and receiving. Love, in this sense, is a relational energy that allows the encounter between transcendence and immanence, between the giver and the receiving, so that life can continue to go on in harmony.

The cosmic verses of the Qur'an, in symbolic reading, can be understood as expressions of God's relationship of love with creation. The depiction of rain that gives life to the earth, the balance of the sky, and the order of nature serves not only as a description of natural phenomena, but as a symbolic language that reveals God's pattern of affection for His creatures. Nature becomes a space of revelation of love, where Divine grace is manifested in the form of order, fertility, and survival.

In this perspective, the order of nature is not the result of cosmic compulsion, but rather the fruit of a proportionally working balance of love. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes the concepts of measure (*qadar*), balance (*mīzān*), and harmony as the foundation of creation. That balance reflects the way love works; not excessive, does not negate the other, but maintains harmony between the elements. The cosmos thus appears as a living structure of love, in which diversity is maintained in unity, and change takes place in order. Sachiko Murata affirms that, love in metaphysical cosmology, is a principle that "regulates the relationship between opposites without destroying the difference between the two." He states that "*the balance of the cosmos is maintained through love, which allows opposites to remain distinct while working together in harmony* [5]. Thus, cosmic equilibrium is not born from the uniformity or dominance of one principle over another, but rather from the interconnectedness maintained by love as an ontological force.

Through this symbolic-philosophical reading, the cosmology of the Qur'an not only conveys a theological message about God's power over creation, but also offers an ethical and ontological vision of the world as a space of relationship based on love. The cosmic verses do not stop at the affirmation of monotheism in a doctrinal sense, but rather direct human consciousness to understand reality as a network of interconnected relationships, in which each element has a position, role, and meaning in the overall cosmic order. In this way,

the cosmos is understood not as a neutral object that is free to be exploited, but as a structure of meaning that is alive and morally meaningful.

Implications of Tafsir for Ecological Spirituality

The cosmological reading of love for the cosmic verses of the Qur'an does not stop at the conceptual and ontological level, but has far-reaching consequences for the way humans understand their position in the middle of the universe. It is in this context that the implications of interpretation on ecological spirituality and human-nature relations become relevant to be occupied. One of the most fundamental implications of this reading is the paradigm shift in human-nature relations [38]. This kind of interpretation shifts the anthropocentric perspective that places humans as the center and absolute ruler of creation towards relational cosmocentrism, in which humans are understood as one of the elements in an interconnected cosmic network. Seyyed Hossein Nasr sharply criticized the modern anthropocentric view that separates man from the cosmos and reduces nature to a mere object of exploitation. He stated that the contemporary ecological crisis is rooted in "*the loss of the sacred view of nature and the reduction of the natural world to a mere object for human use*" [39], [40].

This relational cosmocentrism rejects the logic of domination that is often legitimized through a textual reading that is reductive to the concept of caliphate. Rather, humans are positioned as part of a cosmic love structure that works through the relationship of giving and receiving, as illustrated in the symbolic relationship between heaven, earth, and rain. This consciousness places man not as a single subject who has the right to exploit nature, but as a participant who is responsible for maintaining the quality of cosmic relations so that it remains balanced and harmonious.

In this perspective, nature is no longer understood as a neutral and passive material object, but as a meaningful subject containing the signs (*āyāt*) of the Divine. The cosmic verses in the Qur'an consistently present nature as a medium of communication of meaning, directing human consciousness to God and the interconnectedness structure of creation. Thus, human interaction with nature has a spiritual and ethical dimension, since each cosmic element is understood as part of a symbolic language that contains meaning and purpose.

Understanding nature as *a carrier of signs* requires a change in human existential attitudes towards the environment [41]. The exploitation of the infinite nature is no longer theologically justifiable, for it means ignoring or undermining the network of signs that sustain monotheistic consciousness and cosmic order. Instead, the human-nature relationship is geared towards an attitude of respect, care, and responsibility, rooted in the realization that humans live in—not above—the same cosmic love structure. In this way, the cosmological

interpretation of love paves the way for the formation of an ecological spirituality based on relationships, not domination.

A similar view can be found in contemporary commentaries, Quraish Shihab in *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ* consistently emphasizes that nature is part of the Divine sign system that should be treated with respect. In interpreting the verses on the earth and balance (*mīzān*), he asserts that the destruction of the environment (*fasād*) is a violation of the order of God's will and reflects man's failure to read His signs correctly [36]. Thus, the human-nature relationship is directed towards an attitude of respect, care, and responsibility, which is based on a relational understanding of the position of man in the overall structure of the cosmos [42].

This kind of ethical awareness further finds a deepening of its meaning in the realm of spirituality. Ecological spirituality, within the framework of the cosmological interpretation of love, is not limited to individual ritual practices or mental experiences separate from the material world. In contrast, spirituality is understood as a relational consciousness that involves human connection to the entire cosmic order. The cosmic verses of the Qur'an consistently lead man to meditate on the sky, earth, rain, and life processes as part of the practice of spiritual awareness, so that the knowledge of God takes place not only in the hall of worship, but also in the daily encounter with the universe.

Reading nature as *āyāt kauniyyah* places the cosmos as a medium of appreciating monotheism. Natural phenomena are not presented as neutral objects or physical coincidences, but rather as signs that point to God's oneness, wisdom, and compassion. This perspective is in line with Sachiko Murata's view that the cosmos in the Qur'an is a "symbolic language" that reveals the structure of the relationship between Divine reality and creation. According to Murata, the universe is never spiritually mute, as each level of existence serves as a *sign* reflecting God's names and attributes [5]. Therefore, the neglect or destruction of nature is not only an ecological problem, but also reflects a spiritual failure to read and respond to sign language that connects man to Divine reality. Within this framework, Qur'anic spirituality is cosmic; it demands man's ability to grasp the Divine meaning manifested in the order, balance, and relations of the cosmos, as Murata affirms that understanding monotheism means understanding the network of relationships that unite God, man, and nature in a single structure of meaning [5].

In this perspective, ecology is understood as a space of spiritual praxis, not merely a technical or managerial issue. Maintaining the balance of nature, caring for the environment, and avoiding damage (*fasād*) are concrete expressions of the living monotheistic consciousness. Ecological action is no longer seen as an

external obligation imposed by regulation, but as an ethical consequence of man's spiritual connection to the cosmos. In this way, the human-nature relationship becomes an integral part of spiritual life, where ecological concern reflects the depth of religious consciousness.

Ecological spirituality born of the cosmology of love affirms that Divine love is not only experienced personally, but also lived in relation to all creation. This cosmic consciousness integrates theological, ethical, and ecological dimensions in a single horizon of meaning, so that the spiritual life is not separated from responsibility to the earth. Within this framework, nature becomes a space of encounter between man, the cosmos, and God – a space where monotheism is lived as a living and sustainable relationship.

Awareness of nature as a space of encounter that mediates the relationship between humans, the cosmos, and God opens up more fundamental questions about what principles underpin this connection. Love (*mahabbah*) in the framework of cosmological interpretation of love is not understood solely as a normative moral attitude added from the outside to the human-nature relationship, but as an ontological principle that underpins the existence of the cosmos itself. Love serves as a binding force that allows the relationship between heaven and earth, between the giver and the receiver, and between the Transcendent and the immanent [43]. Therefore, ecological concern is not born primarily from imposed ethical obligations, but from the recognition of man's ontological connection with the entire order of creation [44]. Environmental ethics, in this perspective, is rooted in the way humans understand and live the structure of reality based on love.

Starting from this understanding, ecological ethics is not enough to be built through regulations, legal instruments, or resource management alone. Technocratic approaches tend to view nature as an object to be controlled and optimized, rather than as part of a network of meaningful relationships. Seyyed Hossein Nasr reminds that the modern environmental crisis is rooted in the "loss of the sacred meaning of nature," when the cosmos is reduced to matter with no intrinsic value.[39] In these kinds of situations, ecological regulation works on the surface, while the roots of the relational crisis remain untouched. On the contrary, ethics based on *mahabbah* demands the growth of cosmic empathy, that is, the awareness of the existential attachment between man and nature as fellow participants in the order of Divine love. Sachiko Murata asserts that in Islamic cosmology, the relationship between the elements of nature is not mechanical, but rather "shaped by the principle of love and balance flowing from the Divine Reality to all levels of being [5]. Love, in this sense, serves as an ontological principle that allows the relationship of giving and receiving to take place in harmony and continuity.

Departing from the view of the cosmos as a network of relationships that are nourished by divine love and balance, the position of man cannot be understood outside of the relational structure. Man is not an exception to the cosmic order, but a part of it. This is where the concept of *khalīfah* in the Qur'an needs to be read relationally. The concept of human beings as *khalīfah* in the Qur'an is often narrowly misunderstood as the legitimacy of power or domination over nature. In fact, in the cosmological and ethical framework of the Qur'an, *khalīfah* is more accurately understood relationally rather than hierarchical [42]. In line with this, Sachiko Murata asserts that in Islamic cosmology, man is not placed as a separate center from nature, but rather as a "relational node in the cosmic network of giving and receiving" that reflects the Divine attributes in a proportionate [5]. Humans, thus, participate in the cosmic order, not stand on it. This is relevant to the view of Al-Ṭ abarī, When the Qur'an states that human beings are appointed as caliphs on earth (QS al-Baqarah: 30), this appointment is not accompanied by a mandate of unlimited exploitation, but rather a responsibility to maintain the order and harmony of creation. Al-Ṭ abarī interprets the concept of *khalīfah* as the role of management (*imārah*) and the enforcement of justice according to the will of Allah, not as absolute control over nature [1].

In this perspective, *trust* becomes a key concept that marks the ethical position of humans in the cosmos [45]. Trust, as mentioned in QS al-Aḥzāb: 72, contains the meaning of cosmic responsibility which is not only related to moral law, but also to the ability to maintain balance (*mīzān*) and the continuity of relations between the elements of creation. Man receives the mandate not because of his ontological superiority over nature, but because of his conscious capacity to recognize and care for cosmic order [46]. Quraish Shihab emphasizes that the mandate includes the obligation of man not to disturb the balance of nature, because the damage (*fasād*) is a betrayal of the responsibility entrusted to him by Allah [36], [47].

The mandate also implies a theological rejection of all forms of destructive exploitation of nature. The Qur'an consistently condemns actions that transgress (*isrāf* and *tughyān*) and disturb the balance of creation (QS al-Raḥmān: 7-9). Within the framework of the cosmology of love, the exploitation of nature cannot be justified as a consequence of human progress, since it reflects the unequal and disconnected relationship of *the principle of maḥabbah* that underpins the cosmos. Seyyed Hossein Nasr even considers that the modern ecological crisis is a direct result of man's denial of his cosmic mandate, when nature is reduced to a material object with no spiritual meaning [26].

Thus, the concept of *khalīfah* and *trust* places man not as the sole ruler of nature, but as the guardian of balance in the network of cosmic relations [37],

[48]. Human responsibility is participatory; he is called to work in harmony with the cosmic laws and Divine values that preserve the continuity of life. In this framework, Qur'anic environmental ethics is rooted in relational and spiritual awareness, where protecting nature means taking care of the mandate and affirming monotheism in the realm of life proxy.

In this perspective, the cosmology of love has not only metaphysical implications, but also ethical relevance in the face of a global ecological crisis. By placing nature as part of a cosmic relationship based on *maḥabbah*, this paradigm challenges an exploitative approach to the environment and offers a spiritual basis for sustainability ethics. The human-nature relationship is no longer understood as a utilitarian relationship, but rather as an ontological attachment that demands ethical responsibility.

Conclusion

This research came to the conclusion that the basic concept of the cosmology of love according to Sachiko Murata is rooted in the metaphysical understanding of reality as a relational structure that is lived by the principle of *maḥabbah*. Love, in this framework, is not just a psychological experience or additional ethical value, but an ontological principle that underlies the creation and order of the cosmos. Inspired by Ibn 'Arabī Sufism and symbolic dialogue with Taoism, Murata views the cosmos as a dynamically moving field of giving-receiving, active-receptive, and transcendent-immanence. Thus, the cosmology of love affirms that diversity and differences in reality are not directed at conflict, but rather at the relational harmony that allows life to take place.

Furthermore, this study shows that the Murata Daoist-Sufistic approach can be applied productively in reading Qur'anic verses about the sky, earth, and rain through symbolic-philosophical readings. This approach is not intended to replace classical interpretation, but rather to uncover layers of cosmological meaning that are often missed in legalistic or descriptive readings. By utilizing the symbolic parallels between *yin-yang* and *jamāl-jalāl*, Murata provides a conceptual language for reading cosmic verses as representations of ontological principles. The Qur'an, in this perspective, is understood as a text of revelation that articulates the structure of cosmic meaning, not merely a collection of theological information or historical narratives.

Within the framework of the cosmology of love, the symbolic meaning of the cosmos can be formulated relationally. The sky (*al-samā'*) represents the active, giving, and transcendent principle that initiates cosmic motion; the earth (*al-ard*) represents the receptive, receptive, and immanent principles that become the space for the actualization of life; while rain serves as a mediating symbol

that allows for creative encounters between the two. Rain is not only understood as a natural phenomenon, but as an expression of cosmic love that flows from heaven to earth, revives the dead, and fosters diversity. Thus, the cosmos appears as an orderly, dynamic, and meaningful structure of love, in which life is born from the balance of relationships, not from the dominance of one element over another.

The implications of this reading for the spiritual, ethical, and ecological understanding of contemporary Muslims are fundamental. Spirituality is no longer limited to individual rituals, but rather expands into a cosmic consciousness that reads nature as *āyāt kauniyyah* – the Divine signs that lead to the practice of monotheism. Ethically, human-nature relations are shifting from an anthropocentric paradigm to relational cosmocentrism, in which humans are understood as part of a cosmic love network, rather than the absolute ruler of creation. In the ecological context, the destruction of nature is no longer seen solely as a managerial failure, but as a crisis of love relations and a disturbance of the balance of the cosmos. Thus, the cosmological interpretation of love offers a strong theological and ontological foundation for the development of Islamic ecological spirituality that emphasizes responsibility, care, and respect for nature as an integral part of the life of faith.

Thus, this research not only contributes to the study of cosmological interpretation, but also offers a relevant conceptual framework for the development of Islamic ecological spirituality in response to global sustainability challenges.

Author Contributions

Siti Masykuroh is responsible for the initial research concept, methodology development, original draft writing, data collection and analysis, as well as conducting verification throughout the entire research process. **Masruchin** contributed to the addition of reference data, methodology development, the review and revision process, as well as manuscript editing. Both authors have approved the final version of this manuscript and take full responsibility for the entire content of the publication.

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