

# Spirituality and Environmental Preservation: The Role of Abah Anom as the Murshid of the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah Order (TQN) in the Development of Eco-Sufism

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## ABSTRACT

The thoughts of KH. Ahmad Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin (Abah Anom), a contemporary Sufi and the murshid of the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Sufi Order at the Suryalaya Islamic Boarding School, offer a new paradigm in integrating Islamic spirituality with ecological awareness. Through the concept of *pepelakan* (planting), Abah Anom reinterprets classical Sufi teachings within a practical and contextual framework for environmental preservation. The acts of planting and caring for nature are not only seen as moral obligations but also as forms of worship that reflect love for God (*mahabbatu Allah*) and the human role as a steward (*khalifah*) on Earth. This study aims to analyze the relevance and implications of Abah Anom's thoughts in the context of the modern ecological crisis and his contribution to the development of Islamic-based environmental ethics. The method used is a literature review with a descriptive-analytical approach. The findings show that Abah Anom's concept of eco-Sufism bridges spiritual values with concrete environmental actions and offers an alternative model of sustainable development based on spirituality. His teachings are not only locally relevant but also

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## 1. Introduction

In facing the ongoing global environmental crisis—ranging from global warming, pollution, deforestation, to clean water scarcity—the world continues to seek new approaches capable of addressing ecological challenges not only through technocratic solutions but also by touching the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of humanity. Climate change is not merely a physical or technical issue; it is a reflection of how humans treat the natural world that sustains them. In this context, the idea emerges that spirituality plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of ecosystems (Anieg, 2024; Haq et al., 2024).

One such approach that is gaining attention is *eco-Sufism*, which integrates Sufi values—rooted in Islamic tradition—with ecological awareness. This approach does not merely offer physical solutions but seeks to transform the way humans understand and relate to nature as a creation of God. Eco-Sufism is a spiritual paradigm that views the universe as a sacred manifestation of the Divine Presence; thus, damaging nature equates to violating divine values (Imamah, 2017; B. Irawan & Widjajanti, 2021).

In Indonesia—a country rich in biodiversity and spiritual-cultural diversity—eco-Sufism finds fertile ground for social contextualization. One of the prominent figures who plays a vital role in integrating spirituality and environmental conservation is KH. Ahmad Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin, widely known as Abah Anom. As the *murshid* (spiritual guide) of the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Order at the Suryalaya Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya, Abah Anom not only guided thousands of disciples in spiritual practice but also instilled ecological awareness in their daily lives. He is a central figure in the landscape of contemporary Indonesian Sufism, who used Sufi teachings as a means to improve both individual and societal life, including in its ecological dimension (Annajih & Sa'idah, 2019; Jamaluddin & Gojali, n.d.).

The Sufi experience taught by Abah Anom goes beyond ritual worship; it includes character development, personal and environmental cleanliness, and awareness of responsibilities toward fellow beings. In this regard, the pesantren he led served as both a spiritual and social laboratory for shaping *insan kamil*—the perfected human being—who maintains harmonious relationships with God, fellow humans, and the universe. Through this approach, the TQN teachings under Abah Anom's guidance transcend the traditional boundaries of Sufism, often perceived as individualistic, and become a transformative force that touches on socio-ecological aspects (Abdillah & Soleh, 2024; Adenan & Nasution, 2020).

The concept of *insan kamil* in Sufism implies that humans bear a cosmic responsibility as *khalifah* (stewards) on Earth. Humans are not absolute rulers over nature, but entrusted caretakers responsible for maintaining balance. According to Abah Anom, this role of *khalifah* can only be fulfilled by individuals who have purified their hearts from destructive traits such as greed, egoism, and injustice. Therefore, the process of *tazkiyatun nafs* (self-purification) becomes the core of spiritual transformation, which leads to ethical behavior, including in the treatment of the environment. This makes Abah Anom's teachings highly relevant to addressing ecological crises, as they do not merely offer technical solutions but build a spiritual and ethical foundation for caring for the Earth (Ahmad et al., 2020; Anwar, 2021; Fatah et al., 2024).

Beyond the philosophical aspect, Abah Anom also provided practical examples of environmental stewardship. At his pesantren, physical cleanliness and environmental hygiene are of primary concern. Students are taught to live orderly, clean lives and to plant and care for greenery as an expression of love for nature. Here lies the integration between spiritual practice and ecological action, where environmental preservation is regarded as part of worship. In many of his sermons and teachings, Abah Anom emphasized that polluting or damaging the environment is an act of disobedience to God, as nature is created as His living signs (*ayat kauniyah*). Therefore, protecting the environment is not merely a social responsibility, but a manifestation of faith and devotion (Hayat et al., 2024; Khikamuddin et al., 2024).

Interestingly, Suryalaya pesantren is also well known for its social rehabilitation programs, particularly for drug addicts and marginalized communities. The spiritual approach used in these programs is based on holistic healing principles that not only heal the soul from addiction but also restore individuals' connectedness with their surrounding environment. This shows that the spirituality instilled by Abah Anom is inclusive and touches all aspects of human life. In this context, the *eco-Sufism* practiced by Abah Anom becomes a model of a socio-religious approach deeply rooted in local culture while possessing global relevance.

Abah Anom's presence as a *murshid* who unites spirituality with ecological concern offers inspiration for developing an Islamic educational paradigm that is environmentally conscious. Education based on Sufi values such as *tawadhu* (humility), *zuhud* (simplicity), and *shukr* (gratitude)

holds great potential in nurturing generations who are empathetic, non-consumerist, and environmentally aware. In a modern society that tends to be secular and materialistic, such an approach becomes essential in the effort to rehumanize education and development (Kodir, 2020; Ma'mun, 2018).

In a broader framework, the role of Abah Anom and the teachings of TQN Suryalaya demonstrate that Islam, through its Sufi heritage, possesses rich spiritual and cultural capital for addressing contemporary challenges, including environmental crises. This also refutes the notion that religion is passive or even counterproductive in relation to modern issues such as climate change or environmental preservation. On the contrary, when religious teachings are understood in their essential and practical dimensions, they can become a powerful and sustainable transformative force.

The phenomenon of eco-Sufism in the practice of TQN Suryalaya opens new avenues in Islamic and environmental studies, where spirituality is no longer confined to private spaces but becomes a source of values that drive social and ecological change. In this regard, Abah Anom can be seen as a pioneer of eco-Sufism in Indonesia who successfully integrated inner spiritual practice with concrete action, planting ecological consciousness in the hearts of his followers. This legacy is vital to explore and develop further, especially in a world increasingly deprived of spirituality and wisdom in environmental management (Mud'is & Mud'is, 2023).

Therefore, the study of the integration between spirituality and environmental preservation through Abah Anom's role as the *murshid* of TQN is not only academically important but also a tangible contribution toward building a new paradigm of sustainable development rooted in the nation's spiritual and cultural values. In a world plagued by multidimensional crises—including moral and ecological degradation—figures like Abah Anom offer hope for the reemergence of humans living in harmony with God, fellow beings, and the natural world. Hence, an in-depth study is necessary to understand how eco-Sufism can be adapted and further developed to meet contemporary challenges while strengthening spiritual-based ecological awareness (Rohimat, 2021).

This research aims to comprehensively explore the role of Abah Anom as the *murshid* of TQN in developing environmental eco-Sufism, covering its conceptual foundation, implementation, and social relevance. Employing a qualitative approach, this study will analyze the philosophy and practice of eco-Sufism applied at Pesantren Suryalaya and its impact on the community and surrounding environment. Additionally, the research will identify challenges and opportunities in integrating eco-Sufism into broader environmental conservation movements in Indonesia.

Through this study, it is hoped that a valuable contribution can be made to the development of Islamic ecotheology and to enriching the discourse on spirituality-based environmental preservation. The findings are also expected to inspire pesantren, religious communities, and policymakers in designing environmental programs that emphasize not only physical aspects but also spiritual and cultural values. In doing so, environmental preservation efforts can become a collective movement that touches the heart and consciousness of humanity, fostering harmony between humans, nature, and the Creator.

## 2. Research Method

The research method employed in this study is qualitative, using a literature review approach. This method was selected because the study aims to analyze and understand the concept of eco-Sufism and Abah Anom's role in environmental preservation by examining various written sources and relevant literature. The data consists entirely of library materials, including primary sources such as original or translated texts of Abah Anom's sermons, writings, speeches, and documented teachings on eco-Sufism and Sufi philosophy. Secondary sources include scholarly books, academic articles, theses, dissertations, journals, official documents, and intellectual works addressing eco-Sufism, Islamic perspectives on environmental conservation, and Abah Anom's biography and thought.

Data collection was conducted through systematic literature study: the researcher read, took detailed notes, and classified the information according to thematic relevance. To ensure rigor, an interpretive coding process was applied whereby texts were carefully examined to identify recurring themes and categories related to eco-Sufism concepts, spiritual ecology, and Abah Anom's practical contributions to environmental preservation. The data analysis was descriptive and interpretative, focusing on synthesizing theoretical frameworks with empirical insights to explain the core principles of eco-Sufism, detail the implementation and influence of Abah Anom's teachings, and explore their contemporary implications.

This method aligns with previous research utilizing literature reviews to study eco-Sufism, including works analyzing Seyyed Hossein Nasr's contributions, the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical, and Islamic eco-Sufi traditions concerning human-nature relations. By employing this literature review with a systematic thematic approach, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how spiritual and ecological values are integrated in Abah Anom's teachings and how they contribute to environmental preservation. Additionally, the method facilitates examination of multiple perspectives and theoretical approaches, offering a strong conceptual foundation for further research and practical applications in Islamic boarding school education and spirituality-driven environmental movements.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Abah Anom: A Figure of Spirituality, Exemplary Conduct, and Environmental Stewardship

KH. Ahmad Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin, better known as Abah Anom, was born on January 1, 1915, in the village of Suryalaya, Tasikmalaya, West Java. He was the son of Syekh Abdullah Mubarak bin Nur Muhammad—known as Abah Sepuh, the founder of Pesantren Suryalaya—and Hajjah Juhriyah. Abah Anom lived a long life and passed away at the age of 104, on September 5, 2011, at the very pesantren that had become the spiritual center of the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Order in Indonesia (Hilmi, 2023).

Abah Anom received his early religious education directly from his father, Abah Sepuh, who provided him with the foundations of Islamic knowledge. His passion and love for religious sciences grew from an early age, and by the age of 18, Abah Anom had already mastered numerous branches of Islamic scholarship. His intellectual journey took him to various pesantren in West Java starting in the 1930s. Between 1935 and 1937, he studied at Pesantren Cireungas in Sukabumi under Ajengan Aceng Mumu, a scholar known for his expertise in *hikmah* (spiritual wisdom) and martial arts (*silat*). In 1938, Abah Anom performed the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the holy city of Mecca, which he also used as an opportunity to deepen his understanding of *tasawuf* (Sufism). There, he studied at the Naqshbandi *Ribat* and explored seminal Sufi texts such as *Sirr al-Asrar* and *Ghaniyyat at-Talibin* by Syekh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani, under the guidance of Syekh Romli, a scholar from Garut (G. B. Irawan, 2024).

Abah Anom was widely known for his wisdom and compassion. Many people came to him to share their life problems, and nearly all left feeling comforted and relieved. His hospitality toward guests was extraordinary; he treated everyone with respect and kindness. On one occasion, an elderly couple came bearing *rengginang* (rice crackers) and asked him to taste them. Smiling, he replied, "Eh, *raos pisan*" (very delicious). Before they left, he gifted them a sarong and travel money as a token of appreciation. Interestingly, the *rengginang* turned out to be quite hard, which he later gave to one of the attendants. This incident illustrates his sensitivity in preserving his guests' feelings, ensuring they felt valued and not disappointed—reflecting his noble character (KAANA, 2012).

In delivering his teachings, Abah Anom was known for his gentle and respectful language. He often conveyed advice using phrases like, "It would be good if..." or analogies that were easy to understand. He consistently instilled values of honesty, goodness, and well-being through both speech and personal example. In one of his early morning sermons, he emphasized the importance of maintaining speech and actions that ensure safety and blessings—not only for oneself but also for

those around—thus bringing about a prosperous life in both this world and the hereafter (Putri et al., 2019).

Beyond his role as a spiritual guide, Abah Anom also demonstrated a profound concern for the natural environment. His commitment to environmental preservation was manifested through concrete actions, such as initiating reforestation efforts in the upstream area of the Citanduy River to prevent erosion. In 1960, he built a dam named *Dam Nur Muhammad*, which irrigated over 100 hectares of rice fields around Suryalaya. The dam was also equipped with a waterwheel used to generate electricity, providing illumination for the pesantren and its surrounding areas.

During the 1960s, amidst the conflict between the DI/TII rebel forces and the government in West Java, Abah Anom and the TQN brotherhood actively supported the legitimate government. His spiritual and social efforts at that time demonstrated that the Sufi order was not an isolated movement but actively engaged in maintaining social stability and peace. His reforestation activities extended beyond the dam project; he also encouraged local communities and Sufi followers to plant various hardwood trees such as bamboo and clove around Suryalaya as water catchment areas. For his contributions to environmental conservation, he was awarded the Kalpataru Award by President Soeharto on June 5, 1980. In 1990, the clove trees were replaced with approximately 2,000 teak trees, which are still cared for today, forming a living ecological legacy (Sadono, 2021).

In Abah Anom's perspective, nature should not be treated merely as an object of human exploitation but rather as a partner that must be preserved for the sake of shared sustainability. This view aligns with a hadith of the Prophet narrated by al-Tirmidhi: "Have mercy on those on the Earth, and the One in the heavens will have mercy on you." This concept of universal compassion is also the spiritual essence of the *tasawuf* tradition (Sunarno, 2022).

Great Sufi thinkers like Jalaluddin Rumi even described nature as a manifestation of the beauty of the Divine Beloved. In one of his verses, Rumi writes: "*In the garden are hundreds of charming beloveds. The roses and tulips twirl and dance. Clear water flows through the streams. All of this is a sign: that is He.*" Abah Anom, in his local tradition, translated this cosmic love into pesantren practice. Through the approach of *pepelakan* (planting), he built a philosophy that planting is not merely a physical act of greening the land but also a symbol of sowing values of goodness and maintaining spiritual harmony between humans and their environment. In his teachings, ecological activities such as planting trees are considered part of the human spiritual journey—a form of worship and an effort to realize both external and internal balance (G. B. Irawan, 2024; Sunarno, 2022).

Through this approach, Abah Anom positioned environmental preservation as an integral part of the Sufi path. He provided a tangible example that Islamic spirituality, when fully and contextually embodied, can serve as an ethical foundation for building a sustainable and harmonious civilization in relation to the universe.

### 3.2 Spiritual Education and Ecological Ethics

Abah Anom's thought integrating Sufi spirituality with ecological awareness is not merely doctrinal or abstract but is realized in concrete practices by his followers at the Suryalaya Islamic Boarding School and the TQN community. A very tangible example is the implementation of the *pepelakan* concept, which emphasizes harmony with nature through activities such as planting and nurturing vegetation around the pesantren as a spiritual and ecological manifestation.

At Suryalaya, students and TQN members regularly engage in sustainable agriculture by cultivating land surrounding the pesantren to grow vegetables, fruits, and medicinal plants. This activity serves not only to meet daily needs but also as an execution of Abah Anom's teaching that regards farming as an act of worship (*dzikr*, remembrance of God) and *mahabbah* (love) toward God and His creation. The agricultural management is conducted naturally and environmentally friendly, avoiding harmful chemicals to preserve soil and water quality.

In addition to farming, the pesantren applies an inclusive waste management system, including segregation of organic and inorganic waste, composting, and waste treatment aimed at reducing



environmental impact. This effort involves the entire pesantren community as a shared ecological responsibility. This awareness of cleanliness and environmental care is grounded in Abah Anom's teachings that maintaining cleanliness is part of worship and respect for Allah's creation. Other initiatives within the TQN Suryalaya environment include environmental education campaigns integrated into the pesantren curriculum, outreach on the importance of ecological balance, and afforestation programs in areas surrounding the pesantren involving local community participation. These activities illustrate that ecological consciousness taught by Abah Anom is not only spiritual but also socially practiced in real environmental stewardship.

Historical records describe that since the leadership of Abah Anom (K.H. Ahmad Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin), various ecological approaches have been applied as part of the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah Order teachings he led, emphasizing balance between spirituality and worldly life, including harmonious human-nature relationships. Therefore, Abah Anom's followers at TQN Suryalaya provide concrete examples of how Sufi spirituality can blend with sustainable ecological practices, making the pesantren environment a living laboratory for the implementation of eco-Sufism values in daily life.

Spiritual education within the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Sufi Order is not merely aimed at fostering vertical closeness between humans and God through *dhikr* and other ritual worship practices, but is also directed toward shaping grounded moral and ethical attitudes, including environmental consciousness. In the perspective of Sufism as taught by Abah Anom, spiritual education is not a solitary or private activity but rather an integrative process that permeates both social and ecological aspects of human life. This is clearly reflected in the various educational programs at Pesantren Suryalaya, where Abah Anom guided thousands of disciples in the path of soul purification and character development (Abas, 2025; Abdullah et al., 2024).

The educational model implemented at Suryalaya exhibits a different orientation compared to conventional education systems. At this pesantren, education is not solely aimed at increasing students' intellectual capacity, but at forming *insan kamil*—the perfected human being—who is aware of their position and responsibility as *khalifah fil-ardh*, the vicegerent of God on Earth. This concept serves as the philosophical foundation of all spiritual educational processes within TQN. In practice, this is realized through the cultivation of values such as simplicity, responsibility, compassion, and empathy toward other beings—both human and non-human.

A concrete expression of spiritual education that supports ecological ethics is the habit of clean and orderly living that is enforced within the pesantren. Abah Anom consistently instilled the principle that cleanliness is not merely a matter of health or comfort, but a part of worship. From a Sufi viewpoint, a clean environment reflects a pure heart. Therefore, every student is required to maintain the cleanliness of their living quarters, places of worship, and surrounding areas such as gardens, courtyards, and restrooms. This discipline is not merely administrative routine but an essential part of *tazkiyatun nafs*—the ongoing process of spiritual purification (Abitolkha et al., 2020; Abror & Arif, 2021).

Ecological ethics within TQN education is not abstract or theoretical but is embodied in tangible actions. Programs such as farming, plant cultivation, reforestation, and sustainable living skills are integral to the non-formal curriculum at Suryalaya. Students are not only taught *fiqh*, *tafsir*, or *hadith*, but are also involved in hands-on activities that foster direct interaction with nature. In this context, Abah Anom taught that caring for the soil, planting trees, or even watering plants are acts of worship with immense spiritual value, as they contribute to the preservation of God's creation.

Furthermore, the spiritual education taught by Abah Anom also embodies the spirit of empowerment and social transformation. The *dzikr*-based rehabilitation program for drug addicts, known as "Inabah," is a prime example of how spirituality is used as a means of individual and communal healing. Beyond soul restoration, the process also carries an ecological awareness mission. Participants in the Inabah program are also involved in agricultural activities, animal husbandry, and environmental clean-up. In other words, spiritual education here is blended with

ecological work ethics, which not only heals the human soul but also restores harmony between humans and nature.

Within this framework, the spiritual education developed by Abah Anom does not merely aim to produce ritualistically devout individuals, but also ecologically conscious human beings—those who live simply and empathetically in response to environmental conditions. Sufi values such as *zuhud* (non-excessiveness), *tawadhu* (humility), and *shukr* (gratitude) serve as guiding life principles that encourage environmentally friendly lifestyles. The way of life instilled at Suryalaya does not lead to exploitation of nature but rather teaches reverence and appreciation for God's creation. This is a form of deeply internalized ecological ethics, rooted not in legal threats or economic interests but in spiritual conviction (Zamzami et al., 2022).

From the perspective of Islamic pedagogy, the approach developed by Abah Anom can be classified as *transcendental holistic education*. This model views the human being as composed not only of intellect and body, but also of spirit. Thus, educational success is not merely measured by academic achievements or technical skills but by the formation of holistic spiritual and ethical awareness. In light of today's environmental crisis, such an approach is highly relevant and urgently needed within broader Islamic education systems.

Accordingly, the spiritual education in the TQN tradition pioneered by Abah Anom not only produces individuals spiritually close to God, but also cultivates communities with a strong ecological ethos. It offers an alternative educational model that combines *dhikr* with labor, contemplation with action, and spirituality with ecological responsibility. This is the very foundation of *eco-Sufism*: the awareness that caring for the environment is not merely an ecological duty but a profound spiritual practice.

### 3.3 TQN Spirituality and Environmental Awareness

The Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Sufi Order, as developed at Pesantren Suryalaya, possesses a unique form of spirituality that integrates the inner mystical dimension of Sufism with concrete social realities. Its teachings, inherited from the global lineage of Sufi orders, have undergone a process of local adaptation under the guidance of charismatic figures such as KH. Ahmad Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin (Abah Anom). Within this framework, spirituality in TQN is not merely understood as a closed, elitist, individual practice, but as a holistic process of cultivating awareness that encompasses human relationships with God, fellow beings, and the natural world.

TQN spirituality is practiced primarily through *dhikr* (remembrance of God), which forms the core of the Sufi path. This includes both *dhikr khafi* (silent remembrance) and *dhikr jahr* (loud remembrance), which serve as means of purifying the heart (*tazkiyatun nafs*) with the ultimate goal of forming *insan kamil*—the perfected human being who lives in harmony within the structure of God's creation. In TQN teachings, a pure heart gives rise to behaviors that reflect compassion toward all creatures, including non-human beings such as plants, animals, and other elements of nature. Thus, TQN spirituality inherently contains a strong potential for ecological ethics.

Pesantren Suryalaya, under Abah Anom's leadership, became a social laboratory for the integration of spiritual values and ecological practices. At the pesantren, students are taught not only the importance of *dhikr* and ritual worship (*ibadah mahdhah*), but also clean living, environmental love, and sustainable farming and livestock practices. Students are guided to maintain gardens, clean their surroundings, and internalize the idea that caring for cleanliness and environmental sustainability is part of worship. This aligns with Islamic principles that state "cleanliness is part of faith" and that the Earth is a trust (*amanah*) to be protected (Kalimantan, 2025).

In practice, Abah Anom extended the meaning of worship beyond ritual dimensions to include concrete actions in daily life. In many of his sermons, he emphasized that any form of environmental destruction is an expression of a corrupted heart and behavior that deviates from God's path. He instilled the understanding that the Earth does not belong to humans, but to God, who has entrusted it to humankind as *khalifah* (stewards). Therefore, wise management of nature becomes a spiritual responsibility. This awareness is an integral part of the TQN spiritual path.

Moreover, TQN teachings stress the values of *zuhud* (simplicity) and *qana'ah* (contentment), which stand in direct contrast to the consumeristic and exploitative lifestyles at the root of many modern ecological crises. Through consistent spiritual discipline, TQN followers are trained to restrain greed for natural resources and to replace it with respect and concern for ecological sustainability. This Sufi way of life is not only spiritually ideal but also profoundly relevant in the context of environmental preservation (Rohimat, 2021).

Ecological awareness in TQN is not cultivated through environmental slogans alone, but through the formation of strong spiritual character. The soul purification process—through *dhikr* and *muhasabah* (introspection)—makes individuals more sensitive to the impact of their actions on the surrounding environment. This is the root of ecological awareness that is not based on external instruction or regulation, but emerges from within a soul that is pure and connected to the Divine. It is this kind of spirituality that makes TQN highly compatible with the concept of eco-Sufism (Sunarno et al., 2021).

Eco-Sufism itself arises from the awareness that Sufism contains rich philosophical and ethical resources for addressing ecological crises. In the TQN context, eco-Sufism is not just a conceptual idea—it is a lived reality practiced by its community. Suryalaya serves as a tangible example of how spirituality can be transformed into a social and ecological movement. Through community empowerment programs, social rehabilitation, and spiritual-based agricultural development, the pesantren has made a significant contribution to building a culture of environmental awareness rooted in Sufi values.

The integration of *dhikr* and labor—of the inner and the outward—is the essence of TQN's ecological spirituality. In the Sufi logic taught by Abah Anom, one who seeks closeness to God cannot possibly destroy His creation. Planting trees, caring for rivers, and cleaning the environment are no longer seen as secular tasks but as acts of love toward the Divine. This is the spiritual foundation of environmental preservation from the TQN perspective: not motivated by rules or fear of punishment, but by love and spiritual awareness (Kalimantan, 2025).

Thus, TQN spirituality provides a solid foundation for the formation of sustainable environmental ethics. It does not merely offer technical solutions, but reconstructs the human-nature relationship through an inner, spiritual approach. In a world increasingly detached from spiritual meaning, the model offered by Abah Anom through TQN stands as an important alternative for ecological development rooted in traditional wisdom and transcendent values (Mud'is & Mud'is, 2023; Soleha, 2016).

### 3.4 The Concept of *Pepelakan*: Planting Spirituality and Ecological Ethics in the View of Abah Anom

For Abah Anom, the act of planting is not merely seen as an agricultural activity, but carries profound symbolic meaning in the process of spiritual purification. Each stage of planting holds spiritual lessons that reflect a believer's inner journey. The initial step—preparing the soil—is likened to the cleansing of the heart from blameworthy traits. The planting of seeds represents the internalization of good intentions and the embedding of faith values in the heart. The process of watering and nurturing the plants is analogous to spiritual struggle, known in Sufism as *mujahadah* (striving against the ego) and *riyadah* (spiritual discipline). The final stage—waiting for the plant to bear fruit—teaches the virtues of patience and complete trust (*tawakkul*) in Allah (Walid, 2019).

This idea is encapsulated in the concept known as *pepelakan*, a term coined by Abah Anom to describe the interconnectedness between spiritual and ecological dimensions of human life. Externally (*zahir*), *pepelakan* refers to the physical act of planting and caring for the environment; internally (*batin*), it signifies the purification of the heart through *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and *kalimat thayyibah* (good words), as a means of strengthening one's relationship with the Divine. Within the framework of the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah (TQN) teachings, this concept serves as a theological foundation for integrating Sufi values into environmental awareness.



*Pepelakan* is not merely a theoretical concept. At Pesantren Suryalaya, Abah Anom encouraged its practical implementation. Planting and environmental stewardship were taught as expressions of love for God (*mahabbah ilallah*) and as a means of controlling one's desires—a key component of the spiritual journey. Abah Anom emphasized that love for Allah is the principal path to happiness in both this world and the hereafter. Therefore, nurturing *mahabbah* for Allah not only deepens individual spirituality but also improves human relationships and our connection with the natural world (Hardianto, 2024).

In practice, TQN students and the broader community were educated to view planting and caring for the environment as forms of worship. This perspective aligns with the human role as *khalifah fi al-ardh* (God's vicegerent on Earth), as stated in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:30), which emphasizes that the Earth is a trust from Allah to be cultivated and sustained. This understanding fosters the internalization of environmental preservation values as a daily spiritual practice, rather than as a response to legal or technical imperatives alone.

Abah Anom's holistic approach reveals a deep understanding of the unity of creation in Islam. He linked the theoretical aspects of Sufism with the practical work of environmental conservation, making spirituality a strong foundation for ecological responsibility. The *pepelakan* concept he developed serves not only as a theological principle but also as a structured model of religiously motivated environmental activism. This paradigm challenges the common dichotomy between ritual worship and social action by equating ecological preservation with genuine acts of devotion (SuaraIslam.id, 2025).

Thus, Abah Anom's approach redefines the meaning of worship and expands the scope of Islamic spirituality. His thinking has major implications for transforming how the Muslim community views ecology, as it integrates Sufi values into concrete solutions for environmental crises. The concept of *pepelakan* becomes a model that encompasses theological and spiritual dimensions while serving as a blueprint for social and cultural change grounded in sustainability.

In Sufi cosmology, humans are positioned as bridges between the spiritual and physical realms—an embodiment of the concept of *insan kamil* (the perfected human being). This role requires individuals to develop ecological wisdom rooted in an awareness of the existential unity of all God's creations. Abah Anom consistently emphasized that caring for the environment is a primary path to closeness with Allah. Environmental stewardship, therefore, is not separate from the spiritual path but is a fundamental part of Sufi practice.

This approach offers an integrative Islamic ecological theology that is capable of addressing contemporary challenges without abandoning its spiritual roots. When contextualized within the global ecological crisis, Abah Anom's ideas open space for a redefinition of progress and prosperity. Referring to the thoughts of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the dominant paradigm of development—centered on economic and technological growth—is seen as inadequate because it ignores spiritual values and ecological balance. In Abah Anom's view, true well-being cannot be separated from the harmony between humans, God, and the environment (Solihin, 2023).

His concept of *khalifah* extends beyond individual moral responsibility and encompasses collective transformation. Environmental activism in Abah Anom's perspective is communal, engaging society in the collective responsibility of environmental preservation as a shared spiritual mandate. This approach—best categorized as *eco-Sufism*—bridges local wisdom, classical Sufi values, and the contemporary need for planetary sustainability.

Grounded in this foundation, Abah Anom's thought and practice not only contribute to the discourse of Islamic ecology but also provide a robust spiritual framework for modern environmental movements. His model offers a new direction for developing a more grounded, humanistic, and ecological form of contemporary spirituality. The *pepelakan* concept is an innovative synthesis that connects the transcendent with real-world action, affirming that caring for the Earth is not only a social duty but a profound calling of the soul.

### 3.5 Eco-Sufism as a Civilizational Alternative

The ongoing ecological crisis facing the world today is not merely a technical problem or a matter of technological deficiency—it is, at its core, a crisis of civilization. Modern civilization, built on the foundations of secular rationalism, anthropocentrism, and market-driven economics, has created a profound disconnection between humans and nature (Suwito, 2011; Syihabuddin et al., 2023). Nature is no longer regarded as an integral part of human life, but rather as a mere resource to be exploited without limit. In this context, science- and technology-based solutions have proven insufficient to halt the accelerating pace of environmental degradation. Therefore, what is needed is an alternative civilizational paradigm—one that restores the harmonious relationship between humans, God, and nature. One such transformative perspective is *eco-Sufism*, an integration of Sufi teachings with ecological consciousness (Sugiarti & Riyanto, 2024).

Eco-Sufism views nature not simply as an object or “other,” but as *ayat kauniyah*—signs of God’s greatness manifest in the universe. The relationship between humans and nature is not one of domination, but a spiritual connection founded on love, mercy, and responsibility. Within this framework, caring for and preserving the environment becomes an act of worship and a spiritual discipline. Classical Sufi teachings, such as those found in the works of Jalaluddin Rumi, Ibn Arabi, and Al-Ghazali, describe the existential unity between humanity and the cosmos, where all beings are part of a single divine reality (*wahdatul wujud*). In Sufi interpretation, even trees, water, and soil possess a spiritual dimension and are therefore worthy of reverence and protection (Kusnadi et al., 2023; Rohidayah, 2018).

A civilization based on eco-Sufism offers a critique of the modern paradigm that overemphasizes human dominance over nature. Eco-Sufism teaches that humans are not owners of the Earth but *khalifah*—vicegerents responsible for sustaining God’s creation. This is not merely a theoretical idea, but one that is practiced in Sufi communities such as the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah Order (TQN) in Suryalaya. Under the guidance of Abah Anom, Sufi spirituality is not seen as an escape from the world, but as a path of inner purification that enables one to fulfill social and ecological roles wisely. TQN teachings encourage adherents to embrace simplicity, patience, and gratitude as foundational ethics for life—principles that also support environmentally friendly living (Kalimantan, 2025).

Abah Anom has demonstrated that Sufism can serve as a foundation for building a society that is both spiritually and ecologically oriented. At his pesantren, worship is complemented by sustainable environmental management, reforestation efforts, and spiritual farming. Through this approach, a social ecosystem is formed that prioritizes not economic growth alone, but sustainability, harmony, and the blessings of life. Thus, eco-Sufism functions not only as a theological alternative but also as a foundation for constructing a new social and cultural system that is more ethical and sustainable.

In a global context, the concept of eco-Sufism is highly relevant as a civilizational alternative for a future world suffering from spiritual decay and ecological degradation. A world built on competition, consumerism, and greedy capitalism is in dire need of a collective spirituality that can reshape the human-Earth relationship. The spiritual movement exemplified by the TQN Suryalaya community shows that lifestyle changes based on Sufi values can become a powerful civilizational force. It offers a model of life founded on spirituality, simplicity, cleanliness, and responsibility—one that, if replicated on a broad scale, has the potential to transform the architecture of civilization toward a more humane direction.

Eco-Sufism also serves as a bridge between scientific knowledge and spiritual wisdom. In many cases, modern ecological approaches fail because they lack a value-based and spiritual dimension. Ecological science often remains descriptive and predictive, yet fails to awaken the moral consciousness necessary for real change. In contrast, eco-Sufism touches the deepest inner realms of the human being, motivating transformation not through external pressure but through spiritual drive and divine love. This is what makes the Sufi approach a transformative force within environmental preservation efforts (Suhaimi, 2021).

As a civilizational alternative, eco-Sufism also excels in cultural inclusivity and local contextualization. In Indonesia, for example, Sufi values have long been embedded in the religious practices of the people, particularly through Sufi orders (*tarekat*). The integration of Sufi values and environmental conservation—as exemplified by Abah Anom—makes eco-Sufism not merely elitist or academic, but a living religious praxis embedded in everyday life. It does not create a dichotomy between the spiritual and the material worlds, but instead bridges the two in holistic harmony.

Therefore, eco-Sufism is not merely a school of thought but also a paradigm of action and a foundation for alternative civilization. It offers a way of life that honors the sanctity of nature, positions spirituality as a social force, and calls humanity back to its essential role as guardians of the Earth. In a world increasingly bereft of meaning and connection, eco-Sufism offers hope that a more civilized, spiritual, and sustainable global order is still possible.

### 3.6 Contemporary Relevance and Implications of Abah Anom's Thought

Abah Anom's thought on integrating Sufi spirituality with environmental awareness remains profoundly relevant in addressing the complexities of social dynamics and ecological crises in the modern era. His concept of *pepelakan* not only reflects classical Sufi wisdom but also offers a contextual and applicable model for ecological action. Amid worsening environmental degradation driven by industrialization, uncontrolled urbanization, and consumerist lifestyles, Abah Anom's approach presents a deep alternative: environmental preservation is not merely a technical act but an integral part of human worship and spiritual development.

The relevance of Abah Anom's approach becomes even more apparent in light of the multidimensional crises affecting global society today. Climate change, moral decay, and spiritual alienation in the age of technological advancement require a multidisciplinary approach that addresses not only physical and structural issues but also the existential roots of human life. Here, Abah Anom's environmental Sufism emerges as a balanced path that harmoniously integrates spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. The spirituality he cultivated was not escapist, but grounded, contributive, and transformative.

In a modern world characterized by fragmentation, Abah Anom's teachings challenge the dichotomy between the spiritual and the material. He offered a holistic vision of Islam, wherein environmental management is inseparable from spiritual life. Activities such as tree planting, maintaining cleanliness, and wisely managing resources are understood as acts of *dhikr* and expressions of *mahabbah* (love) toward Allah. This represents a reinterpretation of worship—not centered solely on formal rituals, but emphasizing social and ecological benefit (Suhendra, 2013).

In contemporary discourses on spirituality and environmental preservation, the thought of KH. Ahmad Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin—widely known as Abah Anom—stands out as a unique and highly valuable contribution. As a modern Sufi figure and *murshid* of the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Order at the Suryalaya Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya, Abah Anom developed a framework that harmonized Sufi values with ecological awareness. His ideas not only reflect the depth of classical Sufi wisdom but also directly address today's ecological crises. He constructed a spiritual framework that bridges religious values with pressing socio-ecological issues.

Abah Anom was a spiritual leader who played a crucial role in the renewal of Sufism in Indonesia. His leadership of the TQN in Suryalaya not only preserved established Sufi traditions but also responded creatively to modern challenges. He offered teachings that spanned the inner, social, and ecological dimensions of life—making Islamic spirituality more adaptive to changing times. The concept of *pepelakan*, alongside teachings on *mahabbatu Allah* (love for God), formed the foundation for internalizing ecological ethics within the spiritual practices of his followers. The depth and flexibility of his thought demonstrate how Sufism can serve as a solution to contemporary human and environmental problems.

One of the most distinctive aspects of Abah Anom's teaching is the application of environmental ethics as a manifestation of spiritual piety. This is reflected in his constant encouragement to choose actions that bring ecological benefit as part of practicing true Islamic values. In the Sufism he taught,

harmony between God, humans, and nature is a central principle. Therefore, environmental ethics is not viewed as a mere ideal, but as a lived reality in environmental stewardship. In-depth analysis reveals that his approach to environmental Sufism has positively impacted the environmental quality of the surrounding region.

Respect for local wisdom was another vital component of Abah Anom's approach. He believed that indigenous knowledge could be integrated with Islamic principles to create sustainable environmental management. Thus, the ecological ethics he developed were not solely grounded in universal moralities but were also interwoven with spiritual values rooted in local tradition. For Abah Anom, Sufism served as a vehicle for enhancing ecological awareness while simultaneously improving the overall quality of life within communities (SuaraIslam.id, 2025).

Through the concept of *pepelakan*, Abah Anom offered a synthesis of traditional Sufi values and contemporary ecological consciousness. This concept not only integrates spiritual and social dimensions but also revitalizes the human role as *khalifah* (steward) on Earth. Within this framework, humans are not exploitative rulers but responsible caretakers of nature. The concept of *khalifah* is understood as a divine trust to be fulfilled through a spiritual foundation. As such, environmental conservation becomes a broader expression of worship—not limited to formal rituals, but encompassing actions that sustain God's creation.

The *eco-Sufism* model developed by Abah Anom represents a creative reinterpretation of classical Sufi teachings in response to modern ecological challenges. This approach is not only conceptual but also applied in the daily lives of students and surrounding communities. His thought becomes increasingly relevant as the world grapples with multidimensional environmental crises. His vision of integrating spirituality and environmental action offers an alternative paradigm that is both contextual and solution-oriented.

Moreover, Abah Anom expanded the notion of worship into a process of internal transformation that results in deliberate, outward action. This lays the foundation for a form of spirituality that is embodied in ecological behavior. Through this method, he created an Islamic environmental ethic that unites inner and outer dimensions—between contemplation and contribution. This form of spirituality enriches Islamic discourse while having tangible effects on environmental sustainability.

From the perspective of Sufism as taught by Abah Anom, humans as *khalifah* are positioned as intermediaries between the physical and spiritual worlds—embodying the principle of *insan kamil* (the perfected human being). This role entails a profound responsibility to maintain the balance of God's creation by developing ecological wisdom rooted in spiritual awareness. Environmental preservation, therefore, becomes a means of drawing closer to Allah and a real manifestation of worship.

The integration of spirituality and ecology championed by Abah Anom provides not only a strong ethical foundation for environmental preservation movements but also a transformative model of contemporary spirituality. This paradigm breaks down the traditional dichotomy between the material and the spiritual by presenting a holistic approach that upholds the sanctity of nature while remaining open to the advancement of science and technology. Through this approach, there is vast potential for developing a more comprehensive Islamic environmental theology capable of addressing global ecological challenges through profound spiritual wisdom.

On a practical level, Abah Anom's teachings create a space for environmental activism that emerges from inner awareness. This model not only shapes environmentally conscious individuals but also mobilizes communities to collectively build harmony with nature. It is a model that is not only relevant within the Indonesian context but also offers an alternative perspective in global discourses on sustainable development.

Thus, Abah Anom's thought offers significant contributions to a renewed understanding of development and sustainability—one that transcends a solely economic framework to embrace a deeply spiritual grounding. In alignment with Seyyed Hossein Nasr's critique of the modern materialist paradigm, Abah Anom articulates an alternative narrative of progress and well-being that

harmonizes spiritual values with the preservation of the Earth. His intellectual legacy serves as a robust foundation for rethinking both development trajectories and environmental theology in the future of Islam.

However, placing Abah Anom's contributions within the broader and evolving discourse of Islamic environmentalism reveals a rich plurality of approaches. For instance, Khalid (2019) foregrounds an Islamic legal framework by employing *maqasid al-shariah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) to articulate environmental ethics grounded in jurisprudence. Al-Jayyousi (2010) expands the conversation to include interfaith dialogue and pluralistic engagement, advocating for cooperation among diverse religious traditions to address global ecological crises.

Within the Indonesian context, scholars such as Sahal Mahfudz emphasize the inseparability of social justice and ecological balance, advocating sustainability that is both spiritual and socio-politically conscious. Meanwhile, Amin Abdullah critiques secular environmental paradigms for neglecting spiritual cosmology, calling for a reinvigorated integration of Islamic metaphysics with ecological awareness. These perspectives complement and sometimes contrast with Abah Anom's eco-Sufism, collectively enriching Islamic environmental thought by highlighting legal, social, interreligious, and metaphysical dimensions.

In this light, Abah Anom's spiritually rooted paradigm offers a vital and creative alternative that dialogues with, and is enhanced by, these diverse contemporary voices in Islamic and global eco-theology. His work invites ongoing reflection and development toward a comprehensive environmental ethic that is not only grounded in Islamic spirituality but also responsive to jurisprudential rigor, social justice, and interfaith collaboration.

#### 4. Conclusion

The increasingly complex and multidimensional phenomenon of environmental degradation demands a response that is not merely technical but also spiritual and ethical. In this context, the teachings of *tasawuf* (Sufism) have proven capable of offering a comprehensive value framework for reestablishing the relationship between humans and nature. Through the practices of the Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Order, KH. Ahmad Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin—widely known as Abah Anom—has demonstrated that spirituality not only guides human beings toward God but also instructs them to live in harmony with His creation.

The spiritual education he developed at Pesantren Suryalaya reflects a serious effort to shape humans as *khalifah* (stewards) on Earth—not only ritually devout but also ecologically responsible. The environmental awareness that flourishes within the TQN community does not originate from external mandates, but from an inner purification nurtured through *dhikr*, *tazkiyatun nafs* (soul purification), and a lifestyle of simplicity. This forms the foundation of *eco-Sufism*—a Sufi approach that affirms environmental preservation as an integral part of spiritual devotion to God.

As a civilizational alternative, eco-Sufism bridges the gap between contemporary ecological needs and the spiritual wisdom long embedded in Islamic tradition. In Abah Anom's view, harming nature is equivalent to wounding the Divine dimension present in all creation. Conversely, caring for the Earth is a form of *dhikr* in action. This model offers renewed hope for the emergence of a development paradigm that is more just, sustainable, and meaningful—one that not only saves the environment but also restores humanity's existential relationship with God and the universe.

Therefore, the integration of spirituality and environmental preservation, as exemplified by Abah Anom, is not merely a localized phenomenon confined to a Sufi order or Islamic boarding school. Rather, it is a civilizational legacy with profound relevance for the future of humanity. *Eco-Sufism*, as it lives and breathes within TQN Suryalaya, stands as a reflection of the possibility for a society that is not only technologically advanced but also spiritually enlightened.



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