Conclusion

Faced with threats of total annihilation, mankind can no longer turn a deaf ear to the warning note found in the writings of ecological thinkers. In the place of hubris at the self-assigned mastery over the earth and its inhabitants, one has to learn suppleness and humility. Instead of assuming themselves as owners of the rest of life, humans must acknowledge themselves as caretakers. Each species of plant or animal is a distinct evolutionary form of life, and thus, has unique intrinsic value in its own right. Where dominant cultural hierarchies like capitalism, science, and technology have failed to address problems of existence and survival, ecology has offered an environmental ethic as a corrective to anthropocentric greed. Since the last decades of the twentieth century, the world has been witnessing a burgeoning of environmental activism. The animal rights movement has stressed the need to extend civil rights to animals as individual persons. Environmentalists are seeking legal rights for species and environments.

These activist steps need the support of strong philosophical foundations so that it can lead to a redefinition and reconsideration of man’s relationship with the non-human world. Many contemporary writers have tried to inculcate ecoliteracy in their readers. William Howarth states that in the darker moments of history, ecology offers to culture an ethic for survival; land has a story of its own that cannot be effaced, but must be told and retold by honest writers.
Alice Walker’s integrity as a writer urges her to listen to the story of the land and tell and retell it to others. She has proved her stance as an ecologically conscious writer with an overtly green shade enveloping her works. In developing a deep passion for the earth and everything on it, Walker has been considerably influenced by writers like Rachel Carson, Margaret Fuller, Isabella Bird and Zora Neale Hurston. Her own mother who had an inextricable bond with nature, played a vital role in fostering an earthling psyche in Walker.

Walker repeatedly says that she is preoccupied with the physical and spiritual survival of her people. This overwhelming concern for the “survival whole” seeks expression in almost all her works. Having grown up in the South noted for its story-telling tradition, Walker imbibes the story-telling spirit of her foremothers. She acknowledges that in moments of despair, she has experienced the revitalizing energy of narration in the form of poems, stories, and novels. In the absence of literary models, she turns to her mother’s stories and gardens to create her own vernacular garden. With her belief in the redemptive power of art, Walker uses it for maintaining the health of the planet.

With a keen sensitivity to the traditional lore and skills, Walker adopts the quilt aesthetic in structuring her oeuvre. The intertextual and intratextual link visible in her works is very much in the manner of a patchwork quilt in which old scraps of fabric create new patterns. She foregrounds the intertextual space by borrowing characters from her own earlier novels. The
circular narration is highly suggestive of the thread of continuity running through her works. The effect of continuity is also maintained by means of transmigration of characters from one fictional space to another. She insists on a collective female experience and underscores the need for interrelatedness that should be the hallmark of sustainable communities.

The quilt which represents the larger African American past forms a recurring thematic motif also. It acts as a medium by which the African experience is embodied and transmitted. The quilt matrix reinforces her matrilineal heritage because quilt-making is an art maternally handed down to posterity. In turn, she makes an attempt to revive the submerged art of women in the past, their cultural history and their stories of survival so that it will be a legacy for the future.

Walker exhorts others to keep a dialectical relation with nature. Her readers cannot miss the writer's genuine concern for the plight of the different species of animals and plants. Dismantling the anthropocentric tendencies, Walker encourages an egalitarian attitude towards all entities in the biosphere. She claims that she possesses an unusual capacity to understand the language of plants and animals. By projecting the reciprocity and mutuality of relation as a desirable behavioural code, Walker insists on having kinship with the rest of the universe. It is her reverence for the native American religions and belief in African animism that have led to the formulation of such an ecocentric view. She advocates a holistic view that promotes harmony and peaceful coexistence. She views animals as her
cousins and plants as her allies. When she stands among the trees she imagines that she is in the midst of her forefathers. The sublime consciousness that she attains helps her to consider ‘everything as a human being’.

There is an insistent note of warning in her works. She maintains a very hostile attitude towards western capitalist patriarchy and the white man’s exploitative behaviour. She thinks of the White House as a “symbol of oppression to subjugated peoples of color since it was constructed during the colonial period” (Anything 171). In The Way Forward, Walker speaks of America as a ‘frightened’, ‘brokenhearted’ nation. Her emotional outburst reveals her obsessive concern for tomorrow: “We’ve never seen violence like the violence we see today. We’ve never seen greed or evil like the greed and evil we see today . . . There is much from which to recoil” (The Way Forward 199). Walker feels that as a black woman she is bound to protect her sisters from patriarchal exploitation. She exhorts the black woman: “Refuse the role of victim! Create a new role and identity as fighters for our lives” (149).

Therefore she rejects all patriarchal institutions and celebrates woman-centred cultures and earth-worshipping religions. Her belief in an immanent goddess is repeatedly stated in her works. She seeks a non-dualistic spirituality which keeps one in constant communion with the universe.

Moreover she combines the writer’s commitment with social, political and environmental activism. She feels that enough lip-service has been paid in this field; so she engages herself in a more meaningful participation by
fighting against environmental racism, pollution and cruelty towards animals.

She is now actively involved in peace demonstrations, antinuclear campaigns and protests against many of the US policies which threaten life on earth.

When she writes, she wants her writings to represent her struggle not simply to revive the past and remain nurtured by it, but to embrace the present and fight for the future. She is determined to protect her HOME at any cost and stresses very particularly that only justice to every living thing will save mankind.

This can be made possible only if there is a redefinition of man's place in the universe. Literary ecology, with its reconsideration of the existing parameters of western science and philosophy, is subversive by nature. Walker questions many of the prevalent norms and paradigms in her enthusiasm to promote an ecological world-view. The canons of male-produced literature and the reductionist principles of western science are challenged. The really subversive element in Ecology rests upon its basic premise viz. inter-relatedness. With a strong urge for interconnectedness, Walker topples the separatism inherent in Newton's atomic principles. For instance the web-like pattern of relationships which she demonstrates in the form and content of her works is an open rejection of Newtonian paradigms.

Whereas Harold Bloom attributes the anxiety of influence to male writers, Alice Walker experiences delight in celebrating her literary foremothers. Lovalerie King refers to Clara Juncker's description of this as an attempt on the part of Walker to womanize theory. According to Juncker: "Walker
deconstructs Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* and his theory of aggressive misprision with the harmonious chorus of women writing/inviting/rewriting women in 'Search of Our Mother's Gardens'" (qtd. in *The African American Novel* 114).

Likewise, her plea for wholesome survival and her attempts to empower others transcend Darwin's theory of evolution. Her admiration for Carl Jung and the Collective Unconscious questions the validity of Freudian individualism. Her adherence to the indigenous beliefs and practices aims at weakening the colonizing influence of western religions and attitudes which distance humans from the environment. By advocating autonomy for women, Walker makes a bold denial of *rigid patriarchal laws and traditions*. She enters into an intimate kinship with the world around her—both human and nonhuman—whereby she questions the anthropocentric and humanistic notions of the west.

Thanks to the theoretical and practical work done by ecological philosophers and writers, many attempts are being made now-a-days for keeping the universe habitable for the future generations. Seminars and conferences are being organized at various levels—academic, religious, social, cultural—to promote awareness and bring about a meaningful paradigm shift. Churches take keen interest in observing world environment day and the initiative to reinterpret The Bible, giving due consideration to the green aspects. Thus a chain of new thoughts like the green church, ecotheology and ecosophy have emerged, all of which assert that the
greenness of the Bible was lost in translation from the original Hebrew language to the King James version. For instance, the word “Adam” has come from the word “Adamah” which means earth. The Bible is often criticized for its anthropocentric overtones, but Bible scholars now cite several passages from the Book which highlight man’s relationship with his environment as envisaged by God. They refer to Noah as the first great deep ecologist. In the book of Leviticus also, several rules are prescribed for man’s right conduct towards land. For instance, in chapter 25. 4 -5, the Lord gives instructions regarding the observation of Sabbath for the land. Accordingly the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land. Man should not sow his field and prune his vineyard. In verse 23, the Lord gives the command: “The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine: for ye are strangers and sojourners with me”. Chief Seattle’s oft-quoted letter demonstrating the natives’ attitude to life also emphasizes the same idea.

Orin G. Gelderloos in Eco-theology, explains that the word “creation” does not have a Hebrew equivalent, it is derived from the Greek “ta Panta” which is a theological word meaning “the totality of all things”. He adds that the closest Hebrew equivalent “bara” as a verb depicts “a process producing a dynamic creation capable of change and renewal rather than a static world filled with resources to be consumed by humans” (19). In short, Christian ecological thinkers believe and assert that rightly understood, the biblical God and Gaia are not at odds with each other, but on terms of amity.
Alice Walker, even though she is not able to come to terms with Yahwism with its masculine overtones, appreciates the immanence of Jesus and tries to reinterpret many of his teachings. She encourages people to heal, to love themselves for who and how they are, to imbibe a sense of community, of struggle, of spiritual wholeness and of self-esteem. She advocates a new spirituality which urges one to listen to the pulse of nature and the throbblings of Mother Earth. She propagates an ethics based on hylozoism—i.e. the belief that the cosmos is alive—which would encourage people to value life and would countervail the trend to destroy the biosphere. Her belief in interconnectedness prompts her to maintain a series of empathetic relations and reactions against the problems created by capitalist patriarchy. There is no exaggeration when she speaks of herself as a multidimensional, compassionate warrior fighting with her pen, heart and sometimes her body in the causes of blacks and other oppressed peoples, the poor, women and the planet she loves.

To sum up, Walker puts across her ecological consciousness by means of constant pleas for survival, the thrust placed on interconnectedness, her love for the non human and also a bold rejection of patriarchal codes of relations and attitudes. Her vision of an earth in its fullness is based on the principle of equity—equity between man and woman, equity across human communities and equity between human and nonhuman. She hopes and works for a fundamental restructuring of systems of domination and exploitation to those of biophilic mutuality. Her dream of a resplendent earth blooming with vigour and vitality is being materialized through her activism inspired by love.