

# ***Prophet Muhammad: Pioneer of the Green Movement***



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## Introduction

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *{And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate to Aadam," and they prostrated...}* [Quran, 20:116] Allaah The Almighty ordered the angels to prostrate before Aadam, may Allaah exalt his mention, signifying the status of man amongst other creatures. Allaah The Almighty also Says (what means): *{And We have certainly honored the children of Aadam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference...}* [Quran, 17:70] Thus, we see that man is the most noble and resourceful of all the creatures that Allaah The Almighty created.

Allaah The Almighty made everything on earth subject to man. With the hands and physical strength that Allaah The Almighty gave him, man chopped down trees and used their wood and timber to build homes and make furniture. Man constructed canals to channel water to his fields, where his crops would be irrigated. Man put his mental capacities to work and produced formidable inventions, implements and machines. Man dug his way into the earth's treasures, precious stones and gems. Man manufactured goods out of raw materials.

Above all, man alone, out of all the creatures that Allaah The Almighty created, was given the power to think and reason so that he may conceive of and evaluate the world around him. Allaah The Almighty also gave man the inborn ability to distinguish between right and wrong. This ability, called the *Fitrah* (sound, innate disposition), is within each and every person, and this is what makes man's nature and behavior different from the bestial, brutal ways of animals.

However, with all that Allaah The Almighty gave man in the way of physical and mental capabilities and endowments, man is not only the most privileged and empowered creature on this earth, but also the most destructive. To satisfy his desires and wants and indulge his whims and fancies, man will stop at nothing – that is, unless he restrains and disciplines himself, and acquires the

admirable qualities of thrift, austerity and frugality. It is here that the concept of environment and conservation of resources comes in.

Caring for the environment and endorsing sustainable practices are part of the identity of the Muslim. One will find that, both in the Quran and the *Ahaadeeth* (narrations) of Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, we are told to avoid being unnecessarily wasteful and not to squander the blessings that Allaah The Almighty endowed us with. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{...and waste not by extravagance. Verily, He likes not Al-Musrifeen (those who waste by extravagance)}*** [Quran, 6:141]

Allaah The Almighty also Says (what means): ***{Verily, the spendthrifts are brothers of the Shayaateen (devils), and the Shaytaan (Devil-Satan) is ever ungrateful to his Lord}*** [Quran, 17:26, 27]

Al-'Askari, may Allaah have mercy upon him, said, *"It is said that waste means spending money on things that are inappropriate and extravagance means spending too much on things that are inappropriate."* Extravagance leads to wastage and depletion of resources, because one continues to procure things that they are not really in need of. Though this is probably of no consequence to the person doing the purchasing, it has its effect on the environment and the earth's resources. Muslims should spend wisely and only when they are genuinely in need of something.

Likewise, there are many of the sayings of Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, that encourage Muslims to take care of their environment and to avoid excessiveness and wastefulness. These are mentioned later on, along with the attitudes endorsed by the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, towards the environment and the earth's precious resources.

### **What is the environment?**

The concept of environment is broad and is used in many different ways. The environment is the medium in which man lives. Its mother's womb is the human child's first environment, followed by the home, the school, one's place of work, and the area one lives in. The earth and the whole universe is an

environment. One definition of the environment that some environmentalists have arrived at is, *"The environment is the sum of the material and social resources available at a given time and place to satisfy the needs and aspirations of man."*

We all live on a single planet and have a shared future, particularly at the present stage in which the interests of the inhabitants of this Earth are becoming ever more interlinked with advances in communications, to the extent that the world has become like a global village. Perhaps further impetus has been given by what we are currently hearing about with regard to a hole in the ozone layer as a result of the use of certain industrial gases - a problem which has become international and has led to climate changes throughout the world, thus threatening both humankind and all other living beings. The environment, with its interacting elements forms the universe which is the environment of man – the universe with its galaxies, nebulae, constellations, stars, planets, moons, comets, meteors and shooting stars, etc. All of these constitute an interlinked and integrated system – a dynamic system governed by specific and precise relations and forces. If one part of the system is affected, then the whole is disturbed. A constellation breaking free of the forces guiding its movement would be loosed into space with its constituent parts colliding or merging with one another. Life anywhere in such a system would be endangered.

Though it has existed for billions of years, the system on our planet is a fragile one. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *{Indeed, Allaah holds the heavens and the earth, lest they cease. And if they should cease, no one could hold them [in place] after Him. Indeed, He is Forbearing and Forgiving.}* [Quran, 35:41]

Allaah The Almighty also Says (what means): *{...and He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth, unless by His permission. Indeed Allaah, to the people, is Kind and Merciful.}* [Quran, 22:65]

### **The earth and its perfect equilibrium**

The earth is a planet in the solar system and it constitutes an environment made up of basic elements of air, water, the earth's crust and what is inside it and

plants, animals, man and solar energy. Added to these is the earth's movement round the sun and its relationship with the moon. These elements and their sub-elements interact in a complex and interconnected yet precise manner. The result of these interactions is an environment suitable for life and, what is more important, its continuation.

Allaah The Almighty created everything in such perfect order, that if the slightest, minutest variation were to occur in the amount of solar energy reaching the earth's surface, it would be sufficient to make the earth too hot or too cold to sustain life. It is Allaah The Almighty Who maintains the delicate balance on which all life depends. Dr. Chris Morrisson, former president of the New York Academy of Science and a member of the British Royal Society says in his book *'Man Does Not Stand Alone'*,

*“The sun, which is the source of life, has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Our earth is just far enough away from the sun for this tremendous heat to be felt as warm – just warm enough. No more, no less. And this distance has changed slightly over millions of years to enable life as we know it to continue. If the temperature on the earth increased by twenty degrees in one year, every plant would die and so would man, whether burnt alive or frozen to death.”*

It is scientifically known that the environment is made up of smaller and smaller environments. Each small environment as a whole is a large environment made up of the same elements. Even though an environment may appear limited in scale, clearly defined and almost semi-autonomous, it is in fact not independent. This is because it is affected by and continuously interacts with the surrounding, larger environments of which it constitutes a continuously interacting part. One of the most important distinctive features of any environment, whether large or small, is that it is in a state of flexible equilibrium despite the multitude of internal and external variables and elements acting upon it.

Were the tall plants to die or be cut down in a given environment, the prevailing balance in that environment would change. Sunlight would fall on places where there was once shade; thus, the small plants growing there would be affected by the change. They would probably die and other kinds of light-loving plants

would grow in their place. Animals which had lived there seeking shelter in the shade would repair to another place of shade, migrate or die; animals which were not troubled by the light, or preferred it, would move into that environment. Thus, the balance in any environment is governed by factors which define the environment and prevent one element in it predominating over the others. Small changes can have monumental consequences and could have widespread implications.

Changes in the environment are periodic, and at times disorderly. However, these changes do not usually bring about a disturbance in the dynamic equilibrium of the environment. Radical change takes place only in disasters and, depending on the scale of the disaster, it is not long before the environment has repaired the damage and returned to its original equilibrium.

About this fine equilibrium, Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{Indeed, all things We created with predestination.}*** [Quran, 54:49] He, the Exalted, also Says (what means): ***{It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming.}*** [Quran, 36:40] and also (what means): ***{He created the heavens and earth in truth. He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night and has subjected the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. Unquestionably, He is the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver.}*** [Quran, 21:33]

Allaah The Almighty further Says (what means): ***{He created the heavens and earth in truth. He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night and has subjected the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. Unquestionably, He is the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver.}*** [Quran, 39: 5]

It was Allaah The Almighty, with His perfect wisdom, power and might, Who created this system, a system free from chaos and disorganization, a system in which everything has been created in perfect balance and proportion. The verses mentioned above were revealed to the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, more than fourteen hundred years ago, and we are certainly in no need for modern science to confirm these facts. The facts are indeed supported by the

statements of the greatest scientists, who observed and contemplated upon the perfection of creation. They were not the only ones to be awed at the fact that life would disappear if the forces regulating creation were at variance with one another.

We do not need any proof from modern science, of the existence of a single, Wise, All-Powerful Creator, Whose will it was to make the complex, intricate system of the environment exist. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{Had there been within the heavens and earth gods besides Allaah, they both would have been ruined. So exalted is Allaah, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe.}*** [Quran, 21: 22] It is this system that Allaah The Almighty created, the magnificent and diverse environment, that still baffles and captivates scientists to this day.

### **Man's role in the environment**

In the Quran, Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" He [Allaah] said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."}*** [Quran, 2: 30] With all the blessings Allaah The Almighty bestowed upon man, He made him an authority on earth. Man would make use of the earth's resources, availing himself of them whenever he needed to and whatever he needed them for. Man was made a *Khaleefah*, or vicegerent, on earth.

Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was a teacher as well as a leader. Moreover, he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, taught his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, by precept and example. He would also take consideration of the differences between each of their backgrounds and personalities. His style of teaching was one that enabled his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, to memorize his *Ahaadeeth* by heart and relate them to those who came after them. Some of the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, followed the example of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, when teaching others. Abu Waa'il narrated that 'Abdullaah, may Allaah be pleased with him, used to give a religious talk to the people on every

Thursday. Once a man said, "*O Aba 'Abdur-Rahmaan! (By Allaah) I wish if you could preach us daily.*" 'Abdullaah, may Allaah be pleased with him, replied, "*The only thing which prevents me from doing so, is that I hate to bore you, and no doubt I take care of you in preaching by selecting a suitable time just as the Prophet used to do with us, for fear of making us bored.*" [Al-Bukhaari]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, did not neglect to teach his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, the importance of not wasting resources and protecting constituents of the environment, such as trees, plants, etc., which are of use to them and to others as well. The environmental philosophy of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, assumed an interdependency between all natural elements and bases its teachings on the premise that if man abuses or exhausts one element, the whole natural world will be affected. There is no one concise phrase of the Prophet's, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, that contains this view; rather, it is an underlying principle that was the foundation of all his, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, words and actions. The earth and the heavens, and all that exists therein, belongs solely to Allaah The Almighty, Creator of all that is. Man is responsible before Allaah The Almighty for all the acts he commits on earth, and he will be held accountable for all his deeds.

The circumstances of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, led him to be very close to nature and the environment. In his infancy, he was sent to live in the *Baadiyah* (desert area) with his nurse, Haleemah As-Sa'diyyah. The *Baadiyah* was where Bedouins lived, who learnt the ways of living in the desert and speaking the Arabic language in its pure form. Later on, in the years before his Prophetic mission, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would meditate and worship in the cave of 'Hiraa in a mountain at some distance from the city of Makkah. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also took care of and grazed people's goats as a youth. As is mentioned later on, he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, gave colorful and vivid examples of the earth. For instance, Abu Moosa, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said:



*"The example of guidance and knowledge with which Allaah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil that absorbed rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. (And) another portion of it was hard and held the rain water and Allaah benefited the people with it and they utilized it for drinking, making their animals drink from it and for irrigation of the land for cultivation. (And) a portion of it was barren which could neither hold the water nor bring forth vegetation (then that land gave no benefits). The first is the example of the person who comprehends Allaah's religion and gets benefit (from the knowledge) which Allaah has revealed through me (the Prophet) and learns and then teaches others. The last example is that of a person who does not care for it and does not take Allaah's guidance revealed through me (He is like that barren land.)" [Al-Bukhaari]*

Of course, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, believed that the knowledge and power of Allaah The Almighty encompasses and pervades everything, and that everything belongs to Him alone. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): **{And to Allaah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And ever is Allaah, of all things, encompassing.}** [Quran, 4:126] Therefore, abusing and mistreating one of the creations of Allaah The Almighty, whether it is a living being or a natural resource, is wrong and prohibited.

The universe and the earth is not man's property; though a Muslim is allowed to own land, he must remember Who gave him ownership of it. It is incumbent upon us all to reflect upon the creation of Allaah the Almighty and to recall the One Who is the real owner of the earth and all that is upon it. The dominion of the heavens and the earth belong to Allaah The Almighty alone. Man merely has the responsibility of taking care of what he has been provided with, and to use it wisely and efficiently. This is not only in his interest, but also in the interest of his offspring and all coming generations.

Therefore, the Muslim must show alertness and cautiousness in his interaction with the environment brought into existence by the Mighty Creator in order for

him to safeguard and protect it not in order for him to cause man-made disasters as is happening now. The constituents of the environment are signs of Allaah The Almighty on His earth. Through them He shows us His Majesty, Power and Ability. Man is invited to meditate and ponder over these breathtaking signs of the existence of Allaah The Almighty.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, would often meditate on the creation of Allaah The Almighty. Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated, “*I stayed overnight in the house of my aunt Maymoonah. The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, talked with his wife for a while and then went to bed. When it was the last third of the night, he got up and looked towards the sky and said [reciting a verse from the Quran] (what means): {Verily! In the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and in the alteration of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding.}* [Quran, 3:190].” [Al-Bukhaari]

Protecting the environment from disasters that are the consequence of man's actions or his not respecting the principles of interaction with it is the responsibility of man. Scientific developments, research and equipment can be put to use in conserving exhaustible natural resources or using them sustainably. Man must improve his exploitation and use of these resources, otherwise he will harm his own direct interest. Man must realize that this environment and its resources are for him and his descendents and so preserve the balance of this wealth from extinction. In addition, man may continuously search for new resources not just on the earth's surface but also on ocean beds and in the depths of the earth – while renewing efforts in recycling and reusing mineral industrial products.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, taught his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, the basic attitudes one needs to adopt in order to live on this earth and co-exist with one another as well as with animals, plants and all creation. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: “***Let there be no harm or reciprocating harm.***” [Ahmad]

Among the many instructions that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, gave his followers was to abstain from defecating in public gathering places and

areas where people rest or shelter, as under a shade, as this act will surely offend and harm others. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also taught Muslims that they should be as careful as possible in their treatment of others, and to treat them as they would like to be treated. Islam does not accept the culture of selfishness and 'it's every man for himself'. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was a paragon of consideration towards others. And contemporary environmentalism advocates a cleaner, greener place for future generations to live in. If we do not give thought to those to come, and instead recklessly use up the non-renewable resources at our disposal, surely we are being selfish and inconsiderate?

Therefore, Muslims should participate, indeed head, conservation efforts. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, has been called a 'pioneer in environmentalism' by some, which is not surprising, for he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, encouraged 'green' practices in many instances. These included taking care of cleanliness and not harming the environment (as well as people) by polluting and contaminating water and soil. They also involved growing trees for others' benefit and making efficient use of resources.

Below is an elaboration of how the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, instructed Muslims to behave with regard to their environment:

- **The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, encouraged hygienic practices, linking *Eemaan* (faith) to cleanliness**

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, linked *Eemaan* to cleanliness in the *Hadeeth*: "...**cleanliness is half of faith...**" [Muslim], thus highlighting the importance of hygiene and hygienic practices in Islam. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is also reported to have said: "**Be sure to keep your teeth clean, for cleanliness invites to faith (Eemaan) and faith will lead you to Paradise.**" [At-Tabaraani] There is another *Hadeeth* where the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, states: "**Be sure to keep your mouths clean, for it is your mouths which give voice to the Quran.**"

In addition to all of the above, there are many more *Ahaadeeth* on personal hygiene and cleanliness. One of these is reported from Abu Hurayrah, may

Allaah be pleased with him, who related that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“The Shaitaan (Satan, Devil) loves filth and dirt. Whosoever passes the night with the stench of meat on his hands, and something untoward transpires, then he only has himself to blame.”*** [At-Tirmithi] This *Hadeeth* stresses that germs find a fertile breeding ground on hands and in mouths which are unclean and it warns against the dangers thereof.

Hygienic practices are not restricted to individuals, but extend to others as well as to the environment. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also said: ***“Avoid the three actions that bring people’s curses: defecating in water sources, on roads, and in the shade.”***[‘Awn Al-Ma’bood] In this *Hadeeth*, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, forbade us from harming people by defecating in water bodies and places where it is customary for people to congregate (as under the shade) and where they walk (on the roads). In another *Hadeeth*, The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also said: ***“The deeds of my people, good and bad, were presented before me, and I found the removal of something objectionable from the road among their good deeds, and the sputum (mucus) left unburied in the mosque among their evil deeds.”*** [Muslim] This is an act of cleaning up or removing waste substances that is a part of environmental management of land-based pollution.

There is a great bond between man and his environment, whether at individual, collective or state levels. Cleanliness, as in washing and ritual ablution either with clean water, or wiping oneself with sand or dust (*Tayammum*), is of vital importance and a requisite of Islamic belief and faith, without which worship is invalid. Furthermore, personal cleanliness is of utmost importance, for it will certainly affect others as well as oneself, in one way or another.

It is an Islamic value that whatever causes offence and harm to people in the way of unpleasant smells, injurious impediments or dangerous obstructions in someone’s path, should be removed. Thus, a Muslim is told to come to the *Masjid*, where people gather to pray, in clean garments and without eating garlic or onions. Ibn Suhayb reported that Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, was asked about the garlic and he stated that the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, had said: ***“He who eats of this plant (garlic) should not***

*approach us and pray along with us.*" [Muslim] This *Hadeeth* indicates that a Muslim should respect others and not offend or harm them with unpleasant odors. Furthermore, a Muslim is rewarded for removing potentially harmful objects, such as thorns, etc. from others' path.

This is what a Muslim's character is, liking for others what he likes for himself. A Muslim is not selfish or self-absorbed; he thinks of the whole community, and those to come. This is also one of the messages of environmentalism: leave a clean and healthy environment for your children to grow in, and your children's children after that, and all the generations to come.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was also concerned that mosques and houses should be kept clean and free from dirt. Houses should be kept free of waste materials and refuse, or they may lead to an infestation of insects and become a cause of the spread of various diseases. The Jews were neglectful of this and the Muslims were warned not to be like them. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: *"Allaah is good and likes everything that is good. He is clean and loves cleanliness; you must clean your houses and do not follow in the footsteps of the Jews."* [At-Tirmithi, see also *Mishkaat Al-Masaabeeh*]

At-Tabaraani, may Allaah have mercy upon him, has a *Hadeeth* in his book *Al-Awsat* from Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, who is reported to have said, *"I heard The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, say: 'Whosever relieves himself on a public way shall be cursed by Allaah, the Angels and the people.'"* Thus, when one harms and offends people by defecating or urinating publicly, he not only arouses their disgust and anger, but also incurs the wrath and invites the curses of Allaah The Almighty and the Angels.

- **The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, encouraged economical and hygienic use of water**

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):

- *{...and [We] made from water every living thing...}* [Quran, 21:30]

- *{It is He who sends down rain from the sky; from it is drink and from it is foliage in which you pasture [animals].}* [Quran, 16:43]
- *{Do you not see that Allaah drives clouds? Then He brings them together, then He makes them into a mass, and you see the rain emerge from within it. And He sends down from the sky, mountains [of clouds] within which is hail, and He strikes with it whom He wills and averts it from whom He wills. The flash of its lightening almost takes away the eyesight.}* [Quran, 24:43]

Water is a precious resource of the earth, one that is exhaustible and is being exhausted at a rapid rate. The Saying of Allaah The Almighty (which means): *{...and [We] made from water every living thing...}* [Quran, 21:30] is enough to make us realize how important this resource is. Without water, there will be no life.

Wastage and pollution of water is a disturbing phenomenon which, if it continues on a large scale, will have dire consequences on the environment, not to mention its severe impact on the world's population. Water resources are depleting and, in many regions, scarcity of rains has turned numerous lakes and rivers into lifeless sewers, with water unfit for use. The ecosystems that used to exist in these water bodies have been greatly disturbed; the organisms that lived and multiplied there, and which were a vital source of food, were killed. Bacteria and colonies of harmful organisms took their place. The pollution does not stop here; it extends to the banks of the water bodies and the land that borders or surrounds them. This inevitably affects the animals living on land, as well as humans living in settlements on the banks.

However, having grasped the grave implications of spreading water pollution, many countries have taken measures to reduce it as much as possible. In some countries, water treatment plants have been built to purify sewage water. These are very expensive, but apparently the only way to reduce pollution levels in the water. Legislations include forcing industrial installations to treat the water they have used before returning it to its source. Pollution of water resources is not confined to drinking water but also includes pollution of the seas and oceans, which, although their salt water cannot be used directly, are the source of water

as they fall to the earth as rain or snow, thus feeding rivers and springs anew. There is also growing concern for the environment and increased conservation efforts.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, could be said to have practiced economy in all areas of his life, and certainly did so in his use of water. In a *Hadeeth* collected by Ad-Daarimi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, on the authority of Safeenah, the servant of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, he, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, would perform his ritual ablutions and wash himself with only the amount of water necessary. In addition to this, ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, passed near Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, when he was performing his ablution. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“What is this waste?”** And the latter replied, **“Is performing ablutions an extravagance?”** He, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“Yes, even if you are [doing them] at a running river.”** [Ibn Maajah]

These *Ahaadeeth* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, encourage Muslims to be economical even when using water for the purpose of purifying oneself for performing acts of worship, ablutions. What if he were to see the way people waste water when bathing, washing their cars, etc.? The *Sunnah* (Prophetic tradition) of our Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, was to avoid wastage of resources wherever possible. It is our duty as Muslims to emulate him, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, in all deeds, as well as this simple act of conservation.

In addition to conserving water resources, one should also avoid polluting existing water bodies and resources and prevent others from doing so as well. It is known that the obligations that a Muslim performs, such as *Salaah* (prayer) and *Hajj* (pilgrimage) can only be performed in a state of purity and washing in pure, clean water, free of any contamination. This is one article of faith, among others, that teaches Muslims the importance of protecting water sources and reservoirs from pollution. Regarding this, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“Avoid the three actions that bring people’s curses: [and he**

***mentioned among them]: defecating in water sources...*** [‘Awn Al-Ma’bood]  
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Thus, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, clearly forbade us from harming people inadvertently by polluting water sources, for these could be used by others and by animals, and it is an unhygienic way of relieving oneself, resulting in the spread of diseases like cholera, etc.

- **The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, encouraged growing trees**

One of the most serious environmental problems is that of desertification. According to some scientists, the area of partially or totally arid land makes up thirty-six percent of the total land surface area of the earth. This proportion is already high and desertification continues to increase. It is considered one of the greatest causes of the famine affecting the people in Africa and other parts of the world. Agriculture is the main source of income and food for these countries, which is why they are affected when deserts cover large areas of land. Land used for pasture and growing crops is being swallowed up by desert sands. Egypt, Sudan and Algeria in Africa, Rajasthan in India and Chile in South America are among the places reported to be at risk from desertification.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, encouraged planting trees (which prevents or slows down soil erosion, thus acting as a brake upon desertification) in a number of *Ahaadeeth*:

1. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***“Whoever revives a dead land has right to it [meaning reward] and if beasts and birds feed from it, he who revived it will have it as a Sadaqah.”*** [An-Nasaa’i]
2. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, says: ***“Whenever Muslims plant a tree, they will earn the reward of charity because of the food that comes from it; and likewise what is stolen from it, what the wild beasts eat out of it, what the birds eat out of it, and what people take from it is charity for them.”***[Muslim] In another narration, he, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, says: ***“It is charity for them till the Day of Judgment.”***



3. Jaabir ibn ‘Abdullaah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, visited Umm Mubashhir Al-Ansaariyyah, may Allaah be pleased with her, at her orchard of date-palms and said to her: **“Who has planted these trees of dates, a Muslim or a non-Muslim?”** She said, “A Muslim, of course,” whereupon he said: **“Never [does] a Muslim plant, or cultivate a land, and out of that men eat, or the animals eat, or anything else eats, but that becomes charity on his (the planter's) behalf.”** [Muslim]
4. In another *Hadeeth* in which the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, says: **“If the Final Hour is come, and one of you has a palm seedling in his hand and it is within his power to plant it, then let him do so.”**
5. The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, is also reported to have said: **“The reward accruing from seven things continue to reach the person concerned even if he is in his grave: knowledge he has taught, water he has provided for the public benefit, any well he has dug, any tree he has planted, a mosque he has built, recitations of the Quran bequeathed to him, and children who pray for him after his death.”** [Faydh Al-Qadeer]

There was an incident in the life of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, where a tree actually cried out loud out of love and reverence of him, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*! Jaabir, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated, “The Prophet used to stand by a tree or a date-palm on Friday. Then an Ansaari woman or man said, ‘O Messenger of Allaah! Shall we make a pulpit for you?’ He replied: **‘If you wish.’** So they made a pulpit for him and when it was Friday, he proceeded towards the pulpit (for delivering the sermon). The date-palm cried like a child! The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, descended (the pulpit) and embraced it while it continued moaning like a child being quieted. The Prophet said: **‘It was crying for (missing) what it used to hear of religious knowledge given near to it.’**” [Al-Bukhaari] From this we learn that, far from being inanimate and insensate creatures, plants and trees are living things that should be protected and grown.

When the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, conquered Makkah, he respected the sanctity of the *Haram* (sanctuary) and all that was within its

borders. Therefore he ordered that no trees should be cut. Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated,

*“In the year of the Conquest of Makkah, the tribe of Khuzaa'ah killed a man from the tribe of Bani Layth in revenge for a killed person belonging to them in the Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance. So the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, got up, saying: ‘Allaah held back the (army having) elephants from Makkah, but He let His Apostle and the believers overpower the infidels (of Makkah). Beware! (Makkah is a sanctuary)! Verily! Fighting in Makkah was not permitted for anybody before me, nor will it be permitted for anybody after me; It was permitted for me only for a while (an hour or so) of that day. No doubt! It is at this moment a sanctuary; its thorny shrubs should not be uprooted; its trees should not be cut down...’”* [Al-Bukhaari] The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, only permitted the people to use a plant called ‘Ithkhir’; no one was allowed to uproot even the thorns and shrubs that grew in Makkah.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, was reported to have warned those who cut down trees for no good reason, thus causing harm to the natural environment. He, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“Whosoever cuts down a lote tree will have his head put into the Fires of Hell by Allaah.”** Abu Daawood, may Allaah have mercy upon him, was asked about the meaning of this *Hadeeth*. He said, *“If there is a tree in an open space which provides shade for wayfarers and animals, and someone cuts it down, then Allaah will put that person's head in the Fires of Hell.”* [Abu Daawood]

The Quran was first compiled on date-palm leaves, which signifies the importance of trees and our duty to make good and efficient use of them. Zayd ibn Thaabit, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated,

*“Abu Bakr sent for me owing to the large number of casualties in the battle of Al-Yamaamah, while 'Umar was sitting with him. Abu Bakr said (to me), 'Umar has come to me and said, 'A great number of Qaaris (those who recited the Quran) of the Quran were killed on the day of the battle of Al-Yamaamah, and I am afraid that the casualties among the Qaaris of the*

*Quran may increase on other battle-fields whereby a large part of the Quran may be lost. Therefore I consider it advisable that you (Abu Bakr) should have the Quran collected.'*

*“I said, 'How dare I do something which the Messenger of Allaah did not do?' 'Umar said, 'By Allaah, it is something beneficial.' 'Umar kept on pressing me for that till Allaah opened my chest for that for which He had opened the chest of 'Umar and I had in that matter the same opinion as 'Umar had. Abu Bakr then said to me (Zayd), 'You are a wise young man and we do not have any suspicion about you, and you used to write the Divine Inspiration for the Messenger of Allaah. So you should search for the fragmentary scripts of the Quran and collect it (in one Book).'”*

Zayd, may Allaah be pleased with him, further said,

*“By Allaah, if Abu Bakr had ordered me to shift a mountain among the mountains from one place to another it would not have been heavier for me than this ordering me to collect the Quran. Then I said (to 'Umar and Abu Bakr), 'How can you do something which the Messenger of Allaah did not do?' Abu Bakr said, 'By Allaah, it is something beneficial.'*

Zayd, may Allaah be pleased with him, continued,

*“So he (Abu Bakr) kept on pressing me for that until Allaah opened my chest for that for which He had opened the chests of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and I had in that matter, the same opinion as theirs. So I started compiling the Quran by collecting it from the leafless stalks of the date-palm tree and from the pieces of leather and hides and from the stones, and from the chests of men (who had memorized the Quran). I found the last verses of Chapter At-Tawbah: **{Verily there has come unto you an Apostle (Muhammad) from amongst yourselves--}** [Quran, 9:128-129] from Khuzaymah or Abu Khuzaymah and I added to it the rest of the Chapter. The manuscripts of the Quran remained with Abu Bakr till Allaah took him unto Him. Then it remained with 'Umar till Allaah took him unto Him, and then with Hafsa bint 'Umar.”*

In many of his *Ahaadeeth*, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used the example of trees and plants and made mention of them. Some of these *Ahaadeeth* include:

- Ka'b, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"The example of a believer is that of a fresh tender plant, which the wind bends it sometimes and some other time it makes it straight. And the example of a hypocrite is that of a pine tree which keeps straight till once it is uprooted suddenly."*** [Al-Bukhaari]
  - 'Abdullaah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated, *"I visited the Messenger of Allaah while he was suffering from a high fever. I said, 'O Messenger of Allaah! You have a high fever.' He said: 'Yes, I have as much fever as two men of you.' I said, 'Is it because you will have a double reward?' He said: 'Yes, it is so. No Muslim is afflicted with any harm, even if it were the prick of a thorn, but that Allaah expiates his sins because of that, as a tree sheds its leaves."* [Al-Bukhaari]
  - Abu Qataadah bin Rib'i Al-Ansaari, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated, *"A funeral procession passed by the Messenger of Allaah, who said: 'Relieved or relieving?' The people asked, 'O Messenger of Allaah! What is relieved and relieving?' He said: 'A believer is relieved (by death) from the troubles and hardships of the world and leaves for the mercy of Allaah, while (the death of) a wicked person relieves the people, the land, the trees, (and) the animals from him."* [Al-Bukhaari]
  - Ibn 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: ***"There is a tree among the trees which is similar to a Muslim (in goodness), and that is the date palm tree."*** [Al-Bukhaari]
- **Some of the legal practices concerning land and people that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, put into effect**

Individualism has no place in Islam; a Muslim is, as mentioned before, encouraged to take consideration of the whole community, and how his decision affect them. Therefore, in the *Sharee'ah* (Islamic legislation), ownership is a

social responsibility, a fact which confirms the relationship between the community and the land, and the extent of Islam's interest in regulating it.

The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, established certain laws, at the order of Allaah The Almighty, by which ownership was regulated, as well as residence in an area. There are many Islamic truths and wisdoms underlying the laws. Below are some of these laws:

1. Every individual should realize his true responsibility on this earth and the fact of man's *Khilaafah* (being sent as a vicegerent on earth). Man should abandon lack of care for and thoughtless abuse of the environment. Man should care for the environment, as it was given to us as a trust by its Creator and True Owner, Allaah The Almighty. Allaah The Almighty reminds us of what Moosa (Moses), may Allaah exalt his mention, said to Banu Israa'eel (the Children of Israel) in the *Aayah* (which means): ***{And [mention, O Muhammad], when Moosa (Moses) said to his people, "O my people, remember the favor of Allaah upon you when He appointed among you prophets and made you possessors and gave you that which He had not given anyone among the worlds.}*** [Quran, 5: 20]
2. The *Sharee'ah* goes on to qualify the right of ownership as not being an absolute right which allows the owner to monopolize it for his own personal interests in an absolute fashion. Rather, man is given the authority to make sensible and wise use of it. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.}*** [Quran, 6: 165]

Imaam Ash-Shaatibi, may Allaah have mercy upon him, and other jurists affirm that man's general sovereignty over this property is delegated from the Owner of the Heavens and the Earth and all that lies therein, that anything that man might own should be seen within this

context and that ownership as a delegation entails being considered a social responsibility.

In addition, the *Sharee'ah* permits those in positions of responsibility to intervene when people mismanage their property as in the hoarding of money or leaving land fallow or neglecting it. It also permits them to give guidance on the development, production, commerce, industry and agriculture appropriate for the public good. There is the case when a land owner might be inclined to plant a more profitable crop but which would be harmful to society or the land. Rightly guiding production and investment in accordance with the needs and interests of society is one of the important questions which have concerned the jurists in their researches.

Abuse of the right of ownership leading to damage to the environment or man's social and economic situation is one of the major concerns of the *Sharee'ah* which includes many restrictions preventing a property owner from arbitrarily using that property in such a way as to harm his neighbors. The same idea is behind French legislation and the provisions of Article 807 of Egypt's new civil legislation. Jurists of the *Sharee'ah* have given many applications of this idea and go as far as saying that a property owner may not turn his house into a public bath which would produce fumes annoying to the neighbors. Similarly, if a man builds a mill running on horsepower and the neighbors are disturbed by the smell of the horses or the noise resulting from the running of the mill, then according to the *Sharee'ah* the mill must be removed in order to stem the harm. Likewise, if a man were to plant a tree on his property, and the roots and branches extend into his neighbor's property he is obliged to remove the cause of the resulting harm. Again, if a man erects a building which blocks the window of his neighbor's house such that he has insufficient light to read, he should remove the building.

In Islam, a man's social situation is respected, but man should remember his obligations towards his fellow men. *Ahaadeeth* abound that enjoin a man not to cause harm, disturbance or annoyance to his neighbor,

whether to his land or property. Among these *Ahaadeeth* is the *Hadeeth* of Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, who narrated that the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, observed: **“He will not enter Paradise whose neighbor is not secure from his wrongful conduct.”** [Muslim]

3. It is forbidden to amass basic commodities and resources which lead to the accumulation of capital. It is also forbidden to cheat people; Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“...Anyone who cheats us is not one of us.”** [Muslim] In one variant of this, the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is reported to have passed by a heap of grain and put his hand into it, and his fingers came upon some dampness. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“O owner of this grain, what is this?”** The man said, *“The rain caught it, O Messenger of Allaah.”* He said: **“Why did you not put it on top of the heap so that the people could see it! Anyone who cheats us is not one of us.”**

It is also wrong to monopolize basic resources by a handful to control the prices of those resources or to monopolize commercial or industrial goods if this monopoly causes harm to Muslims. In addition, interest, bribery and the misuse of influence is forbidden. It is permitted the seizure of property amassed illegally. It is clear that all these provisions are to achieve balance and equality and to eradicate major differences between individuals. Some jurists go as far as saying that the *Sharee'ah* permits forcing a property owner to sell goods at prices fixed by the *Sharee'ah*; his failure to do so would be considered a crime punishable by chastisement. The reasoning here is that to do otherwise would be of great detriment to the public interest and could lead to speculation in the people's food in times of crisis. Therefore, under the *Sharee'ah*, merchants who stop selling goods or store commodities for later monopoly and enrichment have to be ordered to sell and be punished.

4. The system of inheritance in Islam, as regulated by the *Sharee'ah*, is a just system which ensures the just distribution of wealth and prevents the

accumulation and concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. Indeed Islam facilitates the distribution of capital and its division into small equal shares for everyone. This system ensures good care for the land and gives the chance to many heirs to acquire land for their living. As a consequence, the land is better tended and protected, thus ensuring care and protection for the environment from being left in the hands of one owner to tyrannize the people.

5. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, implemented the tax system. There are taxes on various activities and sources of income. These include the *Kharaaj* (land tax) and the *Jizyah*, which is a tax on non-Muslims living under Muslim rule. These taxes guarantee social justice for everyone, the intent being for the good and growth of our environment in all its aspects. In addition, the obligation of *Zakaah* (alms) on Muslims given out at the end of the fast of the month of *Ramadhaan* can involve considerable sums. These alms cure the souls of the needy from envy of the rich, and cure the souls of the rich from greed and hankering after this transient world. Moreover, the needier among the Muslims are protected from vagrancy and crime. There is also the slaughtering of sacrificial animals after *Hajj* and distributing the meat amongst the poor.

In addition, it is the duty of the wealthy to give money to their weaker relatives. The inhabitants of a given district or quarter are responsible for one another and help one another to the extent that some Muslim jurists say that if someone dies of hunger then the people who were living near him have to pay the blood money as if they were all responsible for his death. The Treasury was established in order to provide care and support to the elderly, those unable to earn an income and others. In this, there is to be no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. There is also the financial expiation for breaking an oath, failing to observe fasting rituals, uttering the words of *Jaahiliyyah* (the pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance) to divorce one's wife, (i.e. "*Be thou as my mother's back*") and violation of certain prescriptions relating to the *Hajj*. The sums are in the form of money, produce or alms given to the poor.



The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, encouraged his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, and in fact all his followers, to consider the greater good, to keep in mind the rest of the Muslims. The relationship between Islamic laws and the environment with regard to ownership is religious in nature, as the real rights of ownership belong to Allaah The Almighty, the One and Only Creator. The laws of *Sharee'ah* set by Allaah The Almighty and put into effect by His Messenger, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, ensure that justice is practiced among people. This will enable them to achieve sound development of resources and enrichment.

For not only had the *Sharee'ah* endorsed all the above mentioned points, it has also established the limits (*Hudood*) to the right of ownership including property and wealth and has established regulations to minimize differences between the Muslims. In addition, there is the legal right to confiscate the property of the wealthy which has been illegally acquired from the making of excessive profits, from a forbidden source or from an activity harmful to the members of the Muslim society. The expropriation goes to the state and thus for the benefit of the poor and the needy. With regard to this legal principle, the *Sharee'ah* permits the leader to distribute public property in a way which achieves an economic equilibrium among the classes even by favoring one group over another in order to restore social equilibrium. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, applied this principle when he gave the wealth confiscated from the Banu an-Nadheer to the *Muhaajireen* (the Emigrants) and two poor members of the *Ansaar* (the Helpers) in order to reduce the disparity in wealth between these two groups which made up the Muslim society at the time.

Muslims are forbidden from hoarding the wealth of the earth and concealing it from the benefit of man, whether by failing to give to the poor or by failing to invest the wealth for the good and prosperity of society, thus reflecting on man's care for the development and prosperity of the environment. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, taught us to distance ourselves from selfishness and greed. Hakeem ibn Hizaam, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrates that, "*(Once) I asked Allaah's Apostle (for something) and he gave it to me. Again I asked and he gave (it to me). Again I asked and he gave (it to me). And then he said: 'O Hakeem! This property is like a sweet fresh fruit; whoever takes it*

*without greediness, he is blessed in it, and whoever takes it with greediness, he is not blessed in it, and he is like a person who eats but is never satisfied; and the upper (giving) hand is better than the lower (receiving) hand.’” [Al-Bukhaari]*

Selfishness and greed are among humanity's psychological diseases which, if cured, would make man generous and moderate in his interaction with his human environment and the natural resources with which Allaah The Almighty has provisioned him, the immense resources which could be used in the betterment of mankind if they were used judiciously and in accordance with the divine laws which forbid profligacy in all aspects of life. It is greed that is making man consume non-renewable resources at such a rapid level, leaving nothing for those to come.

## **Conclusion**

There has been a devastating increase in environmental pollution in modern times, owing to industrialization and experimentation with nature. Land, air, water and noise pollution are only a few examples. In addition, vast expanses of forests are being cut, soil erosion is increasing, and climate changes appear likely. At the same time, some groups have come to realize the gravity of the consequences of environmental pollution, and have started taken steps to correct what the previous generations have been doing for decades.

In recent times there have appeared environmental pollutants resulting from wars and conflicts breaking out in the Middle East as in the Gulf War and there have been oil leaks from super-tankers or as a result of sinking of oil transporting vessels, etc. Being less dense than water, oil stays on the surface of the sea and is fatal to living organisms such as plankton which float on the surface. Plankton is the main source of food for fish and other marine life. It also plays a vital role in extracting carbon dioxide from the air - an important factor in maintaining the proportion of gases in the atmosphere. In the event that a large number of plankton was killed by pollution this proportion would be disturbed, and could lead to a grave disaster for all life.

There is also the dangers of chemical weapons, radioactive materials and waste which are spreading at present to an extent which threatens the environment, mankind and animal and marine wealth. Scientists have begun to raise their voices demanding that man halt his wanton activities which will only harm himself in the end. They want research to be restricted to what is beneficial to man and to concentrate on the seas and oceans as important sources of vast wealth which have not yet been properly exploited.

After taking note of this, and of the components of the environment and Islam's care thereof, thus linking care to faith, man has to be aware of the world upon which Allaah The Almighty has made him His vicegerent. He should meditate on the universe and its laws, and understand how to make sustainable use of the resources that have been bestowed upon him. He should deal with it according to the rules and ethics of the vicegerent of Allaah The Almighty, who deserves to be made responsible for the earth and honored with knowledge. Allaah The Almighty put the earth and its resources for the benefit of man; man should understand this and make wise and efficient use of those resources, shunning wastage and profligacy. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful.}*** [Quran, 17:27]

Modern man must also relinquish his arrogant and selfish attitude; if Allaah The Almighty willed, He would replace the whole of humanity with another that was more grateful and compliant to Him. The whole of creation is subject to the Authority of Allaah The Almighty; this is what we have been stressing from the beginning.

Above all, one should seek to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, who taught us invaluable lessons in what would today be called 'environmentalism' or 'conservation of resources'. He and his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, lived simple, austere lives – unlike many of us today – and certainly the level of pollution in their times was close to nothing compared with what is occurring today at a global level. Yet, he, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, still encouraged people not to be wasteful, not to be greedy and acquisitive (for the life of this world is transient and its

pleasures fleeting), not to inconvenience or harm others, and not to cut down trees without necessity. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also told us to love for others what we love for ourselves, to think of the interests of the whole community, and to live frugally, for we will take nothing of this world with us when we enter the grave. 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, "*The Messenger of Allaah took hold of my shoulder and said: 'Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traveler.'*" [Al-Bukhaari] The life of a stranger and a traveler is one where one carries along only what is necessary, thus shunning materialism and pomp, and following the shining example of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

