



Intersecta Minds Journal
**Social Science, Arts and Humanities,
Business, Management, and Education**
<https://so13.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/IMJ/index>
ISSN : 3056-929X (ONLINE)

Interconnectivity and Importance of Environment and Nature in Spiritual and Religious Tradition

Author & Corresponding Author*

Sourasis Chattopadhyay

Affiliation:

Department of Computer Science and Information,
Asia University, Taiwan.

Email: chattopadhyaysourasis@gmail.com

PKP

PUBLIC
KNOWLEDGE
PROJECT

OJS

OPEN
JOURNAL
SYSTEMS



Article history:

Received: 01/04/2024, Revised: 26/05/2024,
Accepted: 25/08/2024, Available online: 01/09/2024

How to Cite:

Chattopadhyay, Sourasis. (2024). Interconnectivity and Importance of Environment and Nature in Spiritual and Religious Tradition. *Intersecta Minds Journal*, 3(3), 42-62.



Original Research Articles

Interconnectivity and Importance of Environment and Nature in Spiritual and Religious Tradition

Sourasis Chattopadhyay*

Abstract

This research explores the interconnectivity and significance of the environment and nature within spiritual and religious traditions, emphasizing spirituality as a human sensibility that evolves through a deep connection with the environment. By engaging with both the tangible and intangible realms, individuals foster an understanding of the infinite, finding spiritual motivation and conceptions. Almost universally, religious traditions recognize nature as a divine and transformative force, underscoring the spiritual imperative to conserve the environment—a concern now elevated to a global agenda. This study aims to revive ancient spiritual ecology ideals to promote environmental conservation and enhance human well-being. Using a conceptual framework grounded in spiritual and social consciousness, this research integrates established theories on spiritual ecology with traditional religious customs, examining their role in fostering environmental awareness and cognitive growth. Data and findings from recent studies highlight the urgency of addressing environmental degradation and psychological challenges across diverse communities. By aligning religious and spiritual beliefs with environmental conservation, this study presents spiritual ecology as a potent model for encouraging sustainable behaviors and fostering a harmonious relationship with nature.

Keywords: Spiritual Ecology; Spiritual Wellbeing; Religious; Spiritual Ideals

Introduction

Spirituality is a human sensibility and perception that rises at the time when an individual accustoms with the environment, sees it closely and feels an inherent attachment towards it. The environment where an individual's spiritual senses evolve is agreed by most of spiritual masters as an all-encompassed domain (Munsoor, & Munsoor, 2021). These domains include the areas where the individual can form questions and looks for their answers by means of understanding.

Such areas include both known and unknown, living, non-living, earthy and supernatural realms. Simply said, a spiritual environment is where an individual finds resources to enrich his or her sensibility of understanding the endlessness, the entity that has power beyond the powers. This is the space where he finds his motivation to search and form his or her spiritual conception (Sharma, 2023). Almost all the religious principles agree that nature, in its original shape forms the perception of spiritual understanding in individuals who devotedly looks for the realization of divinity.

In other words, religions of the world see nature and the creation of the universe as a divine phenomenon. That is, in terms of religion, creation of universe is sacred, undiluted and it is an endless process of transformation and reconstruction. Consequently, nature, the domain that is size-less and continually transforming entity becomes the core resource spiritual perception. Thus, question of conserving the nature is also an important concern of spiritualism (UNEP, 2023). This concern that is practiced by religious masters and religious preachers from ancient days are now a global agenda and it being taken care of.

Conceptually, we can thereby say that spiritualism has an inseparable connectivity with an individual's natural ecosystem. Furthermore, the extent of attachment and inquisitiveness of the individual towards nature is thought to be influential in his or her spiritual enrichment. In this article, we will establish this interpretation by means of theories and supportive evidences. Thus, this study attempts to regard nature as the crucial domain to instill spiritual motivation in human mind supporting for further development and extensivity.

On that terms, conservation of nature is also discussed as a vital part of religious and spiritual movement that certainly is a necessity and worldwide demand to secure human well-being. The article aims to justify the reemergence of spiritual ecology as a subject of importance in society as well as spiritual motivation that on its part increases our attachment and integrity with the environment and lets us be compassionate and aware in ensuring its proper conservation. Before explaining our central theme, firstly, we are providing a chosen review of literature that indicates the role, importance and connectivity of nature in spiritual motivation.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine contemporary spiritual and religious theories on nature and its interconnectivity with the living world.
2. To assess the role of spiritual awareness in environmental conservation initiatives.
3. To analyze the role of Spiritual Ecology in promoting human well-being and fostering harmony with the natural environment.

Related Works

Ali Kirman (2014) stressed on the need of enforcement of environmental conservation and ethical norms to secure nature and its resources from the reckless consumption and damage that are caused since 20th century with the rise of globalization. The author discussed on secular and religious theories on nature's role and its vitality for human as well as the world's wellness that, according to him can play effective in this scenario to spread awareness and consciousness among the people to take care and be close to the nature to eradicate the alarming rate of degradation that is caused to the environment due to technologies and industrialization. The author recommended that at this time, it is essential to generate morality and sense of cooperation and love by means of spiritual guidelines so that the society can stay balanced and value for its environmental prospects.

Schauer et al. (2016) stressed on nature's influences and motivation on human mind that developed their well-being, mindfulness and compassion towards their surrounding habitat. However, the authors admitted that modern urban society had least scope to be close to the unadulterated nature to enrich their perception on integrity with natural surroundings and thus, the current society is much aloof in terms of compassion towards environmental conservation. However, since the concern of environmental conservation is vital nowadays and so it is equally important, as the authors believed to let the people come close to the natural ecosystem. The study was conducted to measure the impacts on nature in building the spiritual conception among the respondents. The procedure revealed that immersion with nature motivated the spiritual well-being among the respondents.

Sayem (2018) made an analysis on traditional religious practices and established their connectivity with the nature. Two religious, namely Christianity and Islam was scrutinized by the author and thereafter, these relationships were recommended as by the researcher as a guidelines to spread consciousness and awareness among the people in conserving the environment. According to the author, religious connectivity with nature is necessary to be made

known to the people in order to make them conscious of protecting them and utilize their vital elements to ensure human well-being. Such an awareness will in turn make the human society be integrated again with the unspoiled nature that, the author felt is a vital component in creating healthy and sustainable habitat.

According to Daldoss Pirri (2019), modern western culture has a key role in detaching people from their natural coexistence and thus creating a society that is unaware of nature's vitality and prospects. On the other hand, there still exists jungle dwellers indigenous people who follow their nature based religious customs and believe in unusual knowledge that they call 'Other Reality'. In this study, the researcher made an extensive study on a Shamanic ritual called Ayahuasca that is performed in Amazonian tribes where the practitioners to whom the researcher interviewed agreed on their experience of 'Other Reality' that was beyond the knowledge of usual world and made them believe in the power on their surrounding nature that could transform and give rise to another ways of thoughts and visions towards their environment.

In a recent spiritual discussion done in a 2019 workshop of St Ethelburga's conducted on the awareness of spiritual ecology, it was emphasized that the learning on spiritual ecology is necessary because, knowingly or unknowingly, we all have a connectivity with our natural environment that supports our physical and spiritual well-being. The workshop is particularly conducted as an awareness program on environmental conservation where the concept of spiritual ecology was referred to as an universal and ancient religious concept that is neutral of every religious streams of the world. Nonetheless, spiritual ecology is described and debated in various religious principles and is mandated as an integral part of spiritual procedure. The concept integrates nature and human beings with all its surrounding components in harmony and compassion. Such sensitivity, according to the trainers of the workshop is vital in today's world to grow attachment towards environment and conservation of habitat.

Shirlin & Selvaraj (2023) made a comparative exploration of eco-theological concepts with the traditional religious ideals in context with Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Animal Dreams*. In this analysis, they described eco-spiritualism as the channel that established interconnectivity between human sensation and nature. There, as the authors argued that this spiritual stream was distinctive from that of traditional religious ideals. The authors stressed that the concepts of eco-spiritualism is a workable method to identify the connectivity between human, nature and surrounding habitat.

Summary, several scholars have emphasized the necessity of integrating spirituality, religious beliefs, and ethical norms into environmental conservation efforts. Kirman (2014) highlighted the urgent need for moral enforcement to curb reckless environmental exploitation driven by globalization and industrialization. He advocated for spiritual awareness as a tool to

instill a sense of responsibility and cooperation in society. Schauer et al. (2016) explored how nature influences human well-being, mindfulness, and compassion. Their study revealed that direct immersion in nature fosters spiritual awareness, but modern urban life has distanced people from their natural surroundings, leading to reduced environmental consciousness. Sayem (2018) examined the relationship between traditional religious practices and nature, specifically in Christianity and Islam. He argued that religious teachings could serve as a guideline to promote ecological awareness and encourage sustainable living by reconnecting humanity with the unspoiled environment. Daldoss Pirri (2019) analyzed how modern Western culture has contributed to detaching people from nature, contrasting it with indigenous practices such as the Amazonian Ayahuasca ritual. His findings suggested that indigenous spiritual traditions foster a deeper connection with the environment through experiential knowledge beyond conventional understanding.

A 2019 workshop at St. Ethelburga's reinforced the importance of spiritual ecology, emphasizing its universal relevance across religious traditions. The discussion framed spiritual ecology as an ancient yet essential concept that integrates humans with nature, fostering harmony and environmental responsibility. Lastly, Shirlin & Selvaraj (2023) examined eco-theology through literary analysis, comparing traditional religious ideals with eco-spiritualism in *Animal Dreams* by Barbara Kingsolver. They highlighted eco-spiritualism as a method to establish a meaningful interconnection between humans and their natural habitat, distinct from conventional religious perspectives. Together, these studies underscore the role of spirituality, religious traditions, and ecological consciousness in fostering environmental stewardship and human well-being.

Research Methodology

Research Type

This study follows a qualitative research approach, focusing on conceptual analysis and theoretical exploration. It synthesizes insights from religious and spiritual traditions to propose a framework for environmental consciousness and sustainability.

Study Population and Sample Groups

The study examines various religious and spiritual traditions, including the Bahá'í Faith, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and indigenous belief systems. It analyzes scriptures, historical texts, and contemporary research to explore their perspectives on environmental conservation.

Selection Techniques

A purposive sampling method is used to select religious teachings, philosophical perspectives, and documented case studies that emphasize the interconnectivity between nature and spirituality. Sources are chosen based on their relevance to environmental ethics and sustainability.

Research Tools

1. Literature Review – Analysis of religious scriptures, philosophical texts, and scholarly research on spiritual ecology.
2. Comparative Analysis – Examination of common themes across different traditions related to environmental stewardship.
3. Case Studies – Review of past and present applications of spiritual and religious principles in environmental conservation efforts.

Research Procedures

1. Conceptual Framework Development – Establishing the theoretical foundation of spiritual ecology and environmental conservation.
2. Data Collection – Gathering information from religious scriptures, philosophical works, and environmental studies.
3. Synthesis and Analysis – Identifying patterns, correlations, and contradictions between spiritual traditions and ecological sustainability models.
4. Discussion and Interpretation – Evaluating how traditional teachings can be applied to modern environmental issues.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

1. Document Analysis – Reviewing existing literature on spiritual ecology and environmental consciousness.
2. Interpretative Analysis – Extracting key insights from religious texts and scholarly articles.
3. Contextual Evaluation – Assessing the relevance of ancient spiritual teachings in addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

This methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of how spiritual and religious traditions can inspire sustainable environmental practices, ultimately reinforcing the need for an integrated approach to ecological conservation.

Results and Discussion of Results

1. Contemporary spiritual and religious theories on nature and its interconnectivity with living world

When we look for the purpose that religion and spirituality serve for our society, ideals and theories suggest interlinking and strong influences on the society in stimulating motivation towards perceiving the unknown through cognitive understanding. Indeed, religious and spiritual philosophies encourage willingness of deep exploration in mass. Verghese (2008) defined spiritualism as the means by which individuals achieve their life goals, the pursuit of enlightenment, and a feeling of oneness with the cosmos. A person's spirituality may be characterized as their inherent ability to transcend themselves and their ideals and practices.

At the same time, "religion" (sometimes spelled "spirituality") refers to a structured set of practices that help people get closer to God and to each other as members of a collective. There is some evidence from earlier research that spirituality and religion are not synonymous or possibly reflect separate ideas (Schnell, 2012). Spirituality is often associated with the mystical, the esoteric, and structured religion, and scholars generally believe that the two concepts overlap significantly (Pirri (2019); Omoyajowo et al. (2023)).

A common observation is that "interdisciplinary approaches embracing beliefs and spirituality help us protect our surroundings and change human behaviors". This is due to the fact that all major faiths teach adherents to certain environmental standards and, in most instances, have specific policies and procedures on this matter. Some have said that religion has a significant part in environmental preservation, stating that "religions shape our views of right and wrong, affecting how we act not only towards other human beings but non-humans as well".

This points to the idea that different faiths emphasize different aspects of environmental preservation and environmental responsibility, which might be used to create a more positive outlook. Participants from the Christian and Moslem groups in the UK's study on religion and the environment framed their response within the framework of their theocentric principles, with the idea that humans have a God-given role as "guardians" of creation and a responsibility to care for it. The study also included secular those who participated (Okyere-Manu et al., 2022).

Proper guardianship and harmony were emphasized in the scriptures. For instance, in their discussion of Genesis 2, the Christian participants noted that guardianship was "not quite a right to rule [but] a case of privileged position" where people, because to their understanding, had a "unique responsibility" to take care of humanity (Sarah). According to the Muslim participation, "everyone has to be accountable for the gifts and the way that they are used" (Qur'an, Chapter 2.26-286).

By advocating for environmentally conscious lifestyle choices, Hinduism shows its reverence for the environment. For example, Constance Jones and James D. Ryan pointed out that many Hindu rituals, such the veneration of specific plants and animals, had their roots in the Neolithic period (around 4000 B.C.E.). In order to reacquaint oneself with the fundamental aspects of nature that are necessary for human flourishing, Frawley argues that practices like yoga and meditation might be beneficial.

Similarly, other Hindu experts have discussed issues like climate change, water, land, and air pollution; the alarming rate of extinction; destruction of forests; topsoil loss; and declining drinking water supplies, and they have proposed practical solutions to these problems by drawing on cultural customs and sacred texts (Okyere-Manu et al., 2022).

As we can see from the above, several faiths have environmental responsibilities. Nearly eighty-four percent of the world's population claims religious affiliation, as previously said. An individual's sense of what is good and evil, morality, and virtue is shaped by their religious beliefs, doctrine, and liturgy, which are the practices and ceremonies of their faith. The power of religion to influence people's views and beliefs makes it a useful tool for gauging support for sustainable practices and environmental protection.

As opined by Ozgul (2022), using both internal and external environmental orientation methodologies, researchers have shown a correlation between green leadership that promotes transformation and green absorptive ability. The remark implies that people are starting to realize that conservation initiatives should also take into account cultural, spiritual, and ethical factors. The statement suggests that communities' cultural, spiritual, and ethical beliefs and practices should be included alongside scientific and economic factors in conservation efforts, rather than a more reductionist approach.

As we already discussed in our review of literature section, Indigenous peoples and their connection to the earth are prominently depicted in Barbara Kingsolver's novel 'Animal Dreams'. "Kingsolver investigates how various groups perceptions the land and how such perspectives influence the way they interact with it" (Goldendale, 2003, p. 103), as expressed according to critic Laura Gray-Rosendale. In addition to advocating for a more equitable and sustainable connection to the natural world, Kingsolver's eco-spiritual viewpoints question conventional religion beliefs.

Ecotheology is a relatively young academic discipline that arose in the latter part of the twentieth century in reaction to environmental catastrophes and the demand for fresh perspectives on the interdependence of humans and non-human entities. Environmental ethics, social justice, and sustainability are all areas that ecotheology aspires to bring together from a faith-based and theological standpoint.

"Ecotheology seeks to apply the findings of ecological and sociological research to bear on theological investigation while additionally leveraging on the foundations of faith cultures that can add to sustainability ethics and engagement" (Hogue, 2010, p. 1), according to theologian Michael S. Hogue.

Ecotheology is important because it promotes a more equitable and sustainable connection with the natural environment, as opposed to conventional theological beliefs that put human dominance of nature first. In her work, eco-theologian Heather Eaton argues that "Ecotheology is a movement of change which highlights humanity's accountability for environmental problems and the need for new ethical and spiritual approaches that are more in tune with the interconnectivity of all life" (Eaton, 2002, p. 2).

We are shaped by our place and community in connection to the natural environment, according to eco-theology. "Ecotheology is about restructuring our place in the world and appreciating how we have a deep connection to the land and other living beings" (Kearns, 2013, p. 19), says theologian Laurel Kearns. Additionally, ecotheology acknowledges the importance of indigenous peoples' viewpoints, their profound relationship to the earth, and the necessity of interfaith cooperation and conversation in resolving environmental issues.

The International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture is one example of a group that discusses how religion and nature interact with each other. Religion and environment are equally open topics for discussion, as demonstrated by the Yale Forum on the subject. While these concepts are not identical, they also do not exclude one another. In order to foster tolerance, fairness, and culturally adaptable human-Earth connections, spiritual ecology is a faith-based ideal that necessitates the type of introspective and relational labor that is lacking in such convictions.

An all-encompassing strategy for spiritual ecology can be conceived along two axes: knowledge and ecology, affirming the existential circumstances of spiritual lifestyles. With an emphasis on ecology, its inclusiveness calls for a focus on the interdependence of all life on Earth. To be inclusive when it comes to knowledge, one must accept and work with many forms of ambiguity and unknowing, as well as different methods of knowing. In addition, diversity and interfaith convictions are also part of inclusive knowledge.

Spiritual ecology has many advantages. "Spiritual ecology is considered preferable to other labels" (Sponsel 2012, p. xiii) according to Leslie Sponsel's book *Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution*. One possible advantage of using the term "spiritual ecology" over "religion and ecology/nature" is its shorter length. Furthermore, spiritual ecology is confusingly similar to other ecological schools, such as communal, political, historical, and ecosystem ecology. Lastly, it appears to encompass a wider range of religious practices than religion does, which is useful

because the term "religion" is typically linked with official religious institutions rather than more loosely knit communities (Mickey, 2020).

2. Spiritual awareness and environmental conservation initiatives

The current prevailing paradigm for international development is defined by its use of GDP as the primary indicator of progress and advancement. Economic progress, according to this paradigm, will lead to people's development, which in turn will provide them with greater possibilities and lives. This perspective fails to take into account the intangible quality of development and fails to recognize that growth resources are valuable in and of themselves, both economically and in terms of sustainability.

It also fails to take into account the finite resources of our planet and the state of our ecosystems, which are interdependent on human well-being. This economic expansion is being propelled by unsustainable industry, which in turn is causing a lot of harm through things like depleting natural resources, polluting the air, destroying ecosystems, and causing biodiversity to dwindle. This is on top of the already-mentioned effects on human health, livelihoods, conflict, and resource-based conflicts.

We have entered the Anthropocene, a time when human activity has had the greatest influence on Earth's biota, thanks to this paradigm shift in development. During this "take-make-dispose" period, people prioritize maintaining economic development above all else, which manifests itself in their excessive consuming and production habits (Abumoghli, 2022).

Religious principles and spiritual approaches are reemerging as effective models to resist this alarming and unrestrained degradation. These ideals are significant means to stimulate sensitivity and encourage morality towards ecosystem and surroundings. In today's world, spirituality and religious beliefs are everywhere. Economic development, job satisfaction, mental health care, and safeguarding the environment are just a few examples of the many important discussions surrounding religion and spirituality.

The work of Ana Karina Yepes Gomez (2009–2010), which resonates philosophical ecofeminism as a means that can be instrumental in changing individual behaviors to promote societal change founded on an environmental ethics, has been recognized by scholars who have sought to rationalize the relationship between humans and nature in general, especially spirituality and environmental responsibility (Omoyajowo et al., 2023).

Apart from that, Groen (2013) looked at the increasing interest in environmental and spiritual adult education within the context of modern Western society's disillusionment and malaise, and he stated that we should focus on environmental adult education programs and responses based on a humanistic approach to learning. The profound impact of religion on one's

worldview, way of life, and dedication to humanity makes it a potent agent of personal and societal transformation (Gabriel, 2018). His talk focused on indigenous global religions and traditions and how they relate to and support sustainable development.

What the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) calls "the spiritual, societal, motivational, visually appealing, traditional and cultural implications, standards, sentiments, thoughts and associations that features of the environment and nature in general have for past, present and upcoming generations of people - both individuals and groups" is how they describe the spiritual and cultural importance of nature.

As they always have, religions are dynamic and adapt to new world problems. What the Earth has to give should be shared equitably among all living things, and many faiths emphasize the importance of balancing personal success with the greater welfare of society. People are viewed as accountable guardians of their natural surroundings, and religious qualities such as moderation play a significant role. Hence, religious teachings make it extremely apparent that one should be frugal and live sustainably; these are lessons that may be used to base and promote environmentally conscious behavior in people's day-to-day lives.

By incorporating faith-based ideas of redemption and forgiveness into conventional strategies, individuals' value systems can influence their behavior and decisions, which in turn can aid in resolving conflicts and fostering reconciliation after conflicts. This, in turn, can help societies become more resilient. It is also possible to draw on religious beliefs that discourage greed to help reduce disputes over few resources.

Because of the objectification, commoditization, and divestment of all life and integrity that has occurred routinely as a result of the successive industrial revolutions—including technological advancement, globalization, free markets and trade agreements, the mechanization of agriculture, and the proliferation of urban centers—societies and individuals have grown increasingly detached from their natural environment.³² Systemic reform is necessary to confront the myriad development difficulties that have developed as a result of this growth mindset.

The obligation of care for a healthy world for this generation and future ones who will inherit a severely ailing earth is asserted by this stewardship responsibility, which is intergenerational like other faith-based ideals taught and passed down through the centuries. Therefore, we must put the well-being of people and the earth ahead of economic prosperity and reject the present global economy centered on material goods. A return to a more harmonious relationship with the natural world and a rejection of the present-day "take-make-dispose" mentality can be fostered through the rededication of religious principles and teachings to all areas of society and all tiers of government.

Innovative solutions that include and spread these environmentally caring beliefs, values, and behaviors are necessary to achieve the sustainable development goals. A common goal for mankind and the natural world, as well as concrete steps to improve environmental sustainability, may be fostered by identifying and capitalizing on the areas of religious agreement in environmental ethics, as mentioned before.

Culture and religion are often considered by researchers to be the primary factors that influence human behavior, the ability to modify one's behavior, and the sense of moral obligation one feels towards others. Scholars in religious ecology and beyond have taken notice of the beneficial correlation between religion and environmentally conscious actions because of the significant impact it may have on present-day sustainable development initiatives.

Religious institutions and individuals are in a prime position to motivate these societal changes due to their economic clout, persuasiveness, and ability to bring people together. Worldwide, religious and spiritual leaders have a significant impact on local communities and are influential voices. They frame environmental care as a matter of faith, which their followers internalize, understand, and justify within their own belief systems. "Minimum adjustments to the framing of a message or a choice can have a tremendous influence on the decisions we make and the actions we do," and this framing by religious leaders is crucial to fostering environmentally conscious behavior and a shared economic ethic.

It is well-established that people may be motivated to act in ways that mitigate climate change by appealing to their ideas and values, which are structures of the mind.³⁸ The frameworks from the "theory of planned behaviour" and the "value-belief norm theory of environmentalism" show that attitudes, beliefs, and norms impact activist activities, philanthropy, and environmental protection. There are two main schools of thought within the social-environmental approach, and both of them propose that people's religious beliefs have an effect on their actions and the way those actions affect the environment. An abundance of evidence is emerging that connects religious beliefs to actions taken in support of the environment.

One such study found a strong positive correlation between religious belief and environmental action, as measured by things like environmentally focused donations and advocacy, among other things. The researchers used a battery of indicators and drew on data from 91 countries and five waves of the World Value Survey, which covered 1989–2014. The Islamic Fatwa is a prime illustration of how religions influence both individual and community actions and the ways in which institutions react to these changes. For instance, in 2016, the Indonesian Islamic Council issued a fatwa that deemed arson in forests to be a sin. Thanks to the

joint efforts of the government, the Islamic Council, and other non-governmental organizations, almost 65% of the damaged peatland has been recovered.

The influential Catholic *Laudato Si'* initiative (*Laudato Si: Care for Our Common Home*) is a prime illustration of how religious organizations can systematically engage with faith-followers and the global community to mobilize them, drawing on both religious teachings and scientific facts. Pope Francis's environmental encyclical, published in 2015, shortly before the Paris Agreement, gave rise to this movement. The potential for behavioural change among Catholics and the global world is being mobilized by the *Laudato Si* movement. The *Laudato Si* Action program was one of the projects introduced by the Dicastery for Integral Human Development as part of *A Journey Towards Full Sustainability in the Holistic Spirit of Integral Ecology*.

In 2019, following the eighth ministerial summit of the Islamic nations' environment ministers, which approved a policy for engaging with religious actors on environmental concerns, the UNEP religious for Earth Initiative enabled the *Al-Mizan* movement. More than 350 Islamic and international organizations were given the opportunity to evaluate the *Al-Mizan: Covenant for the Earth* text as part of a consultation process. The ninth conference of the ministers of the environment of Islamic nations is expected to approve *Al-Mizan* in 2022. It offers a comprehensive Islamic strategy to tackling the current environmental catastrophe, grounded on Islamic ethics, principles, and practices.

Unfortunately, no other major religion has made any globally adoptable institutional efforts to promote such ideas outside of these two worldwide initiatives that involve Muslims and Christians. Take, for instance, the almost 1.6 billion adherents of the world's two largest religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. As per the UNEP report 2022, the organization contends that through their own institutions, other interfaith groups can help mobilize faith-followers to take collective action and catalyze pro-environmental changes in attitude and behavior. To guarantee participation in mainstream development debate, however, significant planned and tangible engagement tactics are required.

An interfaith movement based on ethics in environmental governance, the Fifth Directive on "Commitment to a Culture of Sustainability and Care for the Earth" was added to the 2018 edition of the Parliament of the World's Religions' *Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* - The unique fifth statement, which was accepted by over 200 religious and spiritual leaders in 1993, may have its roots in the teachings of faiths that hold a global view of the respect and worth of all living things (Abumoghli, 2022).

3. Role of Spiritual Ecology in stimulating human well-being and encouraging harmony towards surroundings

For ecopsychology researchers, spirituality is often seen as an integral part of experiencing nature's healing powers. As agreed by scholars, it might provide light on how nature improves mental health. An individual's "ecological self" is said to emerge in ecopsychology theory as a result of feeling a deep spiritual and physiological connection to the natural world. This shift in perspective represents a shift away from the "I" that dominates Western psychology and toward a more "wide-ranging or field like belief in the self, that ultimately includes all life forms, environments, and the earth itself" (Bragg, 1996, p. 95).

In accordance with the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition, a person is considered to be in a state of optimal wellbeing when they are able to fully experience life on all levels: physically, mentally, socially, spiritually, and economically. The theory is investigated by many scholars through physical surveys. For example: According to a small but strong body of research, physically and/or sensorily connected to the outdoors—can boost positive emotions and cognitive function while lowering negative mood states. In such a well-controlled research, 17 children from low-income urban families were evaluated both before and after they moved into new housing, using a longitudinal approach. The study conducted by Wells (2002) revealed that the presence of more natural elements in the house has a significant impact on cognitive performance.

Furthermore, Wells and Evans (2003) discovered that out of 337 children living in rural areas, those who had greater access to natural areas near their homes showed reduced psychological discomfort. What's more, they observed that being close to nature mitigated the impact of adverse life events on distress. Consistent with previous research by Ulrich (1981), Ulrich (1984), and Ulrich et al. (1991), these results show that people feel calmer and recover from stress more quickly when shown pictures of natural settings rather than man-made ones. This lends credence to Ulrich's (1983) Psycho-evolutionary Theory, which posits that being outside can help people deal with the mental, emotional, and physical effects of stress more quickly (Kamitsis & Francis, 2013).

Trigwell et al. (2014) laid the groundwork for several promising avenues of future study by offering empirical evidence in favor of ecological-self theory as a valuable framework for comprehending the connection between people and their natural surroundings. Elaborating on this ideal, the authors explicated that according to ecological-self theory, one's health can be improved by cultivating a sense of oneness with the natural world and all living creatures (Bragg, 1996). A person's ecological-self, or self-perception, in this model includes not just themselves but also all other living things, ecosystems, and the planet Earth (Bragg, 1996). Therefore, it's

possible that enhancing one's health might be as simple as finding a way to reconnect with nature.

In their investigation, the authors aimed to find a way to quantify the "engaged spirituality" that ecological-self theory proposes as a reflection of the interdependence of humans and the natural world (Bragg, 1996). Their goal was to find a measure that could capture the "oneness" and "connection" that ecological-self theory described without making direct references to nature or connections between people and the natural world (so that it doesn't get confused with our independent variable). They used the subscales of Hood's (1975) Mysticism Scale in their analysis based on its efficiency. The authors inferred that the idea that spending time in nature may have a positive effect on mental health may seem obvious, but this study clarifies one of the possible mechanisms.

In an instance of more latest research, Leung & Pong (2021) observed that the university students of China were less likely to suffer from symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression if they had a strong sense of spiritual wellness. The model they used for evaluation was SHALOM (Spiritual Health and Life Orientation Measure), first created by Fisher in 1998. The 20-item SHALOM has already gained popularity and translated into 29 languages. It has consistently been used in several studies and has shown greater reliability.

The 'lived experience' and 'ideal value' subscales within SHALOM revealed a dependable four-factor structure (i.e., personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental domains), which led to its adoption in several western research, including those involving Hebrew, Persian, and Brazilian-Portuguese people. As per the researchers, the Chinese populace would be able to recognize the three-factor structure of SHALOM due to the widespread adoption of Confucian ideas.

Partially revealing cultural variance are due to variations in the structure of spirituality. The transcendent component of SHALOM was expanded by Fisher to include a wide range of entities, such as God or a divine being, a higher power, one's higher self, and the deceased. Using the SHALOM scale, researchers in the West and China discovered a substantial gap in the transcendental spiritual welfare of religious and non-religious youngsters.

A decreased risk of psychological discomfort was observed by the researchers across all three dimensions of spiritual wellness (individual and community, environmental, and transcendental), with the strongest correlation seen in the former. Among college students in the Asia-Pacific area, this study is claimed as the first research to focus on their spiritual health. Spiritual counseling should be a part of treatments for students with mental health issues, according to the findings.

Conclusion

In this article, we've presented a global as well as our own perspective of dealing with the current alarming environmental conservation with the aid of traditional and spiritual awareness initiatives that is already an active motion all around the world as we've discussed in our findings. Our findings reveal the contributions of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) that are currently coming up spreading their words to influence the society by working for both people and the environment. Spiritual guides and religious leaders have considerable impact over society at large. The ability to persuade and gather others is the first of these abilities. Anyone may find religious leaders offering spiritual direction or FBOs delivering humanitarian aid. Second, religious institutions have considerable financial clout. Among the world's investment categories, religious groups rank fourth. The inclusion of religious and indigenous leaders in global environmental governance and policymaking is therefore essential. While FBOs are strong institutions and have demonstrated relevance to development around the world, major groups and stakeholders' groups of the UN still do not identify them as such. As such, as we explored, FBOs have been trying to find their way to engage in policy dialogue at the UN as part of the NGO designation. While this might be somewhat effective, it fails to leverage the unique and influential powers of faith actors and the perspectives of spiritual and moral responsibilities to environmental governance brought about by religions. Thus, faith actors, despite their significance, remain underempowered within the margins of dominant discourse and global policy formulation. Their role should be recognized and be encouraged. Moving towards the individual motivations, in this study, we've presented a few approaches that establish the beneficial effects on human sensitivity and psychology, cognitive functioning and increased self-esteem. Thus, spiritual approaches can serve as to improve human psychological aspects of wellbeing that have been linked to exposure to nature. Furthermore, the study testifies that there is a favorable correlation between a sense of natural connection and psychological health results.

Suggestions and Implementations

Based on the findings and discussion, the following suggestions and implementations are proposed to enhance environmental conservation through spiritual awareness, religious teachings, and ecological consciousness:

1. Integrating Spiritual and Religious Theories into Environmental Ethics

Suggestion: Contemporary spiritual and religious theories emphasize the interconnectedness of nature and living beings, which can be leveraged to promote ethical environmental behavior. Ecotheology and spiritual ecology highlight humanity's moral responsibility to protect nature.

Implementation: Religious institutions and academic curricula should incorporate ecotheology and spiritual ecology concepts, fostering ethical environmental stewardship. Interfaith dialogue programs should be established to discuss environmental responsibilities, integrating diverse religious perspectives. Governments and NGOs should collaborate with faith-based organizations to develop community-driven conservation projects rooted in religious teachings.

2. Promoting Spiritual Awareness for Environmental Conservation

Suggestion: The research underscores the role of spiritual awareness in shaping attitudes towards environmental conservation. Spiritual values can motivate individuals to adopt sustainable practices by emphasizing moral responsibility toward nature.

Implementation: Establish nature-based mindfulness and meditation programs that promote ecological consciousness. Organize environmental workshops in religious centers, emphasizing the moral duty of environmental protection. Develop media campaigns that highlight the spiritual significance of nature and sustainability.

3. Encouraging Faith-Based Environmental Initiatives

Suggestion: Several religious traditions advocate environmental responsibility, as seen in Islamic, Christian, and Hindu perspectives. Faith-based initiatives, such as the Indonesian Islamic Council's fatwa and the Catholic *Laudato Si'* movement, demonstrate the potential of religious institutions in environmental advocacy.

Implementation: Religious leaders should integrate environmental stewardship messages into sermons and teachings. Encourage faith communities to adopt eco-friendly practices, such as reducing waste, conserving energy, and tree planting. Expand faith-based environmental initiatives through partnerships with governments, NGOs, and international organizations.

4. Strengthening the Role of Spiritual Ecology in Policy and Governance

Suggestion: Spiritual ecology plays a crucial role in promoting human well-being and fostering harmony with nature. However, faith actors remain underrepresented in environmental policy-making.

Implementation: Incorporate spiritual ecology principles into national and global environmental policies. Encourage faith-based organizations to actively participate in climate change discussions and decision-making. Develop research initiatives that explore the psychological benefits of spiritual ecology and its impact on pro-environmental behavior.

5. Enhancing Human Well-Being through Spiritual Connection with Nature

Suggestion: Exposure to nature has psychological benefits, improving mental health, cognitive function, and self-esteem. Promoting spiritual connections with the environment can enhance overall human well-being.

Implementation: Design urban spaces with green areas that facilitate spiritual engagement with nature. Integrate eco-therapy and spiritual wellness programs into mental health initiatives. Encourage schools and workplaces to incorporate nature-based mindfulness practices into daily routines.

By integrating spiritual, religious, and ethical dimensions into environmental conservation efforts, a holistic approach can be developed to address ecological challenges. Engaging faith-based organizations, promoting ecotheology, and fostering spiritual awareness can encourage individuals and communities to embrace sustainable practices, ensuring environmental well-being for future generations.

Acknowledgements

I sincerely express my gratitude to Asia University, Taiwan, for providing the necessary resources and support for this research. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my colleagues in the Department of Computer Science and Information for their insightful discussions and encouragement throughout this study. I would like to thank all scholars and researchers whose works have contributed to the understanding of the interconnectivity between environment, nature, and spiritual traditions.

Declaration of Interests

The author declares no competing interests related to this research. This study, *Interconnectivity and Importance of Environment and Nature in Spiritual and Religious Tradition*, is conducted independently, with no financial, personal, or institutional influences that could affect its objectivity.

Ethical Considerations

This research adheres to ethical guidelines by ensuring that all sources of information, including religious and spiritual traditions, are cited appropriately and respectfully. No human subjects or personal data were involved, eliminating concerns regarding informed consent and confidentiality. Additionally, this study upholds academic integrity by presenting unbiased interpretations and avoiding any misrepresentation of cultural or religious beliefs.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

References

- Abumoghli, I. (2022). *Reimagining the Human Environment Relationship: Religion and the Environment*. [Social-Religious]. UNEP. https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:8838/UNUUNEP_Abumoghli_RHER.pdf
- Bliss, C. (2022). Conservation, Culture, and Consciousness: Awakening to a Re-Imagined Vision of Nature Co-Existence. In *POLLEN*. <https://politicalecologynetwork.org/2022/08/24/conservation-culture-and-consciousness-awakening-to-a-re-imagined-vision-of-nature-co-existence/>
- Crockett, J. (2021). An Ecological Spirituality. In *Ecological Spirituality | The Natural Contemplative*. <http://www.naturalcontemplative.com/essays/ecospiritual.html>
- Egri, C. P. (1999). Nature in Spiritual Traditions: Social and Cultural Implications for Environmental Change. In F. Fischer & M. Hajer (Eds.), *Living with Nature* (1st ed., pp. 58–80). Oxford University Press Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.1093/019829509X.003.0004>
- Henning, H., & Henning, M. (2021). Reflections on the Nature of Spirituality: Evolutionary Context, Biological Mechanisms, and Future Directions. *Journal for the Study of Spirituality*, 11(2), 174–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20440243.2021.1955453>
- Irvine, K. N., Hoesly, D., Bell-Williams, R., & Warber, S. L. (2019). Biodiversity and Spiritual Well-being. In M. R. Marselle, J. Stadler, H. Korn, K. N. Irvine, & A. Bonn (Eds.), *Biodiversity and Health in the Face of Climate Change* (pp. 213–247). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02318-8_10
- Kamitsis, I., & Francis, A. J. P. (2013). Spirituality Mediates the Relationship Between Engagement with Nature and Psychological Wellbeing. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 36, 136–143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2013.07.013>
- KRMAN, M. A. (2014). Religious And Secularist Views Of The Nature And The Environment. *The Journal Of International Social Research*, 1(3), 1–11.
- Leung, C. H., & Pong, H. K. (2021). Cross-Sectional Study of the Relationship Between the Spiritual Wellbeing and Psychological Health Among University Students. *PLOS ONE*, 16(4), e0249702. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249702>
- Mickey, S. (2020). Spiritual Ecology: On the Way to Ecological Existentialism. *Religions*, 11(11), 580. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11110580>
- Munsoor, M. S., & Munsoor. (2021). *Wellbeing and the Worshipper*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66131-1>

- Okoyere-Manu, B., Morgan, S. N., & Nwosimiri, O. (2022). Cultural, Ethical, and Religious Perspectives on Environment Preservation. *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, 85, 94–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2022.09.004>
- Omoyajowo, K., Danjin, M., Omoyajowo, K., Odipe, O., Mwadi, B., May, A., Amos Ogunyebi, & Rabie, M. (2023). Exploring the Interplay of Environmental Conservation within Spirituality and Multicultural Perspective: Insights from a Cross-Sectional Study. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-023-03319-5>
- Pirri, M. D. (2019). Spirituality, the Connection to Nature, and the Role of Shamanic Rituals. *Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group*. <https://edepot.wur.nl/472319>
- Rawat, G., & Mishra, S. (2021). Spirituality and Environment: Significance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems In Africa and Challenges. *Literary Endeavour*, 12(1). <https://literaryendeavour.org/files/kcha5iff0kqmijbwyw1f/2021-01%2012%20SPIRITUALITY%20AND%20ENVIRONMENT%20SIGNIFICANCE%20OF%20INDIGENOUS%20KNOWLEDGE%20SYSTEMS%20IN%20AFRICA%20AND%20CHALLENGES.pdf>
- Sayem, Md. A. (2018). Religious Understanding of Nature and Influence of Geographical Environment on Shaping Religious Beliefs and Practices within Christianity and Islam. *KARSA: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture*, 26(2), 195. <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v26i2.1777>
- Schauer, B., Koch, K., Lemieux, L., & Willey, K. (2016). How Immersion in Nature Impacts the Human Spirit: A Phenomenological Study. *Master of Arts in Holistic Health Studies Research*. https://sophia.stkate.edu/ma_hhs/8
- Sharma, N. (2023). Spirituality, Mindfulness, and Eco-Consciousness: The Interconnected Path. In *IMI Insights*. <https://imiinsights.wordpress.com/2023/06/12/spirituality-mindfulness-and-eco-consciousness-the-interconnected-path/>
- Shirlin, J. J., & Selvaraj, A. (2023). Nature and Spirituality in Animal Dreams: An Ecotheological Analysis. *Nature and Spirituality in Animal Dreams: An Ecotheological Analysis*, 12(11), 396–404. <https://doi.org/10.48047/ecb/2023.12.11.32>
- Summer, I. (2023). *Spiritual ecology: Honoring Nature as a Path to Enlightenment*. In Medium. <https://medium.com/@indigo.summer444/spiritual-ecology-honoring-nature-as-a-path-to-enlightenment-881dda95bb18>
- Trigwell, J. L., Francis, A. J. P., & Bagot, K. L. (2014). Nature Connectedness and Eudaimonic Well-Being: Spirituality as a Potential Mediator. *Ecopsychology*, 6(4), 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2014.0025>