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Manifestation of Environmental Teachings of Islam and Hinduism: An Interfaith Effort in an Era of Environmental Crises

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Abstract

In the present stage of environmental disequilibrium, religion provides worldview that connects natural world to God and never separates mankind from nature. It brings sacredness and value of nature in the mind of modern secular man and can provoke environmental change in his practices. In this regard, current research presents a prismatic view of man and nature rooted in Islam and Hinduism. Furthermore, the eco-religious understandings of contemporary thinkers of both faiths like Seyyed Hossein Nāsr, Fazlun Majeed Khālid, Mahātmā Gandhi, and Ranchor Prime are more focused. Because they are the pioneer of modern environmentalism of Islam and Hinduism. They have shifted the modern secular understanding of man-nature relationship to religious or sacred view of man and his surroundings. Therefore, this paper presents a comparative study of environmental teachings of Islam and Hinduism and discuss the eco-theological response of these contemporary scholars to sustain man-nature relationship in 21st century. Through discussion of their eco-religious thoughts, this article motivates human beings to avoid exploitation of natural resources and protect them for future generations .

Keywords: Environmental crisis, disequilibrium, Anthropocene, nature, Khalifah, Amanah, jiva, Islam, Hinduism

Introduction

Today human beings find themselves in a period that is very critical in terms of their relationship with the natural world. The environment upon which their life is fully dependent has been altered since the middle of the 20th century. It seems that environmental degradation is the result of Anthropocene activities of human beings like deforestation, industrialization, and modern style urbanization, etc. It is argued that these crises started when modern secular man stopped understanding nature as the sacred reality and himself as the protector of it.

In the view of contemporary eco-scholars of Islam and Hinduism like Nāsr, Khālid, Izzi Dien, Gandhi and Prīme, modern secular world view and Industrial Revolution of United States became main factor to bring change in human practices concerning environment. These two features were gradually spread in Muslim and Hindu world through colonization.¹ Furthermore, Gandhi criticized colonial education system in India in his 'Hind Swaraj'.² In Khālid view, there are two historical events that were occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in West, breached the outer perimeters of natural order. The first of these took place in sixteenth century when the usury was legitimized in Christian world. The second was Cartesian doctrine of dualism.³ Such kind of modernity caused to change traditional understanding of environment and the limitation of human activities concerning the environment. They developed a purpose in life far beyond survival. They did not remain only inhabitants on earth, and they became its master or transformer. Industrialization allowed them to exploit natural resources in the name of comfort and luxuries. These changes in human societies and modern worldview have rapidly increased the human impact on the earth. Many global environmental issues are on the rise including deforestation, desertification, biodiversity loss, water, air, climate change, and soil pollution.

In this scenario of environmental crisis, the eco-scholars of both faiths suggest a paradigm shift from secular understanding of man-nature relationship to religious understanding of man and his surroundings. Therefore, in the field of Islamic and Hindu environmentalism, scholars are actively writing religious understanding of man's relationship with nature, environment, earth, and ecosystem etc. Because these terms have been used interchangeably to regulate human behavior with this phenomenal world and

its diversity including water, air, forests, animals, and mountains etc. Scholarly publication in this fields includes Izzi Dien's "*Islam and the Environment: Theory and Practice*"⁴ Haleem's "*Islam and the Environment*"⁵ Manzoor's "*Environment and Values: Islamic Perspective*"⁶ Khālid's "*Islam, Ecology, and Modernity: An Islamic Critique of the Root Causes of Environmental Degradation*"⁷ and Nāsr's "*Religion and the Order of Nature*".⁸

The environmental degradation in contemporary world have also noticed by scholars of Hindu tradition. They also have written religious view of man and nature against modern secular worldview like Prīme's "*Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth*"⁹ Nelson's "*Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*"¹⁰ Jain's "*Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*"¹¹ and Gandhi's "*An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*"¹² are the foundation of Hindu view of modern environmentalism.

On the basis of existed fountain of knowledge, this comparative study of both faiths explores certain questions in purely Islamic and Hindu understating. How Islam and Hinduism describe the man's relationship with environment in the light of their sacred scriptures? How Islamic and Hindu thinkers reinterpret and revise the theologies about God, mankind, and earth to response the modern secular worldview? In this respect, this paper focus on eco-religious understandings of contemporary scholars like Seyyed Hossein Nāsr, Fazlun Majeed Khālid, Mahātmā Gandhi and Ranchor Prīme to eliminate environmental crisis of Muslim and Hindu world.

Research Methodology

This is a descriptive, comparative, and analytical study to elaborate the peaceful co-existence of earth and man in the hierarchy of cosmos. This research uses qualitative method for the collection of existing literature. In this regard, the data is collected from books, journals, and web articles to produce new data grounded on previous fountain of knowledge.

Islamic View of Natural World

In Islam, the foundation of natural order of creation is found in the canonical scriptures, like the Holy Qur'an and the hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW.¹³ The Qur'an, as the primordial scripture addresses the whole of the cosmos not only men and women. In this paradigm, the earth with all its richness also participates in the revelation of Qur'an.

In many verses of Holy Qur'an, Allāh SWT addresses non-human creature as His creation such as animals, trees, moon, sun, stars, mountains, and rivers. Therefore, the nature and man are not separate in Qur'anic view of creation. Both are created by Allāh SWT with definite purposes.¹⁴ The Qur'an refers to the natural resources of earth as the Āyāt (signs or symbols) of Allāh SWT. The verses of Holy Qur'an are also named as Āyāt. In the understanding of many scholars of Islam, the word Āyāt means signs, symbols, and proof of the divine which suggests that the creation and the Holy Qur'an, both are the proof of Allāh's existence. The Qur'an also talks about some signs within the creation and the self of man.¹⁵ In a sense, our home planet earth and all natural resources are the signs of Allāh SWT and equal member of His creation along with human beings.

The environment of our innermost selves and the universe in which we inhabit are sign of God's creation. The Holy Qur'an says in this respect:

﴿سُئِرِهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾¹⁶

The origin of both creation is in one supreme source known Allāh SWT in Islam. They both are created with one or the same purpose that is to fulfil the divine will. This bonding reflects the primary relationship between the Creator and the rest of His creation, the Creator Himself determined a subsidiary one, that between man and his other creation.¹⁷

In Nāsr view, the nature is both veils and reveals Allāh SWT because Qur'an portrays creation as being a theophany. The components of earth are so many masks that hide various qualities of divine and in the meantime also revealing these qualities to those who have developed a spiritual vision or have deep feelings.

Allāh SWT is also al-Muhit,¹⁸ which means all-encompassing, and surrounds all. Qur'an says:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا﴾¹⁹

“But to Allāh belongs all things in the heavens and on the earth: and He it is that encompass all things.”²⁰

Nāsr interprets this attribute of Allāh SWT to link with environment. He calls Allāh SWT as “the ultimate environment which surrounds man.” He pronounces the present ecological crisis as the result of desacralization of earth by man. In fact, man is unable to see the Allāh as the real environment which encompasses him and nourish his life with various beautiful gifts of

sustenance. Thus, earth is not ontologically independent order of reality and not a separate reality from divine.²¹

Khalifah/Amanah

Khalifah as a principle of responsibility describes that the man has a special place in Allāh SWT's creation scheme. He has appointed him as His vicegerent through giving the gift of intelligence. Man is Allāh's vicegerent on earth and its protectors. Allāh SWT says:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيُبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾²²

“It is He who appointed you khalifs on the earth and raised some of you above others in rank, So He could test you regarding what He has given you.”²³

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 Qur'anic notion of Khalifah (vicegerency) and amanah (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 are required for this mission. He is a knowledgeable creature 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 Nāsr 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, man is the highest of God's creation, bearing in himself the spirit of God, a theomorphic being before whom the angels prostrated. He was depicted as the “image of God” on earth in medieval cosmology. Nāsr called this man as pontifical who is a religious, spiritual, traditional one and is quite opposite to promethean or modern secular man.²⁴ In Nāsr view, man's role should not be restricted to the vicegerent only rather it should be based on both the khalifat-ullah and ‘abd Allāh (vicegerent of Allāh and His servant). Because the vicegerency may create feelings of superiority in their mind over nature but the other status of man as the servant of God may create humbleness in his mind toward nature.²⁵

Earth is a testing ground for man, and he has accepted it as a trust (amanah) 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.²⁶ He is willing to care and protect the environment of earth against exploitation. Nāsr also describes the role of man 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.”²⁷

In Khālid view, Khalifah is a sacred duty assigned to man as the price of the gift of intellect and free will.²⁸ Allāh SWT wants to see man 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.

The Holy Qur'an describes the important aspect of man as trustee. He was given a special responsibility or trust by God which is mentioned in following verse:

﴿إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا﴾²⁹

“We have offered trust to the heaven and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were afraid to receive it. Yet man took it up. He has always been prone to be wicked, foolish.”³⁰

The eco-Islamic writers gave a broader meaning to this verse. It is interpreted by them that man according to his own choice accepted the earth and its resources as a trust. By accepting the trust man showed a willingness to serve the purpose of God and he became the trustee of God. It expresses the ability of man to control and caretaker of nature. This concept of amanah also implies that man has a huge responsibility to protect the earth against exploitation.³¹

Izzi Dien writes in this respect:

“Humans are the only being that God has 'entrusted' with the responsibility of looking after the earth. This trusteeship is seen by Islam to be so onerous and burdensome that no other creature would 'accept' it.”³²

Khālid describes that man as being the vicegerent of Allāh SWT, his role is one of the trusteeships (amanah). It is basically a moral responsibility handed down to man as the price of the gift of intelligence. man is the only creature honored with such quality. Only man can perform this sacred duty which is

based on principle of justice (adl) and no other sentient being in creation can perform it.³³

God-Man-Earth Relationship

In Nāsr view, all religious traditions describe the relation of God with earth and man in different perspectives. In Islamic view, he recognizes that there is a hierarchy in the God-Human-Earth relationship. Nāsr writes:

“The universe is arranged in a hierarchical manner based on the degree of actuality, God being pure actuality and below Him standing the levels of angels, souls, sensible forms, and finally matter or potentiality... The purpose of this order is to fulfil the object of Creation, which is God Himself as the Supreme God.”³⁴

Nāsr argues that in such kind of relationship human beings are located at the place between God and earth. They are bound to play their role as the protector or custodian of the earth and its diversity. Furthermore, this hierarchal relationship does not allow human beings to mistreat the earthly resources and never allow them to consider non-human creatures as valueless. It does not allow them to ignore the rights of other species that live in our home planet earth.³⁵ Human beings are made responsible for the earth and its resources by taking care of them, otherwise they are accountable for their actions to Allāh SWT.³⁶

This kind of relationship never supports a human-centric relationship, modern scientific worldview separates God from human, and it also separates humans from nature. When God is not fundamental figure in that worldview, human beings are free to think only for their own earthly benefits. They are no longer responsible for any of their actions by God. This type of human mentality is an anthropocentric approach to the natural world. Instead, most religions of the world describe a triangle relationship (God, earth, and man).

Manifestation of Environmental Teachings of Islam: A Practical Dimension

For the application form of such ethical principles of Islam, Khālid used religion based

Indigenous approach to address environmental crises that Muslim communities are facing

around the world. He revised certain rules of Islamic Sharī‘ah such as hima, harim and hisbah

etc. Then he practically applied them under *Misali Ethics Pilot Project*” to marine conservation in Zanzibar and worked in Saudi Arabia for the establishment of biosphere reserved. He also worked for the implementation of Islamic environmental ethics to the spiny forest of Madagascar and in Indonesia. He tried to revise Islamic ethical foundation and give it fresh expression to solve the environmental crisis of different areas of the global world.

Khālid thought that the “*Misali Ethics Pilot Project*” and all other projects for the Islamic conservation Ethics are inadequate to protect the natural resources of earth without educating people about the importance of environment for their life existence on earth. Along with practical works of planting trees, conservation of fishes in Zanzibar, a biosphere reserve in Saudi Arabia, the conservation of Spiny Forest in Madagascar and spread of Islamic conservation ethics in Indonesia, educating people was made a priority. All these projects were succeeded through education. Khālid considers education as the central tool to spread Islamic environmental ethics. The holistic approach of Islam to deal with the issues of environment is understood only through education.³⁷

He argues that education in the modern era needs to be re-modelling of education with emphasis on the fitrah. This principle describes the right understanding of our home planet earth and the position of mankind on it. The ecosystem will continue to decline until we, the human beings do not mend our ways swiftly.

Furthermore, Khālid’s IFEES (Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science) is successively working for spreading ecological awareness on global level.

Hinduism and Nature

The natural order of creation is integrated with the core concept of Hinduism. Therefore, sacred scripture describes it in detail. One of the basic features of sacred scripture is that it emphasized seeing the image of Maker in every particle of the earth, and it never differentiated human from non-human objects. The foundation of natural order of creation is found in the Vedās, the sacred and classical scriptures of Hinduism.

The concept of God is the foundation of all religions which establish the relationship between finite and infinite on one hand and between infinities on other hand. Therefore, the fundamental concept of God in Hinduism is “oneness of God.”³⁸ As it is mentioned in ‘Upanishads’:

“In the beginning, there was that only which is (ro vo), one only, without a second.”³⁹

He alone existed before the creation of a phenomenal world. Nothing was there except him. He is the root of all worlds and derives all that exists from Him. The earth along with all diversity is created by one God.⁴⁰ As it is stated: “How the one Sat became many, how what we call the creation, what they call emanation, constantly proceeds, and returns to it... the whole creation, the visible and invisible world, all plants, all animals, all men are due to the one Sat, are upheld by it, and will return to it.”⁴¹

Like Islamic concept of creation, this text states that only Supreme Self alone is the Creator of everything. This concept of unity also brings worth and value to creation and asserts its wholeness and holiness. The dualistic view is also rejected by this understanding which sees man as separate entity from nature and caused the present ecological crisis.

Shankara’s non-theistic school of philosophy is based on this statement of Upanishads, he believes on One Supreme soul that is called Brahman who is devoid of all attributes (nirguna). Brahman associated with maya (shakti) appears as the qualified Brahman (saguna) or the Īśvara. This qualified Brahman is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe which is the appearance of nirguna. Hence, the universe and man need Brahman for their essence while Brahman does not need them for his essence. The universe and man have no existence apart from Brahman, but He is not exhausted by them.⁴²

Jiva: Trustee of God

The creation in Hinduism is not human-centric rather it is Cosmo centric. It sees human beings and natural world as the mutual constitution and are interconnected since their creation.

According to sacred scripture of Hinduism, man is combination of both body and soul or Avidyā and atman, together it may call self or jīva.⁴³ He suffers from bondage in course of his earthly life that is said to be Samsara. The samsara is an endless cycle of births and death while the only solution to get rid from it is attaining liberation or moksha. Hence, Hindu philosophy

focus more on individual soul that is appropriately called the self, Atma or Atman because only Atman remains forever while the body or material form of man is destroyed in cyclical process of birth and death.

According to 'Purusha Śukta' man is the result of the god's sacrifice. Various living creatures including human beings came into existence through the parts of divine primordial form of man. The creation story of man says that it was not an actual creation of something out of nothing, but a rearrangement. Therefore, this hymn highlights the fact that man has his origin in divine.⁴⁴

Furthermore, this sacred scripture also explains that the creation story presented here is not a human-centric rather God has created other creatures including, animals, plants, and human beings subsequently. There is no special status of Human beings depicted through this hymn. Although some of them are created from his feet to face miseries of this material world. There is no concept of equality among all human beings shown in this hymn which is the basic need of our time to survive.

Thus, the traditional view of Hinduism about the order of natural world is based on this understanding of relationship between divine and creation. The whole universe including animate and inanimate is regarded as the body of Purusha. The earth and man are not an independent order of reality but manifestation of single divine principle. It is the origin and end of both earth and man.

Nature/Earth/Environment as a Trust for Man

Hindu theology teaches that the five elements; water, fire, air, ether, and earth, constitutes the environment and are considered as the fundamental constitution of the universe. They all are derived from primal energy, and all have their own life and form but together they are interdependent and interconnected. Therefore, human beings are charged with keeping these elements in balance. Because when these elements are out of balance, disaster, destruction, confusion, violence, stress, starvation prevail. The Chandogya Upanishad explains the story of existence of these elements.

“In the beginning there was only Sat, One and Only, without a second and that One Reality is beyond any name and definition, it is neither existence nor nonexistence. Then it thought about creation and created Akasa (ether), then produced Vayu (air), and then Tegas (fire). Then Sat in the form of fire, it created water and water is the essence of earth.”⁴⁵

The Institutes of Vishnu describe that these five elements are supported by Vishnu. Goddess of earth bows down to Vishnu and asked him that other four elements are getting support from him in different forms, so she requested him to bless her by stepping on her, as text states:

“O Bhagavat! Four (out of the five) grosser elements are receiving their support from thee, and are constantly about thee: the ether, in the form of the shell; the air, in the form of discus; the fire, in the form of mace; and water, in the form of the lotus. Now I also desire to attend upon thee, in my own shape, as the ground which Bhagavat’s feet tread upon.”⁴⁶

In Hinduism, our only living planet earth is considered as mother and is sacred. Its believers venerate the mother earth as a symbol of benevolent, patience, tolerance, steadfastness, and forbearance. It is respected for all its natural resources especially vegetation, plants, mineral herbs, water, and soil.

The nourishing elements of earth for life production as described in ‘Atharva-Veda,’ are the best example to illuminate the phrase mother earth. The sacred text says in this respect:

“The earth that supports all... upon which the sea, and the rivers, cattle, horses, the snowy mountain heights, and thy forests, plants, Rock, stone, dust, the soil, Rice, barley, wealth, jewels, and gold, the kindly goddess, wealth shall she bestow upon us.”⁴⁷

It is highly praised and respected in sacred literature because of its motherly qualities. Even the Vedic gods are worshipping her as mother. The text says:

“The mother is the Earth whose surface Agni licks.”⁴⁸

In Sacred scripture of Hinduism, Earth is also considered as the Manifestation of Goddess. In Kinsley view, “hymn to goddess Earth” of Atharva-Veda is described in respect for the tremendous stability of the earth. He writes:

“When Prithivi is described, characterized, or otherwise praised, the earth itself is usually the object of the hymn. Prithivi is the earth in a literal sense as much as she is a goddess with anthropomorphic characteristics.”⁴⁹

The basic needs of human survival such as shelter, food, air, and water are fulfilled by the natural resources of earth. Therefore, this hymn demands from human beings to use them carefully and manage them wisely.⁵⁰

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.⁵¹

Furthermore, Gandhi rejected the idea of private possession and replaced it with communal trusteeship under the spiritual orientation of Sarvodaya. Because Gandhi believed that personal ownership establishes attachment to the material world and enhance personal greed for more wants which hinder self-realization. Hence, Sarvodaya aimed to help communities live sustainably within their local territory and work for the welfare of a society.⁵² Hence, Gandhi’s concept of trusteeship is based on the idea that whatever belongs to a person is the right to an honorable livelihood, the rest of his property belongs to the welfare of the community. The concept of trusteeship has dynamic nature, and it also has strong moral imperatives toward restructuring the relationship of earth and man in current situation.

God-Earth-Man/Oneness of Existence

Shankara’s philosophy of ‘oneness of existence’ presents the “anthropocosmic” view of the creation. It describes that earth, man and all natural resources including, water, mountains, forests, oceans, deserts, plants, and other biodiversity all are sprung from Brahman and return to it. Hence, Brahman and the universe are one. So, all should be treated with reverence.

Another leading school of Indian philosophy is Sāṃkhya that holds the doctrine of “*Sat-Karya-Vada*” which views the material universe is real because it is produced from the Pradhāna. The Pradhāna is the cause and universe are its effect, the relation between them is that of producer and the produced. The produced is not completely different from the cause rather it possesses the nature of cause, and all matter is indestructible. Because destruction brings the disappearance of it into the cause. Thus, the universe is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal. The effect is always contained in cause in an un-manifested form and the production of an effect is nothing but its manifestation. Hence both are identical.⁵³

Therefore, the Sāṃkhyas interpreted the doctrine of “*sat-karya vada* as *prakriti-parināmavada*” which suggests that the effect is the real parināma (transformation) of the cause. Prakriti transformed and differentiated into multiplicity of objects.⁵⁴

Ramanuja recognizes God as the Supreme Real, the immanent, and inner controller who holds together in unity the individual souls and the dependent matter as His body. The God, souls and matter are equally ultimate and real, but the last two are dependent on God. Although they are substances in themselves but in relation to God, they become His attributes. God is the soul of nature and nature is His body. The relation between them is that of inner inseparability (aprthaksiddhi).⁵⁵

Aprthak-siddhi is the relation between a substance and its attribute, between the body and the soul, between parts and whole, and between one substance and another. It is an inseparable, inner, vital, and organic relation. The matter and soul form the body of God and are inseparable and entirely dependent on Him.

Ramanuja defines a body as that:

“Which is controlled, supported, and utilized for its purposes by a Supreme spirit. Souls and matter are called attributes of God. They are supported and controlled by Him since there is nothing either similar or dissimilar which is external to or other than Him.”⁵⁶

Therefore, the relation of God with earth and man is eternal and are based on inner inseparability. The earth with all natural resources and man are his attributes and forms of his body. Hence nature is not something to be desacralized rather is sacred and should be revered and protected against destruction.

Manifestation of Environmental Teachings of Hinduism: A Practical Dimension

Ranchor Prīme as being a famous contemporary figure of Hindu environmentalism, has worked to re-establish the pre-British lifestyle in India through his religion based indigenous approach. Like Nāsr and Khālid, Prīme also describes the theoretical dimension of nature in Hinduism. The sanctity of all life forms and the role of human beings toward them is also expressed on the basis of scriptural understanding. He tried to revise the values of Vedās and reinterpreted the ten incarnations of Vishnu in ecological perspective. He suggests that Krishna provides several examples of the protection of mother earth through his care for the forest of Vrindavan and purification of river Yamuna.⁵⁷

After revising the worldview of Hinduism from scriptural context, Prīme also did bunch of efforts for protection of Vrindavan forests in religious vein.

For instance, he adopted religion based indigenous approach as characterized by Christopher Key Chapple. He admires Prīme's contributions in the forest of Krishna in totally religious framework.⁵⁸ Like Khālid, Prīme also used education based indigenous approach to get proper response from indigenous communities to solve their ecological problems. Both understand education as the primary tool to spread religious stance of environmental protection to the common people to avoid catastrophe. Therefore, Prīme's ecological contributions are belonged to the Vaishna tradition of Hindu religion. Because he is the devotee of Prabhupada and follower of Krishna.

Suggestions

It is suggested that a similar study could be designed to find the eco-religious contributions of contemporary scholars of Indian and Sematic religions. It should be conducted by adopting comparative and analytical methods to create mutual understanding between these religious traditions. As it has been realized that religions are necessary partners in the present situation of environmental degradation, and they are able to provoke environmental change in human practices.

Conclusion

This study of religious understanding of man-nature relationship across religious frontiers identified that Islam and Hinduism have both a theological foundation and practical manifestation of ecological worldview. Their sacred understanding of nature, earth, man, and natural resources is remarkable to demolish disequilibrium of our earthly environment. The eco-theological understandings of 20th century scholars of Islamic and Hindu faith are outstanding to revise the ecological worldview of their respected religious tradition in the mind of modern secular man. Their efforts to solve the current crisis that our earth is facing after the advent of modern secular knowledge and technological development are both theoretical and practical in nature. Their rejection of anthropocentric value approach and their presentation of cosmo-centric view of nature forms the deep ecological foundation of Islam and Hinduism. This new eco-understanding brings equality among all components of the earth, and their basic right of living and flourishing. It suggests human beings replace their negative destructive attitudes into positive constructive ones to avoid future catastrophes and to ensure the sustainability of earth and its life bearing resources.

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