



The prophet's green legacy: The prophet's practice in environmental conservation

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ABSTRACT

The escalating global environmental crisis has prompted the world community to seek sustainable solutions. Global warming, environmental pollution, loss of biodiversity, freshwater crisis, and increasingly frequent natural disasters are global issues faced by humanity. One of the efforts that can be done is to explore relevant values and practices from various religious traditions, including Islam. Islam, as a universal religion, has a comprehensive teaching about the relationship between humans and the universe. This study aims to examine the practices of the Prophet Muhammad in environmental conservation, especially in the context of planting trees. Through a literature study of hadith, this research found that Islamic teachings have since the beginning instilled awareness of the importance of preserving nature. The Prophet's practices in daily life have become an example for Muslims in managing natural resources wisely.

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Introduction

The global environmental crisis is one of the most serious threats facing the Earth today. Global warming, caused by the increasing emission of greenhouse gases due to human activities, has triggered extreme climate changes such as heatwaves, more frequent and intense storms, and sea-level rise. Additionally, ecosystem degradation caused by deforestation, pollution, and excessive exploitation of natural resources has threatened biodiversity and disrupted natural cycles. Water scarcity, environmental pollution, and increasing frequency of natural disasters are also part of this complex problem. All of these have significant impacts on human life, the economy, and the sustainability of the planet. (C J Vörösmarty, P Green, J Salisbury, 2000)

Islam teaches that humans have a deep and intimate connection with the universe. As God's stewards on Earth, humans are entrusted with the responsibility of managing and preserving nature. The Quran and Hadith contain numerous verses and hadiths that emphasize the importance

of maintaining ecological balance and avoiding environmental destruction. Islam teaches that nature is a beautiful creation of God and must be respected. (Dina M. Abdelzaher, 2017)

In Islam, understanding the universe deepens human knowledge of God's power, enabling humans to utilize God's blessings more wisely for their own well-being. The primary objectives of studying and preserving nature are to strengthen faith and piety, and to ensure that humans care for the environment in the best possible way. Humans should not exploit nature arbitrarily, but should utilize it wisely to meet their needs. This concept demonstrates that Islam has a holistic view of the relationship between humans and nature, where both are interconnected and interdependent. (A Duderija, 2019)

In an ideal perspective, Islam, as the ideological foundation for Muslims, is believed to possess very strong values related to environmental issues. The Prophet Muhammad demonstrated great concern for the importance of maintaining environmental health and cleanliness, including water, air, and soil. He also established basic guidelines for preserving environmental health and cleanliness.

Method

This research employs a library research method (literature study) using a qualitative descriptive approach. Data was collected by searching various sources, including books, journals, and articles related to the research theme of environmental conservation.

Result and Discussion

1. Environment Concept

Environment is defined as all objects, forces, and conditions that exist in a place or space where humans or living beings are located and can affect their lives. Conservation means striving to dedicate, maintain, and protect something from change. Efforts to conserve the environment involve safeguarding the existence of the environment with love and care. (Siahaan, 2004)

Natural environment, often referred to as the living environment, refers to the natural conditions encompassing all living and non-living things on Earth or a part thereof, which are naturally interconnected. This environment consists of several main components: first, the complete landscape functioning as a natural system unaffected by humans, including land, water, rocks, flora, and fauna; second, common natural resources and phenomena such as air, climate, and atmosphere that influence and are influenced by the landscape; third, the appearance or state of nature occurring within natural boundaries, whose existence is influenced by human engineering, such as wild animals in zoos or wildlife parks. There are two types of environments: natural and artificial, which differ in their nature and conditions. An artificial environment refers to an area or natural element that has been influenced or engineered by humans. For example, a conservation

forest, although involving human intervention, is still considered a natural environment because the intervention is very limited. On the other hand, a nature reserve is an area that is completely untouched by humans and remains entirely in its natural state. (Muhjidin Mawardi, 2021)

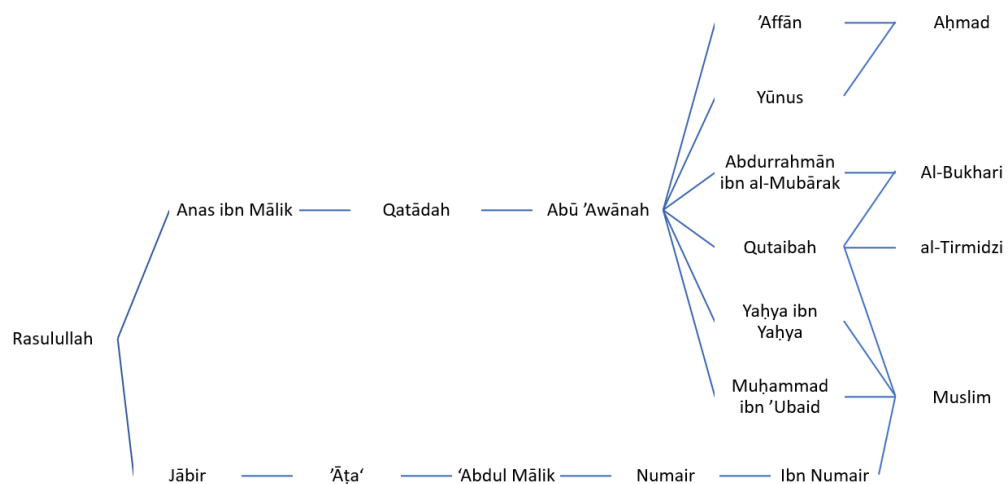
2. The Prophet's Practice in Environmental Conservation

There is a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad regarding the command to conserve the environment in al-Bukhari.

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَوَانَةَ، ح وَحَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ الْمُبَارَكِ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَوَانَةَ، عَنْ قَتَادَةَ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَغْرِسُ غَرْسًا، أَوْ يَزْرَعُ زَرْعًا، فَيَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ طَيْرٌ أَوْ إِنْسَانٌ أَوْ بَيْمَةٌ، إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ بِهِ صَدَقَةٌ

Qutaybah ibn Sa'id narrated to us, Abu 'Awana narrated to him, and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Mubarak narrated to me, Abu 'Awana narrated to him, from Qatadah, from Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "If any Muslim plants something or sows seed from which man, bird, or beast eats, it counts as sadaqa for him." (Al-Bukhari, 1311)

Apart from being included in *Ṣaḥih al-Bukhārī*, these hadiths are also found in *Ṣaḥih Muslim*, Tirmidhi, and Aḥmad with almost identical wording. (Al-Tirmidzī, 1975; Ḥanbal, 2001; Muslim, 1955) The chain of narration can be seen in the following diagram.



Al-Bukhārī (d. 256) narrates from two chains of transmission, firstly from Qutaibah ibn Sa'id (d. 240) and Abdurrahmān ibn al-Mubāarak (d. 228), both of whom received it from Abū 'Awānah (d.176) from Qatādah (d. 117) from Anas ibn Mālik (d. 91) from the Messenger of Allah. Muslim narrates from four chains of transmission, one chain through Qutaibah (d.240), Yaḥya ibn Yaḥya

(d.226), Muḥammad ibn 'Ubaid (d. 238), all three of which pass through Abū 'Awānah (d.176) from Qatādah (d. 117) from Anas ibn Mālik (d. 91) from the Messenger of Allah. Muslim also narrates from Ibn Numair (d.234) from Numair (d.199) from 'Abdul Mālik (d.145) from 'Āṭa' (d. 144) from Jābir (d.78) from the Messenger of Allah. Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241) narrates the above hadith through two chains of transmission, one from 'Affān ibn Muslim (d. 219) and the other from Yūnus ibn Muḥammad (d.207). Both of them received it from Abū 'Awānah (d.176) from Qatādah (d. 117) from Anas ibn Mālik (d. 91) from the Messenger of Allah. Al-Tirmidhi narrates the hadith from the chain of Qutaibah through Abū 'Awānah (d.176) from Qatādah (d. 117) from Anas ibn Mālik (d. 91) from the Messenger of Allah. The narrators through the chains of al-Bukhari, Muslim, Aḥmad, and al-Tirmidhi are all trustworthy, and their narrations are accepted, thus making the chain of transmission authentic. (Al-'Asqalānī, 1326; Al-Dhahabī, 1963)

Some versions of the hadith may differ in length or have minor additions or subtractions, but these differences are not significant enough to contradict the overall meaning. Therefore, all these hadiths can be considered authentic and can be acted upon without the need for reconciliation.

3. Interpretation of the Hadith

The hadith above clearly demonstrates the importance of planting and farming in Islam. Besides being a way to fulfill one's needs, planting is also a highly recommended form of worship. The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad encourages Muslims to actively cultivate and develop the land. This encouragement is not limited to fulfilling daily needs, but also has a broader dimension, namely for the benefit of future generations. In other words, Islam teaches us to not only think about our own interests in the present, but also to pay attention to the survival and well-being of future generations. Therefore, cultivating the land and building civilization upon it is a form of worship and a responsibility as God's vicegerents on Earth. (Lāshīn, 2002)

Linguistically, the word *gharasa* means to plant a tree, with derivatives having more specific meanings, ranging from the process of planting, the plant that is planted, to parts of the plant itself. The word *zara'a* shares the same root as *zirā'ah* and both are related to the activity of planting. The word *zara'a* is more often used to refer to the act of sowing seeds into the ground, while *zirā'ah* refers to the general process of planting, including the care of plants after they are planted. (Manzūr, 1414).

Sadaqah means giving wealth to those in need without expecting anything in return, as a form of drawing closer to Allah SWT, whether it is obligatory charity or voluntary charity. This definition encompasses obligatory charity, such as zakat, which is taken from the wealth of the rich at the end of the year, or zakat al-fitr, which is taken at the end of Ramadan to purify the rich and those who have fasted. In addition, this definition also includes voluntary charity, which is encouraged to be

done at any time. (Al-Islāmiyyah, 1404)

Ibn Hajar al 'Asqalani mentioned that the meaning of sadaqah in the hadith is that its reward continues to flow until the Day of Judgment. The implication is that the reward from that action continues as long as the planted tree is still being consumed, even though the planter has died or ownership has been transferred to someone else. And what is clearly evident from this hadith is that the reward will be obtained by the person who planted, even if the land belonged to someone else, because he has added something to the land belonging to Ummu Mubasyir and then asked her about who planted it. (Al-'Asqalānī, 1379) Greening is a noble act that provides many benefits, both environmentally, economically, and spiritually. Planting trees not only preserves nature, but also provides an ongoing reward. According to Yusuf al-Qaradhawi, every result of a planted plant, even if it is not intended as charity, will still receive reward. This shows that the good intention to plant and benefit others is very important.

Planting trees not only has a positive impact on the environment but also holds great religious value, as explained in the hadith that serves as a motivation to draw closer to Allah SWT in a simple yet impactful way. By planting something beneficial that can last a long time, even after the planter has passed away, the reward for that deed will continue to flow until the Day of Judgment. Planting is a form of charity and is not a vain act, as Allah and His Messenger have promised rewards for those who do good. A Muslim should remain positive, productive, and active, and should not hesitate to do good deeds, even if the benefits are not immediately felt. The Prophet encouraged his followers to continuously work, seek initiatives and solutions by planting trees, reflecting a never-ending movement and a spirit of life that is always renewed. In addition, the Prophet emphasized the importance of righteous deeds as a form of productive work.

The Prophet forbade the cutting of trees without proper procedures as this could threaten the lives of living creatures on earth. The Prophet introduced the concept of hima, which can be interpreted as a conservation area. Hima is a nature reserve or protected forest. In this area, the taking of wood, grass, grazing of livestock, hunting, or exploitation of certain natural resources is prohibited. Certain animals or plants that are protected and conserved also live and breed in this area. The Prophet Muhammad once designated several areas around Medina as hima areas to protect valleys (oases), grasslands, and the plants within them. The processing of land and exploitation of other natural resources (cutting down trees, taking wood and grass, and so on) was also prohibited. The Prophet also once reserved a place near Medina, on the slopes of Mount al-Naqi, saying that the land was a protected area. (Muhjidin Mawardi, 2021)

Sardar (1985) has classified the hima areas in the Arabian Peninsula, which are still

preserved today, into six types, namely: 1) conservation areas that prohibit all grazing and grass-cutting activities, 2) conservation areas that prohibit or restrict the cutting of trees, 3) conservation areas that limit livestock grazing to certain seasons, 4) protected areas specifically designated for certain animal or plant species, 5) special areas for beekeeping, where grazing is prohibited during the flowering season, and 6) protected areas managed by a particular village or tribe for the common good or village interests.

The Prophet taught the importance of paying attention to, loving, caring for, and respecting the environment. Although natural resources were created for human needs, their use should not be arbitrary or destructive. Humans have the right to utilize natural resources, but it must be within reasonable limits. The hadith also underscores that every Muslim should be actively engaged in productive work, such as farming. Greening provides many benefits, such as improving air circulation, creating a cool and beautiful environment, and providing oxygen. Additionally, planting trees can help absorb water, prevent floods, and make people more environmentally conscious, ultimately providing comfort for all living things. (Istianah, 2015)

Conclusion

The global environmental crisis, posing a serious threat to Earth such as global warming and ecosystem damage, is caused by human activities such as deforestation, pollution, and excessive exploitation of natural resources. Islam offers a holistic perspective on environmental conservation, teaching that humans have a responsibility as khalifah to preserve and protect nature. Prophet Muhammad emphasized the importance of ecological balance and avoiding actions that harm the environment. One way to maintain this balance is by planting trees, which not only helps improve the environment but is also considered as an ongoing charity.

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