

Eco- Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mahatma Gandhi for Environmental Sustainability

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.8003341](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8003341)

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Abstract

The present paper focuses on Mahatma Gandhi's and Seyyed Hossein Nasr's eco-philosophy in connection to the current environmental crises. Both scholars are considered as the pioneers of modern environmental movements of their respected faith. By correlating Gandhi's and Nasr's spiritual discussion with the environment, this article investigates how deeply the actions of human have impact on the equilibrium of this phenomenal world. The paper also tries to expose why Gandhi and Nasr understanding of natural world and suggestions in relation to the sustainability of natural world look meaningful. Here, descriptive, and analytical methods are used to define eco-spiritual and eco-philosophical ideas of both scholars from their prescribed religious tradition and how far their understanding is relevant to present situation. The comparative analysis highlights some similarities and disparateness in their eco-philosophy. In doing so, this research will contribute to current debate of environmental crises and spiritual crises of modern secular man. The study concludes that despite the differences in beliefs and practices, both eco scholars have shared a common goal of promoting ecological harmony. Their sacred understanding of the natural world motivates humans to endorse harmonious relations with other species of this phenomenal world and their basic right of living and flourishing.

Keywords: *Eco-philosophy, Modern secular worldview, Anthropocene, khalifah, Trustee, Sacred sign, Sustainable development, Islam, Hinduism*

Introduction

Environmental and ecological awareness among the scholars, thinkers, policy makers, and public has been growing since the last four decades of 20th century. They have recognized that Anthropocene development of human society has negative impact on natural world. Their unrestricted use of natural resources has damaged the resources and habitats that are needed to survive. Their quest for unlimited economic growth has changed the climate of our planet and the forests are being destroyed at an alarming rate. Therefore, humans are the only species that is continuing to put a great demand on natural resources, many non-renewable resources are being depleted. There are other crises like depletion of biodiversity, climate change, deforestation, desertification, water, air, and soil pollution prevailing the globe scale. In the solution of current environmental crises, scientific and engineering research is playing a

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crucial role, meanwhile religious and sacred understanding is also very important to control human greed and their unrestrained development.

In the above cited context, Mahatma Gandhi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr are world-renowned scholars of Islamic and Hindu faith in general and also considered by many thinkers as pioneer of Islamic and Hindu eco-theological movements. The major contributions of Seyyed Hossein Nasr are directly related to religious ecology because he was aware of ecological crisis which humanity was facing on global scale in 20th century. On the other hand, Gandhi did not directly talk about the nature of environmental crises. Because he belongs to the 19th and 20th century, his environmental contributions are shown his vision and foresight. He is very famous as a political hero due to historical circumstances of subcontinent in late 19th century and early 20th century. There was no wide-ranging debate on humans' relationship with nature and its catastrophe during the lifetime of Gandhi. But he is considered as pioneer of environmental movements and conservation in the observation of many thinkers. Because he did much more by living the life of a person who affirmed the value and integrity of life, including human and non-human. He lived a life with harmonious attitude toward all animate and inanimate.

Both contemporary scholars felt the need for a radical shift from a modern secular worldview to traditional worldview of nature in order to avoid catastrophe. Nasr describes that the traditional worldview of nature is based on sacred science in which human beings were deeply connecting with God and the cosmos. It develops a spiritual feeling in the mind of believers which is essential for being sympathetic to the non-human world. While the modern scientific worldview is disconnected from spiritual contemplation and sees nature as a machine. It treats such spiritual feelings as superstitions. Hence there is a need to revise traditional values of religion. In some extent, Gandhi's philosophy of oneness of existence also rejected dualistic secular worldview of nature. His philosophy of oneness forms a supreme humanitarianism. It brings the value and worth of all natural resources.

Review of Literature

In the field of Islamic and Hindu environmentalism, there are numerous scholars who have tried to address these crises in religious perspective and are famous for their eco-religious works. But i have narrowed the research by selecting Mahatma Gandhi and Seyyed Hossein Nāsr. Nāsr tries to address these issues from an Islamic understanding of nature while Gandhi attempts to deal with ecological crisis from Hindu faith.

As far as, the contemporary response of Muslim scholars is concern about man and nature relationship can be traced back to incredible works of Seyyed Hossein Nāsr in 1960s. He spent his career writing on the relationship of mankind to natural world invoking a distinctly 'Islamic environmental worldview. He linked environmental problems to spiritual and moral crisis of the modern man. As Nāsr "*Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*"^m 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. He has contributed a lot to address the root cause of the crisis and their solution from Islamic

perspective, his most relevant works in this regards are followings, Nāsr “*The Need For A Sacred Science*”² “*Religion and the Order of Nature*”³ and “*Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*”⁴ through these sources he describes the root of the ecological crisis is a modern science that has desacralized the earth and allowed humanity to exploit it. “*Sacred Science and The Environmental Crisis: An Islamic Perspective*”⁵ To bring humanity back into peace with Creator and His creation, Nāsr argues for an alternative metaphysics which is embedded in the scriptures of all religious traditions. He has attempted to provide an alternative mode of thinking about nature and mankind with relation to God. “*The Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal*”⁶. Through this he appeals a spiritual dimension of nature to bring a change in the heart of believers and their outlook for peaceful existence of all creatures.

Mahātmā Gandhi as revolutionary figure of contemporary India also talked about the conservation of natural resources. He has inspired many contemporary environmentalists on a global level through his critique of modern technology, economics and simple way of life. Mahadev H. Desai’s “*An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*”⁷ is an example of Gandhi’s simple lifestyle in advocating the new ecofriendly coexistence of all living species including human beings. His ideology and simple lifestyle are living examples of environmental ethics. His other writings such as “*Hind Swaraj*”⁸ “*The Essence of Hinduism*”⁹ “*Ashram Observance in action*”¹⁰ are an example in advocating the new ecofriendly coexistence of all living species including human beings. Arne Naess in “*Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World*”¹¹ borrowed the concept of “self-realization” of Gandhi and developed a new ecological approach. Parekh’s “*Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction*”¹² outlines Gandhi’s major philosophical insights and his Cosmo centric view of nature. He discussed Gandhi’s philosophy of man in detail and his hostility to modern civilization. His ideology of non-violence is also discussed by Parekh as the only relevant ethical approach to save nature from exploitation in modern society. Haigh “*Deep Ecology Education: Learning from Its Vaisnava Roots*”¹³ defined elaborately how Naess developed the approach of deep ecology from Vaishnava roots. By inspiring Gandhi’s philosophy of self-realization and non-violence, Naess was able to cultivate the idea of deep ecology.

In this respect, Nāsr and Gandhi are philosophical and theoretical in understanding the nature of environmental crisis and revise the ecological worldview of their respected religious traditions Therefore, this dissertation compares and analyzes of eco-religious contributions of these four scholars to sustain earth-man relationship in 21st century.

Considering above literature, this article is going to answer following questions: How Nasr and Gandhi reinterpreted and revised the theologies about mankind and nature to response the modern secular worldview in 20th century? And how their eco-religious response support or challenge the idea of nature as simply a utilitarian resource? Is there any similarity in the works of prominent thinkers of both faiths on man-nature relationship or they differ with each other? If is then in which context?

Research Methodology

The author has used descriptive and analytical methods to define eco-philosophy Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mahatma Gandhi in the current situation of environmental degradation. The data is collected by following qualitative method through using books, journals, and web articles. Furthermore, comparative analysis highlights some similarities and disparateness in their eco-religious understandings, beliefs, and practices. In doing so, this research will contribute to current debate of environmental crises and spiritual crises of modern secular man.

Discussion

Before renaissance philosophy of humanism and industrialization revolution of United States in 18th century, humanity was not facing such environmental rises as we face it today. They were using natural resources in a just and balanced way. There was very less negative impact of their activities on the environment. They were careful and responsible about the limitation of their activities in natural world. Their tools and other technological instruments were not capable of modifying the nature on a larger scale. They were very eco-friendly and conservative in protection of their environment.¹⁴

¹⁵In the Medieval period, human beings were living in agricultural societies. They were aware of their basic needs for surviving and utilized the natural resources to fulfill their needs not their greed. They understand the nature as sacred creature of God and were against harmful activities. Basically, their technologies and other hand tools used in farming were very simple and without having negative impact on earth. their non-agricultural products were made by using hand mills. They get their clothes, food, flour, vessels, furniture, shoes, and other tools of iron and wood by using hand mills. Their basic needs were fulfilled with eco-friendly manners.¹⁶

In Islamic history and culture, we can see that Islamic society was divided into nomads and sedentary groups who were never against harmony between man and earth. Their living practices were analyzed in '*Muqaddimah*' by Ibn Khaldūn. He wrote that the nomads were protectors of the earth and its natural resources. They lived in the bosom of nature and sedentary were building cities and town which were the center of cultural enhancement. The Mongols invasion destroyed much of the sedentary centers of Asia and reduce the over population of South and East Asia.¹⁷

It is necessary to note that even in sedentary setting, the Islamic architecture grew with full awareness of harmony between man and natural environment of earth. The use of water, material, cold, heat, shade, sunlight, and the wind all these elements were used in balance way, and in contrast to today's cities which cause disequilibrium in natural environment of our earth.

The traditional villages of Afghanistan in mountains, Persian and North Africa all were built in balance with their natural surroundings. And traditional cities too were not polluting air, wasting, and dirtying water, or cutting many trees as we see in today's cities.¹⁸

The practice of agriculture in Islamic world is also example of harmony between earth and man. The rich soil was always kept for agricultural production and was not used for building towns. Traditional Cairo is a fine example of this principle. It was built some miles away from the edge of the river to preserve the fertile land for agricultural purposes.¹⁹

In history of Hinduism, we can also find harmony between man and his surroundings. The seers of Rig-Veda understand trees and plants as having the divine powers. They lived in the bosom of nature and were its protector. Conservation of natural resources was considered as part of dharma or religious duty. Their practice of vegetarianism and concept of asceticism never allow them to harm any species and exploit trees.

Pankaj Jain writes, the holistic attitude of Indian communities to save natural resources is based on dharma. Most of them are not aware of the environmental crisis our earth is facing. But they consider it as religious duty or dharma to save diversity of earth.²⁰ Nāsr also says in this respect: “A traditional Afghan or Indian village was and to some extent still is in harmony with its natural surroundings...”²¹

It is important to note that the crisis our earth is facing began in the west as Nasr says: “The environmental crisis did not, however, begin globally but locally in the West during the Industrial Revolution in such places as the Ruhr Valley in Germany, the middle part of England and Lowell, Massachusetts.”²² Then, spread globally when colonized countries sought to regain power and independence by adopting western practices and norms. As Khālid notes: “all Muslim countries are also locked into this global system...and in many ways they also want most things the system has to offer...”²³ They forgot their traditional understanding of earth and the limitations of their activities. They developed a purpose in life far beyond survival.

Afterwards, they did not remain only inhabitants on earth, and they became its master or transformer. Industrialization allowed them to exploit natural resources on the name of comfort and luxuries.²⁴ These changes in human societies and modern worldview have rapidly increased the human impact on the earth.

Nasr’s and Gandhi’s Critique on Modernity

Considering environmental degradation, Nasr is very critical of the modern scientific worldview of nature which is attached with the secular approaches. In his view, the modern or secular science has no relation with spirituality and based on the human rationalization process. It does not talk about sacred character beyond all resources of earth. It treats such spiritual feelings as superstitions.²⁵

Nāsr makes distinction between traditional and modern sciences, cited below: “The traditional sciences are essentially sacred and accidentally profane and modern science essentially profane and only accidentally aware of the sacred quality of the universe and, even in such rare instances, unable to accept the sacred as the sacred. Modern science... lost the sense of the sacred.”²⁶

Nasr tries to present the correlation between the development of modern industry and current ecological crisis of human civilization. The following citation is the root of crisis in his thought: “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."²⁷

Mahatma Gandhi also criticized modernity because of the colonial education system and industrialization. He considered these two entities as the cause environmental crisis in Muslim and Hindu societies. Colonial education system was established in India by British government. In his view, this education system was a negation of uppermost values called truth and non-violence. His concept of 'Nai Talim' was a program of sustainable development and was an alternative view of industrialization. This educational system provided knowledge of the production processes involved in craft, such as spinning, bookbinding, weaving, basket-making, metalwork, leatherwork, and pottery. This type of education also included the fundamental universal ethics.²⁸ He condemned the modern urban industrial civilization that it contained the seeds of destruction, and he favored the sustainable development of society.²⁹

Nāsr's Religious and Philosophical Dimension of Man and Nature

As being the Islamic philosopher of contemporary time, Nasr has successfully integrated religious, spiritual, and philosophical understanding with our natural world and tried to show a potential correlation between ecological crises and religious, spiritual, and philosophical crises of modern man. He thought that when human beings understand their worldview based on their religious tradition their actions automatically adopt harmonious attitude toward non-human beings.

Nasr's understandings on Islamic View of the Natural Order of Creation

Nāsr took purely Qur'anic stance to define the natural order of creation. In his view, our home planet earth and all natural resources are the signs of Allāh SWT and are equal members of His creation along with human beings. According to his Quranic understanding, nature reveals the supremacy of Allah SWT on one hand, on other hand, it veils Him. Because nature is described in the Quran as a theophany. The natural world has so many mask that hides the attributes of God. Meanwhile, nature reveals various qualities to some people who are blessed with the inner or deep vision. Thus, the one with spiritual feeling can see the divine qualities of nature.³⁰

The Holy Quran also affirms the unity of God's creation. God alone is the sole creator of earth and its resources. It also presents the holistic approach of Islam as Qur'an says in this respect:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا﴾³¹

*"But to Allāh belongs all things in the heavens and on the earth: and He it is that encompass all things."*³²

Nāsr interprets this Quranic verse in a spiritual sense of Islam. He writes that al-Muhit, as the quality of God means He Himself is a "Ultimate Environment". This environment surrounds and encompasses the human and non-human world. Thus, human beings and other creatures are immersed in the divine environment. If human beings want to understand al-Muhit, the attribute of Allah SWT in deeper sense of Islam then they will see the sacredness of every

creature. But due to negligence they are not able to understand themselves and their natural world.

In Nasr view, if human beings do zikr or remember Allah SWT then they will overcome this negligence. They must see nature as immersed in divine reality as Muhit and it is sacred. Because the environmental crises are the result of modern man's understanding about nature as the profane reality. And ontologically a separate order of reality. Al-Muhit, as the attribute of God, reminds Humans the sacredness of natural world and all creature as the sign or ayat of Allah SWT. Each particle has a divine origin. Thus, the earth and man are created by Him and will return to Him.³³

He describes that because of this natural view of Qur'an, the traditional Muslims harbored a great love for earth. Their love for nature is reflected in Arabic, Persian Turkish literature, in the work of Islamic philosophers, and particular in Sufi poetry. Saadi composed a famous poem in Persian,

"I am joyous with the cosmos."

"For the cosmos receives its joy from Him."

"I love the whole world, for the world belongs to Him"³⁴

Nāsr also writes the poetry of another Sufi, Yunus Emre of Turkish in English language to describe that how these poets were understanding nature as theophany.

"The rivers all in Paradise

Flow with the word Allāh, Allāh

And every loving nightingale

He sings and sings Allāh, Allāh."

Nāsr describes that there are many saints or mystics in Islamic tradition who love nature intensively in that they were able to see the face of God in every creature and were able to hear the praises of all creatures to Allāh SWT. As the Holy Qur'an declares this truth in following verse:

﴿تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ﴾³⁵

"The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein, glorify Him and there is not a thing but glorifies His praise. But you understand not their glorification."³⁶ In Nāsr view, these mystics were remained busy in remembrance and praise of Allāh, as a result they became one with the prayers of the birds, the mountains, the stars, and trees in contemplating their forms not as outward but theophanies as "signs of Allāh SWT." They joined them in remembrance of the One.

The Holy Qur'an vividly explain this truth:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ﴾³⁷

"And to Allāh belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn (yourselves or your faces) there is the Face of Allāh (and He is High above, over His Throne)."³⁸ In Nāsr view, to see Allāh everywhere in the universe means to be fully aware of the divine attribute of God as al-Muhit. This divine environment permeates and surrounds the material world and the ambience of human beings.

This understanding of nature developed a harmonious relationship between man and earth throughout Islamic history.³⁹

Perennial Philosophical thought

He describes that secular or materialistic philosophy is responsible for growing a spiritless worldview. He is a critic of this view which teaches the modern man to understand earth and natural resources as lifeless entity. In response, Nāsr talks about perennial philosophy that describes the “*inherent unity of all religions.*” Nāsr also divided it into two “*philosophia perennis*” (sacred science) and “*cosmologia perennis*” (the order of nature) which are inspired by Divine reality. He emphasizes that humanity needs to renew the perennial knowledge about nature or earth. Because it creates connection between material and spiritual understanding of nature and makes balance between them.⁴⁰ It prescribes the spiritual dimension of natural resources, material phenomena, the soul of man, and the whole universe and build a spiritual approach toward the earth and its natural resources.⁴¹ Nāsr also appreciates the contributions of perennial philosophers about the deeper understanding of our physical earth and its resources. He suggests perennial philosophical thinking in shifting the paradigm from modern scientific worldview to the traditional worldview.⁴²

Philosophy of man

Nāsr discusses the characteristics of man and his relationship with earth in philosophical way. He describes that the purpose of man’s creation for God is “*come to know Himself through His perfect instrument of knowledge that is the Universal Man or al-insan al-kamil who is the mirror reflecting all the Divine Names and Qualities.*”⁴³ Man by virtue of his theomorphic qualities, he was given the right of domination over earth. He was depicted as the “image of God” on earth in medieval cosmology.

In Nāsr view, man’s active participation in the spiritual world made him as a “channel of grace” for cosmos. His actions have cosmic consequences. Nāsr explains this understanding in following citation: “*Man is a channel of grace (or baraka) and light for the natural order. That is why his responsibility is so grave, he concludes. He is given the power to rule over nature, but also the capability to destroy it. His actions have a cosmic consequence.*”⁴⁴

In medieval cosmology, the dream of man was to establish a paradise on earth which was basically a symbolic world of inner meaning. Because he was able to observe and understand the spiritual dimension of nature and he was able to manipulate his will on earth. He turned toward the inward dimension of his being and was able to see earth and natural phenomena as a symbol or transparent reality and understand them in the real sense. This understanding of nature never allows him to underestimate the earth and its resources.⁴⁵

Nāsr called this man as pontifical who is a religious, spiritual, and traditional one. He is submissive to Heaven and caretaker of the earth and its resources. He can act as bridge between heaven and earth. In fact, his role on earth is described by Qur’an as the representative or vicegerent of God or *khalīfat Allāh-fīl-ard*. Nāsr describes that humans

should remain active in protection and conservation of all resources of earth. Their 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.⁴⁶

In Nāsr view, renaissance is responsible of new fall man who has lost a paradise which he has discovered on earth in previous times. His new role is described as a "*deity upon earth*" who is devoid of transcendent archetype. In this period, he is closely tied to anthropomorphism and humanism. He also became the cause of desacralization of earth and destroyed it in the name of development. By removing him from the center of things, this modern man has lost the transcendent and theomorphic dimension of his nature. He adopted the anthropomorphism and the promethean revolt against the voice of heaven.⁴⁷

He defined modern man as promethean human, who is ignorant of God, and he is irreligious and only earthly man. He is a very selfish human who only thinks for immediate earthly benefits. Nāsr proclaims that such kinds of human beings are pervading everywhere on earth and the modern scientific worldview is responsible for such thinking.⁴⁸

Nāsr observed that change in man's characteristics also changed the sacred quality of nature. He said: "*When man's inner being has turned to darkness and chaos, nature is also turned from harmony and beauty to disequilibrium and disorder. Man sees in nature what he is himself and penetrates the inner meaning of nature only on the condition of being able to delve into the inner depths of his own being. . . .*"⁴⁹

In Nāsr view, man who live only on the surface of his being can understand earth and natural resources as something to be manipulated. He only understands his domination over them.

Nāsr suggests that man must act as the bridge between Heaven and Earth through minimizing his role of promethean and fulfil his responsibility as being pontifical man on earth.

Gandhi's Religious and Philosophical Understanding of Man and Nature

The ecological contributions of Gandhi consisted of moral, spiritual, and philosophical dimensions. He is role model in ecological paradigm by living an ascetic way of life and his practice of supreme humanitarianism. His concept of sustainable development is based on bio-mass production, processing, and consumption. Thus, it shows that our current situation needs bio-industrial development, instead of pure industrial development.

Gandhi's View of Natural World

Hindu tradition understands relationship between man and nature based on "anthropocosmic" worldview which defines "*Brahman and universe as one.*"⁵⁰ In this view, the nature and man both have no separate identity apart from Brahman. Rather they are considered as the parts and parcel of God. Radhakrishnan describes that when nature and man are viewed in relation to Brahman, then all this is considered real and identical to Brahman: "*sarvam khalv idam brahma*".⁵¹

Gandhi's philosophy about the natural order is based upon the oneness of all life forms. In his view, human beings and all natural resources including water, air, animals, plants, mountains,

and soil all are created from God and will return to him. Gandhi says: *“Hinduism believes in the oneness not of merely all human life but in the oneness of all that lives. Its worship of the cow is, in my opinion, its unique contribution to the evolution of humanitarianism. It is a practical application of the belief in the oneness and, therefore, sacredness, of all life.”*⁵²

In the view of Martin Haigh, the philosophy of “oneness of existence” is the basic tenet of Vedanta school thought. But its interpretation of self-realization is the main contribution of Mahatma Gandhi.⁵³ In the term of self-realization, Gandhi was speaking about the sacred or divine origin of all creatures. Nature or all natural resources are immersed in the wider “Self” or the Supreme reality of this phenomenal world. They are not ontologically independent order of reality. Through this philosophy, Gandhi reduced the importance and dominance of narrow self or Western philosophy of Humanism. About the oneness of all life forms, he 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 end, if one man fails, the whole world fails to that extent.”*⁵⁴

Gandhi was very practical in realizing himself with other living beings. He was a strong proponent of his ideology. In Naess view, Gandhi’s ashrams were example of bio-spherical egalitarianism, where human beings were living harmoniously with other species without any harm. They provide a peaceful environment to non-human species. They understand their basic right of life and flourish.⁵⁵ The people who living in ashram have already developed their social self and they work for the common good of society. They reduced their narrow understanding of self as “ego-trip”. Which is a norm of developed society. Naess says about it: *“To identify self-realization with ego-trip manifests a vast underestimation of the human self.”*⁵⁶

The people of ashrams by following Gandhi’s philosophy of self-realization have also developed their deep understanding of self. They understand other species the sacred or divine reality of God. They are not separate from human beings. Thus, humans and nature both have shared the same or common origin. In Naess’ view, if people understand themselves and their environment as a single order of reality, they feel everlasting happiness and joy. Naess says: *“You are much greater, deeper, generous, and capable of more dignity and joy than you think! A wealth of non-competitive joys is open to you!”*⁵⁷ Through ego-trips, Naess invited people to think in terms of deepening their selves. He has suggested humanity that if they want to survive peacefully in future then they must widen and deepen their ‘selves.’⁵⁸

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.

Gandhi’s Philosophy of Man

In Gandhi’s written literature, we can find certain psychological principles that are extremely basic to develop Gandhi’s philosophy of man. There are some fundamental facts that characterize man’s nature. First, Gandhi developed ‘Cosmo centric’ view of man in which

man is integral part of the universe along with all other living creature. Second, he is three-dimensional being who is made up of the body, manas (mind), and the atman (self). The relationship of these dimensions explains his behavior and form the basis of ethics.⁵⁹

Gandhi's Philosophy of Man

Gandhi writes in his Autobiography: *"We are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world."*

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He believes that human beings are an integral part of universe and are tied to it by the deepest bound of sacredness. He argues that this world is not entirely a material world, but it is divine or spiritual in nature. Since the eternal principle or Ultimate Reality pervades in the cosmos, this natural world is not entirely material but sacred and divine in nature. According to T.N. Khoshoo, Gandhi believes on fundamental unity in diversity that means there was divinity in all life forms.⁶¹ It means that he was more inclined toward Cosmo-centric view of nature and rejected the anthropocentrism that the earth and its resources are for merely human's use, and they have superiority over all others. Parekh also explains that Gandhi avoided the idea of anthropocentrism that the domination of man over the non-human world.⁶² Haigh also argues that recent environmental crises are the result of anthropocentrism.⁶³

Haigh says that Gandhi was a supporter of advaita philosophy. He defines that advaita means that the 'self' and 'self' are not two but one. The goal of it is to connect with oneness of all creation, especially with its ultimate reality.⁶⁴ Since Gandhi considered all life sacred and united them on the tenet of oneness of existence, though he also believes on superiority of human over non-human in some extent. Because human beings are blessed with the quality of rationality and morality. However, superiority was not absolute for non-human beings although both were divine in nature and are addressed by divine law which make them legitimate member of the cosmos. They all have the right to live and survive on earthly planet equally.

Gandhi conceptualized human beings as triplet dimensional in nature. They had bodies, mind, and soul. The body of man is distinct or separate from others he called it as a '*prison of soul*' and the place of action.⁶⁵ Each individual's body must do labor and work hard in earthly planet. Gandhi stated that it is necessary for all to treat the body as the '*temple of God*' to attain freedom.⁶⁶ It shows that Gandhi took opposite view of Shankara about material body as 'maya,' he called it as the '*temple of God*' so that human beings get freedom. Through its Gandhi wanted to introduce the concept of human freedom. For Gandhi the mind is the main tool of knowledge and action.

In addition to the body and mind, human beings also had atman, which is often translated soul or spirit. Gandhi believed in the cosmic spirit that infused all living beings. It is not a spark or part of the cosmic spirit but one with and same in nature with cosmic spirit. The Atman is the manifestation of cosmic spirit as he described in his theory of advaitism means everything including this world is the manifestation of one ultimate reality. As being manifestation of

Ultimate spirit, atman shared many basic attributes. It was eternal and imperishable. The purpose of atman consisted in recognizing its identity with ultimate spirit.⁶⁷

The body encouraged individual sense of separateness and selfishness while the soul reinforced them to break the walls of separateness and become one with all living beings. The soul represented the principle of universality. There were numerous ways to shed body-based illusion of particularity which required intense self-discipline, meditation, and spiritual exercises. “Gita calls upon us to dedicate ourselves, body, mind and soul, to pure duty, and not to become mental voluptuaries at the mercy of all chance desires and undisciplined impulses.”⁶⁸ Gandhi prescribed a suitable way for the perfect health of body, mind, and soul (spirit) is to repeat constantly ‘Ramanama’ during the hours of waking. Indeed, with the help of God’s grace, their body, mind, and spirit will be filled with perfect help.

Relevance of Nasr’s and Gandhi’s Eco-Philosophy for Sustainable Development

In Islam and Hinduism, the view of man’s relationship with nature is quite opposite to modern secular worldview that separates God from human beings and then it separates human beings from earth, eventually human beings are no longer responsible to God for any action. Hence, they only think of their earthly benefits and destroy earth on unprecedented level. Nāsr 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.”⁶⁹ This citation describes that he considers the environment crisis as the spiritual crisis of modern man.

To Understand Hierarchical Relationship Between God and His Creation

Nasr’s philosophical understanding about hierarchical relationships is quite opposite to the modern secular worldview that has motivated humanity to exploit the natural world for their unrestrained desires. Nasr’s view is also relevant to promote peace and sustainable development of natural world. In Islamic view, he recognizes that there is a hierarchy in the God-Human-Earth relationship. He 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.”⁷⁰

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.⁷¹ 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.⁷² This kind of relationship never supports a human-centric relationship, modern scientific worldview separates God from human, and it also separates humans from nature.

To Understanding Natural World as Reflection of Divine

Nasr suggests Muslim scholars to revise and spread sacred dimension of natural world to create a harmonious attitude in the mind of others toward the rest of Allāh's creation. As it is described in Holy Qur'an: "*And to Allāh belong the east and the west.*"⁷³ This verse of Holy Qur'an possesses various kind of meanings. In the interpretation of this verse Nāsr describes the inner unity and sacredness of all creatures. He says: "*where the sun rises and where it sets, where forests cover the land and where sand dunes rove over empty spaces, where majestic mountains touch the void of heaven and where deep blue waters reflect the Divine Infinitude, all belong to Allāh and hence interrelated.*"⁷⁴ They are interconnected and interdependent in such a deep sense that, the destruction of one part of creation affects deeply and strongly the other parts. Even the present science is not able to fathom this entire process.⁷⁵

Adopt Wise Policies in Economics, Construction, and in Agriculture System

Moreover, Nāsr also highlights certain other points which allow sustainable development and avoid further catastrophe. Like, understanding of natural world as the reflection of the divine, to understand the transcendent unity of all beings, to adopt traditional agriculture system, promote tradition way of construction, built wise economic policies, control human greed, and fewer consumption.⁷⁶

Encourage Rural Development

In the early 20th century, Gandhi underlined the critical necessity of sustainable development. He interrogated the modern civilization that established upon increase of wants and desire. Gandhi favored 'village development' that is evolved with two basic components i.e., self-sufficient village and decentralization of political and economic powers. He formed a main place to development of 'Khadi' and cottage industries in India.⁷⁷ In his rural development, his approach was holistic, and people centered. It was rooted in his vision of truth, non-violence and the communal good. The influence behind his idea of rural development was by Ruskin, Tolstoy, and the teachings of Gita. His Phoenix Farm, Tolstoy and Satyagraha Ashrams were the best example of sustainable rural development.⁷⁸ Therefore, rural development should also be encouraged to avoid various environmental crises in an era of ecological disequilibrium.

Revise Modern Education System

Instead of colonial education system, Gandhi introduced the concept of 'Nai Talīm' that is based on uppermost values of Vedas like self-realization and non-violence. This concept of self-realization helps humanity to find the inner unity of all beings and adopt a non-violent approach to them.⁷⁹ Therefore, by following this concept scholars of all faiths should try to revise the education system to teach the value and worth of nature.

Promote Natural Cure

According to Autobiography of Gandhi, man should return to natural cure. Because there is close link between man and nature so human beings should cure their diseases with five elements like earth, ether, air, water, and sunlight.⁸⁰ He believed that "*personal hygiene and healthy living are of primary importance.*" His 'Autobiography' is full of such incidents of natural

cure and his dislike for medicines. Instead of taking medicines, Gandhi favored dietetic changes and suggested natural remedies to cure any disease. *"I knew that the cure lay not in taking medicines internally, but dietetic changes assisted by external remedies."*⁸¹ Furthermore, he narrated many experiments in which Gandhi cured diseases through *"earth and water treatment"* and by following the natural diet plans, he was entirely succeeded in them. Therefore, in an era of environmental crises, humanity should return toward natural treatment of their diseases.

Trusteeship or Khalifah

In his 'Autobiography' Gandhi described the meaning of the term 'trustee' as the servant of God. If we elaborate this concept of 'trustee' it can be 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.⁸²

In Islamic view, Allāh SWT has assigned man the role of vicegerent. He made him the guardian of the earth and its resources. Because Qur'an describes that other phenomenon of creation are greater than man. He is not just the friend of earth, but its protector and guardians. Nāsr a prominent thinker of eco-philosophy of Islam, describes the role of Khalīfah in following words: *"As a khalifat Allāh, he must be active in the world, sustaining cosmic harmony and disseminating the grace for which he is the channel as a result of his being the central creature in the terrestrial order."*⁸³ He also describes that humans should be remain active in protection and conservation of all resources of earth. Their 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.⁸⁴

Conclusion

After the detailed discussion of Nasr's and Gandhi's eco-philosophy, it is clear that both scholars deal with ecological crises from their respective religious traditions. Although both come from different backgrounds in terms of religious belief and education, they united on the same issue of environmental conservation. Their theoretical discussions are different from one another but are similar in the way they connect environmental crisis with religious tradition or provided sacred dimension to nature.

Both eco-scholars have criticized the anthropocentric approach of the West that has disconnected humanity from the sacredness of nature. In alternative, both have presented their constructive approach. After addressing the present crisis from a traditional viewpoint, Nasr tries to solve them from religious, spiritual, and philosophical understandings. First, he describes the order of creation, the status of earth and its natural resources, the place and role of human beings from purely Qur'anic, and spiritual understandings, then he turned toward philosophical understandings of these phenomena. Here, he talks about perennial wisdom against materialistic philosophy for a deep thinking about humans and nature. In his ecological understandings, Gandhi seems more practical than Nasr, his philosophy of 'oneness of

existence' forms cosmo-centric value approach to deal with nature and human beings. His ashrams were living example of bio-spherical egalitarianism where human beings were peacefully co-existed with other species and enjoying the basic right of living and flourishing.

In solution of present ecological disequilibrium, it is suggested to spread Nasr's and Gandhi's renewal of natural world as the reflection of divine among the public and remind them they are khalifah/trustee of God on earth. The natural resources have values in themselves apart from human beings as the sacred creation of God. So human beings should adopt a balanced or constructive approach to deal with them. They should encourage rural development and revise the modern education system through including the traditional understanding of the natural world. They should control their unrestrained desires of wants by adopting wise policies in economics, construction, and in agriculture system. Natural cure should also be promoted to avoid various environmental crises. Thus, for the long-term solution of environmental crises, Nasr's God-Man-Nature relationship model and Gandhi's oneness of existence suggests a paradigm shift to Muslims and Hindus from modern secular worldview to traditional sacred view of nature.

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