

**Environmental Ethics in Islam and Hinduism in the Light of Prominent Thinkers of Twentieth Century (A Comparative and Analytical Study)**

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**Abstract**

In the present scenario of environmental degradation, Islam and Hinduism serve as the source of both an ecological worldview and an ethos involving the environment. Their sacred understanding of man and environment is remarkable to demolish disequilibrium of our earthly environment. In contemporary times, the eco-scholars of Islam and Hinduism tried to reinterpret environmental ethics grounded in divinely guided scriptures of both faiths to bring peace and harmony in the environment of our home planet earth. They criticize the anthropocentric value approach of west which is insufficient to deal with present environmental crisis. On a more practical level, they suggest that both religions describe metaphysical and philosophical principles governing the environmental ethics and approaches for the limitation of human behavior toward our home planet earth and living within these limits may defined as living holistically. Therefore, this paper makes a comparative analysis of their eco-ethical dimensions grounded in sacred scriptures of both faiths and present environmental ethics to cope with the trends of 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is suggested that the application of eco-ethics of Islam and Hinduism can help humanity to restore, protect, and conserve his environment against over exploitation and develop harmonious attitude toward it.

**Keywords:**

Ecological Crisis, Anthropocentric, Virtue, Islam, Ethics, Hinduism, Sustainability, Environmental Ethics, Sacred, Cosmo-Centric

**1. Introduction:**

Religion remained one of the most important wellsprings of mankind's concern with earth and natural resources. It provides the worldview, values, and ethics for the protection of our home planet earth and its biodiversity. It defines the sacred dimension of earthly diversity including

mountains, rivers, forests, animals, plants, and human beings. It gives the meaning to human existence on earth and ties the non-human residents of the universe to the divine. In the early 1970s, environmental ethics were emerged as a new discipline in an academic discourse to understand the current environmental problems from moral paradigm. Some scholars, for instance Arnold Toynbee's *"The Religious Background of the Present Environmental Crisis: A Viewpoint"*<sup>1</sup> and Lynn White's article *"The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis"*<sup>2</sup> blamed religions for allowing anthropocentric view of man. Many theologians and religious scholars have tried to respond to their assertions. Then they started religious and spiritual approaches to rectify the present scientific worldview of nature. They felt the need to solve the problems from a religious perspective. Because human beings have exploited the natural environment for economic benefits through using science and technology. It has been observed that science and technology has provided many facilities to human beings, but they are failed to provide a sustainable use of these new developments from ethical perspective which is non-harming for all species on earth.

Therefore, some secular ethicists, like Tom Regan in *"The Case for Animal Rights"*<sup>3</sup> and Peter Singer in *"Animal liberation: towards an end to man's inhumanity to animals"*<sup>4</sup> talked about ethical attitudes to biodiversity of earth without articulating spiritual feelings for non-human creatures of earth. Which may call secular environmental ethics and are critical to the hierarchical value approaches of religions. On the other hand, some scholars realize the importance of moral teaching of religion in motivation of human attitude to diversity of earth in favor of environmental sustainability. So, they tried to solve present ecological crisis from religious oriented environmental ethics.

As for as, the specific response toward eco-ethics of Islam and Hinduism is concern, they were developed by 20<sup>th</sup> century religious scholars such as Nasr in *"Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man"*<sup>5</sup> *"Religion and the Order of Nature"*<sup>6</sup> and *"Islam and the Plight of Modern Man"*<sup>7</sup> observed and framed the current ecological crisis as a spiritual crisis of modern man, not just modern science and engineering alone are responsible for this vast catastrophe. Khālīd in *"Islam and the Environment - Ethics and Practice an Assessment"*<sup>8</sup> *"Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics"*<sup>9</sup> and *"Islam, Ecology, and Modernity: An Islamic Critique of the Root Causes of Environmental Degradation"*<sup>10</sup> draw attention to the increasing destructive impact of negative behaviour of human beings to non-human world. He examines some of the ethical patterns of Islamic Shariah which frame to basic principles of Islamic

conservational practices and applied them to solve the current ecological problems of Muslim societies around the world. Izzi Dien in *"Islam and the Environment: Theory and Practice"*<sup>11</sup> analyzes the negative impact of modern industry on the environment of Middle East. Ozdemir in *"The ethical dimension of human attitude towards nature: a Muslim perspective"*<sup>12</sup> Manzoor in *"Environment and Values: Islamic Perspective"*<sup>13</sup> Haleem in *"Islam and the Environment"*<sup>14</sup> and Sayem in *"Religions and Environmental Ethics: A Comparative Study of John B. Cobb, Jr. and Seyyed Hossein Nasr"*<sup>15</sup> talked about environmental ethics from Islamic faith. Gandhi's *"An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth"*<sup>16</sup> is an example of Gandhi's simple lifestyle in advocating the new ecofriendly coexistence of all living species including human beings. Naess in *"Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World"*<sup>17</sup> borrowed the concept of "self-realization" of Gandhi and developed a new ecological approach. Prime's *"Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth"*<sup>18</sup> is addressing current ecological problems in religious vein. Haigh *"Deep Ecology Education: Learning from Its Vaisnava Roots"*<sup>19</sup> defined elaborately how Naess developed the approach of deep ecology from Vaishnava roots. Jain *"Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability"*<sup>20</sup> gives a detail account of the ecological practices of three communities of India.

Despite the variety of scholarly publications on environmental concern in contemporary world from Islamic and Hindu tradition, their perspectives are differed as well. This paper makes a comparative and analytical study of their eco-religious understandings, approaches, and suggestions for drawing environmental ethics to protect our earth against exploitation.

This paper is devoted to answer the following questions: what are the various models of environmental ethics and behaviors developed in 20<sup>th</sup> century against the over exploitation of natural resources. And how Muslim and Hindu scholars responded to environmental ethics to protect the environment of our home planet earth in religious vein? In this respect, Islamic and Hindu scholars seek to present religious environmental ethics based on traditional worldview of both faiths. They interpreted traditional set of ethical responsibilities that need to be represented in new era of environmental crisis. Therefore, religious environmental ethics are renewal or rediscovery of an ancient wisdom that has been lost with renaissance. Thus, they are based on the existing ethical worldview and are not external to the tradition.

Before determining the Islamic and Hindu contemporary concern about environmental ethics, I will briefly describe some fundamental concepts about ethics and environmental ethics.

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## 2. Definition and Classification of Ethics

Ethics implies a set of moral principles for human beings toward others.<sup>21</sup> Generally speaking, there are three approaches of ethics in philosophy such as virtue, deontology, and consequentialist ethics. The virtue ethics is the oldest one which was developed by Aristotle during 384-322 BCE. It speaks about righteous behavior toward others. The second approach is deontology means duty-based ethics. The speaker of this approach was John Locke (1632-1704) and the developer of it is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). It is based on fulfilling duty regardless of its consequences or without consideration of any reward or fear. The third category is consequentialism founded by David Hume (1711-1776). It was further developed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. It is based on highest good and greatest happiness. That is why it is called utilitarianism.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, these three divisions are considered as the foundation of ethics.

### 1.1. Approaches to Environmental Ethics

Md Abu Sayem writes that: *“Environmental ethics is the application of ethical standards to the relationship between human and non-human entities in the environment.”*<sup>23</sup> Thus, the environmental ethics are divided into two categories such as anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric. The anthropocentrism stands by itself while non-anthropocentrism is divided into three: pathocentrism, biocentrism, and holism. These are also considered as four main types of ethics which may described as *“efforts to articulate, systematize, and defend systems of value guiding human treatment of and behavior in the natural world.”*<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, environmental pragmatism and eco-feminism are also considered as environmental ethical approaches and categorized as non-anthropocentric. These two categorizes are also identified to bring environmental justice in society.

**1.1.1. The Anthropocentrism** approach considers humans as the only intrinsically valuable creature and places them at the center of moral consideration. While nature possesses only instrumental value as it is made for human needs. John Passmore’s work *“Man’s Responsibility for Nature”*<sup>25</sup> defended moral obligation to environment but in terms of human interests. Eugene Hargrove developed his anthropocentric views in his *“Foundations of Environmental Ethics.”*<sup>26</sup>

**1.1.2. The pathocentrism** approach falls into non-anthropocentric approach. It deals with the moral status of sentient entities along with human beings. The basic aim of this approach is that like

humans, animals are sentient beings that feels pleasure and pain, their welfare should be included in moral consideration also.

**1.1.3. The Biocentrism** or eco-centrism approach extends the moral values from human species to all living beings and talks about the moral status of the endangered species and ecosystem. Paul Taylor is a prominent bio-centric scholar who considered equal inherent value of all individual living beings.<sup>27</sup>

**1.1.4. The Holism** or Cosmo-centrism extends the moral values of human and living species to all other objects of natural world or whole eco-system including water, soil, rocks, plants, air. In Rolston view, whole eco-system possesses a systemic value that is both fundamental and prior to the intrinsic value of all living things including humans. Because this whole eco-system can produce life.<sup>28</sup>

### **3. Environmental Ethics in Islam and Hinduism**

We have discussed the secular western spectrum of ethical positions under the term environmental ethics. They have adopted four ethical positions about environment. Therefore, the environmental ethics are interwoven with the holistic of approach of Islam and Hinduism. Both religions, have something special to offer humanity and they provide with a positive code of life transaction in the natural state. In Islam, man's life is an expression of existence in submission to the will of Allah in harmony with the natural order of His creation. In Hindu religion as 'Sanatana-Dharma,' man's life is part of dharma which means, "*religiously sanctioned ways of life and obligation.*"<sup>29</sup> Because, dharma is the root of the four (dharma, artha, kama and moksha) recognized goals of life. Thus, human beings are bound to act according to prescribed duties (dharma) from their childhood to death in order to maintain ecological balance. This integrated approach of both religious traditions describes our earth and its life bearing resources as a sacred reality with distinct purposes not hailed only as a habit for flora and fauna.

### **1.2. Metaphysical And Philosophic Principles Governing The Environmental Ethics in Islam and Hinduism**

In both religions, there are fundamental ethical ideas based on sacred scriptures that regulates human behavior toward the protection of natural resources and living within these limits may defined as living holistically. These are interpreted in ecological paradigm by contemporary scholars of both religious traditions.

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**1.2.1. The Unity Principle: The Metaphysical Worldview**

In Islam, the unity principle is described as tawḥīd which is the foundation of Islamic faith and the ground for every discussion of ethics. The ethical dimension of tawḥīd describes that Allah SWT alone is the source of all moral values and code of conducts. And its monotheistic dimension affirms the oneness of God and unity of His creation. This is holistic approach of Islam to understand the relation of creation to their creator. The holy Quran states: *“What is in the heavens and the earth belong to Allah. Allah encompasses everything.”*<sup>30</sup>

Khālīd suggests that knowing the Creator is the first step to understand His creation.<sup>31</sup> Sūrah Ikhhlās describes the concept of creator to understand the relation of humans with their environment. This relationship is neither based on Cosmo-centrism nor anthropocentrism but is theocentric or God-centered. Wherein it is believed that earth with its life bearing resources and man are God’s creation and His signs.<sup>32</sup> Earth is the theater of theophanies and mirror of divine creativity. It is divine reflection in both that veils and reveals the supremacy of its Creator.<sup>33</sup> While mankind is the theophany of God's Names and Qualities.<sup>34</sup> He is instrument of knowledge and a channel of grace for cosmos.<sup>35</sup> They both are created through a set of procedure. These two entities are obliged to survive in accordance with the Fiṭrah principle or with the order created by Allah SWT. Therefore, at the level of intra behavior between earth and man is to be harmonious to the universal order and their inter behavior is described based on human’s role in the universe. In this respect, earth is created as subservient to mankind and mankind has been created with the ability to behave and misbehave. Apart from this, mankind is blessed with a spiritual element which describes his role as the master and guardian of earth. This position assigned to him by his Creator Who intends a high destiny for him, for instance to affirm His existent, to be His vicegerent and to serve Him as being a trustee or responsible agent on earth. Any deviation of assigned role may intensively disturb the harmonious relationship of man and earth with the order of the universe. It results in disaster and ecological crisis.

Manzoor writes that for Muslim, the concept of Tawḥīd is very essential part of ethics. On ecological level it describes the natural world as Islamic and Muslim which is brought under moral control, and it reminds mankind the goal of their existence on earth. Then their purpose and actions become intertwined.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, in Hindu tradition Earth is not merely sign of divine but it is considered the feminine aspect of divine such as Prakriti in the relation to the material pole of universe.<sup>37</sup> It is also imagined by Vedic

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seers as the mother of all animate and inanimate objects and goddesses with anthropomorphic qualities.<sup>38</sup> Hindu tradition understands the earth-man relationship based on “anthropocosmic” worldview which defines “*Brahman and universe as one*.”<sup>39</sup> In this view, the earth and man both have no separate identity apart from Brahman. In this view, earth and man are considered as the parts and parcel of God.

Gandhi’s philosophy about man’s relationship with all livings is based upon the oneness of all life forms. Gandhi says: “*I believe in advaita (non-duality), I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spirituality, the whole world gains with him and, if one man fails, the whole world fails to that extent*.”<sup>40</sup> Radhakrishnan describes that when earth and man are viewed in relation to Brahman, then all this is considered real and identical to Brahman: “*sarvam khalv idam brahma*”.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the goal of human life is to identify oneself with Brahman and to harmonize oneself with earth in order to return to the transcendent source called Brahman of both human beings and earth. This ‘anthropocosmic vision’ indicates that the world as object cannot be manipulated from human beings as subject, but their responsibility is to understand it and themselves so that they can live up to the fullness of their humanity.

### 1.2.2. The Creation Principle: The Intrinsic Dignity of Creatures

Here the creation principle means to describe the intrinsic dignity of all creatures and the position of mankind in the natural order of creation. In Islam, the term ‘Fiṭrah’ is used to describe the origination of mankind within the primordial nature of creation. The holy Quran states in this respect: “*Set yourself firmly towards the Deen [the way, the life transaction], As a pure natural believer, Allah’s natural pattern on which He made mankind. There is no changing Allah’s creation. That is the true Deen-But most people do not know it*”<sup>42</sup> Khālīd interpreted this verse in ecological understanding. He says that this verse is telling the position of human beings in the pattern of Allah’s creation. It depicts that they are originated in the bosom of creation. Allah SWT originated them like all other sentient beings. This understanding of human beings makes them as a part of a vast natural pattern.<sup>43</sup>

For the sanctity of all natural resources Nasr interpreted al-Muhit, the attribute of Allah SWT in a spiritual or a deeper sense of Islam. He said that Allah Himself is the “*Ultimate Environment*” which encompasses or surrounds mankind. Because Allah is said to be Muhit (All-Encompassing) in Qur’an. Nasr suggests a way to understand the divine aspect of all creatures which is to remember Allah SWT. To remember

Allah is to see earth along with all its resources and understand them as His reality as Muhit. The destruction of earthly resources is the result of modern man's attempts to view them as an ontologically independent order of reality. The Quality of Allah as Muhit reminds human beings the sacred quality of earth, and it is all components as signs of Allah.<sup>44</sup> Human beings should understand the existence of natural resources as filled with divine presence which alone is the ultimate environment.

In Hinduism, we can relate the term 'self-realization' to deal with this principle. Martin Haigh described that although the concept of self-realization emerged from Vedantic philosophy, but the source is Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>45</sup> In the term of self-realization, we mean that Gandhi was speaking about the supreme or universal 'Self' the 'Atman' that is to be realized rather than the 'self' or the 'Jiva' of egocentric interest. By reducing the dominance of the jiva or narrow self, Gandhi tries to reach self-realization. Through this wider 'self' everything or every living being is connected and identified.

According to Arne Naess, Gandhi was a strong advocator of self-realization. He was very extreme about self-realization of other living beings than human beings. His Ashrams were living example of biospherical egalitarianism. He rightly proved the possibility of satisfactory coexistence of other living beings with humans.<sup>46</sup> Although the founder of deep ecology is Arne Naess, but the Islamic concept of 'Fiṭrah' and Hindu concept of 'self-realization' forms the foundation of deep ecology. Deep ecology defines equality of all life forms, and their basic right of living and flourishing

### 1.2.3. The Balance Principle: An Ecological balance

The balance principle means to describe that all components of creation work and maintains themselves in a stable state. In Islam, the term 'Mīzān' is used to describe the principle of balance. The holy Quran describes the function of creation in one of its most popular passages: "*The All-Merciful taught the Qur'an He created man and taught him clear expression. The sun and moon both run with precision. The stars and the trees all bow down in prostration. He erected heaven and established the balance.*"<sup>47</sup> This verse describes that all creature is submissive to the will of Allah SWT and performing their duties honestly. For Muslims, these verses remind that everything in the universe is in the state of prostration, and that is how the earth remains in balance. In Khālīd view, human beings are the only sentient beings in creation gifted with intellect and reasoning. They are choosing not to prostrate like the other objectives of universe and destroy everything around them by their presumed cleverness. Human



beings should understand their place among the order of creation and bring balance in the world of nature. They are not allowed to destroy their environment. If they function properly with the rest of creatures in natural patterns, then the earth and its environment will remain in the state of equilibrium.<sup>48</sup>

In Hindu tradition, the term “rtām or dharma” are used to refer to what we call balance principle. Vedas uses the word ‘rtām’ means cosmic order and rhythm. It also uses the term ‘dharma’ means to hold, and support frequently in connection with yajna (sacrifice). Jain interpreted this concept of rtām and dharma deliberately. He defines that although the Vedas celebrate the concept of rtām in connection with natural order, but it transformed into the idea of dharma. The concept of dharma used in Purusha Sukta is the latter version of the Rig-Veda. In this latter addition, the concept of rtām converted into dharma. In earlier version of Rig-Veda, the yajnas were offered by human beings with best material like soma, grains, white, rice, barley and ghee to God. They believed that through these offerings they please cosmic gods and maintain the rtām of the world.

Both dharma and rtām have the sense of cosmic order or law that sustains the universe, the mechanism to achieve it shifts from physical sacrifices to metaphorical sacrifice of a cosmic man. This shift also demands from humans to move away from materialistic pursuits to metaphysical one. The Purusha Sukta declares that earth, air, water, fire, trees, animals, and all creatures are organs of Lord’s body, so believers should respect them all. Drawing on this divine foundation, dharma or cosmic order leads human beings to understand the divine presence in all things. As a result, treat all creatures with respect and without harm. Furthermore, Hindu scriptures highlight the fact that protecting the earth and its ingredients is part of dharma.<sup>49</sup> Thus, human beings are bound to act according to prescribed duties (dharma) from their childhood to death to maintain ecological balance.

Furthermore, Prime describes that Hinduism is a ‘holistic religion’ as ‘Sanatan Dharma’ means ‘the eternal essence of life.’ This essence is the essential quality not limited to human beings only, but its unities all beings, humans, animals, and plants. The concept of underlying unity describes our earth filled with various resources that are not made up of inanimate matter, to be wasted or exploited they all are sharing one spiritual core of existence, therefore must be treated with respect.<sup>50</sup>

#### **1.2.4. The Responsibility Principle: Mankind as Trustee of God**

This ethical principle is determined to explain the role and responsibility of human beings toward earth that provides them various sustenance of

life. In Islam, the entire foundation of environmental ethics rests firmly on the Quranic notion of Khilāfah (vicegerency) and amana (trusteeship). As the supreme creation of God, the purpose of man's life on earth is the fulfilment of divine will. Because he is gifted with various qualities that require for this mission. He is knowledgeable creation of God and has given the intellect to manage any situation. He is also guided by divine revelation through Prophets so that he can live on earth with morally and ethically a good life. In Nasr view, he is moral being who works as a cosmic bridge between natural world and God. He is the instrument through which the divine can enter in material world and become actual. Indeed, mankind is the highest of God's creation, bearing in himself the spirit of God, a theomorphic being before whom the angels prostrated.<sup>51</sup>

Earth is a testing ground for man, and he has accepted it as a trust (amana) for his existence. In Manzoor view, the trust is a mutual commitment between God and man as such man is a custodian of God's creation. He is willing to care and protect the environment of earth against exploitation. Nasr also describes the duty of mankind in following words: *"Man therefore occupies a particular position in this world. He is at the axis and center of cosmic milieu, at once the master and custodian of nature."*<sup>52</sup> In Khālid view, the Khilāfah is a sacred duty assigned to mankind as the price of the gift of intellect and free will.<sup>53</sup> Allah SWT wants to see mankind how he creates harmony between his outer world (earth) and his inner (self) by following His laws through revelation and conceptualize each thing through his intellect.

In Hindu view about the principle of human responsibility on earth, Gandhi described the term 'trusteeship in his 'Autobiography.' He relates it with the principle of responsibility. He describes the meaning of the term 'trustee' as the servant of God. If we elaborate this concept of 'trustee' it can implied on all human beings that they all are servant of God in this materialistic world. They all can utilize the resources of earth in sustainable way.<sup>54</sup>

### **1.3. Some others Ethical Approaches to Save Our Home Planet Earth**

There are fundamental ethical ideas based on Islamic and Hindu tradition that relate to human treatment of the earth and natural resources. They are framed from the central moral teachings of Islam and Hinduism. These are as followings:

#### **1.3.1. Principle of Moderation and Justice**

In holy Quran, God said Muslims as Just and moderate Ummah.<sup>55</sup> In Islamic tradition, the words for justice and moderation are the balance, harmony, order, and equilibrium are used etymologically. Justice is also

the supreme attribute of God. Manzoor writes that: *"Divine justice is the guarantor of the Muslim's dignity and self-esteem and is the lock on the door barring human complacency in matters moral."*<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the moderation is a path to reach or attain the goal of justice. The moderation of Islamic ethics suggests a believer to be moderate in all aspects of his life including his use of earth and natural resources.

Just as Prophet Muhammad SAW has guided his believers not to overextend their prayers, not to prolong their fasts from define duration of time, not to adopt celibacy, and not to live a miserable life. He orders them to be moderate in every practice of life, for instance end their fast before offering sunset prayers, get married, wear clean and best clothes for congregational prayers and be moderate in everything like sleep, eat, work, and enjoy the bounties of God but not to overindulge.

The adoption of the moderation ethics can save Muslim Ummah from the unnecessary of wants and desires of materialistic comforts. The notion of justice with its corollary moderation may constitute the Muslim answer to the problem of ecological ethos. Because our universe is created with order and balance. The unlimited use of natural resources of earth may create disorder and unbalance in the universe which is forbidden in Islam. The holy Quran says in this respect: *"and eat and drink, but waste not by extravagance, certainly He (Allah) likes not the wasteful."*<sup>57</sup> Islam shows the path of ecological justice with collaboration of moderation ethics. Manzoor writes that Islam does not emphasize on the material and economic values of life but on moral and ethical values of life. The goal of Islamic morality is to establish the kingdom of God on earth and get its reward on the Day of Judgment.

Like Islamic concept of moderation in every field of life, Hinduism teaches asceticism (sanyasa), as a way of restraint in consumption and simplicity in living. It suggests human beings to take from resources of earth what they need for sustenance without a sense of ownership. In this respect, Gandhi is a role model for simple living. His Autobiography shows that his entire life was an ecological treatise. His every act, thought, emotion functioned much like an ecosystem: his morning ablution and walk, his small meals of fruits, vegetables and nuts, his mud cure of disease, his likeness to cow's milk, his consumption of small property, his spinning wheel, his revising to basic Jain and Hindu values of truth and non-violence, fasting and practice of celibacy, all these consider him as a role model of ecological living.<sup>58</sup> Hence, the eternal values of life were embodied in Gandhi's thought and action. He said that: *"The truth is that my ethics not only permit me to claim but require me to own kinship with*

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*not merely the ape but the horse and the sheep, the lion and the leopard, the snake and the scorpion.”*<sup>59</sup>

### 1.3.2. Principle of non-violence

Indic concept of ‘ahimsa’ implies an all-round material as well as spiritual development of every individual. Ahimsa is a progressive concept that is concerned with a continued healthy environment apart from political and social development so that all sided development of human beings may be ensured. In the light of recent discoveries of science that our home planet earth is filled with chain of interdependent relationship between animate and inanimate. There is need to extend the application of the concept of non-violence to environment for the healthy growth of natural resources. Because we can no longer be concerned only with human beings and their destiny since they are organically linked with all other realities of the earth. These resources of earth have life bearing quality for human beings and even for non-human beings. Hence, there is need to extend the concept of ‘ahimsa’ to the whole of sentient and non-sentient beings in environment.

According to Naess, Gandhi was a strong advocator of non-violence. He was very extreme about the right of life of other living beings than human beings. His Ashrams were living example of bio-spherical egalitarianism. He rightly proved the possibility of satisfactory coexistence of other living beings with humans. He recognized a common or basic right of living and flourishing.<sup>60</sup> Haigh describes that by following the Gandhi’s ideology of ahimsa, Naess emphasis on non-violent approach toward other living beings and refuted the right of human dominance over other forms of life. Humans should live with harmonious attitude and do as little harm as possible to other biodiversity of earth.<sup>61</sup> Thus, Gandhi’s approach of non-violence, what Khoshoo and Moolakkattu, said, “*had to become central to the ethos of human culture.*”<sup>62</sup>

Islam too does not allow its believers to harm any creature of Allah SWT without adequate justification. All the natural phenomena are considered as the signs of God and divine in nature. Nasr says in this respect: “*the world of nature as the theater of theophanies and mirror of Divine Creativity.*”<sup>63</sup> After understanding nature in this way, Muslims are not allowed to destroy any component of the universe. Allah SWT does not love the destroyer of nature. Therefore, conservation of these resources is a sacred duty in Islam. Khālīd said in this respect: “*Conservation of the environment is a religious duty demanded by Allah. Any deliberate damage to the environment and its resources is a kind of corruption which is forbidden in Islam.*”<sup>64</sup>

### 1.3.3. Sustainable Development

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These eco-scholars are agreed that environmental crisis of today arise from an exponential growth model. The present development of technology is increasing the materialistic standards of life. It is facilitating human beings in several ways by exploiting the natural resources on unprecedented level. The only source of extracting money is the earth which is infinite. It is observed that exploiting earth takes precedence over protecting it. Therefore, the contemporary eco-scholars like Nasr, Khālid, Gandhi and Prime have criticized the western model of development and condemned their secular view of nature. Nasr said: *"I saw the blind development of modern industry as a cancer in the body of nature, a cancerous substance which would finally lead to the destruction of the harmony and balance of the natural world and to its 'death' in the form that we knew it."*<sup>65</sup>

In early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gandhi underlined the critical necessity of sustainable development. He interrogated the modern civilization that established upon increase of wants and desire. He outlined the threat to future generation in his book *'The Hind Swaraj'* that was caused by persistent quest for more material goods. He favored the sustainable development of society. He described it in the notion of performing duties and inclination toward morality and exercise of restraint. Its aim is to fulfil the fundamental needs of humanity and put some limitations on greed and passion.<sup>66</sup> Gandhi's concept of sustainable development is based on his six principle of ideology. He taught the value of work and the sinfulness of waste. He suggested to take from the earth what one needed and no more. He thought that these resources are adequate for human life if these resources are used in balanced way. He said in this perspective: *"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed."*<sup>67</sup> Khālid said about sustainable development in following words: *"No wastage or over-consumption of resources is allowed by Allah. Everyone should consider the sustainable development of the earth by practicing wise utilization of resources and respecting the lives of other creatures."*<sup>68</sup>

#### **1.3.4. Karma and Its Impact on Environment**

Karma is from central teachings of Hinduism. It holds that each of human actions creates consequences. These consequences are whether good or bad, but they are especially important for determining the future fate. Prescribed moral behavior creates good karma toward environment. The relationship between human actions and change in environment was famously noted by Gandhi. In 1934, he described about the reason of a severe earthquake of Bihar in following words: *"A man like me cannot but believe that this earthquake in Bihar is a divine chastisement sent by God*

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for our sins.”<sup>69</sup> This saying of Gandhi suggests a deep sense of interconnectedness of human behavior and natural phenomena.

According to Pankaj Jain view, the environmentalism in Hindu tradition is translated in dharmic term. Dharma is based on karma (religious actions). Thus, many Hindu theologians see a close connection between dharma and ecological degradation. There are four Yugas associated with dharma. According to “Law of Manu” the dharma gradually decreases by one pada (quarter) from Satya to Kali Yuga on the basis of human action.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, dharma is a universal principle of equilibrium.

Therefore, human should replace environmentally destructive karmic patterns with good ones. In this respect, Naess took the distinction made by Kant between moral and beautiful actions. His distinction is also relevant to address the interconnectedness of human actions and environmental change. Kant makes distinction between moral act and beautiful act. An act deserves the name moral act if it is based on moral laws and performed as a duty of individual to do it. It is completely against our inclination but are compelled by our respect for the moral laws without sense of feeling hate. And the ‘beautiful act’ is when one performs the action which the moral law prescribes based on inclinations. Naess suggests Kanti’s terminology of ‘beautiful act’ to influence people toward environmental affairs and works on their inclination rather than morals. According to Naess, extensive moralizing of humans’ relation with environment has given the public the false impression. They thought that we may ask them to sacrifice, behave in more responsible way. Through inclination-based acts we can open a joyful way of sensitivity toward the diversity of life.<sup>71</sup> If the defined ‘self’ of Gandhi is deepened and widened than the requisite care flows naturally. The protection of natural resources will be felt as protection of ourselves.

This was the reason that Muslims eco-scholars emphasized on the revival of the ontological supremacy of the order of creation and worldview over environmental ethics. Nasr said: “*the environmental crisis was in fact the result of a spiritual crisis within the soul of modern man and not simply a result of bad engineering.*”<sup>72</sup> If the earth and all natural resources are experienced by divine order of creation, then our behavior naturally and beautifully follow norms of strict environmental ethics.

The eco-interpretation of Fiṭrah principle of Islam by Khālīd may termed as “deepened realism” of Islam which was called by Naess “ecological self” based on Gandhi philosophy of self-realization. This appreciation would lead humanity to address the environmental concerns of today at its root. When we realize the interconnectedness and interdependence of all creatures based on ‘Fiṭrah’ principle or ecological ‘self’ then automatically

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our actions become beautiful toward each component of earth. And change in environmental practices on the bases of Fiṭrah not only includes revering earth, but it also inspires humans to restore, protect and conserve natural phenomena of earth.

## 2. Evaluation

This study of religious understanding of man and his environment across religious frontiers states that Islam and Hinduism serve as the source of both an ecological worldview and an ethos involving the environment which are intertwined. On a more practical level, the eco-scholars of both religious traditions criticize the anthropocentric value approach of west which is insufficient to deal with present environmental crisis. Their theoretical understanding of man and his environment relates to cosmo-centric value approach. They viewed the intrinsic value of all diversity on earth.

They described the eco-ethical foundation based on divinely guided scriptures of both faiths. This dimension explains that there are certain limits to human behavior and living within these limits may defined as living holistically. Their description of “Unity Principle” in the form of tawhīd or anthropocosmic view brings the wholeness and holiness of environment and man. Their explanation of “Creation Principle” in the form of Fiṭrah or self-realization value approach suggests a deep understanding of all creation and brings the equal right of living and flourishing. Through the “Balance Principle” or an ecological balance approach in the form of Mīzān or dharma/rām they tried to demolish disequilibrium of our planet. Their discussion about “responsibility principle” constitutes mankind as vicegerent or trustee of God. It states that man’s attitude should be responsible toward earth and its resources. Since they are the only creature having blessed with intellect and free will to protect other creatures against exploitation.

Their suggestions for adoption of Islamic principle of justice and moderation can save humanity from the unnecessary of wants and desires of materialistic comforts and the unlimited exploitation of natural resources on the name of progress. The renewal of Hindu or Jain percept of non-violence by Gandhi involves ‘non-injury’ to both the living as well non-living creations of God. Their criticism on the western model of development which is based upon unrestrained desire of wants and comforts that allowed humanity to exploit the natural resources on unprecedented level is extremely useful ethical dimension to sustainable development.

Their findings about correlation between human karma and environmental issues are remarkable to bring equilibrium of our earthly environment. In this respect, they reinterpreted the deep ecological principles inherent in their respected religious traditions. The eco-interpretation of Fiṭrah principle of Islam by Khālīd and Nasr interpretation of al-Muhit, the attribute of Allah SWT in a spiritual or a deeper sense of Islam. He said that Allah Himself is the “*Ultimate Environment*” which encompasses, or surrounding mankind may term as “deepened realism” of Islam which was called by Naess “ecological self” based on Gandhi philosophy of self-realization. This appreciation would lead humanity to address the environmental concerns of today at its root. When we realize the interconnectedness and interdependence of all creatures based on ‘Fiṭrah’ principle or ecological ‘self’ then automatically our actions become beautiful toward each component of earth. And change in environmental practices on the bases of Fiṭrah not only includes revering earth, but it also inspires humans to restore, protect and conserve natural phenomena of earth.

### 3. Conclusion

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that the environmental ethics are interwoven with the holistic of approach of Islam and Hinduism. Islam establish a peaceful relationship between man and his environment only when it understood under the notion of theocentric or tawḥīdic centric worldview that governs the entire world. Islam rejects the ideas viewing ‘God in nature’ (pantheism) and believes in transcendent unity of God. It sees man and his environment as God’s creation and His signs. Earth as the theater of theophanies and mirror of divine creativity while man as the theophany of God's Names and Qualities but not identical to Him as in Hinduism. Hindu tradition recognizes the environmental ethics on the paradigm of anthropocosmic worldview which defines ‘Brahman and universe’ as one. Therefore, this Hindu understanding about Brahman as everything is Brahman and Brahman in everything leads toward pantheism. In this view, man and his environment are considered as the parts and parcel of God.

This study of religious understanding of environmental ethics states that Islam and Hinduism serve as the source of both an ecological worldview and an ethos involving the environment which are intertwined. Therefore, the eco-scholars of both religious traditions suggest that respecting and preserving environment is not just altruistic but also an act of faith and worship. They criticize the anthropocentric value approach of west which is insufficient to deal with present environmental crisis. On a more practical level, it is necessary to rediscover the sacred quality of



environment in the mind of modern man to avoid further catastrophe. The rebirth of man as the custodian of the sacred is also very necessary step to avoid further catastrophe. It implies the rejection of modern secular view of man into religious one who is submissive to God and has ability to act as a bridge between heaven and earth. He can play his role as the vicegerent of God and custodian of environment. By following ethical principles grounded in sacred scriptures of both faiths, he can restore, protect, and conserve environment against over exploitation and develop harmonious attitude toward it.

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