

Transformation Of Human Ecology In Uzbekistan: Steps Toward Ecological Conscience

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the transformation of human–nature relations in Uzbekistan under contemporary ecological challenges. It examines the significance of ecological conscience in conditions of alienation from nature and highlights the role of human spirituality amid an ecological crisis. The study emphasizes that fostering ecological responsibility and ethical awareness is essential for overcoming environmental degradation and achieving sustainable development.

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Introduction And Relevance

Human ecology should not be understood merely as the protection and conservation of the environment that surrounds us. In essence, this concept reflects the dialectical relationship between human beings—as biological and social entities—and the natural environment in which they live. Human ecology is grounded in interdisciplinary knowledge and serves to ensure harmony in the relationships between society, human activity, and nature [1].

In Uzbekistan, this relationship has undergone profound transformation in recent years, particularly over the last decade. Whereas nature was previously regarded primarily as a source of resources intended to satisfy human needs, contemporary ecological crises are compelling humanity to reconsider this approach. There is a growing shift from an anthropocentric worldview toward a biocentric one. The desiccation of the Aral Sea, once the fourth-largest lake in the world, along with air pollution in Tashkent and other regions, and increasing water scarcity, are not spontaneous natural phenomena. Rather, they represent nature's response to humanity's exploitative relationship with the environment. It can be argued that today society is paying the price for historical mistakes made in its interaction with nature.

Literature Review And Methodology

Issues related to human ecology, human–nature relations, and biocentrism have long been the focus of scholarly attention. Among Uzbek scholars, Xamroyev A. [2] has examined ecological sustainability and its significance, while Hakimov N. [1] has analyzed concepts of human ecology, ecological sustainability, and ecological culture.

Among foreign scholars, Humphreys R. [3] has explored the theory of biocentrism and its importance, whereas the works of Aldo Leopold [4] focus on the life of the Earth and the concept of ecological conscience.

The research employs methods of historicism, comparative analysis, and analytical examination of scientific sources to achieve its objectives.

In fact, overcoming the ecological crisis cannot be achieved solely through technological modernization. As Erich Fromm aptly noted: *“For the first time in history the physical survival of the human race depends on a*

radical change of the human heart” [5]. Through these words, the scholar emphasizes the necessity of profound changes in human consciousness and moral values.

A historical perspective shows that the Uzbek people traditionally lived in harmony with nature. Courtyards were kept clean, and even in architectural construction special emphasis was placed on greenery and the natural environment. Trees were planted and carefully tended in every household, orchards of fruit-bearing trees were cultivated, and century-old trees could often be encountered—never cut down without serious reason. Particular attention was paid to the ecological condition of the *mahalla* (neighborhood). Water, land, and every element of nature were treated with care and respect.

The Uzbek people have long held a distinctive attitude toward water. The existence of proverbs such as *“He who spits into water is accursed; he who spits into a well is an infidel”* [6; 82] and *“Do not spit into the well from which you drink water”* [6; 171] indicates that protecting water from pollution was not merely a hygienic rule, but a moral and spiritual law. The meaning of life itself was often associated with enriching nature. Proverbs such as *“From a bad person remains a stain; from a good person—a garden”* [6; 30] and *“The Kyrgyz people are known by livestock, the Uzbek people—by gardens”* [6; 216] serve as vivid evidence of this worldview and can be regarded as expressions of the highest form of biocentrism.

During the period of the former Soviet colonial system, however, policies aimed at economic profit and the emphasis on monoculture—specifically, the exclusive cultivation of cotton—undermined the harmony between humans and nature. Instead of living in balance with what nature provided, people began to extract from it aggressively. Riverbeds were diverted toward cotton fields, and trees were cut down. As noted, *“In the 1970s–1980s of the twentieth century, under the pretext of expanding cotton fields, new lands were developed up to riverbeds, which led to the complete destruction of many riparian forests during that period”* [7].

From that time onward, a purely “consumer-oriented” human type began to form, and anthropocentrism intensified. A crisis of human ecology emerged, accompanied by spiritual impoverishment and increasing alienation from nature.

The transformation of human ecology in Uzbekistan represents a complex and multidimensional process that reflects the country’s transition toward sustainable development and ecological responsibility. The study demonstrates that ecological consciousness is not merely an environmental concept, but a socio-cultural, educational, and ethical phenomenon that shapes human behavior, values, and long-term development strategies.

The analysis shows that state policies, educational reforms, and community-based initiatives play a decisive role in forming ecological awareness and responsible environmental behavior. Integrating ecological education into all levels of the education system, strengthening interdisciplinary cooperation, and applying digital and innovative technologies significantly enhance public understanding of environmental problems and their solutions. In this regard, the development of ecological competence among youth is especially important, as young people are the key agents of ecological transformation.

Furthermore, the Uzbek experience confirms that the formation of ecological conscience requires not only technological modernization, but also a deep transformation of social values and worldviews. Traditional cultural attitudes toward nature, combined with modern ecological thinking, create a unique foundation for building a sustainable ecological culture. International cooperation and the adaptation of global best practices further accelerate this process and ensure the alignment of national strategies with global sustainability goals. In conclusion, the transformation of human ecology in Uzbekistan is a strategic pathway toward ecological conscience, where education, culture, governance, and innovation interact to shape environmentally responsible citizens. Strengthening this integrative approach will contribute to improving environmental quality, enhancing social well-being, and ensuring sustainable development for future generations.

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