

**THE ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION OF ECOLOGICAL CATASTROPHES IN UZBEK PROSE OF THE ANTHROPOCENE AND THE CONCEPT OF *MĪZĀN* IN ISLAMIC ECOTHEOLOGY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY AND COMPARATIVE STUDY**

*Namazova Manzura Urakovna*  
*PhD, Shahrissabz State Pedagogical Institute*

**Abstract**

This article examines the artistic interpretation of ecological catastrophes in contemporary Uzbek prose within the context of the Anthropocene and explores their conceptual correlation with the Islamic ecotheological principle of *mīzān* (balance). Drawing on ecocriticism, environmental humanities, and Islamic environmental ethics, the study analyzes how Uzbek prose writers depict ecological destruction as both a material and moral crisis. The concept of *mīzān*, which emphasizes cosmic balance and ethical responsibility toward creation, is employed as a comparative framework to interpret literary representations of environmental collapse. The article argues that Uzbek prose of the Anthropocene articulates ecological catastrophe not merely as an environmental issue but as a disruption of moral, spiritual, and cultural equilibrium. Through an interdisciplinary and comparative-analytical approach, the study demonstrates that literature functions as a mediating space where ecological trauma, ethical reflection, and spiritual values intersect.

**Keywords**

Anthropocene, Uzbek prose, ecological catastrophe, Islamic ecotheology, *mīzān*, ecocriticism, interdisciplinary studies

The Anthropocene, defined as a geological epoch shaped by intensive human intervention in natural systems, has profoundly altered both environmental reality and cultural imagination. Literature, particularly prose fiction, has emerged as a significant medium through which ecological crises are conceptualized, narrated, and ethically evaluated. In Uzbek prose of the independence and post-independence periods, ecological catastrophes are increasingly represented as central narrative concerns rather than peripheral background phenomena.

This literary shift reflects not only global ecological anxieties but also region-specific environmental trauma rooted in historical, political, and socio-economic transformations. Uzbek prose writers respond to environmental degradation by embedding ecological catastrophe within broader questions of moral responsibility, cultural memory, and spiritual loss. In this context, Islamic ecotheology—particularly the concept of *mīzān*—offers a productive interpretive framework for understanding the ethical dimensions of ecological representation in literature.

In contemporary environmental thought, the Anthropocene signifies the collapse of the traditional boundary between nature and culture. Literary scholars argue that Anthropocene narratives are characterized by representations of irreversible damage, temporal disjunction, and ethical uncertainty. Uzbek prose aligns with this paradigm by portraying landscapes marked by exhaustion, scarcity, and silence, where environmental destruction mirrors social and moral disintegration.

Rather than presenting ecological catastrophe as a sudden event, Uzbek prose often depicts it as a gradual process resulting from long-term exploitation and neglect. This narrative strategy corresponds with the concept of “slow violence,” where environmental harm unfolds invisibly over time. The Anthropocene in Uzbek literature is thus framed as a cumulative condition in which human actions destabilize ecological systems and disrupt traditional relationships between humans and nature.

Ecological catastrophes in Uzbek prose are artistically interpreted through symbolic, metaphorical, and narrative strategies that emphasize loss, imbalance, and ethical rupture. Natural elements such as land, water, and climate are frequently portrayed as suffering entities, bearing the consequences of human greed and irresponsibility. Landscapes become narrative

agents that reflect collective trauma and moral decay.

In many works, ecological destruction is paralleled with the fragmentation of human identity and social cohesion. Drying rivers, infertile soil, and abandoned villages symbolize not only environmental collapse but also the erosion of cultural continuity and spiritual values. The artistic language of Uzbek prose avoids direct ecological didacticism and instead employs imagery, silence, and narrative tension to evoke a sense of irreversible loss.

This aesthetic approach reinforces the idea that ecological catastrophe is not external to human existence but deeply embedded in ethical choices and worldviews. The ruined environment becomes a moral mirror, exposing the consequences of disrupting natural balance.

Within Islamic ecotheology, *mīzān* refers to the principle of balance, harmony, and proportion established by divine order. The concept implies that the universe operates according to a moral and physical equilibrium that humans are obligated to respect. Environmental stewardship (*khilāfah*) and accountability (*amānah*) are foundational ethical principles derived from this worldview.

From an ecotheological perspective, ecological destruction is interpreted as a violation of *mīzān*. Environmental imbalance signifies not only physical disorder but also spiritual and moral deviation. Human beings, as moral agents, are responsible for maintaining balance rather than asserting dominance over nature. This ethical framework provides a counter-narrative to anthropocentric ideologies that legitimize exploitation.

When examined through the lens of *mīzān*, the ecological catastrophes depicted in Uzbek prose acquire a deeper ethical and spiritual dimension. Literary representations of environmental imbalance resonate with Islamic ecotheological notions of disrupted harmony and moral accountability. The destruction of land and water in narrative form reflects the collapse of ethical balance emphasized in Islamic thought.

This interdisciplinary comparison reveals that Uzbek prose of the Anthropocene implicitly engages with ecotheological principles, even when religious discourse is not explicitly articulated. The literary emphasis on balance, loss, and responsibility aligns with the moral logic of *mīzān*, suggesting that ecological catastrophe is perceived as a consequence of ethical transgression rather than technological failure alone.

By integrating ecocriticism and Islamic ecotheology, the study demonstrates that Uzbek prose offers a culturally grounded ecological ethics that challenges globalized, secular narratives of environmental crisis. Literature becomes a dialogic space where modern ecological anxieties intersect with traditional moral philosophies.

In the Anthropocene, literature assumes an increasingly important ethical function by mediating between scientific knowledge, cultural memory, and moral reflection. Uzbek prose contributes to this process by transforming ecological catastrophe into a narrative of ethical reckoning. Through artistic representation, writers invite readers to reconsider their relationship with nature and their responsibility toward future generations.

The convergence of literary ecocriticism and Islamic ecotheology highlights the potential of culturally specific ethical systems to address global environmental challenges. Uzbek prose demonstrates that ecological awareness is most effective when grounded in moral, spiritual, and cultural values rather than abstract environmental discourse.

**Analytical Table 1**

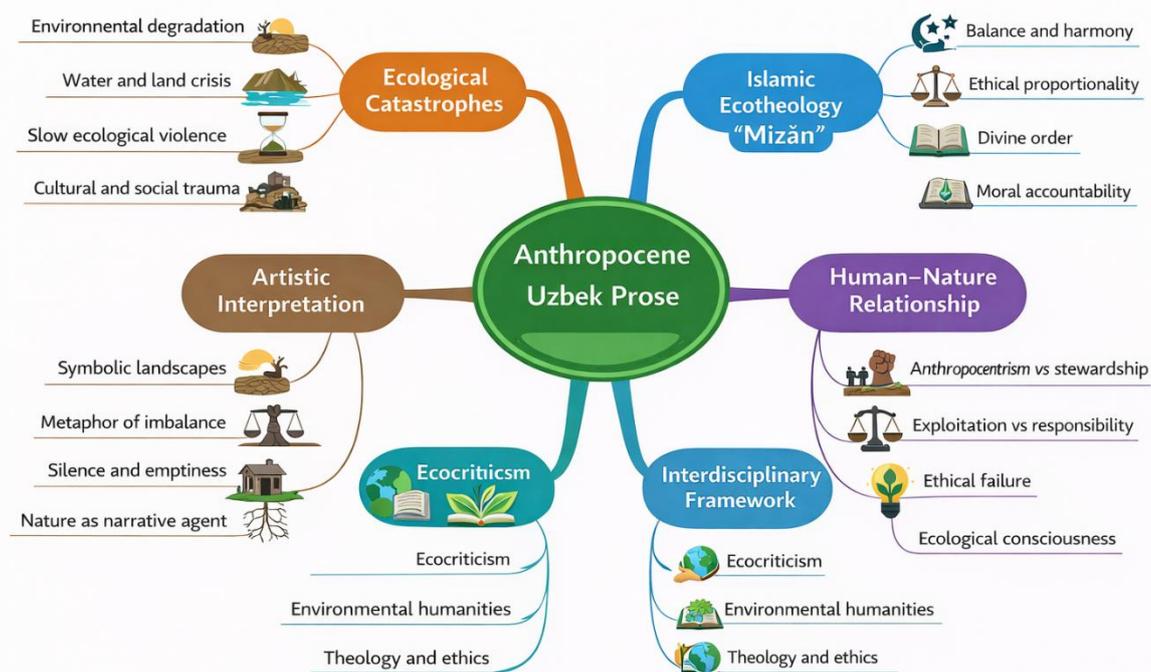
| Dimension        | Anthropocene in Uzbek Prose                       | Islamic Ecotheology ( <i>Mīzān</i> )    | Comparative Interdisciplinary Insight                               |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| Conceptual Basis | Human-driven ecological transformation and crisis | Divine principle of balance and harmony | Ecological crisis as a result of disrupted moral and cosmic balance |
| View of Nature   | Suffering, damaged, exhausted environment         | Sacred creation entrusted to            | Nature as both victim and moral indicator                           |

|                                   |  |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Cause of Ecological Crisis</b> | Exploitation, anthropocentrism, forced modernization | humanity<br>Violation of ethical responsibility ( <i>amānah</i> ) | Crisis emerges from ethical failure, not only technology |
| <b>Literary Representation</b>    | Symbolic landscapes, silence, decay, loss            | Balance, proportion, accountability (implicit values)             | Literary texts encode ecotheological ethics symbolically |
| <b>Human Role</b>                 | Destroyer and witness of catastrophe                 | Steward ( <i>khalīfah</i> ) responsible for balance               | Shift from domination to moral responsibility            |
| <b>Ethical Message</b>            | Warning against irreversible damage                  | Call for justice, moderation, balance                             | Ecological ethics grounded in culture and spirituality   |
| <b>Narrative Function</b>         | Ecological catastrophe as cultural trauma            | Moral framework for interpretation                                | Literature mediates science, ethics, and belief          |

The artistic interpretation of ecological catastrophes in Uzbek prose of the Anthropocene reveals a complex interaction between environmental reality, cultural memory, and ethical reflection. Through symbolic narratives of imbalance and loss, writers articulate ecological destruction as a moral and spiritual crisis. The concept of *mīzān* in Islamic ecotheology provides a valuable comparative framework for understanding these representations, emphasizing balance, responsibility, and ethical stewardship.

This interdisciplinary and comparative study demonstrates that Uzbek prose contributes meaningfully to global environmental humanities by offering an ecologically conscious literary vision rooted in Islamic ethical thought. Ultimately, the integration of ecocriticism and ecotheology underscores literature's role as a powerful medium for ecological awareness, moral critique, and cultural renewal in the Anthropocene.

The growing body of scholarship on the Anthropocene has significantly reshaped literary studies by foregrounding the role of literature in representing ecological crisis, ethical responsibility, and human–nature entanglements. International ecocritical research conceptualizes the Anthropocene as a cultural and epistemological condition in which human activity has become a dominant geological force, resulting in irreversible environmental transformations. Literary scholars argue that Anthropocene narratives are marked by representations of ecological loss, temporal disjunction, and moral uncertainty, emphasizing the collapse of traditional binaries between nature and culture. Within this framework, prose fiction is increasingly viewed as a critical medium for articulating environmental trauma and for questioning anthropocentric worldviews that legitimize ecological exploitation.



Ecocriticism and the environmental humanities have expanded the analysis of ecological catastrophe by integrating ethical, philosophical, and cultural perspectives. Scholars highlight that environmental destruction in literature often functions as a metaphor for broader social and moral crises, particularly in postcolonial and post-Soviet contexts. Studies on “slow violence” demonstrate that ecological harm is frequently depicted as gradual, invisible, and structurally embedded, rather than as a sudden disaster. This theoretical insight is particularly relevant for Central Asian literatures, where long-term environmental degradation has been shaped by historical policies of forced modernization, agricultural overexploitation, and water mismanagement.

Research on post-Soviet and Central Asian literary traditions emphasizes that ecological catastrophe is deeply intertwined with questions of identity, memory, and historical injustice. Local scholars note that land and water occupy a central position in the cultural imagination of Uzbek society, functioning not only as economic resources but also as ethical and spiritual foundations of communal life. Consequently, ecological destruction in Uzbek prose is often interpreted as a violation of cultural continuity and moral order. Independence-era Uzbek literature reflects a growing awareness of inherited ecological trauma, portraying damaged landscapes as witnesses to historical violence and ethical neglect. These studies underline that environmental degradation in Uzbek prose is rarely represented in purely scientific or technical terms; instead, it is embedded in symbolic, moral, and existential narratives.

At the same time, international scholarship has increasingly turned to religious and spiritual frameworks to address the ethical limitations of secular environmental discourse. Islamic ecotheology has emerged as a significant field within comparative environmental ethics, emphasizing principles such as stewardship (*khilāfah*), trust (*amānah*), and balance (*mīzān*). Researchers argue that *mīzān* represents a holistic concept of cosmic equilibrium that integrates physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of existence. Environmental destruction, from this perspective, is understood as a disruption of divinely established balance and as a consequence of human ethical failure. This approach challenges utilitarian and anthropocentric models by grounding ecological responsibility in moral accountability and spiritual consciousness.

Despite the relevance of Islamic ecotheological concepts, their integration into literary analysis remains limited, particularly in studies of Uzbek prose. Existing research tends to address ecological themes through symbolic or thematic analysis without systematically

engaging with religious ethical frameworks. Conversely, studies of Islamic environmental ethics rarely incorporate literary texts as sources of cultural and ethical reflection. This gap indicates the need for an interdisciplinary and comparative approach that brings together ecocriticism, literary studies, and Islamic ecotheology.

Recent interdisciplinary scholarship suggests that literature can function as a mediating space where ecological crisis, ethical reasoning, and spiritual values intersect. In this context, Uzbek prose of the Anthropocene can be read as implicitly engaging with the logic of *mīzān* through its emphasis on balance, loss, and moral consequence. Landscapes marked by degradation, scarcity, and silence reflect not only environmental collapse but also the breakdown of ethical harmony emphasized in Islamic thought. Such representations align with global ecocritical arguments that ecological catastrophe must be understood as a moral and cultural crisis rather than a purely environmental one.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that analyzing ecological catastrophes in Uzbek prose through the combined lenses of Anthropocene theory and Islamic ecotheology offers a productive and original scholarly perspective. International ecocritical studies provide conceptual tools for understanding environmental representation, while local literary research grounds ecological discourse in cultural memory and historical experience. The integration of the *mīzān* concept enriches this analysis by introducing an ethical and spiritual dimension that remains underexplored in existing scholarship. This synthesis highlights the potential of Uzbek prose to contribute to global environmental humanities by articulating a culturally rooted, ethically informed vision of ecological responsibility in the Anthropocene.

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