

## **Role of the Prophet's Sunnah in Forming Environmental Awareness**

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### **Abstract**

This research addresses the issue of the environment and explains the methodology of the prophetic sunnah in promoting environmental awareness through the principles it established and called for, and the practical applications it mentioned. The world is witnessing rapid and noticeable climate changes, and the entire world is suffering from their effects which has led many international, regional, and local organizations to seek to overcome this problem and reduce its damage, especially in developing countries, that are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of climate change. The importance of this research lies in the need to clarify the term "environmental change" and the danger of its resulting damages to human and other societies, and to explain the comprehensive methodology of the prophetic sunnah in achieving environmental awareness. The research relied on the inductive approach in collecting the subject's vocabulary by referring to the Holy Qura'n and Sunnah, and the most famous books of the imams and scholars who dealt with environmental issues. It also relied on the descriptive and analytical approach in analyzing texts and demonstrating the universal relationships between them, extracting rules and regulations that scientists have derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah to regulate this issue, and highlighting its features. Then, the research mentioned some applications of the Prophet's Sunnah, which are considered practical applications of it. The research concluded with results, including that the prophetic Sunnah provides a solution to most of life's problems and offers multiple benefits to humanity, and that environmental preservation has received great attention from the prophetic Sunnah and represents one of the legitimate purposes. The research recommends the necessity of Islamic institutions to play their role in consolidating Islamic values related to environmental preservation in speech and action, and the necessity of studying prophetic directives and guidance contained in the sayings and actions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to benefit from them in the areas of environmental protection and maintenance.

**Keywords:** Role of the Prophet's Sunnah; Forming Environmental Awareness; inductive approach; references.

### **Definition of the Environment and the Necessity of Preserving it.**

#### **Definition of Environment linguistically.**

In language, the environment is defined as the state of residing and settling in a place. In the Quran, it is also defined as the place or location where a person takes up residence and stays, as stated in Surah Al-Hashr: "And [also for] those who were settled in al-Madinah and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them" [Verse 9]. The environment is also described in the Quran as a place or location where a person settles, as stated in Surah Yunus: "And We inspired to Moses and his brother, "Settle your people in Egypt in houses" [Verse 87] (Manzur, I., 1993 & Al-Zabidi, 1993). The concept of the environment in language is used to refer to the place where a person resides or to the surroundings that encompass all its living and non-living components.

#### **Definition of Environment Terminology**

The definition of environment terminology does not differ from its linguistic definition. Ibn Khaldun defined it as "the place where certain potentials are available, and only humans are responsible for benefiting from these potentials by creating environmental changes according to their living and human settlement conditions." (Ibn Khaldun, 1988). One of its contemporary definitions is that "it is the place in which humans live and obtain the components of their lives, such as food, clothing, medicine, shelter, and where they interact with their peers" (Al-Hamad & Sabareen, 1997). Based on the above, the concept of the environment is no longer limited to the environment immediately surrounding humans, but rather its definition has expanded to include the regional environment, and even the entire planet. What happens in one place on the earth can have a significant impact on other places far away.

#### **The Necessity Of Preserving The Environment**

The texts of Islamic jurisprudence indicate that building the earth and preserving the environment are among the objectives of Islamic law because reforming the entire world is one of the objectives of Islamic law. Allah the Almighty says, "So would you perhaps, if you turned away, cause corruption on earth and sever your [ties of] relationship?" [Surat Muhammad: 22]. Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani mentioned that the objectives of Sharia for the accountable individuals are three things: building the earth mentioned in Allah's saying, "and settled you in it"., and that is to secure a living for oneself and others, and the worship mentioned in Allah's saying, "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." [Surat Adh-Dhariyat: 56], and that is to comply with the orders and prohibitions of Allah, and His Caliphate mentioned in His saying, "and grant you succession in the land and see how you will do." [Surat Al-A'raf: 129]. , and other verses, and that is to follow the guidance of Allah according to the capabilities of humans in politics by using the dignities of Sharia law. (Al-Raghib, 2016).

Therefore, Allah the Almighty warned against corruption, which is against building, in more than one verse in His Noble Book. Allah the Almighty says, "Allah does not love corrupters" [Surat Al-Maida: 64], and He says, "And do not corrupt in the land after it has been reformed" [Surat Al-A'raf: 56]. God Almighty has made it clear that the greatest threat to a happy and stable life in this universe is the shedding of blood and corruption on earth, as stated in the

story of the creation of our father Adam (peace be upon him). There is no doubt that mistreating the environment, destroying its resources, and treating it harshly are forms of corruption on earth that have many negative consequences for humanity.

### **The Impact Of Misconceptions On The Environment**

The environment is subjected to many negative practices that result in its pollution, the elimination of some of its components, or damage to it. These practices have led to many problems that have harmed the environment and the living organisms that inhabit it. Among the most important effects that have resulted from these negative practices are:

#### **Pollution In All Its Forms**

Pollution is one of the most dangerous effects resulting from human erroneous practices on planet Earth. Its destructive effects were manifested in the late 20th century, due to phenomena such as global warming, melting of floating ice in the North Pole, emission of fine particles, disease or death, all of which are harmful effects that are increasing day by day, despite the signing of the Paris Agreement on climate by 190 countries at the end of 2016, which aims to stop the rise in Earth's temperature by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. 55 countries representing at least 55% of global emissions were forced to sign the Treaty, Fifty-five countries representing at least 55% of global emissions were compelled to sign the treaty.

#### **Eliminating Large Areas Of Forests**

Some countries with large forest areas have resorted to cutting large areas of those forests for agricultural activity, resulting in the elimination of those forests, and therefore the elimination of wildlife that lives on them, as well as the elimination of all forms of nature existing in those forests. One of the most environmental damages resulting from deforestation is air pollution, as the destruction of forests and cutting of trees causes a decrease in oxygen in the air, resulting in air pollution in many cities, and an increase in the number of people suffering from respiratory diseases such as asthma, in addition to other problems such as soil erosion, water scarcity, the emergence of floods and droughts due to soil erosion, decreased soil fertility, and the extinction of many species of wildlife, among other negative effects that are difficult to quantify. (Mahmoud, 2020).

#### **Weather Fluctuations**

Negative human environmental practices have led to air pollution, which in turn has caused dangerous weather fluctuations that we all feel and are affected by. The emission of toxic gases resulting from fuel combustion has led to an increase in the disruption of air composition, an increase in the depletion of the ozone layer in the earth's atmosphere, which has led to global warming, and an increase in carbon dioxide and toxic gases at the expense of oxygen (majeed, n.d).

#### **Soil Degradation**

Soil degradation is considered one of the most dangerous effects of negative practices and lack of environmental awareness among humans. The uncontrolled urban expansion has led to the consumption of vast areas of fertile land suitable for agriculture in many countries around the world, if not all of them. Similarly, reckless agricultural practices have resulted in the loss of a significant percentage of fertile soil. In addition to that, many practices resulting from incorrect environmental awareness have led to soil pollution, such as the leakage of

toxic industrial waste into the soil and dumping of waste on large areas of land, among other practices.

### **Formation of Environmental Awareness in the Light of the Pure Sunnah**

The prophetic sunnah preceded all theories, research, and studies calling for environmental preservation, warning against the consequences of harming it, and worked clearly to form environmental awareness and correct the erroneous awareness that resulted in many serious environmental damages. The Prophet, peace be upon him, addressed the issue of the environment in dozens of hadiths, emphasizing the need to preserve and protect it, warning his ummah against all forms of aggression against it, and evaluating the negatives resulting from lack of environmental awareness or incorrect environmental awareness, all for the sake of preserving and maintaining the environment. The manifestations of forming environmental awareness through the prophetic sunnah are evident in the following points:

### **Prohibition of Corruption in the Earth**

God has made righteousness and order the basis of human nature and the creation of the universe. Corruption appears in human life and the universe when human nature is corrupted, which calls for love and peace. Allah says in the Quran, "Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people have earned. He will make them taste some of what they have done so that they may return." (Surah Ar-Rum, verse 41). The meaning of "so that they may return" is to return to the original state they left behind, which is the state of righteousness. They should return to it by rectifying what they have corrupted in their lives and by following the method of goodness and doing good deeds. (Abdulwahab, 2009).

Allah also says in the Quran, "And cause not corruption upon the earth after its reformation". (Surah Al-A'raf, verse 56) This verse clearly indicates that Allah has created the earth to be suitable for human habitation, and it is not appropriate to damage or destroy it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to prohibit his companions from causing corruption in the earth, especially in times of war. He advised them: "fight and do not steal from the spoils of war or be treacherous nor mutilate and do not kill a child". (Muslim, 1973), He also advised them not to burn churches or cut down palm trees. (AL-Suna'ni, 1982).

This advice of the Prophet became a command that was issued to all leaders of Islamic armies during his lifetime and after, to protect all components of the environment. They were not to cut down trees unless it was for a benefit, not to destroy buildings, and not to burn palm trees or engage in any action that would harm what Allah has created for His servants. Abu Bakr recommended Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan when he sent him to AlSham, saying: "I advise you with ten things: Do not kill a woman, a child, an old person, or cut down a fruitful tree, or destroy a building, or kill a sheep or a camel except for food. And do not burn a beehive or drown it..." (Malik, 1985).

### **Prohibition of Extravagance**

Extravagance is considered the biggest threat to the environment, as it depletes its resources and inevitably leads to its destruction, which is the biggest threat to the present and future existence of humans. (Abdulwahab, 2009). Many verses and hadith have been mentioned that prohibit humans from extravagance and command them to adopt moderation and balance. Allah Almighty said: " And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful (Alisraa 26-27). The Prophet (peace be upon him)

specifically warned against extravagance in the use of water, considering it as one of the most important components of the environment, and because people may neglect its importance and waste it without consideration. Narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed by Sa'd while he was performing ablution and said, "What is this extravagance, O Sa'd?" Sa'd replied, "Is there extravagance in ablution, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Yes, even if you were at a flowing river (Ibn Hanbal, 2001). This hadith carries a great prophetic guidance that many people neglect. Water is considered the most important element of life, and Allah has made it a great blessing. In the present age, wars are fought over it, and conflicts and ambitions are increasing, which means the necessity of returning to the correct guidance in preserving it and not being extravagant in its use, even if it is for worship purposes.

### **Encouraging Agriculture And Reviving The Land**

The Sunnah of the Prophet encouraged agriculture as it is considered one of the most important components of the environment, and it is the foundation of food all over the world. Agriculture is also an important factor in keeping the environment clean and healthy, as its spread reduces pollution levels, in addition to other benefits such as shade from trees, and its presence in recreational areas and other places, and its use in many industries. Therefore, we notice the emphasis in the Sunnah on planting trees, taking care of them, and rewarding such acts in the Hereafter. In the hadith of Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "There is no Muslim who plants a tree or sows a seed, and then a bird, a human being, or an animal eats from it, except that it is regarded as charity for him (Al-Bukhari, 1987).

He also said (peace be upon him): "Whoever plants a tree and patiently takes care of it until it bears fruit, everything that is eaten from it will be counted as charity for him in the sight of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic (Ibn Hanbal, 2001). The Sunnah also emphasized the revival of barren or damaged land, by encouraging this practice and by granting ownership of the land after its restoration to those who carried out the restoration work. This helps combat the phenomenon of desertification and land degradation, which are major problems threatening many countries and consuming vast areas of land. In a narration reported by Jabir ibn Abdullah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever revives a dead land, it belongs to him." (Ahmad, 2001). This highlights the importance of agriculture in Islam and the severe warning against those who harm trees that people benefit from, either by cutting them down or damaging their fruits. This is because it represents a harm to the environment and its elements. In a hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever cuts down a Sidrah (lote tree), Allah will cause his head to be crushed with it in Hellfire. (AbuDawud, 2002). The Sidrah tree is a well-known tree that grows in the desert, and people benefit from its shade and fruit. The warning of punishment in the Hellfire for cutting down even one Sidrah tree emphasizes the importance of preserving environmental elements, maintaining balance between creation, and not harming them.

### **Advocating for Environmental Cleanliness and Protection from Pollution**

Islamic teachings include guidelines that protect the environment from pollution, and these guidelines have been implemented practically throughout Islamic history. The Sunnah has linked the issue of cleanliness of the earth and its conservation with faith, as stated in the Hadith: "Faith has seventy-some or sixty-some branches, the best of which is the declaration that there is no god but Allah, and the lowest of which is removing an obstacle from the path.

And modesty is a branch of faith (Muslim, 1973). Removing an obstacle from the path refers to cleaning the environment of anything that can harm humans physically or mentally, as explained by Imam al-Nawawi: "What is meant by harm is anything that can harm, such as stones, thorns, or anything else." (Al-Nawawi, 1972). The call for good urban planning: One of the most important reasons for preserving the environment is good urban planning based on proper planning. The Prophet, peace be upon him, advised to consider good planning when building houses. He commanded to have orderly building, meaning joining, consolidation, and precision, and not to have one house encroach on another. Ibn Abbas reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "If you differ in the path, make it seven cubits, and whoever builds a building, let him support his neighbor's wall" (Ibn Hanbal, 2001). This prophetic guidance represents an architectural masterpiece and a regulation among the regulations of buildings and structures that prevents narrowing of the passage for pedestrians and raises disputes between neighbors. The wider the road, the greater its benefit.

### **Environmental conservation through the guidance of the Sunnah by maintaining cleanliness**

The Sunnah's concern for protecting the environment from pollution is evident in some of the prophetic guidance related to cleanliness, including the following:

#### **Prohibition Of Urinating In Water**

Water is the most important component of the environment, and it is the source of life on this planet. Allah Almighty said, "And We made from water every living thing. So will they not believe?" [Surah Al-Anbiya: 30]. Allah Almighty has made water available for all living beings. He brings forth fruits through it, which are the essence of life, and uses it to transport ships from one place to another. He revives the earth through it after its death, and many other benefits that Allah Almighty has deposited in harnessing water. Verse 32 of Surah Ibrahim states: "And He sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth fruits, as provision for you. And He subjected for you the ships to sail through the sea by His command and subjected for you the rivers." In Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 164, Allah says: "and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature" Despite the importance of water as a vital component of the environment and a source of life, humans have often abused this resource by polluting it with waste and urine. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade urinating in stagnant or flowing water, as narrated by Jabir ibn Abdullah: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) forbade urinating in stagnant water." (Muslim, 1972) It is also narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade urinating in flowing water (Al-Tabarani, n.d).

The wisdom behind prohibiting urinating in water is to prevent its contamination, regardless of whether it is a small or large amount. Urinating in water in either case exposes a person to diseases, whether they themselves urinated in the water or used it later, because with repeated urination, the water becomes a fertile breeding ground for infectious diseases and epidemics. One contemporary scholar commented on this, saying: "In their nomadic lifestyle, the Arabs did not maintain the cleanliness of their water. Islam raised them to the highest levels of hygiene, first prohibiting them from urinating in stagnant water, then prohibiting them from bathing in non-flowing water, and prohibiting them from immersing themselves in wells and swamps to avoid impurities, as this would spoil the purity of the water and turn people away from using it for ablution, drinking, or cooking." (Shahin, 2002).

### **Prohibition Of Relieving Oneself In Shaded Areas, Under Trees, And Places Of Public Gathering**

Prohibition of relieving oneself in places where people gather, their pathways, and shaded areas is one of the divine guidance aimed at protecting the environment from pollution. In a hadith narrated by Mu'adh bin Jabal, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Beware of the three things that bring a curse: defecating at the watering places, on the roadbeds and in the shades." (Al-Hakim, 1990). This waste is considered impure, and disposing of it in such places limits people's ability to benefit from them and spreads diseases. This prophetic guidance represents the pinnacle of cleanliness, environmental protection, and pollution prevention, especially from human waste. In another hadith, Ibn Umar reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade urinating under a fruitful tree and on the banks of a flowing river. Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence agree that it is not permissible to urinate or defecate in a shade that people benefit from, and some scholars consider this prohibition as a matter of forbidding while others consider it as disliked, due to the harm that it causes to Muslims. (Ibn Qudamah, 1968). Ibn Abidin of the Hanafi jurists did not suffice with considering the tree to be fruitful for the prohibition of relieving oneself under it, but he generalized the matter to all fruitful and non-fruitful trees, whether this action was done before or after the appearance of the fruit, where there is no difference in the ruling. Al-Shirbini of the Shafi'i jurists also joined the prohibition of relieving oneself in the shade in the summer, as well as in enclosed places where people gather in the winter. (Ibn Abidin, 1992 & Al-Shirbini, n.d).

### **Prohibition Of Spitting In The Mosque And Public Places**

The Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade spitting in the mosque and public places because of the filth and harm it causes to people. Instead, he (peace be upon him) commanded to bury phlegm so that no one would be harmed by seeing it, and to prevent it from being a cause of spreading diseases and epidemics. This is mentioned in the hadith: "Spitting in the mosque is a sin and its expiation is to bury it" (Al-Bukhari, 1987). There is no doubt that spitting in the streets, public places, and gatherings is not only a disgusting and uncivilized behavior, but also a carrier of infectious diseases as many recent studies have shown. In addition to the filth and harm it causes to people, the Prophet (peace be upon him) considered spitting in the mosque grounds as one of the bad manners that contradict the refined Islamic ethics. He commanded to eliminate this phenomenon and get rid of its effects, in order to prevent it from becoming a source of infection. He (Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) said, "The deeds of my nation, good and bad, were presented to me, and I found among their good deeds removing harm from the road, and among their bad deeds was phlegm that was not buried in the mosque" (Muslim, 1973).

This prohibition was issued at a time when the mosque floor was not covered with carpets or similar items. However, now that mosques are furnished, the prohibition is even stronger, and the offense is greater. On the front of confronting viruses and diseases that spread due to environmental unawareness, such as the coronavirus, it is important to identify its causes and ways to combat it. According to Al Ittihad newspaper, a doctor warned of the effects of the phenomenon of spitting, pointing out that studies have shown that spitting causes the transmission of 70% of viral diseases such as common and dangerous respiratory diseases, pulmonary tuberculosis, and respiratory system microbes. If a patient spits on the ground and the saliva dries, the airborne dust carries the microbe, which can be inhaled by a healthy person and cause infection (watfah, 2013).

### **Prohibition Of Sneezing In People's Faces To Prevent The Spread Of Infection**

Sneezing is a phenomenon that happens to everyone, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, clarified the etiquette of dealing with it by applying the practical action that includes the prohibition of sneezing in people's faces, and the command to cover the face when it occurs so as not to harm others. In the hadith of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, it was narrated that "the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to cover his face with his hand or his garment and lower his voice when he sneezed" (Al-Hakim, 1990). The reason behind covering the mouth is evident, which is to prevent the spread of saliva droplets from the sneeze to other people. As one of the commentators of the hadith mentioned, "He covers his face with his hand or his garment so that his saliva or mucus does not splash onto anyone else" (al-Malik, I., 2012). During the COVID-19 pandemic that spread around the world between 2019-2021, studies have shown that airborne droplets from infected individuals play a major role in the rapid spread of the disease. According to Lydia Bourouiba, a fluid dynamics scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the droplets generated by a sneeze "can travel up to 27 feet...This has implications for the number of people who gather in one place, especially if air flow is not regularly changed" (Al-hurra ,(2020).

As researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, United States, used high-speed cameras and other sensing devices to accurately assess what happens after coughing or sneezing, they found that exhalation produces a small cloud of fast-moving gas containing small droplets of varying sizes. The smaller droplets can travel long distances, according to the researchers (Shokman, 2020)

### **Keeping A Distance From Sources Of Diseases And Epidemics**

part of the noble prophetic guidance on preserving the environment is: Citizens are advised to avoid areas where epidemics are prevalent or spreading, and to not contribute to the transmission and spread of infections among people. The Prophet (peace be upon him) warned against following the places of diseases, and prohibited entering or inhabiting areas where they are prevalent. Usama bin Zaid reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place." (Al-Bukhari, 1987). And the areas adjacent to swamps, factories that emit smoke, and waste that causes chronic diseases and others are vulnerable to the plague. This shows us how the prophetic Sunnah has expanded in the field of environmental awareness through the verbal commands and prohibitions issued by the Prophet, peace be upon him, as well as his actions, which included instructions, guidance, and warnings to limit environmental pollution phenomena and prevent epidemics and diseases caused by pollution. This indicates the precedence of the prophetic sunnah by hundreds of years over many Western theories, ideas, and directives that researchers in various fields arrive at or are proposed by official or unofficial environmental organizations and institutions. This means the legitimacy of Islamic law for every time and place, its leadership, and its ability to solve many environmental and other problems, and this is only because it is issued by the best of Allah's creation, the seal of His prophets and messengers, peace be upon them.

### **The Conclusion**

The following results were revealed through the research:



The prophetic Sunnah offers solutions to many of life's problems, whether related to humans, animals, or the environment, and provides valuable benefits and wide-ranging advantages for humanity. Environmental conservation has received significant attention in the Sunnah, which has established principles, standards, and guidelines that ensure the safety, care, and preservation of the environment, in line with the objectives of the Shariah to serve and protect humanity. Environmental conservation and care, and its preservation in accordance with Shariah guidelines, is one of the objectives of Islamic law.

All the directives, guidance, warnings, or prohibitions in the Sunnah regarding the means of preserving and protecting the environment aim to prevent harm and bring benefits to people. It is necessary for the Islamic community, both individuals and groups, to have knowledge of the Islamic environmental and urban jurisprudence, as it has a significant impact on human life. The research recommends that Islamic institutions play their role in promoting Islamic values related to environmental conservation and apply those values in our contemporary reality. The study also recommends studying the prophetic directives and guidance mentioned in Hadith to benefit from them in the fields of environmental protection and preservation.

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