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Ecological Crisis as Human Self-Destruction Through Destruction of Nature

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“Humans fail to realize that they’re part of nature. They can survive and maintain their race throughout the passage of time, simply because of nature’s mercy and hospitality. Humans should be grateful to nature. Humans think that they’re the master. What we commonly see in this technological-driven era is humans trying to control nature and overly, irresponsibly, and unmindfully exploit it.” (Phra Paisal Visalo)²

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

“And Allah has sent down rain from the sky and given life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who listen.” (Qur’an 16:65)

The Marathon of Climate Change Conferences

Since the dawn of realization of the climate crisis in the aftermath of runaway consumerist national and international political-economic policies by the two major world economic systems of capitalism of the democratic countries and the single party communist/socialist systems now metamorphosed into state-capitalism, there has been a plethora of conferences and books on the ecological peril facing humanity. Yet these

² “Global Warming vs Dharma Cooling,” ND, <https://www.budnet.org/sunset/node/324> (Accessed November 28, 2015).

efforts have had little effect because human beings have not yet achieved liberation, but are caged in the modern-age materialist lifestyle, which keeps on evolving.

André Corrêa do Lago, the veteran Brazilian diplomat leading COP30 in Belém, Brazil (10–21 November 2025), warned that his main challenge will be confronting powerful interests working to block low-carbon economic policies. In an interview with *The Guardian*, he noted a shift from denying climate science to discrediting climate action itself—not scientific, but economic denial—which he cautioned could be just as harmful and delaying as past climate denial efforts (Harvey 2025). In other words, André Corrêa do Lago is in a helpless situation. The leaders of nations will come to the UN COP30 summit to make pledges, pass a contested resolution and go back without any follow-up action. This has been the normal pattern of action after such numerous summits on ecological crisis. Nevertheless, the effects of global warming—earthquakes and landslides, floods, and the “deicing of the North Pole” or the shrinking of the Arctic Sea—continue. This is evident in the form of abnormally warmer winters in the North and hotter summers in the South (NSIDC 2025).

Since the first 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the UN has held two other environmentally themed COPs—one on biodiversity and the other on desertification. These conferences revolve around three treaties collectively known as the 1992 Rio Conventions, namely: 1) the 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP16) held in Cali, Colombia; 2) the largest of which was the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2024; and 3) the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP16, held from December 2–13, 2024, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Tang et al. 2024). The upcoming the COP30 climate summit in the city of Belém, in heart of the Brazilian Amazon, in November 2025 (Tang 2025).

Historically, two important protocols related to environmental change are the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which aimed to reduce the emission of gases that contribute to global warming. Put into force in 2005, the protocol called for reducing the emission of six greenhouse gases in 41 countries plus the European Union to 5.2 percent below 1990 levels during the commitment period of 2008–12. It was widely hailed as the most significant environmental treaty ever negotiated, though some critics questioned its effectiveness (Britannica 2025). Commenting on its status after 25 years, an environmentalist remarked:

Still further, the Kyoto Protocol failed to equate emissions reductions with economic opportunity and some countries grew to view mitigation as a costly punishment. Following this line of reasoning the US Senate refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, citing potential damage to the US economy as their motive, setting a precedent for countries such as Canada and Japan to pull out of the deal without penalty in 2011 and providing a serious setback on the agreements effectiveness right from the get-go. What chance of success did it have if the world’s largest emitter would not adhere to its commitments? (Bassetti 2022)

This was followed by the “Doha Amendment” of December 21, 2012:

The Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol, adopted in Doha, Qatar on December 8, 2012, has been the subject of various critiques. Some argue it failed to address the core issues of the Kyoto Protocol, like its rigid distinction between developed and developing nations, and its limited scope of participation. Others point to the fact that the amendment didn’t significantly increase the emission reduction targets of developed countries, despite aiming for a 18% reduction from 1990 levels. Some also questioned the lack of enthusiasm for the amendment, with countries like the United States, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and Russia either not participating or withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol entirely. (UNFCCC December 8, 2012)

All these conferences witnessed fights between the developed and developing countries over the rate of greenhouse emissions and other issues. “A major criticism of the Doha decisions is the very unsatisfactory results on the issue of financial resources for developing countries to enable them to take climate actions” (Khor 2013).

At the 2014 Climate Summit in Peru, Lima, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed to world leaders “to galvanize and catalyze climate action” by reaching a meaningful global agreement in 2015 to reduce emissions. Presently, the rate of global carbon dioxide emissions has reached a critical state. The United States and China agreed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions for the first time, but skeptics pointed out that the deal is merely another piece of climate change diplomacy, worded in terms of intention rather than action.

The 2014 Climate Summit in Peru, Lima stated that the USA intended to reduce its emissions by 26–28 per cent by 2025, and that China intended to achieve peak CO₂ emissions around 2030 and increase the use of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 20 per cent by 2030. Notably, no figure was given for the “peak level”. The critical state of air pollution in the city of Beijing shows that China is the world’s biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. Meanwhile, the annually recurring toxic hazing in Southeast Asia, caused by human-made forest fires, has made Indonesia the world’s fourth largest greenhouse gas emitter, leaving half a million people ill in 2015. Rapidly developing India, with its large, impoverished population, is also not immune to air pollution and environment-related health threats to children—particularly for children and the elderly—resulting in both acute and chronic respiratory diseases. The European Union had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent by 2030. However, expressions of intent will achieve nothing in the absence of action through political will (Yusuf 2014).

A 2012 article in *The Economist* stated that the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, once considered a hallmark of attention to the climate crisis, died without lament in 2012. It died due to political and economic reasons, “The answer, to judge by a United Nations panel looking into the workings of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is: you’d say it is a shambles” (*The Economist* 2012).

Is the COP 30 in 2025 the Last Hope?

The 21st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21), from 30 November to 11 December 2015 in Le Bourget, France was described by the Hollywood star Sean Penn as the “last great chance” to stop the planet from overheating. Previously, at the 2014 Climate Change Conferences in Lima, Peru, countries were called upon to express Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions for consideration before COP21. For global warming of more than 2°C will have serious consequences, causing extreme climate events.

The question before humanity today is “do or die.” The conference addressed critical questions about:

- How biodiversity and ecosystems have shaped human consciousness and behavior;
- What the beliefs of the world’s religions are towards living systems, i.e., understanding or misunderstanding religions shape human lifestyle and behavior;
- How religions, governmental departments, educational institutions, and the business sector should respond to environmental concern;
- How the emerging scarcity of natural resources may become a trigger for conflict and violence between human societies;
- How to integrate study and research in the sciences, business, and commercial activities with nature-related ethics;
- The need for new ontologies of non-violence to shape human-biodiversity relationship.

It called on the well-off nations and oil-producing states to:

- Lead the way in phasing out their greenhouse gas emissions as early as possible and no later than the middle of the century;
- Provide generous financial and technical support to the less well-off to achieve a phase-out of greenhouse gases as early as possible;
- Recognize the moral obligation to reduce consumption so that the poor may benefit from what is left of the earth’s non-renewable resources;
- Stay within the ‘2 degree’ limit, or, preferably, within the ‘1.5 degree’ limit, bearing in mind that two-thirds of the earth’s proven fossil fuel reserves remain in the ground;
- Re-focus their concerns from unethical profit from the environment to that of preserving it and elevating the condition of the world’s poor.
- Invest in the creation of a green economy. (European Parliament 2014)

The success of the Paris Agreement will be possible only if it is implemented as a global political and legal agreement and not only a non-binding directive; otherwise,

nothing will change. The USA, EU, China, and India have to take this as a serious and critical matter affecting all species on Earth, with very important cosmological implications.

Documents produced at the climate change conferences are not legally binding but merely cosmetic. “Rather than submitting themselves to caps, most countries now say they intend to reduce, or at least restrain, their own emissions. This fragmented, voluntary approach avoids the debate that had paralyzed climate talks for years, about whether the burden of cutting greenhouse gases should be carried just by the rich world or spread more widely (a debate rendered absurd by the rise of China) ... Outside the oil-rich Middle East, which is mostly ignoring the process, countries are at least thinking about what they could do” (*The Economist* 2015). In fact, the oil-rich Middle East has never adopted voluntary measures toward climate change alleviation in connecting with their production and sale of oil and gas resources.

At the Paris Climate Agreement of 30 November 2015, it had become abundantly clear that human-made global ecological imbalance had reached a truly dangerous level, and that all human and technological attempts had not alleviated the problem. Carbon taxing and other steps taken so far had not changed human behavior, which lies at the root of the matter.

On 20 January 2025, on his first day back in the White House, American President Donald Trump signed an executive order and a letter to the UN declaring that the USA would be withdrawing from the Paris Agreement climate accords for the second time (Fleck 2025).

All countries today, irrespective of their ideological or religious orientation, are guided by the political philosophy of growth and development rooted in a consumerist worldview. Rising Asia and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are in no mood to adopt an alternative philosophy or alternative policies toward growth and development. Little attention is paid to the impact of irresponsible growth on ecology and biodiversity at the global level. The question before them is: How can they do it differently?

Today, humanity lives in a state of self-destruction through the destruction of nature. The present ecological crisis is a humanitarian crisis, and it calls for a responsible and balanced approach to development. The modern triumph of science and technology, directed at attaining human dominion over nature, has devastated the environment. It began with a materialist philosophy that underpins every modern ideological orientation, whether capitalist or communist. It seems that the future led by China, India, and others will be no different; the actors change, but the philosophical roots remain untouched.

The Garden of Eden Is No More!

At the 2019 World Economic Forum in Davos, Sir David Attenborough, an English broadcaster, writer, and naturalist noted for his innovative educational television programs—especially the nine-part *Life* series—boldly declared, “The Garden of Eden is no

more.” Humanity, through its detrimental activity, has forced the Earth into a “new geological age.” He remarked that the ice age of the Holocene, comprising the last 10,000 years, has ended. “Humanity has changed the world so much that scientists say we are in a new geological age: the Anthropocene, the age of humans,” he declared (Wearden 2019). The current geological age, the Anthropocene, is one in which human activity has had a dominant influence on climate and the environment (Pavid August 31, 2013).

It is hoped that the upcoming 30th Conference of the Parties (COP30), to be held between 10–21 November 2025, will address issues concerning global progress on climate action, including limiting global temperature rise, supporting vulnerable communities, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. It is an opportune moment for world leaders to address global climate policy, with decisions expected on transparency, finance, commitment, and adaptation (UNFCC February 18, 2025).

Yet, interestingly, “A new four-lane highway cutting through tens of thousands of acres of protected Amazon rainforest is being built for the COP30 climate summit in the Brazilian city of Belém. It aims to ease traffic to the city, which will host more than 50,000 people—including world leaders—at the conference in November” (Wells 2025). Such action stands in direct contrast to global goals of addressing the climate change challenges facing humanity, maintaining biodiversity, limiting global warming, and protecting the lives of all sentient beings in our galaxy.

Religion and Ecology—Is Concern for Climate Change and Global Warming New?

The Religious View

The history of religions illustrates that humanity has addressed the issue of the environment and climate since the time of unrecorded history, before the rise of the modern age (Frankfort 1946). Roger S. Gottlieb (2011) remarked, “If the environmental crisis means that religion has to change, it is also the case that over centuries religions have developed powerful resources to help us understand and respond to critical forms of suffering and injustice.”

A study of primal myths of creation and the relationship between geography and religions across the globe illustrates that human beings—whether created, evolved, or coming into existence in a variety of ways—have always been taught by the Ultimate Reality to care for, protect, and nourish the environment for their own flourishing. The neglect or abuse of this responsibility has resulted in the destruction of their own species along with that of other living beings (Sproul 1979).

Present scientific knowledge about the state of the environment clearly indicates that humanity has entered into a dangerous bet with nature, which, if not addressed, threatens human survival. The global ecological crisis is affecting all dimensions of life and living. The spread of a consumerist approach to life is contributing to the current devastation of the environment, as exhibited in the exploitative human attitude toward nature rooted in an over consumptive lifestyle.

The current ecological crisis is a humanitarian crisis. It calls for a responsible and balanced approach to development. The modern triumph of science and technology, based on seeking human dominion over nature, has destroyed the environment. It began with a materialist philosophy that underpins every type of modern ideological orientation, whether capitalist or communist. It seems that the future led by China, India, and others will be no different, as the actors change while the materialist philosophical roots remain untouched (Mignolo 2011).

Facing the critical age of climate change and an ecological crisis, religious actors are challenged to find solutions for humanity and Earth, our sole planetary home in the cosmos, and the only one inhabited by living beings from a religious perspective. Theologians and religious philosophers from every religious tradition have confronted world religions' past attitudes toward nature and acknowledged their own faiths' complicity in the environmental crisis. "Out of this confrontation have been born vital new theologies based on the recovery of marginalized elements of tradition, profound criticisms of the past, and ecologically oriented visions of God, the Sacred, the Earth, and human beings" (Gottlieb 2011).

The Charter for Compassion, issued by Karen Armstrong in 2009, calls for inter-religious engagement in environmental issues. It has laid the groundwork for the ethics of environmental stewardship. The Charter recognizes the interconnectedness of all life and the need to care for the environment. It endorses human responsible stewardship of the Earth for the well-being of present and future generations.

John Milbank, the founder of the postmodern school of Radical Orthodox Christian theology, views modern materialist philosophy as fundamentally exploitative—nothing less than a violent subjugation of nature through knowledge and research. It employs reason and rationality to justify total human control and mastery over nature. This has resulted in current global warming, climate change, tsunamis, typhoons, natural disasters, and also socio-economic and ethno-religious conflicts over resources. Development should not be measured by the number of high-rise buildings or new car models, but by responsible stewardship of the world and its resources.

Naomi Klein, in her book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, warned that mere policy changes will not address the challenge of global warming. Instead, it requires structural change at the political-economic level, or managed growth. She wrote, "Our economic system and our planetary system are now at war" (Klein 2014).

The late Pope Francis (1936–2025), in his encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, released in June 2015, chided modern Christians of the North for misinterpreting Scripture by urging them to "forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures." The Pope linked modern economic driving motives of "need" and "greed" as a moral dilemma requiring urgent attention, as it implicates climate change (Francis 2015). He also addressed the issue of (de)carbonization, emphasizing the need for urgent attention through joint collaboration between the two main agents in human life—science and religion—both of which include deniers and skeptics. He challenged contemporary ethicists, economists, and scientists to develop a

better perspective on the problem of climate change (Francis 2015). On the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Leo XIV called for building bridges for ecological and social justice (Merlo 2025; Roewe 2025).

In a letter released on 27 October 2015 titled *Buddhist Climate Change Statement to World Leaders*, the Dalai Lama and 11 other signatories urged the phasing out of fossil fuels and called for a movement toward 100 percent renewable energy. Through this letter, the Buddhist leaders took a united stance on a global issue for the first time. They wrote, “Protecting the planet is a pillar of Buddhism.”

Our concern is founded on the Buddha’s realization of dependent co-arising, which interconnects all things in the universe. Understanding this interconnected causality and the consequences of our actions are critical steps in reducing our environmental impact. Cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion, we will be able to act out of love, not fear, to protect our planet. Buddhist leaders have been speaking about this for decades. However, everyday life can easily lead us to forget that our lives are inextricably interwoven with the natural world through every breath we take, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Through our lack of insight, we are destroying the very life support systems that we and all other living beings depend on for survival. (UNFCCC 2015)

Universities around the world have also realized the importance of teaching and conducting research about the challenges of climate change. This has led to the introduction of courses on climate change and the future of humanity. University courses on the study of religion have also added a new field that examines the interrelation between religion and ecology (Grim and Tucker 2014).

Islam and Ecology

Islam is a religion of strict monotheism based on the Qur’anic worldview of the duality of nature, marked by a clear distinction between the Creator and the created universe, or the Milky Way galaxy. According to the Qur’an—the foundational scripture of Islam—this dual character of nature has existed since the creation of Adam and has been reiterated throughout the history of religion, including the era of pre-Hijrah Islam, which marks the beginning of Islam with the revelation of the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad—a prophet who came after Jesus (al-Faruqi 2012).

In the Islamic view of monotheism, or *Tawhid*, “Reality is of two generic kinds: God and non-God; Creator and creature.” God alone is eternal, the Creator and transcendent—nothing is like Him, and He is devoid of partners or associates. Creation is the second order of space-time experience. It includes all creatures—the world of things, plants and animals, humans, jinn and angels, heaven and earth, paradise and hell—and all their becoming since they came into existence (al-Faruqi and al-Faruqi 1986).

Tawhid—the unity (monotheism) of God—is the religious opposite of *Shirk*—polytheism or associationism. These are the two main religious concepts found

specifically in the Arabian religious sphere, extending from Mesopotamia to Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula, inhabited by the Semitic peoples (Hitti 2002). The Qur'an describes the monotheistic concept through four basic attributes of God: *Ilah*—Allah, the One and Almighty; *Rabb*—the Lord who does not share His qualities and attributes with anyone else; *Deen*—religion or worldview as a way of life that is exclusively for Him; and *Ibadah*—worshipping God alone without associating any person or thing with Him (Mawdudi 2006).

According to the Qur'an, human beings and all living beings are created in pairs. Adam and Eve are the parents of all humanity. They were God's vicegerents (representatives) on Earth and were entrusted with the responsibility to care for and preserve the environment as an *amanah*—a trust. Over time, their progeny multiplied into peoples of different languages, colors, communities, and tribes.

“O humanity! Indeed, we created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may ‘get to’ know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. God is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (Qur'an 49:13)

“Everyone turns to their own direction of prayer. So, compete with one another in doing good. Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together ‘for judgment’. Surely God is Most Capable of everything.” (Qur'an 2:148)

The human being, as the best of creation, is called to live by practicing the divine attributes through which God treats humanity—namely *rahmah* (compassion), *mīzān* (balance), *ihsān* (benevolence), *‘adl* (justice), and *ḥikmah* (wisdom)—in order to build a flourishing environment and promote social practices of equality, justice, and freedom, modeled on the example of the Prophet Muhammad. The goal and purpose of human life is to worship Allah and embody His attributes in one's personal, social, and environmental engagements (Foltz, Denny, and Baharuddin 2003).

The Qur'an and Responsibility Toward the Environment

Chapter 2 of the Qur'an narrates the story of the creation of Adam and Eve, who first dwelled in heaven and later came down to live on Earth as its first inhabitants. The Qur'an describes itself as a scripture that encourages the seeking of *‘ilm* (علم, knowledge) and engaging in *fikr* (فكر, thinking, reflection, and contemplation) (Rosenthal 2006).

Among the first five verses revealed to the Prophet Muhammad is the declaration that God is the source of all knowledge and that it is the duty of human beings to seek it. In other words, there exists a relational dimension between God and humanity, shaped through the revelation of the Qur'an and the pursuit of knowledge:

1. Read: In the name of thy Lord who created,
2. Created man from a clot.

3. Read: And your Lord is the most bounteous,
4. Who teaches by the pen,
5. Teaches the human being that which he does not know. (Qur'an 96:1-5)

“And He has made subservient to you, [as a gift] from Himself, all that is in the heavens and on earth:11 in this, behold, there are messages indeed for people who think!” (Qur'an 45:13) (Asad 2003).

The Qur'an is replete with verses calling upon human beings to observe the creation of the universe and to recognize in it the *āyāt* (آيات, signs)—the proofs of God's existence and creative power. These signs carry implications for the flourishing or self-destruction of humanity, depending on human actions. The Qur'an emphasizes that all good comes from God, while evil results from human deeds. The cosmos—its creatures, earth, water, flora and fauna, and biodiversity—are all signs of the interconnect-edness between the Creator and the created. Human beings are entrusted with the responsibility of preserving, managing, and sustaining the cosmos, including the environment.

“And We have given you (humans) power in the earth and appointed for you therein a livelihood. Little give ye thanks!” (Qur'an 7:10)

In the Islamic tradition, the environment and all its contents are in a continuous state of worship of God, including the physiological and other systems within the human body. They observe the laws of natural disposition, known in Arabic as *fitrah*. The motion of *fitrah*—the natural disposition—was set into process by God as a continuous act of worship from the beginning of creation. It will come to an end at the time of *Akhirah* (الآخرة), which refers to the end of life on Earth and the beginning of the transition to another realm of existence in either heaven or hell, based on the deeds committed during earthly life on *Yawm ad-Din*—the Day of Judgment. Human neglect, disobedience, or irresponsibility in upholding the trust (*amanah*) endowed by God toward the cosmos results in spiritual distancing from God by failing to follow the straight path (*sirat al-mustaqim*) that leads to God and heaven (Esposito 2002; Esposito 2016; Al-Faruqi 2012).

“Do you not see that to Allah bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth: the sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, the trees, the animals, and a great number among mankind; and many there are against whom chastisement has become necessary; and whomsoever Allah abases, there is none who can make him honorable; surely Allah does what He pleases.” (Qur'an 22:18)

“The seven heavens declare His glory and the earth (too), and those who are in them; and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification; surely He is Forbearing, Forgiving.” (Qur'an 17:44)

“Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of Allah; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.” (Qur’an 61:1)

In the Islamic story of creation, the human beings are advised to do good and refrain from spreading corruption on the earth both at the personal and community levels.

“And when it is said unto them: Make not mischief on the earth, they say: We are peacemakers only. Are they not indeed the mischief-makers? But they perceive not.” (Qur’an 2:11-12)

Prophet Muhammad declared that the whole of the earth is a mosque, i.e., a sacred place—implying human responsibility for preserving and conserving the environment and avoiding wanton and inhumane actions (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 8, Hadith 87). Muslims are encouraged to do good and are forbidden from committing evil or sinful actions of any kind, from the minor to the major, which include:

1. *Shirk* (associating partners with God);
2. Committing murder;
3. Consuming the property of an orphan placed in one’s care;
4. Taking or paying interest (*riba*);
5. Practicing witchcraft;
6. Theft, corruption, and disobedience to parents.

The Qur’an exhorts human beings to perform the following good actions or deeds as a path that leads to paradise:

1. *Tawhid* – Believing in and worshipping God alone;
2. Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong;
3. Showing kindness to others;
4. Planting trees and preserving the environment;
5. Not hunting animals except for food;
6. Never harming animals;
7. Showing kindness to parents, with specific emphasis on kindness to one’s mother;
8. Forgiving wrongs and apologizing, and seeking forgiveness from those one has wronged;
9. Making amends for one’s wrongdoings;
10. Removing harmful objects from the road to prevent injury to others;
11. Respecting members of all religions;
12. Raising orphans and feeding the needy. (Cook 2010)

During the 1960s, when industrialization was rapidly advancing and causing widespread deforestation, climate change was not yet a public concern. Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the doyens of Islamic Studies, sought to draw the modern world's attention to the relationship between human beings and nature as found in many religious traditions. Nasr (1997) raised concerns about the emerging ecological imbalances caused by human activity at a time when the modern ontology of violence and its related epistemology were beginning to manifest consequences on a cosmic scale.

Nasr revisited this topic in his 1994 Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham, highlighting the interrelatedness between religions and the order of nature—not only in Eastern and Western religions but also in the ancient religions of the Greeks, the Shamanic tradition, African religions, the primal religions of Oceania, as well as the Egyptian and Native American traditions. He remarked:

The Earth is bleeding from wounds inflicted upon it by a humanity no longer in harmony with Heaven and therefore in constant strife with the terrestrial environment. The world of nature is being desecrated and destroyed in an unprecedented manner globally by both those who have secularized the world about them and developed a science and technology capable of destroying nature on an unimaginable scale and by those who still live within a religious universe, even if the mode of destruction of the order of nature by the two groups is both quantitatively and qualitatively different. (Nasr 1996)

Nasr held that the devastation of our planet has been exacerbated by the reductionist view of nature advanced by modern secular science. Hence, there is a need to revisit the religious truth embedded in all faiths that nature is sacred. Nasr asserted that every religious tradition offers a wealth of knowledge and experience concerning the order of nature. The recovery of this knowledge across the globe will enable humanity to cooperate in healing the wounds inflicted upon the silently suffering Earth.

Nasr called upon religious leaders to pay attention to this crucial crisis. Today, nearly half a century later, humanity lives in a state of self-destruction through its destruction of nature. The annual occurrences of catastrophic climatic events around the world, increased human consumption of energy, and sprawling urbanization are critically impacting the vital connection between humans, all beings, and the cosmos. The 21st-century efforts to promote environmentally responsible behavior through “green” activities should not be reduced to mere commercial gimmicks or non-binding initiatives. The climate crisis presents a profound ethical challenge that demands serious attention for the sake of both the present and future of humanity (Nasr 1989).

Since the Industrial Revolution, and the resulting ecological imbalances, the world has entered an era of climate instability. The mass burning of coal and other fossil fuels has disrupted biodiversity, triggering an ecological crisis rooted in a profit-driven model.

In August 2015, a group of Muslim environmentalists, academics, and public figures released an “Islamic Declaration on Climate Change” in Istanbul, Turkey. It calls upon Muslims to take ecological responsibility as taught in the Qur'an and to act

according to the example of the Prophet Muhammad. The declaration urges the protection of the rights of all living beings; the safeguarding of native plants and wild animals, which should not be hunted or disturbed; the conservation and sustainable use of rangelands, plant cover, and wildlife; living a frugal life free of excess and waste; and eating simple, healthy food with occasional inclusion of meat, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad, described in the Qur'an (21:107) as "a mercy to all beings."

Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr. Osman Bakar, the current Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in his article titled "Understanding the Challenge of Global Warming in the Light of the Qur'anic Idea of Earth as Our Only Planetary Home," writes:

...in the view of the Quran, the planet Earth is the only suitable place for our home. The implications of this Quranic teaching on the cosmic significance of the Earth for its ecological and environmental future are very obvious. The present and future well-being of man's present home will depend very much on the quality of his guardianship of the Earth's environment, which in turn depends largely on the extent and quality of his appreciation of the Earth as his temporary home. (Bakar 2016, 125)

Bakar commented that this distinctiveness of man qualifies him to be appointed God's vicegerent (*khalifah*) on Earth; in other words, the representative or ambassador of God on Earth, endowed with the responsibility to care for and preserve his only planetary habitat. Safeguarding and taking care of our planetary home is the nature of human responsibility (Bakar 2016, 128). As mentioned in the Qur'anic verse, "O assembly of jinn and humans! If you can penetrate beyond the realms of the heavens and the earth, then do so. But you cannot do that without Our authority." (Qur'an 55:33)

Bakar, concluded that:

However, to particularly address the issue of the current ecological crisis no content of the two sources of Islamic teaching is perhaps more pertinent than the guidelines for living according to the principle of *wasatiyah* ("balance and moderation") and avoiding transgression against limits (*hudud* – limitations) that are providentially imposed both on the human world and the natural world. It is basically man's transgression against both kinds of limits that has brought about the current ecological crisis. (Bakar 2016, 139)

The Qur'anic term *Hadd* (singular) and *Hudūd* (plural) holistically refers to limits and boundaries set by God, which human beings, endowed with the faculty of reason, should not transcend or exceed by tampering with the laws of nature. In other words, this means refraining from inhumane actions that harm or destroy the bounties of nature, the environment, or the cosmos. Unfortunately, in common usage, the Qur'anic terms *Hadd* or *Hudūd* are often understood reductively to refer only to punishments (de Vaux et al. 2012).

Along with the term *Hudūd*, the Qur'an also calls upon human beings to preserve or maintain the *mizan* – balance – by practicing moral, humane behavior and being responsible managers. Negligence in this regard has resulted in a history of catastrophes faced by humanity over the centuries. The Qur'an narrates past catastrophic events involving pre-Muhammadan prophets, such as the deluge during the time of Noah, the destruction of the community of Lot, and the drowning of Pharaoh during the time of Moses (Fleming 2010; Pritchard 1975; Peters 1990, 1992, 2018).

The Qur'an also warns that if human beings continue to ignore or engage in activities described by Catholic theologian Paul Knitter (1995) as the “suffering of the earth”—through environmental abuse and ecological destruction—without heeding the current and future global ecological events and catastrophes, nature will take its revenge on humanity. This revenge may manifest through events such as earthquakes, plagues, endemics, and pandemics. The recent Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which resulted in 12–22 million reported deaths and continues to persist, was a consequence of human destruction of nature (*The Economist* 2022). The Qur'an reminds humans of the destructive consequences of past harmful actions and the possibility of their recurrence in the present and future, as illustrated in the chapter quoted below.

- 1) When Earth is shaken with her (final) earthquake
 - 2) and [when] the earth yields up her burdens,
 - 3) and man cries out, “What has happened to her?”
 - 4) on that Day will she recount all her tidings,
 - 5) as your Sustainer will have inspired her to do.
 - 6) On that Day will all men come forward, cut off from one another,
to be shown their [past] deeds.
 - 7) And so, he who shall have done an atom's weight of good, will see it;
 - 8) and he who shall have done an atom's weight of evil, will see it.
- (Qur'an Chapter 99)

In a recently published book titled *Muslim Environmentalisms*, Anne Gade undertook an anthropological and history of religions approach to what she described as a humanistic study of Islam and the environment as understood and practiced by Muslim communities. Focusing her study on the Indonesian context, she emphasized the ethical and humanistic dimensions of Muslim environmentalisms. She commented that her book “provides a different view of the multivalent idea of environment, bringing a new dimension of Muslim environmentalism, ranging across environmental studies from scientific or technological responses to long-term ethical issues like achieving lasting environmental equity and justice. The chapters progress from considering how Muslim environmentalisms deploy Islam instrumentally as a means to achieve religious ends” (Gade 2019). In other words, the book explores the nature and character of human responsibility in addressing environmental crises and challenges facing humanity in a holistic manner.

Anna Gade (2019, 253) proposed the following measures:

1. Moving beyond a “crisis” paradigm;
2. Articulating notions of ultimate environmental justice sensibly, measuredly, and in both proximate and ultimate frames;
3. Ethical responses to environmental conditions enacted with respect to a universal and socially plural human situation.

Conclusion

Climate change is a multidimensional challenge that confronts us at the core of our being. The question is whether humanity is ready to accept this reality or will destroy itself through its inhumanity toward its own species, other beings, and elements of nature (Stefanini and Restuccia 2015). In 2000, geologists Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer described our era on Earth as the Anthropocene—the human-centered epoch. In this era, geographic conditions have been changed by human activities. It succeeds the currently ending Holocene era, which began about 10,000 years ago (around 8000 BCE) after the glacial period. In the Anthropocene era, “people have become a major geological force. Through mining activities alone, humans move more sediment than all the world’s rivers combined. *Homo sapiens* has also warmed the planet, raised sea levels, eroded the ozone layer, and acidified the oceans” (Monasterky 2015).

Our current ecological predicament requires balancing a market-responsive economy with the principles of moral capitalism and the cultural and religious resources found in all world religions. It is time to revisit how biodiversity and ecosystems have shaped human consciousness and behavior; to consider the beliefs of the world’s religions toward living systems; and to reflect on how religions, governmental departments, educational institutions, and the business sector should respond to environmental concerns. We must also recognize how the emerging scarcity of food and natural resources could trigger conflict and violence. There is a need to embark on a new understanding of existence in terms of human-ecology relations.

Global warming has placed us at a crossroads. As citizens of the world, we can either continue seeking uncontrolled consumption or choose a better, sustainable path by adopting small but effective daily habits such as reducing the use of plastic bags, practicing recycling, limiting brightly neon-lit signboards on street corners, teaching climate consciousness in schools, and turning off lights in school toilets and offices when not in use. Such small acts can make a gigantic impact toward fostering global ecological conscientiousness.

Promotion of environmentally responsible behavior in the public should not be a mere commercial gimmick. It requires serious attention; it concerns our stewardship of a “silent” natural world whose suffering goes grossly unnoticed. The world has entered an era of climate instability and ecological imbalance, but there is still a window of optimism that we can reverse this crisis before it is too late.

The contemporary ecological crisis is not limited to any single religious or secular group or community; it is a pluralistic challenge facing humanity at large. The present age—described variously as the Anthropocene, the age of Great Disruption or Trans-humanism, post-religious and post-secular in the global North, or the era of decolonization in the global South—reveals that the issue of ecological crisis and the threat of nuclear war is not simple but of a compounded nature (Fukuyama 2000, 2003; Taylor 2007; Zakaria 1997; Wilson 2023; Gorski et al. 2012; Berger 1999; Bayat 2013; Sul-eyman and Bhaskar 2023).

It is important to remind ourselves of two pieces of advice: one from the Qur'an and the other from a *hadith*—teachings of Prophet Muhammad—both urging proactive measures to preserve the environment responsibly until the Hour comes.

1. Alluding to human vulnerability, the Qur'an reminds or foretells: "Lo! We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo! he has proved a tyrant and a fool." (Qur'an 33:72)
2. Regarding human responsibility in stewarding the environment, Prophet Muhammad advised: "If the Final Hour comes while you have a palm-cutting in your hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 27, Hadith no. 4)

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