

Earth-Man Relationship in Islam and Hinduism: A Comparative Study of Eco-Theological Response of Fazlun Majeed Khālid And Ranchor Prime

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between man and earth has been both sacred and tender since time immemorial. This bond is based on the guiding principles enshrined and practiced deftly in all religious scriptures. Islam and Hinduism are unique as having a deep sense of respect and consideration for Earth and its natural resources. Fazlun Majeed Khālid and Ranchor Prime being the contemporary scholars of Islam and Hinduism respectively, attempted to bring religious understandings of earth and the place of human beings on it into the discourse of the present ecological crisis. They shifted the global vision of the earth-man relationship to a religious understanding of 'self and surrounding'. They tried to solve the current ecological crisis that our planet is facing after the advent of scientific knowledge and technological development in a purely eco-theological dimension. Khālid tries to address these issues from an Islamic understanding of nature while Prime attempts to deal with the ecological crisis from the Hindu faith. Both scholars criticized the anthropocentric value approach of the West and present the Cosmo-centric value approach as an alternative ethical approach to protecting our home planet Earth and its resources. This article presents a comparative analysis of their eco-theological thoughts to sustain an earth-man relationship in the 21st century.

Keywords: Anthropocentric, Cosmo-centric, Earth-man Relationship, Ecological Crisis, Worldview

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Introduction

Human beings and earth are two inseparable entities. The bond between them is so inextricably interwoven that whatsoever happens to the phenomena of earth is reflected on the life of man, and whatever is the action of man is sure to have impacts on the natural resources of earth. This interdependent relationship has been recognized by all religious traditions of the world. They all have much to teach modern humans how to respect earth and its natural resources which were once considered by humanity as sacred, but now have become fragile and even profane. It is observed that the significant shift of religious understanding is much needed to transform present global vision of earth-man relationship to religious understanding of 'self and surrounding.'

During the 20th century research has been increasingly drawn towards understanding the earth-man relationship from diverse perspectives including

religion, science, ethics, and public policy. The influential works of three scholars such as Rachel Carson's classic "*Silent Spring*"¹ White's article, '*The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*'² and Hardin's '*The Tragedy of the Commons*'³ drew attention to the negative impacts of human activities on earth, human population growth, resource use, harmful effects of pesticides on our food, and the natural resources etc. These works are credited with playing a key role in drawing the academic attention to the ecological crisis and became the cause of the emergence of environmental movements during the last decades of 20th century. Some scholars, for instance Arnold Toynbee⁴ and Lynn White blamed religions for allowing anthropocentric view of man.

Many theologians and religious scholars have tried to respond to their assertions. They started religious and spiritual approaches to rectify present secular worldview of nature. Khālid's "*Islam and Ecology*"⁵ presents fundamental concepts of Islam related with earth and the place of human beings in it from scriptural dimension. Nasr's "*Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*"⁶ described spiritual and philosophical approaches to understand earth-man relation. Khālid's "*Islam and the Environment—Ethics and Practice, an Assessment*"⁷ outline *ethical approaches of Islam to sustain earth-man relationship*. Mawil Izzi Dien in "*Islam and the Environment: Theory and Practice*"⁸ took a slightly different approach based on Islamic scripture, philosophy, ethics, and law. These approaches are adopted by Mawil Izzi Dien in "*The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*"⁹. Haleem followed a theoretical approach in "*Islam and the Environment*"¹⁰ an edited book of various essays to describes the Islamic view about the green teachings. Richard C. Foltz in "*Environmentalism in the Muslim World*"¹¹ outlines the ecological crisis and ecological responses of Muslim world. Prime's "*Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth*"¹² is based on Vaishnava sources and played a primary role in addressing current ecological problems in Hindu religious understandings. He

¹ Rachel L Carson, *Silent spring* (Boston: Mifflin, 1962).

² Lynn. White American Association for the Advancement of Science., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" ([Washington]: American Association of Science, 1967).

³ Garrett. Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Readings in Social Welfare : Theory and Policy ; Edited by Robert E` . Kuenne*, 2000.

⁴ Arnold Toynbee, "The Religious Background of the Present Environmental Crisis A Viewpoint," *International Journal of Environmental Studies Journal of Environmental Studies* 3, no. 1–4 (1972): 141–46.

⁵ Fazlun M Khalid and O'Brien, Joanne., *Islam and Ecology* (New York, NY: Cassell, 1992).

⁶ Nasr Seyyed Hossein, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1997).

⁷ Fazlun Khalid, "Islam and the Environment - Ethics and Practice an Assessment," *Religion Compass* 4, no. 11 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2010.00249.x>.

⁸ Mawil Izzi Dien, "Islam and the Environment: Theory and Practice," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 18, no. 1 (1997): 47–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361767970180106>.

⁹ Mawil Izzi Dien, *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* (New York: Parkwest, 2002).

¹⁰ Harfiyyah Abd al-Halim., "Islam and the environment" (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 1998), <https://library.dctabudhabi.ae/sirsi/detail/38362>.

¹¹ Richard C Foltz, *Environmentalism in the Muslim World* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005).

¹² Ranchor Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology : Seeds of Truth* (New York: Cassell, 1992).

has reinterpreted the ten incarnations of Vishnu in ecological perspective. Mahadev H. Desai's "*An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*"¹ 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 example of environmental ethics. Arne Naess in "*Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World*"² borrowed the concept of "self-realization" of Gandhi and developed a new ecological approach. Nelson's "*Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*"³ examines the relationship between Hindu tradition and ecology from scriptural, philosophical, and eco-activist approaches. Chapple and Tucker's "*Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water*"⁴ is an edited collection which provides an overview of Hindu teachings of ecology. Jain's "*Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*"⁵ gives a detail account of the ecological practices of Hindu communities of India.

Despite the variety of scholarly publications on earth-man relationship in contemporary world from Islamic and Hindu tradition, there is still need for comparative analysis to avoid any future environmental crisis. The work presented in this article is focused on two pioneering scholars of ecological understanding of Islam and Hinduism namely Fazlun Majeed Khālid and Ranchor Prime. Both scholars were asked by *Worldwide Fund* for nature, to write ecological understandings of their respective religion's. Their works are representative of Islamic and Hindu views on ecology at international level. Both scholars are also highly active in addressing ecological crisis being faced by Muslim and Hindu communities in religious perspective. This paper is devoted to answer the following questions: How Hindu and Islamic thinkers describe the earth-man relationship in twentieth century, and what are their major contributions to protect environment? Is there any similarity in the works of Khālid and Prime on earth-man relationship or they differ with each other? If yes, then in what context? In this respect, their eco-religious understandings, their theoretical and practical approaches are compared and analyzed for the sustainability of our home planet earth and its resources. This research also investigates how their ecological understandings articulate religious environmental ethics to avoid environmental crisis in future. Therefore, on the basis of present fountain of knowledge, new research as a contemporary response to sustain earth-man relationship in 21st century is explored.

¹ Mahadev H. Gandhi Desai, "An Autobiography : Story of My Experiments with Truth" ([United States]: Duke Classics, 1993).

² Arne. Naess, *Self-Realization : An Ecological Approach to Being in the World* ([Murdoch, W.A.]: Murdoch University, 1986).

³ Lance E. Nelson, *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998).

⁴ Christopher Key Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker, ed., *Hinduism and Ecology : The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water* (USA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁵ Pankaj. Jain, *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities : Sustenance and Sustainability* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, Vt: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2010).

Modernity and Earth-Man Relationship: A Historical Background

The crucial influence of modernity has been in determining to emancipate the capabilities of individual and motivating him toward freedom from restrictions. This conception of modernity refers to 14th century which is known as the period of renaissance and called it Humanism.¹ According to John Opie:

*“this humanism promotes the radical separation of humans from nature and the denial of nature’s ultimate reality in order to create their own alternative cosmos”.*²

The center of this type of Renaissance Humanism was in northern Italy, presented a sense of liberation for humans from the forces of heaven and earth. The great victory of this development was to make man not a blind tool of fate, but himself the energizing force. This kind of denial of human fate distinguished the Renaissance from classical learning and made man as a rival of earth.

Earth-man relationship changed with renaissance. Historical circumstances of Europe in 15th and 16th century changed the worldview of man. Furthermore, the advent of industrialization of united states in 18th century also cause to bring change in environmental practices of human beings. This industrialization was followed by elsewhere in Europe and North America, and then spread across the whole world through colonization. Nāsr 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.”*³

In the view of Muslim and Hindu thinkers’ colonial education system and industrialization cause environmental crisis such as deforestation, desertification, biodiversity loss, water, air, climate change, and soil pollution.⁴

Before renaissance and industrialization, the impacts of human activity were not as much as negative as today because people were conscious about the limitation of their activities concerning the earth and the technologies, they used to be not capable of modifying the earthly resources on a large scale.

¹ Jerry. Brotton Brotton, Jerry., *The Renaissance : A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 41.

² John Opie, “Renaissance Origins of the Environmental Crisis Author (s): John Opie Source : Environmental Review : ER , Vol . 11 , No . 1 (Spring , 1987), Pp . 2-17 Published by: Oxford University Press,”.

³ Zamir Iqbal Mirakhor, Abbas, Sadr, Seyed Kazem, “Handbook of Ethics of Islamic Economics and Finance” (Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2020), 156.

⁴ Fazlun M. Khalid, “Islam, Ecology, and Modernity: An Islamic Critique of the Root Causes of Environmental Degradation,” in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, ed. Frederick M. Denny and Azizan Baharuddin Richard C. Foltz (Harvard University Press, 2003), 299–322.

In Middle Ages, people were living in agricultural societies and using hand tools or simple technologies without a large negative impact on natural resources. Even the non-agricultural goods were made by using hand mills to produce flour, cloth, furniture, vessels, shoes, wooden tools, and simple iron. These goods were produced at the consumption needs not for luxurious comforts.¹ This kind of encounter between Earth and man was the entire dependency on its life bearing resources. Earth gave man life and nurtured him. It provided him with means of survival. This was a parent-child relationship that man enjoyed all marvelous resources of earth to fulfil his survival needs.

It is important to note that the crisis our earth is facing began in west and spread globally when colonized countries sought to regain power and independence by adopting western practices and norms. They forgot their traditional understanding of earth and the limitations of their activities. They developed a purpose of 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.² These changes in human societies and modern worldview have rapidly increased the human impact on the earth.

The historical background of Earth-Man relationship has conclude that the advancement in technology and secular worldview has shifted the eco-friendly attitude of man to hostile relationship with earth. It is suggested that humanity needs a “paradigmatic shift” from the global vision of earth-man relationship to religious understanding of “self and surrounding” as the only solution to pervading crises our home planet earth is facing.

Khālid and Prime’s Theoretical Dimension to Understand Earth-Man Relationship

Although Islam and Hinduism have a deep sense of respect and consideration for Earth and its natural resources, but for the solution of current crisis of earth, the new discourse is much valuable. It is a reinterpretation of sacred text related with nature by 20th century scholars of Islamic and Hindu traditions. This new discourse is called ‘eco-theological’ based on the sacred scripture of both religious traditions. It is not something new imposed on tradition rather it is renewal or reinterpretation of the existing one. It is also a response to the western view of anthropocentrism or human superiority over nature.

In this perspective, Khālid and Prime concentrated on their respected religious tradition to describe the significance of earth by describing the position of human beings in connection with the natural resources and other life-forms on earth.

¹ Bas J P van Bavel , *Manors and Markets : Economy and Society in the Low Countries, 500-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 146.

² Andrea Kiss , Pribyl, Kathleen., *The Dance of Death in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe: Environmental Stress, Mortality and Social Response* (London: Routledge, 2021).

They talk about man as the co-worker or partner with other creatures of earth to bring equilibrium of the universe. Following sections outline Khālid and Prime's theoretical understanding to sustain earth-man relationship.

Khālid and Prime Criticism to Modern Secular Worldview

Khālid and Prime as being the prominent figures of 20th century, are entirely aware about the severity of environmental crisis our home planet earth is facing. Both criticized the modern secular worldview for convincing human beings to exploit natural resources of earth for their comforts.

The following citation describes the anti-secular philosophy of Khālid. It contains all the elements that illustrates the severity of environmental crisis.

“Our global civilization looked very artificial, resting on industrial and financial systems in singular pursuit of profit. The very human ecology was collapsing. Tradition and the wisdom of the ages spurned, replaced by an iconic modernity based on the enslavement of man to machine.”¹

In Khālid's view, this globalized world in which we live today is dominated by a secular way of seeing reality. It is usually described as the victory of scientific view over religious view. Khālid describes that there are two historical events that occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in the West and breached the outer perimeters of natural order. The first was took place in sixteenth century when the usury was legitimized in Christian world. The second was Cartesian doctrine of dualism by splitting the mind from body and refuted the traditional order. Before renaissance, religion was the most important part of the overall pattern of life in societies. Descartes thoughts challenged the traditional worldview through proclaiming that the mankind is the *“master and possessor of nature.”*² His dualism philosophy made distinction between rational subject and material world which allowed for the development of science on purely mechanistic lines.

Khālid is against the secular worldview because it replaced the traditional view of reality. He defines secular view as the effect of modernity which became 'fashion' to follow, if we are not up there with the rest of the crowd following it then we must be backward. He defines modernity in following words:

“As what we now understand by modernity, as the secular ethic progressively seeped into the Muslim psyche and as industrial development, economic indicators and consumerism became the governing parameters of society, there has been a corresponding erosion of the Muslim perception of the holistic and a withering of

¹ Fazlun M Khalid, “Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics,” *Environmentalism in the Muslim World*, 2005.

² Fazlun M Khalid, “Islam, Globalisation and Ecology,” *The Impact of Globalisation on the Islamic World: Issues and Challenges in the 21st Century*, 2001, 1–9.

its understanding of the scared nexus between the human community and the rest of the natural order.”¹

In his view, all ecological crisis our earth is facing today such as, the water and air pollution, deforestation, loss of species and so on, are the outcome of the secular worldview.²

Prime also criticizes the secular worldview of west in following citation:

“for nearly two hundred years Indians have been estranged from their own culture by English education. They have been encouraged to think in Western ways and to value the things which the West values. Their own traditional values have been marginalised. In many cases they no longer know what those values were or why they were held because those things are no longer taught.”³

He advocates a holistic anti-industrial philosophy based on Hindu metaphysic. In his view, the crisis in India is that the age-old spiritual awareness of human belonging to nature has been destroyed by the industrial development that was originally introduced by the colonial masters in India. He stresses that a radical shift in the direction of traditional understanding is needed to avoid catastrophe. He advised humanity to understand their place and the status of all other living beings in the cosmic realm. There is need to revise the worldview of Religion for the peaceful co-existence on our home planet earth.

How Khālid Relates Islam with Earth-Man Relationship

In late 1980’s, Khālid attended an environmental meeting for the solution of ecological problem that humanity was facing all around the world. He was asked to define what Islam says about the earth and man relationship, but he did not answer this question satisfactorily. He felt the need to study Islamic concept of environmentalism in order to avoid exploitation. This was the time when he decided to study it by himself. He enrolled in the University of Birmingham for a master’s degree in Islamic studies at the age of fifty-eight years.⁴ He devoted himself in searching Islamic teachings about earth-man relationship.

Khālid took purely Qur’ānic view to describe the relation of mankind with our home planet earth. He finds that our recent concern with the term ‘environment’ which connotes a surrounding is not found in the holy Qur’ān. The holy Qur’ān speaks of Khalq⁵ and describes all the diversity of the universe under this term.

¹ Fazlun M. Khalid, “Islam, Globalisation and Ecology” 1.

² Khalid and O’Brien, Joanne., *Islam and Ecology*.

³ Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth*, 111.

⁴ Khalid, “Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics.” 87-88.

⁵ An Arabic term, used for creation

Therefore, Khālid defines the ‘earth’ under the term ‘khalq’ which is used in 261 verses of Qur’ān to describe the process of creation. These verses contain many references to the earth and its natural resources including ocean, rivers, trees, plants, mountains, soil, animals, birds, stars, and the sun etc.¹

In his view, the earth and its life bearing resources are the Āyāt² of Allāh (Subḥānhū wa ta’alā). It means our earth and its resources are the signs and symbols of God. Apart from them, the verses of the holy Qur’ān are also named as Āyāt. This understanding suggests that the creation and the holy Qur’ān, both are the proof of Allāh’s existence and His divinity. The Qur’ān also talks about some signs within the creation and the self of mankind. In a sense, our home planet earth and all natural resources are the signs of Allāh (Subḥānhū wa ta’alā) and equal member of His creation along with human beings. The holy Qur’ān says in this respect: “*And on the earth are signs for those who have faith with certainty. And also, in yourselves. Will you not then see?*”³ In Khālid’s view, to rediscover the divine and its reflection in oneself is the essential step to sustain earth and man relationship. And to see the Divine reflection in the phenomena of earth is its natural consequence.

Khālid took opposite stance of Descartes to describe the status of mankind. He describes the two aspects of mankind; the one is related with the origination of mankind from the bosom of creation and the other is his role as Khalīfah or vicegerent of Allāh (Subḥānhū wa ta’alā) on earth.

The holy Qur’ān affirms the origination of mankind in connection with other creation. The Qur’ān states with this regard: “*Allāh’s Fiṭrah with which He has created mankind. No change let there be in Allāh’s Khalq*”.⁴ Khālid defines this Fiṭrah⁵ in following words: “*the natural primordial condition of mankind in harmony with nature*”. In his view, this verse indicates two messages: the first is a sense that mankind is originated in the bosom of creation like all other creatures and are equal pattern with the rest of Allāh’s creature. Allāh (Subḥānhū wa ta’alā) has created him within the natural pattern and the role of mankind is defined by same patterning. This description of our place in the natural order is both a simple and lucid in ecological description. As a part of Allāh’s creation, we are subjected to His unchangeable laws like all other creatures. Second, it establishes the foundation of deep ecology inherent in Islamic tradition. The holy Qur’ān defines our place and relationship within this pattern which lead humanity to address the present-day

¹ Fazlun M. Khalid; Islam and the Environment; Vol. 5, Social and Economic Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, pp 332-339; Encyclopedia of Global Environmental Change; John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Chichester, 2002.

² A Qur’anic word, means sign or symbol

³ Ismail ibn Umar Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir: (Abridged)* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2003). 51:20-21

⁴ Ibn Kathir. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*. 30:30

⁵ A Qur’ānic term means natural pattern, natural state, or original state of good. Here it describes the origination of mankind within the primordial nature of creation

ecological crisis at its root of Fiṭrah.¹

After describing the position of mankind in the universe, Khālid defines the role of mankind under Qur-nāic notion. The holy Qur’ān states describes his role in following words:

“It is He who has appointed you guardians in the earth and has raised some of you in rank above others, the He may try you in what He has given you. Surely you Lord is swift in reckoning; and surely, He is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.”²

Khālid interprets this verse in ecological paradigm that it describes the relationship of mankind with earth and all natural resources. Allāh (Subḥānū wa ta’alā) has assigned him the role of vicegerent. He made him as the guardian of earth and its resources. Because Qur’ān describes that other phenomenon of creation are greater than mankind. Khālid describes the role of Khalīfah³ in following words:

“As Khalifa Ullah (Allāh Ta’ala’s representative) we are required to care for and manage the earth in a way that conforms to His purpose in creation. That is to use it for our benefit without causing detriment to the other inhabitants of planet earth. This is executing the trust placed in our hands bearing in mind the limits of the fitra.”⁴

Furthermore, in Khālid’s view, earth is not something to play with it or to destroy it. Human beings are accountable for their actions. As being the vicegerent of Allāh (Subḥānū wa ta’alā), they are not just friends of earth but are its custodians and are answerable for their action on the Day of Judgment.

How Prime Relates Hinduism with Earth-Man Relationship

Prime was not interested in environmental issues until 1987, when he started to work as an advisor to the *Worldwide Fund* for Nature. After given the task to author a book on ecological concepts of Hinduism, Prime intensely concentrated on the relationship of mankind with earth.⁵ His focus was to describe the traditional understanding of Hindu faith to reform the negative attitudes of human beings towards our home planet earth.

¹ Fazlun M Khalid, “Islamic Basis for Environmental Protection,” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. London: Continuum International, 2004.

² The Holy Qur’an 6:165

³ A Qur-ānic term, used to describe the role of man in the hierarchy of cosmos

⁴ Fazlun Khalid and Fazlun Khalid and Ali Kh. Thani, *Teachers guide book for Islamic environmental education* (Birmingham: Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, 2007).

⁵ “Transcript: Ranchor Prime : NPR,” accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5043626>.

Prime describes that Hindu understanding of earth is quite opposite to the western worldview that considers only human beings as sacred. Hinduism goes beyond the frontier of human and include the holiness of all creatures. It considers earth as mother, goddess Bhumi or the home of God. He describes the Puranic story of creation to demonstrate the eternal oneness of all life forms. This story illustrates that all life forms sprung from Vishnu, and he is the sole creator of everything. The creation process has a cyclical nature which does not happen only once. Vishnu generates the material universe and extracts it repeatedly time after time.¹

Prime also defines the relation of natural resources of earth with Vishnu, the Supreme reality of Vaishna tradition of Hinduism in following words:

*“The ocean are said that Vishnu’s waist, the clouds are the hairs on his head, the mountains are his bones, the rivers are his veins, and the trees are the hairs on his body”.*²

Prime sees the unity in diversity through describing the Puranic creation story and the core Hindu concept of religion as ‘Sanātana-Dharma’. Since the story of creation described the one essence of all life forms that lies in Vishnu, then the apparent diversity has no longer any importance. Human beings, and the mother earth including natural resources such as forests, oceans, mountains, animals, and tress all have shared the one or a single origin of existence.

Prime describes that Hinduism is a ‘holistic religion’ or ‘a way of life’ that is named as ‘Sanātana-Dharma.’ It is translated *“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 is what causes Hindus to refuse to separate their religion from their daily practices or differentiate between spirituality and materialism. ‘Sanātana-Dharma’ as it is described the ‘complete way of life’ rather than a religion, it includes spiritual, social, economic, political, and environmental practices for its followers. He believed that our earth is filled with numerous resources that are not made up of inanimate matter, to be wasted or exploited rather they all are sharing one spiritual core of existence and must be treated with respect.³

Prime expands the concept of ‘sacredness’ towards matter. As various material elements are used in our daily prayers which are constant reminder of the sacred quality of matter. All matter is infused with the presence of God and his spirit is also present in matter. Therefore, everything is sacred and is seen only by those who have the spiritual vision. He describes this fact in following words:

¹ Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth" 24.

² Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology," 24-25.

³ Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology," x, 78.

“The ritual of daily worship in which the elements of matter are resanctified awakens the dormant sense of divine presence, enabling the worshipper to see that presence even in everyday objects. A deity of the personal form of God can be made out of wood, stone, earth, or paint, or can be created in the mind, and then worshipped with the sanctified elements of matter.”¹

Prime also presents spiritual approach to understand the relation of natural phenomena of earth to God and to see them as sacred. He describes how the contemplatives were able to find the inner unity between God and natural phenomena. His citation states:

“When they see the sunrise and feel its scorching heat, when they taste water or smell the earth in the monsoon rains, they are reminded of Vishnu. Vishnu is both inside it and outside this world, and it cannot be separated from him. All is sacred, God-given, and mystically created. It all came from Vishnu, and it will all return to him in the end.”²

Khālid’s and Prime’s Ethical Approaches to Sustain Earth-Man Relationship

Sayem explains the environmental ethics in following words: *“Environmental ethics are the application of ethical standards to the relationship between human and non-human entities in the environment”*.³ These ethics are basically divided into two categories such as anthropocentric⁴ and non-anthropocentric. The anthropocentrism stands by itself while non-anthropocentrism is divided into three: pathocentrism (considering the moral values of animal species), biocentrism (moral values of all living species) or eco-centrism, and holism or Cosmo-centrism (extends the moral values to all diversity of earth). 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.”*⁵

Khālid and Prime as being the eco-theologian of Islam and Hinduism, have not confined their understanding to any specific ethical approach to earth-man relationship. Their eco-theological discussion exclusively covers all the aspects of earth and its natural phenomena. They did not confine themselves to any specific part or specific specie rather they talked about the whole ecosystem of earth.

¹ Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology," 29-30.

² Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology," 27.

³ Sayem, Md. Abu. "Religions and Environmental Ethics: A Comparative Study of John B. Cobb, Jr. and Seyyed Hossein Nasr." *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 3 (2019): 34-50.

⁴ human superiority over non-human, see also, Stephen M. Gardiner and Allen Thompson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵ Bron Taylor, "Environmental Ethics" *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, (New York: Continuum, 2005), 597-607.

Because they are aware of the failure of anthropocentric value approach to earth-man relationship as it cannot create a strong feeling or inner consciousness for the whole diversity of earth in the mind of human beings. They believe that religion is the only sources for growing such inner and spiritual feelings in the mind of human beings to avoid future exploitation. Their aim is to describe the ecological worldview of their religion and then divert the attitude of believers toward ecological sustainable lifestyle. Both revives the ecological teachings of their religions with a new interpretation. Although their aims are the same, but their mode of thought is somewhat different which is based on their eco-religious understandings. Comparatively both of them are corresponding to a Cosmo-centric ethical approach to earth-man relationship.

Khālid's Ethical Approaches to Earth-Man Relationship

Khālid criticizes the anthropocentric value approach of west to deny the intrinsic value of other living beings. He tries to prove the values and importance of other non-human entities of the earth. His interpretation of Qur'ānic verses suggests a comprehensive understanding about the relationship of human beings with non-human components of the earth.

For this purpose, he worked hard for many years to search Qur'ānic foundation that regulates human behavior toward the conservation of earth and its resources. These ethical principles are as followings:

Tawḥīd: The Unity Principle

In Khālid's view, knowing the creator is the first step to understand his creation. On the basis of 'sūrah Ikhlās' he develops the concept of tawḥīd¹ to describe his ethical approach to earth-man relationship. The concept of Islamic monotheism is entirely based upon this chapter of Qur'ān. This chapter 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'ān says in this respect: "*What is in the heavens and the earth belong to Allāh. Allāh encompasses everything*"² Khālid declares that if human beings understand this concept of tawḥīd in such as God alone is the creator of earth and everything existing and the unity of creation, then they will not destroy any component of earth.³ In his view, Islam presents the tawḥīdic-centric value approach to describe the relation of earth and man. Both are God's creation, and all creature has its own values and unique role in this universe.

Fiṭrah: The Creation Principle

For the intrinsic value of Allāh's creation, Khālid discusses the principle of 'Fiṭrah.' Through it, he argues the origination of mankind within the primordial

¹ Islamic approach to define oneness of God

² Al-Qur'an 4:125

³ Khalid and Thani, *Teachers guide book for Islamic environmental education*.

nature of creation and his position in it.¹ The holy Qur’ān describes this concept in following verse: “*Set yourself firmly towards the Deen [the way, the life transaction], As a pure natural believer, Allāh’s natural pattern on which He made mankind. There is no changing Allāh’s creation. That is the true Deen – But most people do not know it*”² In the interpretation of this verse Khālid define Fiṭrah as “*the natural primordial condition of mankind in harmony with nature.*” In his view, this verse indicates two messages: the first is a sense that mankind is originated in the bosom of creation like all other creatures and are equal pattern with the rest of Allāh’s creature. Second, it establishes the foundation of deep ecology inherent in Islamic tradition. The holy Qur’ān defines the place and relationship of human beings within this pattern. This understanding leads them to address the present-day ecological crisis at its root of Fiṭrah.³

Mīzān: The Balance Principle

Khālid also derived the principle of Mīzān from the most popular passages of the holy Qur’ān. He describes Mīzān in following words:

*“Mīzān is the principle of balance on which all creation works and maintains itself in a stable condition. Preserving the balance and stability of both marine and terrestrial ecosystems helps us to conserve the environment.”*⁴

Furthermore, he describes that the most important objects like sun and moon in the universe are performing their function rightly. And the rest of creature like trees and stars are in the state of prostration. All of them are submissive to the will of Allāh (Subḥānhū wa ta’alā) and performing their duties honestly. These facts remind Muslims that everything in the universe is in the state of prostration, and that is how the earth remains in balance.⁵ The holy Qur’ān further illuminates these truths in following words:

*“Everything in the heavens and every creature on the earth Prostrates to Allāh, as do the angels. They are not puffed up with pride.”*⁶

He describes that only human beings are not created with such state of prostration and gifted with intellect. Through this quality, they have power to distinguish between right and wrong, to express their intentions, and make the sense of their surroundings. This quality differentiates human beings from the rest of creature in the universe. It enables them to conserve their home planet earth from

¹ Khalid and O’Brien, Joanne., *Islam and Ecology*.

² Al-Qur’an 30:29

³ Khalid, “Islamic Basis for Environmental Protection.”

⁴ Khalid and Thani, *Teachers guide book for Islamic environmental education*.

⁵ Khalid, “Islamic Basis for Environmental Protection.”

⁶ Al-Qur’an 16:48-49

destruction, distinguish good from bad, protection from exploitation, and moderation from unlimited desires.

Khilāfah: The Responsibility Principle

It is a Qur'ānic notion of human vicegerency. After discussing the concept of tawḥīd in connection to earth-man relationship, and the Fiṭrah principle from which earth and mankind both are created with same patterns and are equal member of creation. Khālīd also defines the principle of Mizān which states that every creature is in the state of prostration and submissive to the will of God in order to bring balance in universe. Only mankind is chosen not to prostrate like another creature. He is given the gift of intellect which insist him to understand his state or position as the vicegerent of God among other diversity of creation to maintain the equilibrium and balance of the universe. Then Khālīd describes the role of man on earth in following words: “*As Allāh Ta’ala’s khalifa on earth we assume the mantle of guardian of His creation. We are thus obliged to protect the environment not destroy it.*”¹

Khālīd’s Practical Approaches to Save Our Home Planet Earth

Khālīd created an organization known as ‘*Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)*’ to express environmental work of Islam. The motives of IFEES are to give fresh expression or ecological perspective to Islamic ethics. It is working under the supervision of Khālīd and some other scholars from various countries, with the help of NGOs, government agencies, mosques, and local communities etc. The Islamic principles for conserving the earth-man relationships are discussed in above section have further inspired Khālīd to implement them. He describes that the Shariah evolved over the fourteen centuries for giving the best expression of Islamic environment among Muslim communities successfully. Once again there is a need to revise these principles and their implementation form in modern context where secular ethics are prevailed. It has two facets, the first is to discover the Islamic teaching and attempt to make sense out of them as a practically applicable. The second is to change the behavior and negative attitudes of human beings on a finite earth.²

Khālīd took religion based indigenous approach to save our home planet earth and to solve many environmental crisis Muslim communities are facing in the world. He promoted 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.³

¹ Khalid and Thani, *Teachers guide book for Islamic environmental education*.

² Khalid, “Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics.”

³ Khalid, 104-110.

Prime's Ethical Approaches to Earth-Man Relationship

In Prime view, the environment does not consist of only flora and fauna, but human beings are also very much of its part. Their interdependent relationship has immense importance for their sustainability. Unfortunately, it is only human species who does harm and misuse the other companions badly. Prime suggests that there is need to reestablish and preserve the traditional values of Hinduism to sustain human-earth relationship for next generations. He describes some facets to sustain earth-man relationship such as:

Forest Splendor

As Khālid understands the relationship of Earth-Man on the basis of tawḥīd¹, Prime understands it through forest splendor. He argues that human beings should identify themselves as part of this forest splendor along with other diversity of earth. They together form the beauty of our world. This beauty is called 'Vanavaibhava' in Sanskrit.²

Spirituality

Just like Khālid describes human beings as part of 'Fiṭrah' principle,³ Prime after describing the human's relation with forest splendor, he argues that humans must understand themselves in broader sense. They must feel their selves as part of this whole world, and what role they are playing in it. In Prime's thought, to understand our relationship internally with all creature and creator is called spirituality.⁴

Culture

Through the reinterpretation of Indic culture Prime wants to establish eco-friendly relationship between earth and man because culture is an outward expression of spirituality and based upon human religious behavior. The worldviews are fundamental reflection of their cultures. So, when human beings understand their identity linked with all other species, they behave in such a courteous manner.⁵

Heritage

Heritage is a permanent impression of human culture which is preserved in literature, art, and stones. He describes that the foreign rulers have destroyed Indian culture by imposing their ideas on them. So, there is need to preserve Indian cultural and religious values to sustain human-earth relationship for next generation.

¹ Khalid and Thani, *Teachers guide book for Islamic environmental education*.

² Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth*, 19.

³ Khalid, "Islamic Basis for Environmental Protection."

⁴ Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology: Seeds of Truth*, 20.

⁵ Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology," 20.

Pilgrimage

Prime explains that to go on pilgrimage is to experience the cultural and religious values of a particular place. The structure of buildings and surroundings speak about the values of that civilization. It is necessary for devotee to visit sacred places to understand his link with religion and material world.¹

Human Welfare

When human beings learn the underlying unity, sacredness of all creatures and realize their cultural values, then they can develop a full sense of human welfare. Prime describes, they become very kind to all other species or behave in responsible manner even using the inanimate material.²

Human Ecology

All these points taken together constitute the human-earth relationship, through viewing human being as the part of ‘forest splendor’ and developing attitude of spirituality inherently toward all and apparently in the form of culture and heritage. When we understand all these facets correctly, we can find initial point of contact and relation to the biodiversity of earth and to truth (God).³

Prime’s Practical Approaches to Save Our Home Planet Earth

Just like Khālid. Prime adopted religion based indigenous approach as a way of addressing Vrindavan’s ecological problems.⁴ In his book *Hinduism and Ecology*, he examines largely from Vaishnavite⁵ resources for the protection of earthly environment. He reinterpreted the ten avatars of Vishnu to sustain the relationship between human and non-human world. 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.⁶

Vrindavan is a sacred town in the state of Uttar Pradesh in north-central India. It is devoted for the worship of Krishna. Guadiya Vaishnava tradition has been very prominent there for last five centuries. Sri Chaitanya and Swami Prabhupada, themselves made a long pilgrimage to see the sight of Krishna and sent their disciples to establish the presence of Krishna in Vrindavan. These facts illustrate that the town itself became as a sacred center for spiritual efficacious and plays a crucial role in the religious thought of Vaishnavism.⁷

¹ Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology," 21.

² Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology," 21.

³ Prime, "Hinduism and Ecology," 22.

⁴ Nelson, *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*.

⁵ Sect of Hinduism who worship Vishnu as Supreme Lord

⁶ Major river of northern India, devotees of Vishnu consider it as sacred river because Krishna was taking both in it.

⁷ "Reviving the Forests of Vrindavana by Ranchor Dasa – Back To Godhead," accessed January 31, 2022,

<https://www.backtogodhead.in/reviving-the-forests-of-vrindavana-by-ranchor-dasa/>.

Unfortunately, Vrindavan also faced certain environmental crisis such as deforestation and desertification in 20th century. Prime tried to solve these crises under the *Vrindavan forest revival project* sponsored by WWF for nature in 1991. Numerous trees were planted on pilgrimage path in Vrindavan. He also removed rubbish on the front section of Yamuna River and parikrama path¹. He prevented people for dumping rubbish there. He also tried to find solution of Vrindavan sewerage system. He improved it by discharging into the Yamuna River through unsightly open ditches. These ditches were passed alongside the parikrama path.²

Prime gave international dimension to the Vrindavan project, and it launch a group called *Friends of Vrindavan* in Leicester, United Kingdom. It was not funded by any organization or government rather it was based on charity and funds collected by migrated Hindus from East Africa. They all participated in developing the *Vrindavan Gardens* in Leicester. The *Friends of Vrindavan* organized an annual Yamuna cycle expedition to India to raise funds for Vrindavan and they were completely successful in this campaign.³

Friends of Vrindavan also helped to bring together a coalition of non-governmental organizations that shared a concern for the conservation of the Vraj region. They did numerous works for the renaissance of nature and tradition in Vrindavan and Vraj.⁴ These places are powerful center of spiritual energy for Krishna's devotees. Prime believes that if the woodlands and wildlife of Vrindavan flourish once again, then a message of hope for the protection of earthly resources will be sent to the entire world.⁵

Khālid and Prime both 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. As being the devotee of Swami Prabhupada Prime's ecological contributions are belonged to the Vaishna tradition of Hindu religion.

Evaluating Khālid's and Prime's Eco-theological Approaches concerning Earth-Man Relationship

After the detail discussion of ecological contributions of these contemporary scholars of Islamic and Hindu tradition, it is perceived that their ecological works are characterized as eco-theological contributions because they shifted the global

¹ Pilgrimage path built around the sacred entities in Vrindavan for devotees to walk around the town

² MUKUL SHARMA, "The Vrindavan Conservation Project," *Econpoliweek Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 36 (2010): 59–66.

³ "Protecting Vraja's Sacred Groves by Ranchor Dasa – Back To Godhead," accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.backtogodhead.in/protecting-vrajas-sacred-groves-by-ranchor-dasa/>.

⁴ Sacred Place in India around the Yamuna River belong to Krishna

⁵ "Saving Krishna's Forests," accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/saving-krishnas-forests-21430>.

vision of earth-man relationship to religious understanding of 'self and surroundings.' They tried to solve current ecological crisis that our earth is facing after the advent of scientific knowledge and technological development in purely eco-theological dimension. First, they defended their religion against vast catastrophe while focusing more attention on the textual sources of their religious tradition. They described the worldview of their respective religion to see earth and its diversity as sacred and went forth by presenting environmental ethics to cope with the trends of 21st century. Both are similar in their effort for solving the ecological problem which Muslim and Hindu communities are facing in religious understandings. These facets constituted their efforts as purely eco-theological response.

Khālid and Prime criticize the anthropocentric value approach of west and present their own understanding as an alternative constructive suggestion for sustaining earth-man relationship. Their theoretical understanding of earth, its natural phenomena and human beings relates to cosmo-centric value approach. Both viewed the intrinsic value of all diversity on earth including human beings, animals, plants, water, mountains etc. while they do not compromise the position of God and His relationship with all phenomena of the universe and not reduce the status of human beings to other non-human beings as usually described in deep ecological movements.

Conclusions

After the detail discussion, it is perceived that Khālid and Prime deal with the current environmental issues from their religious understanding of earth and man. Both eco-religious scholars are belonging to the same time period of late 20th century and are aware of ecological crisis our earth is facing on global level. Although they are coming from different background in religious understanding and education, but both unite on common problems of our home planet earth. Their contributions for equilibrium of earth and its natural phenomena from their specific religious traditions are remarkable.

In their eco-theological contributions, both seem theoretical and practical. They present religious understanding of earth, its resources, and the place of human beings in it as the solution of present ecological crisis. They argue that the traditional view of earth and man bring the value and sacredness of earth in the mind of modern man which is missing in modern secular worldview of nature. They are similar in applying their ecological ethics to solve various environmental crisis of Muslim and Hindu communities were facing. Both believe that anthropocentric approach is insufficient to deal with present environmental problems. Their cosmo-centric value approach is appropriate for addressing these issues from the deepest understanding. In this respect, Khālid goes forward in describing the duty and role of human beings as the guardian and protector of the earth and its resources. As being the vicegerent of Allāh (Subḥānū wa ta'alā), they are not just friends of earth but are its custodians and are answerable for their action on the Day of Judgment.