



# Sustainable Development and ‘Deep Ecology’ Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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**Abstract.** Environmental problems have become a global urgent issue that needs to be responded to immediately. Islam as a religion of rahmatan lil ‘alamin certainly has a relevant ecological concept to respond to this problem. This study aims to present the thoughts of Seyyed Hosein Nasr as one of the Islamic thinkers related to ecological issues and to elaborate with a case study at Garbage Clinical Insurance, Malang. This type of research is qualitative by using the method of literature study, interviews, and documentation. The researcher succeeded in revealing several findings: i) Nasr has a vision of deep ecology which is interpreted as a twin of the idea of nature as theophany encouraging humans to view nature as part of the reality of the Godhead that should not be exploited; ii) Garbage Clinical Insurance (GCI) is a business entity engaged in micro health insurance. GCI provides health services to the community by making waste of its insurance premium. This concept is certainly in line with Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the concept of deep ecology and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Seyyed Hosein Nasr · Deep Ecology · Garbage Clinical Insurance

## 1 Introduction

Modern humans are increasingly cultivating various very complicated problems, one of which is environmental problems. Human interests that are increasingly greedy for material worldly wealth encourage humans to achieve maximum profit regardless of the impact. The environmental crisis that is happening globally is clear proof of the greedy hand of humans. Facts on the ground show that environmental conditions are getting worse day by day. Research by WALHI (Indonesian Forum for the Environment) reveals data that the land already covered by the extractive industry investment permit is 159 million hectares. The corporate party has legally controlled the land area of 82.91% and controlled the ocean area of 29.75% [1]. The various activities of corporations that exploit nature not only have an impact on the shrinkage of Indonesia’s forests which function as carbon dioxide emissions absorbers, but also contribute to aggravating the rate of global warming and threaten the welfare of millions of indigenous peoples in Indonesia.

The ecological crisis also occurs in the amount and management of waste in Indonesia. Data quoted by [idxchannel.com](#) from The Economist Intelligence page in 2017 states that Indonesia holds the title of the second largest waste contributor country in the world [2]. On the other hand, the huge amount of waste in Indonesia is still poorly managed. According to a study initiated by Unilever Indonesia in collaboration with Sustainable Waste Indonesia (SWI) and Indonesian Plastic Recyclers (IPR) revealed that the waste recycling process in Indonesia is still not optimal. Recorded for four months, the study conducted by them revealed that only 11.83% of plastic waste in urban areas in Java was successfully managed. The rest are still being transported to the Final Disposal Site (TPA) and are even seen scattered around the environment [3].

The issue of ecological crisis is one of the greatest effects of human exploitation of natural resources. One of the causes of the crisis is the neglect of the concept of sustainable development in every business project. Sustainable development strategies that aim to increase harmony between humans and between humans and nature are often ignored and considered mere formalities. In fact, through the balance that is built between humans and nature, it can maintain access to the economic welfare of the community and distribute it equally from the current generation to the next generation [4].

Several business actors who are concerned about environmental issues have participated in solving the ecological crisis. One of them is Garbage Clinical Insurance. This business entity is classified as a micro health insurance business. The business was initiated by dr. Gamal Albin said carries the spirit of providing access to public health by managing waste as a premium for health insurance. Concern for health that is connected with environmental care seems to be an alternative for dealing with modern ecological crises. The concept also fits with the deep ecology idea voiced by global Muslim figures.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr as a Muslim figure in the modern century has participated in solving modern human problems, especially economic, development, and ecological issues. Seyyed Hossein Nasr was originally one of the Muslim figures who were also popular in discussing the integration between religion and science. Some of the issues that have been studied by Nasr include the study of philosophy, tasawwuf, to ecology. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the various ecological crises that have hit modern humans above, one of which stems from the denial of modern humans to God due to the positivistic-anthropocentric paradigm, so that the science created is only centered on the power of ratio [5]. Nasr uses the ta'wil approach to integrate Islam and ecology. This integration can be developed more seriously in the discussion of contemporary Islam and ecology [6]. Nasr also highlighted environmental issues more deeply and was well recorded in the Elisabeth Eaves Bulletin, one of which was the case of water shortages in Saudi Arabia and California due to climate change [7, 8].

The decline in the aspect of humanity in modern times occurs because humans have lost the direct knowledge of identity that they always have. Modern humans have rebelled against God by creating a science that is not based on the light of intellect but based on positivism or rationality alone. Ecological damage and environmental pollution and psychological imbalances experienced by modern humans are nothing but side effects of the pollution of the human soul that originated at a time when Western humans were determined to play the role of God on earth by throwing away their transcendental and life dimensions, "killing all gods", and proclaiming freedom and heavenly power [5].

Modern man, according to Nasr, relies too much on the power of reason (ratio) and wallows in material life, so his “inner eye” becomes closed and finally there is an imbalance (disequilibrium) between ratio and intellect [9]. Modern humans live in a secular era, an era where science and religion are separate and separate. The secularism school departs from a scientific point of view which only takes into account all things that are material and sensory. This school also separates the socio-mystical aspect through a process of desacralization which leads to the destruction of various social systems [10]. Secularism as a school begins with a paradigm that will later be known as the scientific worldview, which is colored by secularism, rationalism, empiricism, desacralization, pragmatism, dichotomous thinking, and denial of metaphysical truth. These ideas are interconnected and give birth to an epistemology which is often referred to as the scientific method. According to Nasr, this school has had a major impact on the development of the secularization of natural substances. Scientific worldview gave birth to modern humans who claim to be great and able to solve all kinds of problems in their own lives. Modern humans deny the role of God (theomorphism) and then establish a new order centered on themselves (anthropomorphism). The new order has unwittingly damaged the spiritual order of humans and changed human life to become dry, often filled with anxiety, and meaningless [9].

The multidimensional problems of modern humans are considered by Nasr to be a prolonged side effect of the secularization paradigm that has plagued modern humans. Nasr responded to these issues with his ideas on science and religion through the sacralization of science, which in the end would also intersect with economic and ecological activities. Previous researches [8, 11, 12] in the study of Nasr and deep ecology only focused on Nasr’s ideas, philosophical struggles, and interdisciplinary studies with figures from other religions. There has been no empirical study so far that is the real practice of Nasr’s ideas. This study is interested in reviewing this matter through the Garbage Clinical Insurance business operation in Malang. It described Nasr’s ideas in responding to sustainable development issues involving an ecological crisis.

## 2 Method

This type of research is qualitative with the method of interview, documentation, and literature study [13]. This research utilizes Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s paradigm of ‘deep ecology’ which the researcher explores through various primary and secondary sources regarding his thoughts. After getting the idea of ‘deep ecology’ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the researcher collaborated with one of the business units engaged in waste-based micro health insurance, namely Garbage Clinical Insurance in Malang. The researcher interviewed the relevant management to obtain information about the mechanism of waste management in insurance premiums. Researchers at a later stage try to organize this information so that it can be read as new knowledge, both for readers and other academics.

### 3 Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Deep Ecology Seyyed Hossein Nasr: A Vision of Sustainable Development Against the Modern Ecology Crisis

The phenomenon of modernism has factually damaged various ideological, social, and even environmental systems of the world. The damage is strongly suspected to come from modern human reasoning which is characterized by anthropocentrism, which means that humans and all their interests are the center of the ecosystem. Modern humans are arrogant and selfish, ultimately adding to human greed and serious consequences for the destruction of nature and the environment. Nasr said that the occurrence of natural destruction today cannot be separated from the crisis of religiosity and spirituality of human life. This crisis of human spirituality and religiosity is the result of an attitude of neglecting the eternal truth (perennial truth). In this case, the occurrence of environmental damage according to Nasr's view is also the result of the efforts of modern humans who view nature as an order of reality that stands alone, separate from the Divine Essence which is the center. In fact, in this way nature is seen as something that has no value in itself. For Nasr, the resacralization of nature is very important to try to change the human perspective on nature that has occurred since the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution three centuries ago [14].

Nasr from a long time ago had raised the early alarm for them, especially through his ideas about the face of God. According to Nasr, the Names and Attributes of God have been manifested in all his creation. Manifestation of God in nature can be interpreted that nature is a living being equal to humans and integrated with God [11]. In other words, the relationship between God and the universe includes each other and is not limited to just the beginning of all things, but also the sustainer and end of the universe. The mutual interaction between God and the universe is interpreted as a manifestation of the Reality of the Absolute Divinity of Divinity. This discussion in the end will position humans as figures who mediate heaven and earth, creatures who become embodiments, and crystallize God's Will or become *khalifatullah fi al-'ardhi* [10]. Islamic philosophy about Nature and science, as well as the role of humans in relation to the natural environment. To achieve this requires thorough integration with traditional Islamic sources, a task which is complicated by the fact that Islamic philosophy. Nature and science are not treated as separate subjects in classical Islamic sources, such as, for example, logic, physics, and psychology. One must draw not from various sources of Islamic teachings. There is the Qur'an itself, most of which deals with nature and human relations with it. The same can be said of the hadith [12].

Nasr in this discussion reaffirms the position of nature as a theophany or Divine Reality. Humans and nature as manifestations of the manifestation of God's attributes are well integrated with God as the center. Nasr wants to explain that the relationship between humans, nature, and God must be mixed in a complete relationship and guarded by the principle of monotheism. Nasr's idea indirectly became the seed of fertile environmental ethics movements. Some contemporary movements that have similarities with Nasr's thinking are deep ecology and eco-psychology. Deep ecology has the perception that nature has an intrinsic value other than axiological value for humans. This movement eventually gradually shifted the pattern of anthroporism towards eco-centrism. As a

result, Nasr's idea of deep ecology is at least able to save the world and modern humans from their crisis [10]. Nasr's idea of eco-theology cannot be separated from his ideas about cosmology and the concept of God in Islam. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's idea of cosmology gives us the idea that in Islam Allah is seen as transcendent. Allah as the Supreme Reality is given four basic qualities, namely: the First and the Last, the Outer (the Visible), and the Inner (Invisible). These four basic qualities want to point out that Allah is the center of the cosmos [14]. If Allah is understood as the center of the cosmos, of course this will return to the basic teachings of Islam in tawhid about "There is no god but Allah" (La ilaha) illa Allah). This is not only understood as theological testimony, but is also the source of all Islamic metaphysics, which states on a metaphysical level. The "nothingness" of all being is finite in the presence of the Infinite and encapsulates all particulars into the universal. At the cosmological level, it refers to the unity of all things and the unity of all manifestations and the interrelation of all beings [14].

The idea of deep ecology in relation to economics is theoretically connected through the theme of the discussion of sustainable development. Sustainable development addresses issues of integrating economic and ecological considerations in decision making. Both are fundamentally integrated into how the real world works. The sustainable development strategy adopted in the broadest sense aims to increase harmony both between humans and between humans and nature. Traditionally, economists have assumed that natural resources are unlimited because they place too much emphasis on the capacity of markets to allocate resources efficiently. The concept of well-being is a central point in the economic interpretation of sustainability. Traditionally, national statistical calculations and some economic models use observable economic values (goods and services) as indicators of welfare. The view of neoclassical economists has an important role in the sustainability of the economic dimension. According to this point of view, the goal of sustainable development is to maintain the capacity of the community to generate economic prosperity and provide a level of welfare equivalent to the current generation to the next generation [4].

Sustainable development is to meet the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept includes two sub-concepts: (1) The concept of "needs", especially the basic needs of Indonesia's poor, should be prioritized above all else; and (2) Consideration of the limitations of technology and social organization on the ability of the environment to meet current and future needs. Thus, in determining the objectives of economic and social development, sustainability should be the basis in all developed or developing countries, oriented towards a market economy or central planning. Interpretations may vary, but some of the common qualities must be the same, there is a consensus on the basic concepts of sustainable development and a broad strategic framework for achieving them [15].

Nasr's vision in building an idea that connects sustainable development and deep ecology or eco-theology can practically be seen from his opinion on the use of nature and the interpretation of the Qur'an. Nasr and Maria Massi Dakake wrote comments in Surat al-Nahl or "The Bee Chapter" which is also known as Surat al-Iqtisad or the "Economics Chapter". Surah an-Nahl according to Nasr shows the integration between the beauty and wonders of nature, its use for human physical needs, and the fulfillment of human spiritual needs. Nasr argues that beautiful and useful man-made goods, which depend

on God's previous gifts, are ultimately also gifts from God that also fulfill a hierarchy of spiritual and other needs. Therefore, Nasr argues that Islamic economic law is not enough to discuss Islamic economics, but is also needed with the tradition of Islamic wisdom. In doing so he fills a critical void in the literature on Islamic economics, which focuses almost exclusively on Islamic economic law while almost completely ignoring Islamic metaphysics and the natural sciences. The emphasis of this discussion is needed given that there is a concept of blessing that fulfills the hierarchy of spiritual needs and can simultaneously add physical beauty and utility, Nasr argues that the rational response is deep gratitude, which leads to satisfaction and fulfillment, as verse 18 of surah an-Nahl. Such gratitude to God breeds generosity towards others, which at least requires a spirit of reciprocity and justice. Herein lies the intersection between Islamic economic law and the mutually reinforcing tradition of wisdom [16].

### **3.2 Garbage Clinical Insurance: Modern Business Platform Based on Sustainable Development and Deep Ecology**

Garbage Clinical Insurance (GCI) is a business engaged in micro health insurance by using waste as a source of funding (premiums). This program offers a payment scheme for clinical services (health) using a waste bank scheme. Of course, with a scheme like this, people can fulfill their health needs without a significant burden. GCI has the main principle to serve the community in accessing sustainable financing and easy health access. GCI also indirectly encourages the community to start optimal waste management from the micro or household level [17]. The waste insurance clinic program is a health-based social program promoted by dr. Gamal Albin said through the Indonesia Medika organization to facilitate access to health for the lower middle class. This program also hopes that there will be no more underprivileged people who cannot get treatment because of the high cost of treatment. This waste insurance system helps solve clinical problems as well as solve ecological problems, where the waste that residents throw away every day can be used to finance health services in the form of insurance premiums [18].

GCI is structurally a subsidiary of CV. Indonesia Medicine. The location is on Jalan Kedawung No. 17 Malang, East Java [18]. CV. Indonesia Medika has been established in 2010 and officially became CV in March 2013. The number of GCI service users fluctuates. The number of GCI customers in 2013 was 300 people, then in 2014, GCI clinic users increased to 700 people. Five years later, GCI reduced the number of clinics to one clinic and is centralized only in Bumiayu, Malang. GCI service users at that time decreased to 203 users [19]. Garbage schemes that become insurance premiums are grouped into several types with varying prices. These types are grouped into several groups as follows: plastic waste is valued at Rp. 1500 per kg, cardboard waste is valued at Rp. 1500 per kg, newspapers valued at Rp. 1000 per kg, white paper is priced at Rp. 1500 per kg, duplex paper is priced at Rp. 500 per kg, glass bottles are priced around Rp. 1000 per kg, and iron is priced at Rp. 2000 per kg. The waste is then collected by users and processed into healthy funds by selling it to collectors. The collected funds are then managed for health services, both curative (treatment), promotive (improvement of health quality), preventive (prevention), and rehabilitative (home visit services, control, etc.) [18].

The business scheme implemented by GCI certainly integrates several dimensions: health, environment, economy, and spirituality. The integration between health and the economy in GCI's business can be seen in its insurance scheme. Meanwhile, the integration between the environment and the economy can be seen through the concept of sustainable development that integrates an insurance system based on environmental care. The integration between the environment and spirituality can be seen from the concept of deep ecology which does not justify the exploitation of nature using good waste management. The integration between economy and spirituality can be seen in insurance schemes that do not burden users. This can be classified as a ta'awun contract or tabarru' (helping each other). Meanwhile, the integration between health and spirituality can be seen in holistic health services, ranging from preventive to curative. Some of these dimensions are in line with the Islamic concept which has a vision of humanity and high environmental care. This concept is also in line with Nasr's concept of deep ecology which not only sees nature as a separate reality but is the reality (wajh) of Allah or theophany [10]. GCI has combined the concept of humanity and environmental care which is factually an implementation effort of the concept of deep ecology. This can be seen in Fig. 1.

## 4 Conclusion

The researcher succeeded in answering the problem formulation of this research which is summarized in two important points: 1) Nasr has a vision of the economy through the concept of deep ecology. The idea of deep ecology which is interpreted as a twin of the idea of nature as theophany encourages humans to view nature as part of the reality of the Godhead that should not be exploited. Humans in this concept are also positioned as mediators of heaven and earth who function as khalifatullah fi al-ardhi. Theoretically, this concept can be strongly connected with the concept of sustainable development that promotes economic prosperity for both present and future generations. 2) Garbage Clinical Insurance (GCI) is a business entity engaged in micro health insurance. Uniquely, GCI provides health services to the community by making waste of its insurance premium. This concept is certainly in line with Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the concept of deep ecology and sustainable development.

Researchers hope that readers can use this article as material for introspection and reference to improve the ecological order on earth to be more beautiful. Climate change issues that are troubling mankind have prompted these discourses to be immediately transformed into a real movement in the basic society. The researcher also hopes for future researchers to explore more deeply the ideas of other Islamic thinkers on ecological issues, so that in the future the empathy of the Muslim community towards ecological issues can continue to increase and improve.

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