

The Prophet Of Islam On Environmental Ethics

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Abstract

This research paper examines the environmental conservation lessons imparted by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and how they apply to the current ecological issues. The Quran, Hadith literature, which records the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, and other articles of scholars offers a solid basis for comprehending the Islamic viewpoint on environmental care. This study emphasises important ideas that support resource conservation, sustainable living, and respect for all living forms by carefully examining a number of literatures. He provides detailed directions on how to use resources sustainably, preserve water, plant trees, and take care of both plants and animals. These lessons promote harmony between people and the natural world by advocating for a comprehensive approach to environmental issues.

Moreover, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) emphasis on refraining from any kind of wastefulness and harm to the environment, as well as his advocacy of moderation, represent a broader ethical framework that is consistent with modern environmental sustainability measures. By studying these teachings, this paper hopes to show how the Prophet's beliefs provide a timeless roadmap for environmental protection and can make a substantial contribution to tackling current ecological concerns.

In conclusion, this study contends that the Prophet's doctrines provide not only profound spiritual insights, but also practical instructions for dealing with today's environmental challenges. By examining and using these teachings, Muslims and the global community might discover useful tools for creating a renewed commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable development. This study emphasises the ongoing significance of Islamic teachings in fostering environmental stewardship, implying that these ancient ideas can inspire effective solutions to contemporary environmental concerns

Introduction

Environmental preservation is one of the most serious issues confronting society today. Natural resource depletion and the growing impact of climate change highlight the need for a more sustainable connection with the environment. While modern approaches often depend on scientific, political, and technological means, religious teachings provide timeless wisdom that can have a significant impact on environmental ethics. In Islam, Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) teachings emphasise the necessity of environmental care, situating it within a spiritual and ethical framework. His guidance, based on the Quran and Hadith, offers useful insights for maintaining balance, protecting natural resources, and avoiding wastefulness.

The notion of Khilafah is central to the Islamic understanding of environmental stewardship, and it relates to humanity's position as stewards or vicegerents of the earth. The Quran designates humanity as khalifah (trustees) of Earth, accountable for its care and maintenance. This stewardship extends beyond human well-being to include all of creation—animals, plants, water, and natural ecosystems. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reiterated this obligation in his teachings, calling Muslims to live in peace with nature and preserve the environment from destruction. This precious trust necessitates a spirit of humility, respect, and accountability to the environment.

Another crucial Islamic principle is mizan³, which means equilibrium. The Quran constantly emphasises that Allah created everything in perfect balance, and humans are expected to maintain that balance in their acts. Disrupting the Earth's natural equilibrium, whether via resource exploitation, pollution, or deforestation, violates the divine order. The Prophet (PBUH) repeatedly emphasised the importance of moderation and careful resource use, whether it was water, land, or food. His teachings on environmental balance might be viewed as pioneering appeals for ecological behaviours, reminding Muslims that abusing nature beyond need is a breach of the sacred balance.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also addressed Israf, which refers to excessive or wasteful behaviour. The Quran alerts against Israf in various chapters, and the Prophet (PBUH) reiterated this by advising people to avoid excess and waste. Even in religious practices like ablution (wudu), he emphasised the need of conserving water, stressing that wastefulness is unacceptable even when resources are ample. This approach promotes simplicity and thoughtful consumption, which are closely aligned with

current needs to reduce waste and promote conservation measures.

Islamic environmental ethics, as expressed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), emphasises a strong sense of responsibility, balance, and moderation. His teachings not only advocate sustainable contact with the environment, but also incorporate these ideals into everyday life, encouraging Muslims to see nature as a mirror of divine wisdom and order. This study will investigate how the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) environmental teachings remain vitally relevant in tackling today's ecological concerns by delving into important concepts such as *Khilafah* (stewardship), *Mizan* (balance), and *Israf* (avoidance of waste). In an era marked by environmental destruction, these teachings provide a spiritual and ethical foundation for cultivating a more sustainable and harmonious connection between people and the Earth.

Stewardship and the Role of Humans in Protecting the Environment

In Islam, people are designated as custodians (*Khilafah*) of the earth. This job has the obligation to safeguard and maintain the natural environment. A key Hadith communicates the following message:

“The earth is green and beautiful and Allah (SWT) has appointed you His stewards over it” (Sahih Muslim, Book 49, Hadith 12).

This Hadith supports the Quranic teaching that Allah (SWT) created the Earth in a balanced condition, and humanity are responsible for preserving that equilibrium. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasised that tremendous power comes with great responsibility, calling Muslims to carry out their duty as Earth's protectors, including its resources and creatures.

Conservation of Resources: Water

Water, a vital and precious element in Islam, is crucial to the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) teachings. He taught moderation in its usage, including when fulfilling religious responsibilities. Water conservation is extremely important in Islam since it is seen as one of Allah's most treasured gifts. Water is not only necessary for living; it also plays an important part in religious rites like ablution (*wudu*) and purifying. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasised the need of water conservation, encouraging his people to avoid wasting even when plenty of water was available. He called for moderation and prudent usage, arguing that excessive water use violates Islamic precepts. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) advocated using less water during *wudu*, emphasising the importance of this

resource and the necessity to conserve it. These teachings highlight the ethical imperative in Islam to preserve water, reflecting a larger commitment to environmental management and sustainability.

Hadith:

Prophet (PBUH) would perform ablution with one mudd (half a kilogram of water) and would perform a ritual bath with one sa' (two kilograms of water), up to five mudd (two and a half kilograms of water). [Muttafaqun' Alayh].

Despite the accessibility of water, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) repeatedly urged its conservation. Even in acts of worship, when water is required, the Prophet (PBUH) was attentive of its use, emphasising the significance of minimising waste.

Hadith:

Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) forbade relieving oneself in a water source, on a path, or in a place of shade.

This Hadith address the notion of cleanliness to the environment, advising Muslims not to contaminate water supplies and other common areas. It serves as a clear reminder of Islam's emphasis on pollution prevention and environmental stewardship.

Planting Trees and Afforestation as Acts of Charity

Saving and planting trees is crucial not just for environmental health, but also for the well-being of all living things. Trees help to clean the air, prevent soil erosion, provide food and shelter, and keep the environment in balance. Tree preservation and planting are highly prized in Islam because they signify humanity's responsibilities as environmental protectors. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasised tree planting as a continual form of charity (Sadaqah Jariyah). He was notably quoted: *"If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person, or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift (Sadaqah)"*. This highlights the long-term advantages of planting trees, which not only improve the environment but also provide for future generations. The Prophet (PBUH) also prohibited the unnecessary destruction of trees, particularly during wartime, expressing Islam's great regard for nature and every believer's responsibility to protect it. Through these beliefs, Islam supports tree planting and preservation as a necessary obligation for Allah's creation to remain in balance.

Hadith:

“If you have a sapling, and if you have the time, be certain to plant it, even if doomsday starts to break forth.”

“Whoever plants trees, God will give him reward to the extent of their fruit.”

“Whoever reclaims and cultivates dry, barren land will be rewarded by God for the act. So long as men and animals benefit from it, He will record it for him as almsgiving.”

“If a Muslim plants a tree, that part of its produce consumed by men will be as almsgiving for him. Any fruit stolen from the tree will also be as almsgiving for him. That which the birds eat will also be as almsgiving for him. Any of its produce which people may eat thus diminishing it, will be as almsgiving for the Muslims who planted it.”

The Prophet’s sayings highlight that planting trees and cultivating land are repaid with ongoing generosity. The environmental advantages of afforestation, such as providing food, shade, and shelter for animals and humans, are all regarded as acts of worship or charity. This Hadith addresses the significance of environmental sustainability and giving back to nature.

Protection of Wildlife and Land Resources

The Prophet (PBUH) was not only concerned with trees, but also with animals and land resources. He established protected zones called Harim and Hima to conserve natural resources and animals. In Islam, animal protection and land preservation are seen as crucial components of humanity’s responsibilities as Earth stewards. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) placed a high value on ethical animal welfare and natural resource conservation, regarding all living beings as Allah’s creation, demanding respect and care. The Prophet taught that humans are responsible for keeping the natural world’s equilibrium (Mizan)⁴, and he prohibited animal cruelty, tree destruction, and wasteful land usage. These teachings promote sustainable living and ecological protection, reflecting Islam’s larger commitment to environmental preservation for future generations.

The Prophet's focus on conserving animals and land highlights the moral imperative to conserve nature as a gift from Allah, ensuring that its beauty and prosperity stay intact for all forms of life.

Hadith:

“Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded.”

To protect land, forest, and wildlife, the Prophet (PBUH) created Harim and Hima, inviolable zones where resources were to remain untouched. Harim and Hima created inviolable zones that safeguarded natural resources from exploitation. Harim zones have been formed around wells and water sources to avoid over-extraction of groundwater. These zones were carefully designed to preserve the surrounding ecosystem, including water and land resources. Harim land is usually related with the developed property it serves, such as wells, crops, or pastures, and is always held by the owner of the corresponding development.

According to Dutton (1985), each development, whether a well, a crop field or a pasture, has its own Harim, or protective buffer zone, the size of which fluctuates depending on the resource's demands. For example, in cities, the Harim is usually the region that can be reached within a day to collect fuel or graze cattle. A Harim is built around water sources such as wells, springs, or rivers to provide access to the water for both humans and animals without overcrowding or causing harm to neighboring land or water contamination.

Similarly, trees and crops are protected by a Harim, which allows their roots to get enough water while still allowing the landowner, adequate access to the region, such as through routes linking holdings.

In contrast, the Hima system was designed expressly to safeguard animals, forests, and grazing pasture. These places were safeguarded from overgrazing and destruction, allowing the natural environment to flourish. Hima zones were usually created to conserve certain animal species or to limit the use of natural resources like timber and grazing area. There are five sorts of Hima zones:

1. Areas where grazing by domestic animals is strictly forbidden.
2. Areas where grazing is permitted, but only during specific times of the year.

3. Beekeeping reserves, where grazing is limited to conserve blooming plants.
4. Forests where chopping trees down is prohibited.
5. Reserves administered for the benefit of a particular village, town, or tribe.

One noteworthy example of a Hima established by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was to the south of Medina, where he outlawed hunting within a four-mile radius and the destruction of trees and vegetation within twelve miles. These inviolable zones not only safeguarded the sustainable use of natural resources, but also prevented wildlife and agricultural land from being depleted. The Prophet's construction of the Harim and Hima zones reveals his foresight and great care for the environment, encouraging prudent and ethical use of land, water, and animals.

This system of protected areas paved the way for contemporary conservation measures. The notion of defined zones for the protection of ecosystems and species is still used in modern environmental laws, such as the formation of national parks, wildlife reserves, and protected forests in many countries across the world. Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) environmental policies demonstrate a forward-thinking attitude to conservation, emphasising the Islamic obligation to maintain the Earth's natural resources for the benefit of all living beings.

Harim zones were built around wells to avoid over-extraction of groundwater, whereas Hima zones limited grazing and woodcutting to protect forests. These early environmental protection methods are similar to current notions such as conservation areas and animal reserves.

Practices of the Prophet's Companions Regarding Sustainability

The companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continued his teachings on environmental sustainability. Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab (R.A.), for example, spoke out against over-exploitation of natural resources, and his policies demonstrated an appreciation of the need of environmental protection. When Umar Ibn al-Khattab (R.A.) became Caliph, he observed the environmental hazards due to overuse and introduced measures to return abandoned and unused land to the community for productive use.”

Furthermore, he opposed any form of over-exploitation of natural resources, believing that they belonged to future generations.

The notion of sustainable development, as demonstrated by Hz. Umar (R.A) deeds, exemplifies how the early Islamic society enacted environ-

mentally responsible practices. The restriction on overuse of natural resources emphasises the importance of responsible resource management and conservation for future generations.

Ethical Treatment of Animals

Islam prioritises the ethical treatment of animals, regarding them as beings worthy of care and compassion. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) constantly preached love to animals, reinforcing the importance of all living beings.

Hadith:

“A good deed done to an animal is like a good deed done to a human being, while an act of cruelty done to an animal is as bad as cruelty done to a human being.”

Hadith:

*“There is a reward for serving any living being.”*¹⁶

These Hadiths make it clear that caring for animals is equally important as caring for humans. No life should be taken without reason in Islam, and all creatures are regarded as Allah’s creation, demanding respect and compassion.

The Prophetic Response to Pollution and Cleanliness

The Islam focus on cleanliness extends to environmental cleanliness. The Prophet (PBUH) exhorted Muslims to keep their surroundings clean, emphasising the negative effects of pollution.

Hadith:

*“Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah forbade relieving oneself in a water source or on a path.”*¹⁷

By prohibiting actions that lead to pollution, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established norms that are consistent with present environmental ethics. He also advised Muslims to keep communal places clean so that others can use them.

Conclusion

The environmental crisis is one of the most pressing issues of our day, threatening ecosystems, biodiversity, and the well-being of human cultures across the world. Climate change, deforestation, pollution, and over-

exploitation of natural resources have resulted in a world in which the ecological balance is increasingly threatened. Rising global temperatures, frequent natural disasters, and the loss of critical resources like water and forests necessitate quick action. These major concerns necessitate not just scientific and political solutions, but also ethical and moral frameworks that guide human behaviour towards a more sustainable future. One such framework is provided by Islamic teachings, notably the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) words and behaviours.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) revealed Islamic teachings on the environment, which are not just spiritual guidance but also practical answers to many of today's concerns. The Prophet (PBUH) constantly emphasised the significance of environmental stewardship, reminding mankind of its responsibility to conserve and preserve nature. In one of his most famous Hadiths, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says, "The earth is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you as stewards over it" (Sahih Muslim). This stewardship, or *Khilafah*, entails a responsibility to maintain natural equilibrium and promote sustainable resource utilisation for future generations.

In the context of today's environmental crises, Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) teachings serve as a moral compass, guiding our activities towards more sustainable living. His emphasis on saving resources, particularly water, is directly relevant to the current issue of water shortage. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) would use very little water, even when conducting ablution, a religious ceremony that may explain more usage. This attentive use of water teaches us the value of preserving resources even when they appear abundant. An essential lesson, as many regions of the world experience droughts and water shortages.

The Prophet's (PBUH) encouragement of tree planting and afforestation provides timeless counsel. In a world where deforestation is a major contributor to climate change, his admonition to plant trees—even in the face of approaching doom—demonstrates the long-term benefits of environmental action. The Hadith "If you have a sapling, and if you have the time, be certain to plant it, even if Doomsday starts to break forth" supports proactive environmental protection and restoration actions. Today, projects like reforestation and afforestation campaigns can be viewed as fulfilling the prophetic mandate to act in ways that benefit the world, its ecosystems, and future generations.

Furthermore, the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings on ethical animal care and

wildlife conservation are relevant to today's worries about biodiversity loss. The Prophet (PBUH) displayed a forward-thinking attitude to conservation by establishing protected areas like Harim and Hima, which conserve natural resources and animals. In modern terminology, these zones function similarly to national parks and nature reserves, providing wildlife sanctuaries while also contributing to ecological balance. His teachings emphasise that animals, like people, are Allah's creation and should be treated with respect and care.

The prophetic teachings additionally address pollution and the value of cleanliness, which are extremely pertinent in today's pollution issue. The Prophet (PBUH) prohibited the polluting of water supplies and public areas, recognising the negative impacts of pollution long before it became a worldwide problem. His Hadith: "Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah forbade relieving oneself in a water source or on a path" [Sahih Muslim] promotes the preservation of public places and natural resources, which is consistent with current attempts to prevent pollution and promote sustainable living. These teachings remind us that the environment is a common resource, and any harm we inflict to it affects the entire community.

The Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) notion of sustainability, as expressed in his teachings, goes beyond basic environmental preservation to include the ethical use of resources, care for living creatures, and the development of systems that secure future generations' well-being. This forward-thinking approach reflects the ideals of sustainable development, which tries to fulfil current demands while preserving future generations' capacity to meet their own. Today, as humanity works to attain the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings on resource conservation, biodiversity protection, and ethical stewardship provide useful insights and direction.

In conclusion, today's environmental situation is complicated and multi-dimensional, demanding both urgent and long-term remedies. While science and technology are important in tackling these issues, the ethical and moral precepts of religion traditions such as Islam give a solid foundation for determining human behaviour. Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) teachings, which emphasise conservation, sustainability, and compassion for all living beings, provide timeless knowledge that may motivate people and communities to take significant action to conserve the environment. By incorporating these ideas into present environmental challenges, we may work towards a future in which the world is conserved and its re-

sources are shared equally among all of Allah's creatures. The prophetic message is very clear: we have a responsibility to take care of the environment as stewards in order to preserve its wealth and beauty for future generations.

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