

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER CONSERVATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE PROPHETIC BIOGRAPHY: A CLIMATE PERSPECTIVE OF PAKISTAN

MUHAMMAD PERVEZ

LECTURER DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES THE UNIVERSITY OF LAHORE (LAHORE) PAKISTAN,
EMAIL: muhammad.pervez@ais.uol.edu.pk, pervezsheikh9999@gmail.com

DR MUHAMMAD ISMAIL TABISH

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, GREEN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY LAHORE
PAKISTAN, EMAIL: ismail.tabish@giu.edu.pk.

HAFIZ MUHAMMAD AHMAD

LECTURER DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF LAHORE PAKISTAN,
EMAIL: muhammad.ahmad@ais.uol.edu.pk

DR. HAFIZ MUHAMMAD SHABBIR AHAMAD

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF LAHORE PAKISTAN

UMER MAJEED

LECTURER DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES THE UNIVERSITY OF LAHORE LAHORE, PAKISTAN. EMAIL ID:
umer.majeed@ais.uol.edu.pk

MUHAMMAD AZAM*

LECTURER, DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, GREEN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY LAHORE PAKISTAN
EMAIL: m.azam@giu.edu.pk.

ABSTRACT

Water scarcity has emerged as one of the most serious environmental and socio-economic challenges facing Pakistan. Climate change, rapid population growth, erratic rainfall, accelerated glacial melting, excessive groundwater extraction, inefficient agricultural practices, and water pollution have intensified the country's water crisis. This study examines the significance of water conservation in the light of the Prophetic biography (Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ) and explores how Islamic teachings can contribute to addressing Pakistan's contemporary water and climate-related challenges. The study highlights Qur'anic injunctions against extravagance and wastefulness and examines Prophetic guidance concerning the responsible use, preservation, and protection of water resources. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ demonstrated moderation in water consumption during ablution and ritual bathing and prohibited unnecessary wastage even when water was readily available. The Prophetic teachings also emphasize protecting water sources from contamination and extending the provision of water to humans, animals, and other forms of creation. In the context of Pakistan, these principles provide an ethical and practical framework for sustainable water management. The study further connects Islamic principles with contemporary solutions, including efficient irrigation methods such as drip and sprinkler systems, improved sanitation, prevention of industrial and domestic pollution, public awareness campaigns, and effective governmental legislation. It proposes a three-tiered strategy involving individual responsibility and moderation, collective adoption of modern water-saving technologies, and governmental and educational initiatives for conservation and environmental protection. The study concludes that the Qur'an and Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ offer not only spiritual guidance but also a comprehensive ethical framework for responsible resource management. Integrating these teachings with modern environmental practices can help Pakistan conserve its water resources and promote a sustainable and resilient society for future generations.

KEYWORDS: Water Conservation; Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ; Pakistan; Climate Change; Islamic Environmental Ethics

INTRODUCTION

Water scarcity is the most abundant environmental crisis currently faced by Pakistan. Climate change dangerously increases the risk of glacial melt, erratic rainfall patterns, and excessive groundwater extraction, which can distort the water reservoirs. Rapid population growth, inefficient agricultural practices, and industrial waste are major concerns faced by Pakistan nowadays, which ultimately impact the water reservoirs.

In such conditions, the most relevant guidance is provided by Islamic teachings and the *Sīrat al-Nabī* ﷺ. The Holy Qur'an strongly condemns extravagance and water wastefulness, while the excellent examples presented by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ demonstrate efficient resource use in real-life situations. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used very little water during ablution and bathing and forbade others from wasteful expenditure. Similarly, he ﷺ prohibited contaminating water sources, which is entirely consistent with modern principles of environmental protection. Against this backdrop, this research examines how teachings derived from the *Sīrat al-Nabī* ﷺ can offer a practical and comprehensive action plan for resolving Pakistan's current water crisis.

"The Importance of Water in the Light of *Sīrat al-Nabī* ﷺ"

The utmost fundamental condition for human survival is water,

which is beholden to human civilization. The land of Pakistan, a trustee of an ancient agricultural civilization in terms of its rivers and canal system, is today caught in the grip of climatic changes. Erratic rainfall patterns, glacial melt, and excessive use of groundwater have transformed water not merely into a natural blessing but into a precious commodity. The teachings of *Sīrat-e-Tayyibah* ﷺ regarding water conservation not only bestow upon us spiritual and ethical insight but also provide practical guidance for the environmental and economic challenges of a country like Pakistan.

"The Principles of Water Usage in Ablution and Ritual Bathing"

The Prophet ﷺ considered water the pivot of life in matters of purification and cleanliness. However, he ﷺ adopted a strategy in using water that was based on protecting material resources alongside spiritual purification.

"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to perform wudu (ablution) with one *mudd* (of water) and perform ghusl (ritual bath) with one *sā'* up to five *amdā*." 1

This narration informs us that he ﷺ established principles for water usage that fulfill the purposes of worship while preventing unnecessary wastage. The quantity of one *mudd* is approximately half a liter, and one *sā'* is roughly equivalent to two liters. Today, when residents of Pakistani cities, despite water scarcity, waste dozens of liters of water during ablution and bathing, this Prophetic teaching presents a balanced and sustainable model contrary to their behavior.

Imam Ghazali mentioned this narration in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, writing that extravagance is forbidden even within the sphere of worship, and these principles hold particular practical significance in water-scarce regions.[2] This clarifies that careful use of water, both at jurisprudential and ethical levels, is part of worship.

2. "The Instruction to Avoid Wastefulness in Water"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade extravagance in water even during ablution, even if one were on the bank of a flowing river.

"Do not be extravagant in water, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river".3

This directive is based on the reality that the wastage of natural resources is not permissible even if they appear abundant. In a country like Pakistan, where despite river flows there are issues of water distribution and storage, this Prophetic guidance also provides direction for national-level policy formulation.

The commentator Zamakhshari defined extravagance as: "Every transgression beyond the limit is extravagance".4

This shows that when water usage exceeds the need, it is tantamount to wasting it.

3. "Guidelines for the Protection of Wells, Canals, and Springs"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ not only emphasized the use of water but also the protection of its reservoirs and their preservation from pollution.

"Guard against the three things which provoke cursing: relieving oneself in water sources, on pathways, or in shaded places."5

Avoid three things that cause cursing: relieving oneself in water sources, on pathways, or in shaded places.

This hadith highlights the principle that protecting water sources from pollution is a collective responsibility. Issues in Pakistan, such as dumping industrial waste into rivers and groundwater contamination, represent an attitude contrary

to this teaching, ultimately leading to environmental disaster. Faḥ al-Bārī, written by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, states that the collection of polluted water is harmful and that every act that harms the common good is haram in Islam

4. "The Excellence of Providing Water to Animals, Plants, and People"

In the Sīrat of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, water was not restricted to just human necessities but also an essential element for animals and plants and declared as a religious virtue.

"While a man was walking on a path, he felt intensely thirsty. He found a well, descended into it, and drank. When he came out, he saw a dog panting and eating mud due to thirst. The man said, 'This dog has reached the same state of thirst that I had reached.' So he went back into the well, filled his shoe with water, and holding it in his mouth, climbed out and gave the dog water. Allah appreciated his action and forgave him."⁷

This event clarifies that providing water is not merely service to creation but an act of worship. In Pakistan, providing water to drought-affected rural populations, livestock, and fields aligns perfectly with the Prophetic tradition as an act of goodness. Imam Nawawi stated in his commentary on this hadith that the reward for giving water to non-human creatures is considered equal to serving humans.⁸ This expands the scope of human compassion, which aligns with the modern interpretation of ecology and environmental justice.

"Water Waste in Light of Islamic Teachings"

1. "The Qur'anic Forbiddance of Wastefulness"

The Holy Qur'an declared extravagance a satanic act and strictly forbade humans from it.

"Indeed, the extravagant are brothers of the devils, and Satan has ever been to his Lord ungrateful".⁹

This verse deems the waste of resources at both societal and individual levels not merely an ethical abomination but also a spiritual decay. Currently, in the light of this verse, the excessive use of water in agriculture or letting it drain away in household pipes is common water wastage in Pakistan, resulting not only in an economic crisis but also a moral and faith-based crisis. Imam Qurtubi explained extravagance, saying: **(Extravagance is spending something beyond its legitimate need and context)**. According to this interpretation, wasting water is a violation of Islamic teachings.¹⁰

2. "A Practical Model of Minimal Water Usage in Ablution"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ set a practical example of extreme water conservation during ablution.

"The Prophet ﷺ used to perform ablution with one mudd".¹¹

The quantity of one mudd is approximately half a liter, demonstrating that even in worship, resource wastage is not permitted. This practical model is a particular lesson for today's Pakistani citizens who waste several liters of water just during ablution. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote regarding water wastage in ablution: "Whoever is extravagant in water during ablution has opposed the Sunnah, even if his ablution is valid".¹²

This indicates that Shariah has linked worship with resource conservation.

3. "The Forbiddance of Polluting Water"

Islam has strictly forbidden contaminating water sources because it is an act harmful to both public health and the environment.

"Let none of you urinate in standing water that does not flow, then take a bath in it."¹³

This teaching is directly connected to environmental sanitation and public health. In Pakistan, groundwater contamination, dumping industrial waste into streams, and the spread of polluted ponds near cities are behaviors contrary to this hadith. Imam Nawawi explained in his commentary that contaminating water is not only an obstacle to worship but is also a threat to human life, so this prohibition is not merely a jurisprudential ruling but an ethical and social principle.¹⁴

"Pakistan's Climatic Conditions and the Water Crisis"

Pakistan is a country that is a custodian of an agricultural and riverine civilization, whose economy and society depend on water. However, with the beginning of the 21st century, climatic changes have plunged this region into a deep crisis. According to experts, Pakistan is among the top ten countries in the world most affected by climate change. The principles given in the teachings of Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ regarding water conservation and avoiding wastefulness can play a key role in understanding and confronting this crisis.

1. "The Effects of Melting Glaciers"

The Himalayan and Karakoram mountain ranges serve as primary reservoirs of water in the form of glaciers for Pakistan's rivers. However, due to rising global temperatures, the rate of their melting has accelerated unusually fast. "Pakistan's glaciers are melting faster than expected, threatening the water security of millions who rely on the Indus River system."¹⁵

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This situation, on one hand, creates an immediate flood-like condition, while on the other hand, it exacerbates water scarcity in the near future. Imam Shatibi mentioned in al-Muwāfaqāt the principle that if a nation does not protect its resources, it is a divine law (takwīnī sunnah) that it will suffer decline and deprivation.¹⁶

This interpretation reflects the symbolic meaning of the dangers associated with glacial melt.

2. "Changes in Rainfall Patterns"

Pakistan's rainfall system has always been linked to agriculture and river flows, but the unpredictability in rainfall patterns has now turned a combination of droughts and torrential rains into a major crisis.

"And We sent down water from the sky in due measure, and We settled it in the earth, and indeed, We can take it away."¹⁷

This verse links the rainfall system to divine destiny, but when human actions disturb the natural balance, rainfall also creates crises, sometimes in the form of scarcity and sometimes in the form of intensity. The commentator Razi wrote in his interpretation of this verse that the descent of water and its system are not independent of human strategy, but nations that are negligent in its usage are deprived of its blessings.¹⁸

3. "The Shortage of Groundwater"

Groundwater in Pakistan is being extracted at an alarming rate, resulting not only in the lowering of the water table but also in increased water pollution.

"Groundwater depletion in Pakistan is among the highest in the world, primarily due to unsustainable agricultural practices."¹⁹

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This reality poses a threat to the country's food self-sufficiency as well as public health. In the jurisprudential tradition, Imam Abu Yusuf stated in Kitāb al-Kharāj the principle that the resources of the earth are collective property, and no one has the right to use them in a way that harms the public.²⁰

Under this rule, excessive use of groundwater constitutes a betrayal of the collective trust.

4. "Water Shortage in Rivers and Canals"

Pakistan's river system is the backbone of its economy. However, due to climate change and water restrictions by India, the scarcity in rivers and canals has reached a dangerous turning point.

"People are partners in three things: water, pasture, and fire."²¹

This hadith guides towards the reality that individual or national monopoly over water is not permissible; rather, it is a collective property. The shortage in Pakistan's rivers is not just a local issue but also a matter of international treaties and justice. Jurists have clarified this principle that if a collective right is violated, it is the duty of the ruler to take action to remedy it."²²

5. "Water Waste at the Agricultural, Household, and Industrial Levels"

The largest wastage of water in Pakistan occurs in agriculture, where outdated irrigation methods and excessive use of tubewells are rapidly depleting resources. The situation is similar at the domestic and industrial levels.

"Over 90 percent of Pakistan's water is used in agriculture, yet water productivity is among the lowest in the world."²³ These statistics highlight that inefficient methods of water usage constitute a national loss. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim wrote in Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'āda that inefficient use of the earth's resources is akin to "taḍyī' al-ni'ma" (wasting Allah's blessing). This shows that water wastage is not merely an economic loss but also a religious and moral deprivation."²⁴

"Current Challenges and Their Solutions in Light of the Sīrah of the Prophet ﷺ"

The growing burden of the water crisis solution is not limited to just scientific and technical strategies in Pakistan but also highlights the importance of ethical and spiritual principles of water usage. The guiding principles learned through Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ regarding water usage, avoidance of water waste, and environmental balance provide a comprehensive approach for finding a solution to climate change. Some prominent aspects in this regard are as follows.

1. "Thriftness in Ablution and Home Usage"

The Prophet ﷺ made frugality in water usage during ablution and bathing a practical Sunnah.

"The Prophet ﷺ used to perform ablution with one mudd and a ritual bath with one sā'."²⁵

This practical guidance reminds us even at the domestic level that water usage should be according to need, no matter how small the amount. Imam Ghazali termed this "Iqtiṣād fin-ni'ma" (moderation in blessings).²⁶

2. "Modern Irrigation Techniques in Agriculture"

(Drip Irrigation, Sprinkler System)

Pakistan's largest consumption of water is in the agricultural sector. Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ contains teachings for improving agricultural productivity and avoiding resource wastage, which can be applied to modern irrigation systems.

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade the wasteful use of water, even if abundant, and encouraged efficient agricultural practices."²⁷

The Prophet ﷺ forbade the wasteful use of water, even if abundant, and encouraged efficient agricultural practices.

In the modern context, this guidance emphasizes adopting efficient methods like "Drip Irrigation" and "Sprinkler Systems." Economist Dr. Mahbub ul Haq also clarified that efficient use of agricultural water is the key to rescuing Pakistan's economy from crisis .28

3. "Islamic Principles for Safeguarding Water from Pollution"

The Prophet ﷺ placed special emphasis on keeping water sources safe from pollution.

"Let none of you urinate in standing water that does not flow."29

This directive is a guarantee of public health. Imam Nawawi interpreted this under the principle of "Sadd al-Dharā'i'" (blocking the means [to harm]), stating that it is obligatory to prohibit any act that becomes a source of public harm.30

4. "Awareness Campaigns at the Public and Governmental Levels"

Sīrat-e-Tayyibah ﷺ contains numerous examples of raising collective awareness. The Prophet ﷺ, through sermons and advice, instilled a sense of responsibility in the masses.

"The Prophet was the greatest teacher, reminding people repeatedly of their duties towards God, each other, and the environment."31

Following this style, public awareness campaigns for water conservation in Pakistan are essential today to foster a collective consciousness, from the individual level to government institutions.

5. "Environmental Protection and Islamic Teachings"

Islam has declared the environment a trust, and its protection a religious duty.

"The world is green and beautiful, and Allah has made you successors in it to see how you act".32

This hadith clarifies the principle that man is not the owner but the vicegerent and trustee of the earth. Ibn al-Qayyim stated that protecting resources and sustaining the environment are included among the objectives of Shariah.33

CONCLUSION

The water crisis has posed severe threats to human life in most parts of the world, including Pakistan. Climate change, population increase, and inefficient resource use have made this issue more complex. In such circumstances, Islamic teachings and Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ stand as a luminous lighthouse, inviting us to caution and frugality at the individual level, while also providing a practical plan for better use and protection of water resources at the collective level. The Holy Qur'an clearly forbids extravagance: That is, extravagance and waste of resources are considered satanic acts. (Al-Isra: 27). If this principle is applied to water, it becomes clear that every drop is a divine blessing, wasting which is prohibited and using it responsibly is a duty.

In Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ, frugality in water during ablution and bathing is seen as a practical Sunnah. He ﷺ used one mudd for ablution and one sā' for a bath, even when water was abundant. According to this Sunnah is that regardless of how plentiful resources may seem, caution, moderation, and fundamental moral duty are conservation of their use and this same principle applies to domestic use as well; its wasteful flow should be avoided and water should only be used as needed. Modern scientific methods like Drip Irrigation and sprinkler systems, which are in accordance with Islamic principles and agricultural sector in Pakistan are consumes water from this method and also get benefit. The Prophet ﷺ advised farmers on the correct and efficient use of water and forbade wastefulness. This teaching, which allows for higher yields with less water is reflected in modern irrigation systems. This not only enables the protection of valuable resources but also brings blessings to agriculture. The protection of water from pollution has been strictly emphasized in Islam. Contaminating standing water is prohibited in Hadith because this act is harmful for public health and environmental balance. Imam Nawawi and other jurists clarified that avoiding these things which causes harmful for public that is Harm and its obligatory. According to the Islamic directive principles, adhering to sanitation by refraining from dumping wastewater into canals, rivers, and groundwater sources. A prominent feature of Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ is the awakening of public consciousness. Through sermons and advice, he ﷺ reminded people of their duties, whether concerning the rights of Allah or the rights of creation. Today, in a country like Pakistan, awareness campaigns based on this approach are indispensable for tackling the water crisis. Policies individual consciousness, government policies cannot be effective, and without government policy, individual efforts cannot be fruitful. Therefore, a coordinated collective strategy is needed.

Islam has declared the environment as a trust from Allah. The hadith states: meaning the world is green and flourishing, and Allah has appointed man as His vicegerent in it to see what attitude he adopts towards this trust. In the light of this teaching, it is abundantly clear that environmental protection and resource conservation are integral parts of the objectives of Shariah in Islam.

Thus, it can be said that the Qur'an and Sunnah provide us with a three-tiered strategy for resolving the water crisis:

1. Frugality at the individual level and following the practical examples of Sīrat al-Nabī ﷺ.
2. Use of modern technology at the collective and agricultural levels, and measures to protect water from pollution.
3. Campaigns, legislation, and environmental protection projects at the governmental and educational levels to raise public awareness.

Finally, it can be said that Islamic teachings are not merely spiritual instructions but a practical system of life that offers effective solutions to the greatest problems of the contemporary age. If the individual adopts the teaching guidelines and the government can act collectively in Pakistan, the water crisis cannot only be brought under control but also a sustainable and prosperous society can be built for future generations.

Recommendations and Suggestions

1. The domestic water practical models of *Sīrat al-Nabī* ﷺ should be adopted and personal use should be limited according to human necessities.
2. To achieve Higher yields with less water, efficient methods of Drip Irrigation and Sprinkler Systems should be introduced
3. Modern sanitation systems should be established and strict bans imposed on dumping industrial and wastewater into nearby rivers and canals,
4. Sermons, media campaigns, and educational curricula should highlight the importance of water and its uses from an Islamic perspective.
5. Laws against water wastage and pollution should be enforced, and national plans for environmental protection should be implemented effectively.

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