1.1 Ecology, Its Meaning and Scope

Ecological perspective and rationality should not be confused with the science of ecology. Neither it should be regarded as a synonymous with it. It is a way of thinking about natural phenomena about actions, organizations and about ultimate ends and values. The main objective is to discover the interdependent and interconnected character of its objects.1

This new outlook of Ecology branded as Metaphysical Ecology is a logical outcome of an emergence of growing ecological consciousness and changing human attitude towards the environment and at last having realized the fatal consequences of the awe-inspiring technological

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"It is possible to distinguish at least two ways of thinking about ecology. On the one hand are the scientific studies of biologists concerned with the inter-action among organisms— whether taken individually or in groups— and between organisms and their environments. On the other, ecology can be regarded as a method of approaching problems, and as supplying as metaphysics that applies to far more than living systems. In this sense, ecology has application to academic disciplines and even to political and moral matters. Thus, it makes sense to think of some people as ecological psychologists, ecological physicists and ecological philosophers. Someone like Fritjof Capra, who claims that ecology has application to physics, is thinking of ecological methods as affecting the methodology of our approach to physics. We can label this non-biological notion of ecology metaphysical ecology and contrast it with scientific ecology."

accomplishments, the study of ecology no longer stands for "the study of the interrelationships" but fast growing as an indispensable branch of science that is more relevant to the everyday life of every human being, with the effect, ecology now connotes—"the totality of man and environment". As such, "ecology is a basic discipline supporting environmental education", and hence, for some it is a perspective and for others, it is simply a biological science.

The ecological debates have been developing from the very beginning almost contemporarily with the onset of Industrial Revolution in the seventeenth century. Naturalists as well as philosophers started airing divergent views about the end goal of the emerging revolution in both human

2 Ecology is the oldest subject of concern of conscious man. The word ecology is of recent coinage which has been proposed by Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (1865), a German biologist. The term is of Greek origin Oekologie (=ecology) i.e., Oikos (=house or dwelling place) and logos (=study of) Literally, ecology is the study of organisms "at home".


3 Haeckel defined ecology as the total relation of the animal to both its organic and its inorganic environments. However, a modern definition makes his definition even more general by stating that ecology is the structure and function of nature.

see Eugene P. Odum, *idem*.


Also see.

*Webster's Third New International Dictionary. Latest unabridged.*

4 *Ibid.*, p. 4

thoughts and culture.

The modern ecological thought\(^6\) has received significant contributions from various thinkers and philosophers which include Gilbert White, John Burroughs, Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Carl Linnean, Darwin, Fedric Clements and A.G. Tanstley.

Gilbert White (1720-1793) who is considered to be the founder of ecological thought, was first man who propounded the ideal of ecological order. The philosophy of vitalism of John Borroughs and the holistic approach to ecology of John Muir further developed the idea in eighteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, Carl Linnaean's writings established a different school of thought which came to be known as the Linnaean school of ecology which dominated the early nineteenth century. The study of ecology was a means of vigorous conquest of nature for most of Linnaeans.

In the words of Donald Worster:

“'The chief characteristic of nature is its productive, real and potential and that man must not remain 'idle spectators' of this useful mechanism. What the hand of God had contrived in the economy of nature must become, in turn, the incentive for man's contriving genius: that was not only a fair conclusion from the premises of Linnaean ecology but also its inescapable ethic.'”\(^7\)

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6 The earlier contributions both from the Muslim world and the Greek cannot be underestimated. Although, Hippocrates, Aristotle and writings of other philosophers of the Greek period and the writings of Al-Jahiz, Masudi, Al-Beruni from the Muslim world were ecological in nature. However, neither the Greek nor the Muslims literally had a word for it.

The entire development of the ecological views of eighteenth and nineteenth century culminated into the Darwanian ecology of the later part of the nineteenth century. However, it is of vital importance that some of the implications of the eighteenth century about ecology have come fully into view with the prevailing mechanical view of life.

The 'arcadian' stance of GilbertWhite again came into the ecological view with the rise of Romantic Movement in the first half of nineteenth century. There can be no doubt that the Romantic approach to nature was basically an ecological one having concern with relation, interdependence and holism.8

The Romantic Movement tried to establish a more sensitive approach to nature. It sought to re-establish a more intimate bond with nature.9 However, this attitude was more sentimental than intellectual.10 Using Nasr's terminology it was a passive attitude11 towards nature.

Thus, Romantic Movement failed to re-discover nature and the spirit within the nature. Therefore, this holistic approach to ecology was chiefly dominated by the emerging ecological notion of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and dialectical views12 anchored by the seventeenth century science

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8 This notion was developed by Henry David Thoreu (1817-1862), a contemporary of Charles Darwin.
10 Ibid., p. 71.
11 Idem., p. 71.

"Man's collective and immediate material dealings with nature bring him into a dialectical relation with it, into a dynamic and potentially developing interaction with it. Such a relation, when critically analysed, reveals nature as continuous motion, interconnection and transformation. Nature is a ceaseless series of

(continued on next page)
and its aftermath.

The Darwanian idea of ecology which is known as *Descriptive Ecology* is said to be theory of evolution by ecological replacement. Donald Worster comments:

"There was truth in Darwanian ecological model—enduring, permanent, genuine, positive truth: valid and important revelations about nature that had never been made before and which could never be ignored thereafter. But there yet remains the simple fact that *Darwanian* was not the *truth*, there were other equally valid dimensions of natural economy that he ignored and underplayed." 13

Thus, inspite of the fact that the *Descriptive ecology* of Darwin was dominant at the time, there was, however, still some sort of skepticism about his ecological notion. The pioneering works of Fredric Clements, whose concept of ecological succession14 dominated the early twentieth century and later the discovery of ‘Ecosystem’ by A.G. Tanstley in 1935 witnessed another landmark in the development of ecological thought which

(continued from previous page)
unities of opposites, which are mutually creative, mutually destructive and mutually transforming.”

14 Communities appear to undergo repeatable directional and convergent changes of structure. This phenomenon is known as “succession”. This classical theory was anticipated by Thoreau and developed by E. Warming, Henry Cowles and given a new version by F. Clements.
promoted a holistic approach in the ecological vision.\textsuperscript{15}

The ecological view of Gilbert White and the Romantic approach to nature in the first half of 19th century are noticeable even in recent times with the appearance of ecological problems far and wide.

In the words of Donald Worster:

"Ecologists have insisted that scientists today are in danger of ignoring the complex whole of nature, the quality of organic interrelatedness and defies analysis by the physicist or chemist. Though they are quick to deny a belief in any non-material or vital force in the organism or in the ecosystem, ecologists frequently argue that breaking nature into the atomic parts cannot result in a true understanding of the whole. Special qualities emerge out of interactions and collectiveness, the whole of nature is different from sum of parts."

With the effect ecology is emerging as a special science manifesting a new perspective with regard to the natural world and human place within it. A perspective of interrelatedness and interconnection.

In the words of J.B. Callicot:

"Ecology changes our values by changing our concept of the world and of ourselves in relation to the world. It reveals new relations among objects which, once revealed, stir our ancient centres of moral feelings."


\textsuperscript{17} Donald Worster, \textit{op. cit}, p. 21-22.

Paul Shepherd endorses the same statement in following words: ‘Ecology deals with organism in an environment and with the processes that link organism and place. But ecology as such cannot be studied, only organism, earth, air and sea can be studied. It is not a discipline: there is no body of thought and technique which frames an ecology of man.

It must be, therefore, a scope or a way of seeing. Such a perspective on the human situation is very old and has been part of philosophy and art for thousands of years. It badly needs attention and revival.’

In other words, environmentalists hold that ecology teaches us a new brand of rationality.

‘Ecology is a rationality of living things from a new perspective, that is the importance given to the inter-connectedness of all things.’

Thus, ecology manifests a deep phenomenon—interdependence, interrelatedness and interconnectedness, giving credence to dynamic balance of nature as Murray Bookchin, a famous ecologist says:

‘Ecology deals with dynamic balance of nature, with the interdependence of living and non-living things’

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20 Rachel Carson, Silent Spring. (Goa, India: Other India Press,), p. 147-148.
This rationality of living as well as non-living enlarges our perspective to see reality as a whole.

"Everything is connected to everything else" 22

The main feature of natural order are interdependence and interconnectedness. Interdependence is a key to life on earth. Fritjof Capra underlines the essence of the ecological world view as follows:

"The emerging new perspective may be called a holistic, or an ecological, world view, using the term ecological here in a much broader and deeper sense than is commonly used. Ecological awareness, in that deeper sense, recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomenon and the embeddedness of individuals and societies in the cyclical process of nature." 23

This "paradigm shift" entails a different outlook. All major assumptions about man and nature are changed in this new emerging

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22 Although this dictum was formulated by eco-philosopher John Muir and is quoted in David Oats, Earth Raising, (Corvalics: Oregon State University Press, 1989), p.35. but this dictum is a part of four "informal laws" of ecology by Barry Commoner which state as:
   (1) Every thing is connected to every thing else;
   (2) Every thing must go somewhere;
   (3) Nature knows best; and
   (4) Nothing comes from nothing.

Although commoner himself referred to the fourth informal laws as "there's no such thing as a free lunch", the Russian ecologist Alexei Yablokow has translated this more generally as "nothing comes from nothing", quoted by John Ballancy, Forster, Marx's Ecology—Materialism and Nature, (Kharagpur, India: Cornerstone Publications, India Reprint 2001), p.14.

ecological order. Man is no more distinct or separate from nature but a member and part of the whole.

"Since nature includes human beings, the science must include humanity's role in the natural world—specifically, the character, form and structure of humanity's relationship with other species and with the inorganic substrate of the biotic environment." 24

Life is not only maintained within the environment but by the environment and interaction with it. No living organism has the capability to live independently, but its own cells and organs will link it to outer environment. Thus, interdependence is a logical concomitant of natural order.

This emerging perspective specifies the vast humanistic role in the entire realm of creation. Being a member of this vast family of creation, the pattern of man's action has also undergone change. Every result and possible outcome of every action is justified according to a new criterion that is in the words of Aldo-Leopold (1887-1948).

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability; and beauty of the biotic community, it is wrong when it tends otherwise." 25

This relational perspective has been under discussion for quite sometime and divergent views and perspective suggestions are pouring in from all quarters about this new paradigm. Accordingly new dimensions take shape and new ideologies take birth. Concepts like "nature is a web of relations" and therefore "denial of rationality is denial of being" lie in

24 Murray Bookchin, op. cit., p. 155.
the domain of this changing dimension of ecology. Also, a new concept
called the "cosmic family" has been envisaged by the advocates of this
vision, and humanity is expressed to mould its behaviour patterns so as to
fulfill the obligatory role towards the vast family and honour all relations
while deriving benefits from nature. 26

Now, it remains to be seen what made us to think otherwise. Think
ecologically and collectively. Honour relations with biotic and non-biotic
community and accept the true facets about nature.

It is an infallible truth that the natural climate no longer stands as the
biggest enemy of mankind, but instead ineffable science aided alternation
juxtaposed by human greed and arrogance, both in the external and internal
milieu of human beings is certainly becoming a threat to the human
terrestrial sojourn. The condition is not only grave but it is worsening. The
facts that are being brought to light about what is happening around us are
fraught with terrifying consequences. The damage to or depletion of ozone
layer that supports life on earth, global warming, lack of drinking water
facilities, the congestion and coagulation of city life, the exhaustion of
natural resources of all kinds, the destruction of natural beauty, and a
thousand and one other difficulties as we know it are all daunting.

All these, and much more of the ecological issues and hardships, are
but the consequences of certain concepts, traditions and ethics that are
typical of man's earth. It is a crisis of values 27 and these values are driving
humans to a state of misdeemour giving credence to economic progress
and materialism. With the result man behaves as if the resources are
unlimited and hence exploits them vigorously. In the outcome, over

26 A.R. Agwan, "Towards an Ecological Consciousness" in Islam and the
27 S.P. Manzur, "Environmental and Values, the Islamic Perspective", Touch of
consumption, discharging wastes and hazardous materials of volumes discharged exceeding the capacities of ecosystems, soil is being eroded, forests destroyed, water bodies polluted and wild life are being killed and thus making cascading impacts on the earth.

It is pathetic that modern man in the framework of modern civilization is using his capabilities in a manner which is violative against nature and thus making his life miserable.

"It appears that human behaviour, and what governs that behaviour in terms of values, ethics and virtues, would definitely control the relation between man and the environment. Therefore, any behavioural deviation from the sound innate path of values and virtues would constitute a relation that is quite detrimental to the environment and its components, making life more miserable."  

Values prevailing among people are often decisive in shaping the basic attitudes in their lives. Man's greedy egoism and his obsession for more luxury, more comfort and more profit by means of science and technology has made him selfishly exploit the environment and upset the ecological order and relationship. As a result the earth which ought to be man's home has become almost like a gast chamber. As ecologist rightly says:

"Civilized man has marched across the face of earth and has

29 How far science is responsible, it will be discussed fully later on. However technological relevance to the eco-disaster is visible in many great works like that of Fritoj Capra, The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture, (London:1983), The issue is beyond the scope of this humbly dissertation.
left a desert in his foot prints."\(^{30}\)

The ongoing ecological devastation has hit back at man in such a manner that even most sophisticated weaponry is unable to control/counter the onslaught and ironically it has threatened even his life-support system.

"... to gain dominion over the natural environment, he has created a situation in which the control of the environment is turning into its strangulation, bringing in its wake not only eco-cide but also, ultimately, suicide."\(^{31}\)

Human existence is sacrificed to the advantage of blind-technological progress and unbridled appetites for luxury, profit and power.

"Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does it to himself."\(^{32}\)

Thus, man has become an-endangered species himself along with one thousand others. Behaving as a species apart and taking diabolic liberties with the rest of creation, he is ramping through the delicate balance of nature. This is the frightening ecological crisis, perhaps the crisis of contemporary world that has assumed alarming magnitude and complexity in the most recent times. The crisis is mounting feverishly and is tolling the death-knell of mankind on this planet.

"The ecological facts of life are grim. The survival of all living things— including man— depends on the integrity of the


complex web of biological processes which comprise the earth's ecosystem. However, what man is now doing on the earth violates this fundamental requisite of human existence."

1.2 The complexity of the problem—Global ecological crisis

The world by the close twentieth century is experiencing a global eco-catastrophe. By means of vigorous conquest and unfettered exploitation of nature with unbridled ferocity, the whole earth with all its natural phenomena and processes has reached an imbalanced and unstable state—the whole of the nature entails an imbalanced affair. Whatever may be cause, the result is obvious—a changing face of earth for a changed civilization. Therefore, it becomes very necessary at the outset to have a general assessment of the situation so as to realize the complexity of the crisis.

(A) Desertification, Deterioration of Land and Improper Use of Forests.

With an increasing pressure on productive land due to practices like unchecked urbanization, deforestation, shrinking vegetation cover, overgrazing, erosion, salinity, inundation, much of the land has lost its productivity which has resulted in considerable increase of desert spans. It has been estimated about 72 square miles of productive land is being lost daily to encroaching deserts.34 About 1035 millions hectares (i.e. 20

The world has lost about 65 billion hectares of forests between 1990 and 1995; whereas 25 per cent of the terrestrial area in the world is exposed to degradation. Desertification has posed a great threat to the arid and fragile lands; which cover about 40 per cent of earth’s surface. It has threatened the very lives of inhabitants as a result of decline in land productivity per capita.

(B) Scarcity of Drinking Water:

There is a considerable decrease in the per capita share of fresh water in several regions around the world. About 20 per cent of world population lacks portable water. It has been estimated that if world consumption patterns hold to their current levels, two of every three persons will face harsh conditions by the year 2025.

(C) Biodiversity Loss:

It is pathetic that the rate of extinction has touched unprecedented levels. At present, it is accounted that about 40-100 species are lost every day that passes by which is about one thousand times much more than its previous rate in human history. Species resistant to draught, salinity, temperature or any other harsh environmental conditions have started to extinct due to so-called Green-Revolution. With the introduction of Genetically Modified (GM) plant together with the destruction or change

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36 Ibid., P.XXI.
38 Sylvan and Bennett, loc. cit.
of several ecosystems, have resulted in extinction of many animal as well as plant species.

Wetlands are also being lost as they are drained and filled for agricultural practices, housing and waste dumps. Between one-fourth and one-half of world’s swamps and marshes have been destroyed. Though the threats to bio-diversity are mainly concentrated in terrestrial areas, yet fresh water and sea water species, particularly coral reefs, are greatly threatened. Certain information indicates that 70 per cent of sea-fisheries are over-exploited. In 1996, the rate of mammals subjected to threat was 25 per cent in addition to 11 per cent of birds.39

(D) Climate Changes:

Human activities such as over-exploitation of fossil fuels, destruction of forests, pollution of sea-water in particular have led to an increase in the concentration of poisonous gases such as Methane, Carbon dioxide, Chloro-fluorocarbons etc., which inhibit outgoing radiation (particularly infra-red) reflected from earth’s surface and absorb it in a manner similar to green-house effect resulting in an increase of atmospheric temperatures. Due to rise of temperature the green house effect leads to certain climatic changes that impose imbalances on the ambient air, affecting a host of activities which include sea-level rise, inundation of small islands and many coastal areas around the world, increased salinity of ground water, severity of natural phenomenon, more soil humidity, increased evaporation, drying out of many secondary water sources. Instances of climatic irregularities include the increase of flood in winter, frequent spells of draught in summer, retarded plant growth; and change in the crops distribution, forests and fisheries as well as deterioration of the fresh water quality. Reports indicate that carbon dioxide

emission from fossil fuels is on the rise. At present, 15 million tonnes of carbon dioxide is being pumped daily into atmosphere.\textsuperscript{40} The developed countries are the chief contributors. United States for instance, which has about 4.6 per cent of world's population contributes over 22 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions from fuel consumption. From an environmental quality point of view, it is \textit{extreme injustice} done by the developed countries whose population represents one-fifth of world's population and yet their carbon dioxide emissions in 1992 amounted to 62\% while as, the poorest one-fifth produce less than 2 per cent of the global consumption.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{(E) Hazardous Waste:}

Constant exposition to the chemicals present in air, water, food, soil in addition to certain industrial detergents, pesticides, nuclear wastes produced by military industries are the major cause of many adverse impacts that have made proper living of humans and other living organisms a real difficulty if not an impossibility altogether. In the early 1990s, hazardous wastes were generated at an annual volume of 400 million tonnes (especially those resulting from chemical production, energy, paper plants, metal industries, tanneries, and dye industry), apart from unofficial generation (less than 1000 tones per year) and illegal production. All such wastes contribute a massive threat to both the ecology and human health.\textsuperscript{42}

The growing production and use of chemicals in almost all parts of the world is a accompanied by an increase in the exposure to fertilizers,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{40} Sylvan and Bennett, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{41} Kamal cl-Batanony, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 58.
\end{flushleft}
heavy metals, air borne particles and other substances that have threatened the lives and health as well as environment. Use of fertilizers result in 3.5 to 5 million poisoning incidents every year. Despite the international ban on certain fertilizers and chemicals like DDT etc., the are manufactured in developed countries to be exported and intensly used in the developing countries.43

(F) Ozone Depletion:

The depletion of ozone layer is another factor that plays its vast role in destroying the ecological balance. Ozone layer which absorbs the harmful radiation of sun supports life on earth. However, with an unaccountable increase in the production of Chloro-fluor carbons, this protective layer has depleted to a considerable level and even disappeared in some specific areas.

All such ecological ills manifest serious consequences for entire humanity. These problems with their repercussions endorse the active involvement of humanity. These global eco-issues have largely resulted from human practices which involve development processes, earning livelihood, etc.

Human Activities:

Some of the activities include44:

* Imposing pressure on land resource exceeding their capacity by means of overgrazing, deforestation, using improper technologies in water discharge and irrigation, soil pollution, erosion, inappropriate land management etc.
* Depleting of fresh water resources and over consumption.

43 UNEO; GEO-2000, op. cit., p.xxi.
44 Kamal el-Batanony, op. cit., p. 59.
* Hunting and unjustified killing of wild life— by destroying the habitats and inducing massive changes that disturb the original feature of such habitats, reluctance to conserve the epidemic genetic resources, destruction of forests, pollution, introduction of exotic species or GM species.

* Dumping of hazardous wastes in seas or on lands of other developing countries.

* Excessive use of chemicals which deplete the ozone layer and failure to implement technologies that avoid or at least reduce consumption of such chemicals.

**Fundamental Nature of Ecological Problems**

It, therefore, becomes obvious that man plays a key role in all such activities resulting in what is being termed as eco-catastrophe. Ecological crisis is seen in terms of a dilemma. The dilemma in question is:

"The more we depend on technology, the more we are thrown into the environmental crisis— the more we produce, the more factories we build— the more we are subjected to new dangers of ecological catastrophe."\textsuperscript{45}

Modern scientific accomplishments that released humanity from the claws of poverty, hunger and disease have now become the most lethal weapons threatening the very survival of humans. Modern man has waged a war against nature. In the words of E.F. Schumacher:

"We are at war with nature and if by chance we win the war, we shall be the loser."\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{45} S. Subharao, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 90.

Fazlun Khalid endorses the same in the following words:

“‘We have lost the art of living in the fitrah state, that is natural state, in balance and in harmony with creation.”47

It is, therefore, imperative to come up with radical reasons beyond such ecological ills. No doubt there are social, economical and political factors behind but specific human values prevailing within the community shares the major responsibility. Ecological crisis is the part and parcel of a world-view, an attitude to life and reality, a set of values and a civilization. The values ranging from selfishness to a quest for excessive pleasures, abondement of individual responsibility towards society, fellow creation, greedness, man's arrogance as regards to his capabilities and resource, the unlimited desire to control, matter and destroy, going astray from sound and innate codes of humanity, and materialistic tendency coupled with an imbalance between the spiritual and the material and in its totality the denial to see reality as a whole.

Ancillary Factors:

Poverty, population, etc. nonetheless are issues when ecological problems are evaluated, judged, analysed. But they are nothing but ancillary factors. They do play a vital rdle in ecological assessment. However, these set of factors further exacerbate the impacts of values discussed above.

(a) Poverty: Poverty is the root cause resulting from prevelance of the values aforementioned. In this context, developmental process has been diverted to serve the interests of a certain group at the expense of others. Environmental deterioration remains one of the sources for persistence of poverty, in as much as the poor depend on natural resources, particularly the common one's like fodder for

living.
Poverty in terms of income is another reason. This is because that the poor are compelled to use limited resources. Nowadays, about half a million persons in the developing countries are inhabitants of fragile areas. As a consequence, poverty and environmental deterioration are identical twins.

(b) Lack of necessary legislation and even lack of appropriate mechanism to enforce the existing legislation.
(c) Lack of education or what is better called environmental upbringing, particularly in the developing and third world countries.
(d) Natural disasters such as deluges, draughts, earthquacks and volcanoes.48
(e) Exploitation of natural resources of developing countries by imperialist countries: Although most of the developing countries have acquired political independence, unequal economic relations still persist between the two that make the newly states economically dependent on the later. The capitalists are treating the developing countries simply as a sphere for the effective application of capital, as a zone for extraction of super profit, and a source of raw materials. Thus, it is no accident that there is an essential ecological component in their fight to establish a new world economic order.
(f) Geographical Conditions: Most of the countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America are in the tropical zone which represents a good example of a very unstable ecological system and that is a circumstance deepening degradational changes in the environment in developing countries.49

48 Kamal El-Batanony, op. cit., p.60.

20
ROOT CAUSES
VALUES & ETHICS

SUPPORTING FACTORS
- Poverty
- Legislation
- Education
- Natural Disasters
- Geographical conditions
- Economic exploitation of Third world by Imperialists

HUMAN ACTIVITIES
- Pressure on Natural Resources
- Depletion of Water resources
- Hunting and wild life extinction
- Production of hazardous waste

GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS
- Deforestation
- Fresh water scarcity
- Bio-diversity loss
- Climate change
- Hazardous waste
- Depletion of ozone layer

ECOLOGICAL CRISIS
The challenge of such grave ecological crisis has caused a response in the mainstream of the world religions to construct an ecological ethics based on religious values—*A call for consolidation of the efforts of all humanity*. As a result, *studies about the religious and sacred aspects of nature* and its relevance to ecological ethics has also increased in the recent past.

In the words of S.P. Manzur

"Ecological issues are, in the final analysis steeped deep in the moral and ethical consciousness of a culture: Ecology is a part and parcel of religious *weltanschauung*."

The emerging religious consciousness of religiously oriented scientists and scholars and those who realize the importance of religious wisdom in the contemporary world could be traced back since the early seventies of twentieth century. With the result various terms viz.

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50 In 1986, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the WWF, representatives of the major religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and other beliefs (Hinduism, Budhism, Taoism), were invited to a meeting convened in Assisi-Italy (known as Assisis Declaration). Despite simple presentations, the results were as great as a reasonable beginning.

Also, Brutland Report, 1987, and Agend 21 Earth Summit, 1991, and other important documents have realized an important role of religions in the field of ecology.

51 S.N. Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

52 Ibrahim O’zdemir, *op. cit.*, p. 175.


54 "Although it has been discussed that the religious response in this regard could be traced back from the seventeenth century onwards, almost simultaneously with the onset of Industries Revolution, however, these low key voices could never be turned into concret ecological ideas".

Theology of Ecology, Environment Ethics, Ecological Ethics, Deep Ecology, Esosophy, Eco-philosophy, Religious Ecology etc., entered into various academic discussions. It gradually paved way for interfaith understanding of the ecological crisis on one hand and on the other for a growing concern to integrate scientific and religious wisdom to redress the grave crisis. 55

The emerging religious perspective highlights some basic principles for the redressal of ecological crisis. The most general principle is a unanimous concept that everything in the universe is interrelated and interdependent. A holistic approach wherein man is no more a supreme creature to misuse or abuse nature but a part of the whole. His spree of victory over nature is therefore, a non-sensible one. This concept of relationality is a prime outcome of a changing paradigm.

The second concept that emanates from such dialogue is the concept of Ecological Ethics which emphasizes that human attitude towards nature has to be a positive one— an attitude bound by certain ethical values and norms.

The third concept and the most important conclusion drawn is that humanity needs a new eco-religio-social paradigm. To make lasting impact on mankind a new paradigm should emerge based on a new synthesis of religious principles and ecological thought. 56 Rediscovering a world view (of the reality) that encompasses both theoretical principles and ecological thought.

Therefore, at a time when the whole world has been addressing itself to this issue with full humanistic zeal, it becomes imperative for Muslims too, to come up and live upto the challenges and put forward those concrete and pragmatic aspects of Islam which can guide humanity for the redressal

55 Ibid, p. xi.
56 Ibid., p. xii.
of eco-crisis.

Because, the teachings of Islam promote all endeavours whether local, regional, or international in scope, and call for the joining of concerted efforts in all fields to conserve, protect and rehabilitate our natural environment.57

Thus, the purpose of this humble thesis is acknowledged.

**ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE**

The ecological consciousness and sense of preserving the ecological balance has been among the corner stones of Islamic civil and religious ethics. The Holy Qur’ān inabundantly guides mankind about the eco-crisis and provides most practical and pragmatic imperatives and injunctions to maintain and preserve the ecology the globe. The Qur’ānic concept of ecology is remarkably clear by focussing with utmost emphasis that the universe exists on a balance.

The Holy Qur’ān says:

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"Glorify the name of Thy Guardian, Most High, Who hath created, and further given fasawwā (order and proportion)."
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(Al-‘Ālā; 87:1-2)

The Islamic perspective on ecology which considers the whole universe as manifestation of Allah's (SWT) Creator, Who has created everything with utmost care and balance, assigns a more pursuasive and authentic meaning to ecology.

The Holy Qur’ān says:

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“Do they not look at the earth—how many noble things of all kinds We have produced therein.”

(Al-Shārā‘, 26:7)

“And made therein mountains standing firm lofty (in stature), and provided for you water-sweet and wholesome.”

(Al-Mursalāt, 77:27)

“It is He Who has made the earth submissive to you, therefore traverse through its tracks and eat of His provisions. And to Him is the rising up.” (Al-Mulk, 67:15)

Thus, if we feel safe on earth, it is because Allah (SWT) has made this earth amenable, manageable and servicable to us.

The essence of an ecosystem and eco-balance are beautifully described in the following āyat.

“And the earth We have spread out: set therein mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance.”

(Al-Hijr, 15:19)

‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali in his commentary of this āyat states:
"And every kind of thing is produced on the earth in due balance and measure. The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable and they in their turn support the animal, and there in a link of mutual dependence between them. Excess is eliminated. The waste of one is made the food of another, and \textit{vice versa}. And there is a chain of gradation and interdependence."\textsuperscript{58}

The \textit{ayat} along with it commentary in brief, sums up the entire scope of ecology.

Thus, interdependence and coordination is a key factor that is acknowledged at different places by the Holy Qur'\'an.

Everything works in a coordinate manner. The presence of continuity and coordination has a direct evidence from the following \textit{ayat} of the Holy Qur'\'an:

\begin{center}
\textbf{\begin{center}
لا الشمس بلغى لها أن تدرك الصمود لأيّن
سابق النهار وكل في ذلك يسبحون
\end{center}}
\end{center}

"It is not permitted to the sun to catch up the moon, nor can the night overstrip the day: each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit."

(Yāsīn; 36:40)

Thus, all creatures are interdependent and the whole of the creation runs because of the perfect order, harmony and coordination.

"At the deepest level 'ecological awareness' is an awareness of the fundamental interconnectedness and inter-dependence of all phenomenon. The biotic and the abiotic environments

interact with each other and form dynamic systems in the habitat. All living things are thus a part of a balanced and inter-acting eco-system which itself consists of sub-systems such as seas, forests, water resources, plants, insects and animals, all interwoven in a network. From the animate little pebble in one valley, the smallest plankton on the surface of the ocean; everything in existence, by its genesis and growth, its life and death furfills a purpose assigned to it by Allah (SWT), which is necessary for other things.”

The Holy Qur’ān regards nature as a Muslim, that is “in submission” to Allah’s will. Everything that exists in the heavens or upon the earth bows its head in submission to Allah’s laws. The Glorious Qur’ān reveals:

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لا يُفَاعَلُونَ تَسْبِيحُهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيَّاً غَفُورًا
وَإِنَّمَا يَوَّلُونَ إِلَّا يَسِيرُ يَوَّلُونَ
تُسْبِيحُ الَّذِي عَرَّفَ السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمِن فِينَ
```

“The seven heavens and the earth and all that exists within them extol the praise of Allah, there is not a single thing that does not praise Allah with thanks and gratitude although you may be unaware of how this praise is expressed.”

(Bani-Isra’il, 17:44)

Thus, the Holy Qur’ān regards nature as living. This organic dimensions of nature is also remarkably clear from the following āyat.

"Everything is swimming in an orbit."

(Ya’sin; 36:40)

The word ‘Sabahūn’ which means ‘swimming’ connotes a deep meaning. Living bodies swim where as non-living (as they seem to be) float. So this notion of swimming of cosmic bodies entitles that they are living. So is the case with planet earth. Although, the āyat gives a cosmic dimension; our earth is a part of it.

Another direct evidence of nature as living comes from the following āyat.

\[
\text{إنّا عرضنا للأمانة على السموم والأرض والجبال}
\]

\[
\text{فأببب أن يحملنّا وأشفعنّ منا وحملها}
\]

\[
\text{الإنسان إنّا كنا طلع مجهولًا}
\]

"‘Verily, We did offer the \textit{amānah} to the heavens, to the earth and the mountains but they refused to bear it and were afraid of it, yet man took it up for, verily he has always been prone to tyranny and foolishness.”

(Al-Ahzāb, 33:72)

The concept of \textit{amānah} mentioned in the above āyat signifies that not only man but the earth, the heavens and the mountains have an organic dimension. It is inevitable that only man had the capability of bearing the \textit{amānah}. The earth, the heavens and the mountains were incapable of bearing the \textit{trust}, although it was offered to them and they showed their unwillingness to accept it.

Therefore, according to the Holy Qur’ān, everything in the natural
world is a Sign (āyah) of Allah (SWT) and as such it is continuously praising Him. The natural world as presented and described by the Holy Qur’ān is an organic, holistic, orderly and perfect world. It is well-adjusted, ordered and possesses an intrinsic value. This serves as a basic in an endeavour towards developing an ecological ethics within the parametres of the Holy Qur’ān. What is required is that the holy Quran as a whole should be studied from an ecological perspective as well.

Muslim scholars have started applying the Islamic wisdom in interpretation of the ecological crisis in recent decades gradually giving credence to the Islamic perspective on ecology. The foundation of this view is based on certain key concepts which have been discussed and highlighted by various Muslim scholars. These key concepts that lie in the domain of this perspective include the concept of tawhīd (the Oneness of Allah), khilāfah (Vicegerency), amānah (trust), mizān (balance), fitrah (nature), fasād (corruption), etc.

Man in the Qur’ānic perspective has been bestowed by Allah (SWT) with the qualities to function as His khalīfah (Vicegerant) on the earth. His own self, status and physical as well as social surroundings are amānah. He is inclined to live with other creation in harmony and benovolence without transgressing the delicate balance in nature or causing any sort of injury or affecting the aesthetics and natural beauty. Any violation of these basic values will bring nothing but a severe punishment by means of severe crisis which the Holy Qur’ān describes in its terminology as fasād (corruption).

The above synopsis gives a most comprehensive message from the Holy Qur’ān so as to develop an ecological ethics. An ethics where nature possesses an intrinsic and living dimension. An ethic which involves not only human to human relationship but an ethics which covers and honors human relationship with biotic as well as abiotic components of natural
environemnt. An ethics which promotes harmony. An ethics which inculcates mankind to identify themselves as vice-gerents and not as vandals, as custodians and not as conquerers. An ethics which promotes all endeavours in the field of conservation, preservation, protection and integrity of whole nature.

So, the crux of this humble work is to study and investigate the Islamic perspective on Ecology. In other words, to elicit those aspects of Islam which can provide us sound and legitimate basis for developing an eco-ethic, highlight the metaphysical aspects regarding the natural world, The Creator, man and his place and role within this world. It is worth mentioning here, that unless a true metaphysical aspect of nature is formulated, developing an ethics is an impossibility.

Thus, developing a more plausible and reasonable attitude towards nature and one which is expected to be more suitable for environmental protection means, to develop a historical perspective on how we have arrived at our present set of attitudes and then understand what material changes are needed to foster and develop a reasonable attitude towards nature.

1.3 The Focus of the Problem

One of the main thesis of this presentation has already become exposed that there is a direct and strong relationship between ecological problems and values prevailing among the humans i.e., values assigned to natural world or nature as a whole makes us realize what we to do and how we behave with natural objects and conceptualize nature as such.

In other worlds, metaphysical views about nature also shapes our value system which in turn shapes and moulds our behaviour and attitudes.

In the entire history of philosophy, there have been many metaphysical views regarding the natural world, man and his place within nature. Human metaphysical concepts oscillating between two extremes—
sometimes people saw themselves a part of nature or subordinate to it, and some times as its dominants.

These metaphysical views have always influenced people's worldviews and provided the basis for their relationship with the external reality. It is these world views again, which legitimize man's actions, attitudes and behaviour.

The long history of ideas conveys that there are many such world views that have not only influenced human attitude towards nature but even their lives too.

The traditional world views, the animistic world view, for example, speaks of a more coherent and sympathetic attitude towards nature. According to their world view and metaphysical implications, everything was part of a whole and alive, and humans not separate but a part of the nature.

As Florence Fluckhon spells out and conveys that there are three general orientations held by people towards nature in different cultures and historical periods.

1. People as subjugated to nature, living at its mercy:
2. People as over nature, regarding nature to be dominated, controlled and exploited;
3. People as an inherent part of nature, living in harmony along with co-habitant.60

It is noticeable, that modern view of nature as well as man's attitude is different and in contrast to other two. Man not only separate from nature but superior to it, having therefore, the right and even the responsibility to control and dominate nature for his material needs: A complete transformation— a shift from subjectivity to objectivity.

60 Quoted by Ibrahim O’zdemir, op. cit., p. 13.
This complete shift or transformation in the metaphysical orientation is noticeable in the early seventeenth century with the emergence of a new metaphysical system formulated and systematized by Rene Descrates replacing the ancient Greek and Medieval Christian metaphysical outlooks.

“Descrates defined all reality from a new perspective. In other words, he constructed the whole of reality on an indubitably and unshakable foundation: ‘I think’. So, the very process and existence of human thought, viz., thinking was regarded as the foundation of all system and this claim is grounded on so-called methodical doubt.”

In the mean time, a historic change had taken place in the concept of science, its methodology, its use and even in its philosophy.

It was Francis Bacon's fresh and motivating ideas and creation of the principles of understanding, who for the first time in the history of philosophy, equated science with power and considered it most powerful weapon for a vigorous conquest of nature. The whole synthesis of this fresh orientation was complemented by Issac Newton whose mathematico-mechanical understanding of nature provided the scientists the necessary implements for understanding and investigating nature, which was regarded as a great machine. Thus, nature was devoid of any sacramental characteristics and assigned only an instrumental value.

Many environmentalists uphold different reasons and views regarding the non-environmental values that led and contributed to the ecological crisis.

Schumacher gives six main ideas for non-environmental values which according to him still dominate the minds of educated people even

today: "evolution, competition, natural selection and survival of fittest; the Marxist belief in the materialists base of history; the Freudian emphasis on the overriding importance of subconscious mind; the ideas of relativism, denying all absolutes, dissolving all norms and standards; the philosophy that valid knowledge can be attained only through the methods of natural sciences."

Another notion in this regard owes its rationale to Lynn White Jr. who argues that the 'Juedo-Christian tradition is the main and root cause of our present day environmental problems.'

He argues that man in Biblical tradition is above nature and a special creation of God commanded to have dominion over nature.

"to replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over everything that moveth upon the earth."

Extending his argumentation, Lynn White blames Christianity as 'the most anthropocentric religion' which sanctified human conquest of nature and hence fostered an exploitative ethic. Thus, Lynn White believes that the misapplication of this 'dominant ethic' has been responsible for the present ecological crisis.

Though these arguments aroused controversial debates, yet in its essence, as S.P. Manzur puts it, hardly any thing original—it was the application of early insights to the contemporary context of ecological crisis.

64 *The Bible*, Genesis, 1:28.
"White's assertion that, as opposed to the pantheistic religions where nature is experienced from within, the monotheistic consciousness of a Transcendent Deity de-divined the world, thereby making nature available as an objective reality to be apprehended from without, merely restates one of the most basic insights of religious phenomenology."

White's thesis, despite lagging originality, concludes that the environmental exploitation or misuse is a monotheistic problem. It led people like Arnold Toynbee to propound on similar grounds that monotheistic disrespect of nature owes the responsibility of eco-crisis and the solution lies in reverting from the Weltanschauung of monotheism to the Weltanschauung of pentheism, which is older and was once more universal.

This concluding statement of Toynbee is important in our case as it once more acknowledges the reason for taking up this humble work. As such, the desacralization of nature thesis shall be examined from the vantage-point of Islam and further seek to answer the question raised, namely whether there exists a monotheistic-Islamic-ethic which provides a satisfactory answer to the current ecological problems, or whether the adoption of pantheism, as pleaded by Arnold Toynbee above, can evolve mankind from the existing distressed state.

The new metaphysics of the seventeenth century which legitimized the instrumental use of nature robbed all intrinsic and inherent value from nature. Nature became opaque and devoid of any meaning or value. The Cartesian classification of soul and body led to the disappearance of all

66 Idem.
such values.

"Thus, there was a man who was distinct and different from the natural world by his capacity of thinking and therefore, was considered as subject; and there was also the natural world as an object to be studied, understand and used by the subject and at his mercy. In fact as the thinking being is the foundation of this new understanding, so this subject is regarded as measure of everything."^69

S.P. Manzur endorses the similar statement in the following words:

"Desacrilised nature, our nature, lacking sacramental transparency, has become an idol, an objectivised reality held to be final and self-sufficient; the highest reality the only reality."^70

The instrumental value of the natural world, thus has an important corollary, that all modern ethical theories are anthropocentric in scope and it also elicits the reasons why ecological ethic is fighting against it and proposing a new ethic wherein the inherent and instrinsic value of nature is emphasized and acknowledged.

Thus, it is this metaphysical ground that ecological ethic is fighting. By trying to replace it with a more comprehensive and sensitive metaphysics, the new metaphysics is expected to lead man to develop a more constructive and holistic attitude towards nature.

"Against the background of the ecological crisis of today a new set of norms is required for mankind. Acceptance of a completely different world view is essential."^71

Thus, unless the ecological crisis are evaluated from a historical and

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in a critical way so as to find its root causes, it is impossible to overcome these problems and replace human exploitative attitude.

"It is quite natural that the natural-history interpretation of the origin of the ecological situation is inter-twined with historico-philosophical analysis of it. The problem of the relations between man and nature found essential reflection in the social-cultural maxims and philosophical system of the past."\(^{72}\)

Now, it is understandable that ecological problems have moral and metaphysical dimensions. People study and interact with nature and base their observations on how they perceive it and not according to what is there independent of them.

"Nature far from human understanding and intervention is independent. Human beings conceive and understand nature according to their cherished theories and knowledge, to use the Kuhnian terminology, they observe and understand nature within their own paradigm. This conceptualization of nature is also called a cultural filter, which means that every one sees his environment by means of pre-suppositions he/ (or she) in mind."\(^{73}\)

Thus, the history of the rise and development of civilization is linked with environment and its transformation under the impact of man's activity with objects. Visualization of the genesis of the problem is obviously a complicated type of research presupposing study of various factors (scientific, culturalogical, sociological, etc.). The thesis touches the simply natural-historical and historico-philosophical aspects of it.


\(^{73}\) Ibrahim O'zdemir, op. cit., p. 17.
It is this very reason that environmentalists are seeking and investigating the roots of ecological problems in history, that is the history of philosophy as well as in the history of philosophy of science. Some thinkers even consider that 'given the metaphysical and axiological conceptual composite at the core of the predominant and prevailing western world view, the environmental crisis is the predictable, the inevitable outcome.' 74

Within the relevant literature it has, been therefore, very frequently emphasized that in order to solve the ecological crisis it is necessary to construct or to adopt a different world-view and a different set of values and duties— for, the remedy lies in the direction and guidance of man and society, their values, laws, institutions, and actions.75

The metaphysical change that took place in the beginning of the seventeenth century bears consequences for the present eco-disaster. The implications of such ideas are very important in the study of the problem at hand. Therefore, the study necessitates to point out some key points.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the introduction of a new metaphysics replaced the ancient animistic concept as well as the medieval theological concept of nature. However, some elements of ancient Greek natural philosophy were merged into this new realm of thought. The traditional Greek concept of atomism is an example. The mechanical concept of nature that appeared on the new horizon was further developed by the Cartesian mind/body dualism. It was the turning point and hereafter, the natural world was institutionalized by particularistic reductive, material, inner, quantitative and mechanical characteristics.76

74 Ibid., p. 20.
75 Abu Bakr, et. al. p. 10.
Thomus Kuhn visualizes the impact as:

"Early in the seventeenth century atomism experienced an immense revival... Atomism was firmly merged with Copernicus as a fundamental tenet of the 'new philosophy' which directed the scientific imagination."\(^\text{77}\)

All such tenets are, therefore, important for the ethical dimension of ecological issues. It is this metaphysics which is being challenged by the environmentalists today and they are trying to replace it with a more comprehensive one: one which encompasses the true definitions of man, the nature, and his positive role with the chief characteristics of interconnectedness, interdependence and interrelatedness.

It is, therefore, very important to elicit, define re-examine and even criticize all such ideas to reach a new understanding of reality. Unless the historical perspective of such ideas is examined, it is impossible to revise them. The theories of ecological ethics can be obtained only by means of scintillation. In other words, it is necessary to avoid those past errors by means of re-examining them where they were committed in the first place. Thus, a critical and historical perspective is important in order to elicit and evaluate the history of ideas concerning ecological ethics. So the practical importance of a historical perspective in ecological ethics is acknowledged.

Before proceeding further it is customary to delineate the topic as how the thesis will be handled in this study. First of all, the reason for choosing this topic, namely *Islamic Perspective on Ecology*, is the conviction of this research scholar based on empirical evidence and studies that the underlying and most profound causes of present ecological crisis

are ethical. Further, the claim also includes the fact that although there might be many other reasons for such ills, nonetheless, in the final analysis, they have metaphysical, theological and philosophical roots which relate them to ethics. Islam provides most practical and pragmatic imperatives based on revealed guidance i.e. Qur’ān, the Central Theophany of Islam and Sunnah of Messenger Muhammad (AS).

Secondly, what man does about his surroundings depends on what he thinks is crucial and fundamental about himself and also about the ecology. Furthermore, how man defines, his role and place in the web of creation also influences and legitimizes his attitudes towards it. Every ecological ethics has to deal with it at the beginning because it is the background of the problem at hand. It is, therefore, necessary to ask the following questions and then embark on answering them:

1. What is nature?
2. How is nature understood and treated by man?
3. What is man's place in nature? What kind of relation has he with nature?
4. What about his future on earth and the future of coming generation?
5. Do non-humans have any intrinsic value?
   Are they completely independent of their usefulness or of their instrumental value?

All such issues are ethical in essence. As already admitted above that ecological issues are part and parcel of a religious weltanschauung, therefore, the practical importance of studying them is evident.

In Islam, all ethics comes from the revealed guidance. Since Islam is a complete code of conduct and possesses myriad details of the minutest problems, therefore, any discussion or attempt to formulate an ethics (ecological ethics in our case) outside the revealed guidance is nothing but negation of Islam as a Dīn.
These and all other related issues are very important and deserve a critical examination of the subject from an Islamic perspective.

The study and theme of this entire work is spread over six chapters. This chapter i.e. chapter I serves as the introduction. Chapter II highlights the importance of ethics in general and ecological ethics in particular. Here, the ethical theories which propose new alternatives for overcoming ecological crisis form an important part of this humble presentation. Thereafter follows the most important part of this work. At the outset in chapter III an attempt has been made to demonstrate how our basic ideas and conviction concerning science, ourselves and nature influence our relationships with our environment. The study covers the historical world-views about man and nature. Thus providing an opportunity to develop a more thorough and balanced outlook or a world-view. The chapter concludes with the aim and object by presenting the ecological perspective as understood in Islam after a thorough and profound debate on Islamic world-view. Chapter IV unfolds those metaphysical aspects of Islam which have direct relevance to the problem at hand. Here, an attempt has been made to answer those questions raised earlier i.e. in this chapter I. The present author has tried to evaluate the metaphysical aspects and further tried to apply them towards developing an ecological ethics. The V chapter evolves Islamic response to certain contemporary ecological issues like economics, development, vegetarianism, eco-feminism and social ecology. Chapter VI will conclude the findings of this humble work.

The Objectives of the Study

At the outset, it was emphasized that the aim of this humble presentation is to highlight those aspects of Islam and standards of action with regard to ecology that have tremendous bearing on problem at hand. It is expected that a critical evaluation of ideas and pre-suppositions or
axioms of our value system and new alternative discussion in the light of revealed guidance will broaden our perspective about nature and make us more sensible and careful to non-humans in general and to nature in particular.

To sum up, this work emphasizes the ethical and of course, Islamic Perspective on Ecology.

This brief account of the relevance of the topic is, sufficient. As mentioned earlier, the present work inclines to the view that the world-wide ecological crisis is ethical in its roots and that to overcome this menace the need to develop an ethical and moral point of view is badly felt. More precisely, a new metaphysics, Ecological ethics can be developed from the Qur'ān and Sunnah of Messenger (SAW). Within the parameters of the Holy Qur'ān wherein lies solution to all ills, an ethics can be developed, what is needed is to explore and evaluate both these revealed sources from an ecological point of view.

Islam as has been a usual procedure of the West, in its capacity is either misunderstood or misinterpreted or even totally ignored. At a time, when all the ethical traditions of monotheism or even outside monotheism is being reviled, Islam is being totally ignored as has been emphasized by S.P. Manzur:

"... the environmental controversy over the monotheistic debasement of nature’ was that Islam—as usual—hardly figured in this discussion, as if it were a religion on the moon and the living reality of one billion Muslims merely a statistical illusion’. It was taken for granted that ‘Islam, like Marxism, is a Juedo-Christian heresy’ and as such, it has hardly anything original to contribute.” 78

Hence, the prime objective of this research is to put forward a comprehensive dialogue of Islam on ecology and related issues. S.P. Manzur further argues:

"Without question, in the ongoing controversy, one recent theme of which is the role of religious consciousness in the formation of environmental attitudes, the vantage-point of Islam deserves as much consideration as any other. There is no justification for assuming an identity of Qur'ānic and Biblical stance on the subject—without enquiry and comparison. Despite the common monotheistic vocabulary (God, creation, man, history, revelation, etc.) the Qur'ānic statement on man's ultimate purpose, and relationship with nature, differs not only in tenor and syntax but in substance as well from that of Bible. Nature and ethics are, as a matter of ethics, at the very core of Qur'ānic Weltanschauung." 79

Thus, Islam deserves as much consideration as any other religion in the perspective on ecology. The modern ecological thought while passing through arcadian, vitalistic, holistic, imperialistic and romantic approaches in various phases of history has grown in basically into three divergent streams.

The first category is formed by the productionists for whom natural resources are nothing but raw materials for production of profitable goods and products.

The second category upholds the idea of sustainable development. For them, the development is necessary for human life but there is a maximum capacity of any ecosystem to bear its vigorous use. So, far them, the development should always remain below the break-down point.

The third group consists of those who hail from a polytheistic background uphold the totemic concept of nature worship and they try to find the solution of ecological problems in human recall or submission to pantheism.

Such under currents in ecological thought deserve a critical evaluation from Islamic perspective otherwise, wrong tendencies would find strong hold in the process of ecological awareness. The Muslim approach has been so far a conventional one. Therefore, there is growing need to examine the various ecological perspectives emerged so far from the Qur'anic point of view which stands as one of the major future challenges for the Islamic ecology.  

The general metaphysics of ethics in Islam offers an excellent values—paradigm from which a relevant ecological ethics can be elicited. The concern for the natural milieu is a part of the Qur'anic world view. No doubt the immediate purpose of this work is to explore that if there exists the possibility of developing a monotheistic—Islamic ethics that provides a satisfactory answer to the current ecological distress then why humanity should once more retrieve the pantheism as has been pleaded by Arnold Toynbee.

Contemporary Muslim scholars, with a few exceptions, do validate the exploitative attitude towards nature so as to fit themselves in the conventional Western model of economic and technological developmental framework. The Western notion of exploitative relationship with nature may be understood in the face of Western perception of prosperity and material superiority which is dangerously misleading the Muslims in particular, for it contradicts the

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Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Messenger (S.A.W.). In current ecological distress, the inclined view is equally irresponsible. So, it is necessary to put forward those tenets of Islam which can save the Muslim ummah from such maliase.

A closer look at the principle sources of Islamic wisdom, the Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah of Messenger (S.A.W.), reveals a set of principles that point to a basically different ecological ethics, with far reaching social, economic and political goals. While the Western scholars are having to rethink about the ecological charter, Islam offers a clear and deep understanding of man-nature relationships. Thus, the aim of this work is to explore this currently neglected ethics.

Muslim response to ecological deterioration so far has been negligible. Though Islamic deep ecological ethics is unique in its principles, yet the Muslims have not been able to redress the situation owing to the fact that the ethical potentialities of Islamic ecology have been distorted by the fever of so-called development and modernization that is no longer part of the Muslim world view and code of behaviour. It is, therefore, imperative on the part of Muslims to recall their time tested traditional doctrines to redress the situation.

While the West is engaged in articulating a new eco-philosophy or deep ecological ethic and stressing the importance of developing an ecological consciousness. It is ironic that this critical response has been virtually absent in Muslims for while others are struggling to formulate a comprehensive ethical doctrine, Muslim who hold the Book of Allah (Al-Qur'ān) and Sharī'ah of Muhammad (S.A.S.), in their hands, have neglected, misinterpreted and even distorted its teaching in this regard.

Thus, the aim of this work is to re-establish that vital awareness preserved for centuries about the natural world among Muslims and make it a part of their lives.
We are entering a new era of human history, the Ecological Age\textsuperscript{81}, it, therefore, becomes obligatory on part of Muslim to see how could Islam reflect ecological wisdom and aid the desperately needed transformation of culture. To sum up, the work will emphasize the ethical and of course, the Islamic perspective on ecology.