

ISLAMIC TREATMENT TOWARDS ANIMALS: A STUDY ON RIGHTS AND WELFARE

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سيف الإسلام،

الأستاذ المساعد (الدراسات الإسلامية)

كلية العلوم الاجتماعية والإنسانية واللغات

جامعة بنغلاديش المفتوحة

Abstract:

Islam is more than just a religion; it is a complete culture for life, guiding the way of life both here and in the hereafter. It describes and addresses every aspect related to human life. Almighty Allah has created human beings as the best of His creations, and He has created others, including animals, to serve them. Although all other creations are created to serve human beings, they have specific rights given by Almighty Allah, which are narrated in the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic law. This article discusses animal rights and welfare in the light of Islam.

Keywords: Animal, Slaughter, Rights, Welfare, Law, Kindness, Benefit.

Introduction

As a comprehensive and welfare code of life, Islam ponders over every life, whether it is of humans, animals, birds, or trees, as a valuable creature of the Almighty Allah. He has created everything with a particular purpose, and indeed all creatures praise Allah, though their praises are not expressed in human languages and human beings are not able to understand their tongue. That's why Islam does not approve of killing any life, even in the case of animal, a bird, or fungus without an essential need. From insects to trees, everything has the right to live until the proper age and to get proper behaviour and treatment from human beings. Islam gives certain indications and describes specific rulings towards animals' and birds' rights, even how to treat them.

Animals are communities like human:

Allah the Almighty treats animals as a community like human beings. He said: "There is no moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book, then to their Lord, they (all) shall be gathered"¹.

Since animals are recognized as communities like human beings, they react to the situations like the human react. The report came from Thailand regarding six elephants is an example for it.

To save a calf, six other elephants died at the dangerous Khao Yai Waterfall in Thailand on October 5, 2019 (Online Reporters, 2019)

¹ - Al Quran: 6:38

Worshipper of Allah:

Allah the almighty created mankind for his worship only. He said: "And I (Allah) created not the Jinn and mankind except that they should worship me (Alone)."²

In the same way animals, and birds also worship Allah the omnipotent in the way he has assigned.

The holy Quran mentions: "Have they not observed things that Allah has created: (how) their shadows incline to the right and to the left, making prostration to Allah, and they are lowly? And to Allah prostrate all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, of the moving (living) creatures and the angels, and they are not proud, i.e., they worship their Lord (Allah) with humility. They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded."³

The observations of these verses make sense that animals are not for people's defiant want, but Allah created them for a special purpose and also for His worship, like the reason for the creation of mankind.

So as the worshipper of Allah mankind should save, protect and become aides for another worshipper.

Attraction and Wealth for Humans:

Animals are one of the most attractive things for human beings. They are fond of animals. Allah says: "Beautified for men is the love of things they covet;

² - Al Quran: 51:56

³ - Surah Al Nhl: 16:48-50

women, children, much of gold and silver (wealth), branded beautiful horses, cattle and well-tilled land. This is the pleasure of the present world's life, but Allah has the excellent return (Paradise with flowing rivers) with him" (Al Quran 3:14). The almighty also says: "And therein is beauty for you, when you bring them home in the evening, and as you lead them forth to pasture in the morning" (Al Quran 16:6). Everybody loves beauty and animals are from one of the beauties. From children to elders, everyone loves particular animals and pets.

Allah says in this regard: "And (He has created) horses, mules and donkeys, for you to ride and as an adornment. And he creates (other) things of which you have no knowledge" (Al Quran 16:8).

In these verses of the holy Quran Allah described human nature that they love animals and want to enjoy their company, to spend leisure with them. As these all are inherent in human nature, their responsibility, as well is saving animals from any risk and ensuring their safety and smooth life like a custodian and guardian.

Useful for mankind:

Allah, the Omnipotent, has bestowed animals upon mankind for their benefit. The Almighty has permitted mankind to consume the meat of animals. He says:

"And the Budn (cows, oxen, or camels driven to be offered as sacrifices by the pilgrims at the sanctuary of Makkah) — We have made them for you as among the symbols of Allah, wherein you have much good. So mention the Name of Allah over them when they are drawn up in lines (for sacrifice). Then, when they fall down on their sides (after slaughter), eat from them and feed the poor who do not

ask, and the beggar who does ask. Thus, We have made them subject to you so that you may be grateful.” (Al-Qur’an 22:36)

Allah also permits the consumption of milk from quadrupeds, as He says:

“And verily, in the cattle, there is indeed a lesson for you. We give you to drink (milk) from what is in their bellies. And in them, there are numerous other benefits for you, and from them you eat.” (Al-Qur’an 23:21)

Besides eating and drinking from animals, Allah, the Almighty, has also allowed mankind to benefit from their hides. The Qur’an states:

“And Allah has made your homes a place of rest, and made for you from the hides of cattle tents which you find light (and handy) when you travel and when you camp; and from their wool, fur, and hair, furnishings and articles of convenience (such as carpets and blankets) — a comfort for a time.” (Al-Qur’an 16:80)

In addition to these benefits, mankind may also use quadrupeds as a means of transportation. Allah says in the Qur’an:

“And they carry your loads to a land you could not reach except with great difficulty to yourselves. Truly, your Lord is Most Kind, Most Merciful.” (Al-Qur’an 16:7)

As Allah, the Almighty, has allowed mankind to derive various benefits from animals, it is also incumbent upon mankind to fulfill certain responsibilities toward them. Since Allah has appointed mankind as His representatives on Earth (Al-Qur’an 6:165; 2:30), it is their duty, as agents of the Almighty, to uphold the rights of all creatures (Rahman, 2015).

The right to live on earth:

As human beings, animals have the right to live on this earth because Allah the Almighty granted them this opportunity. Quran describes: "And the earth: he has put down (laid) for the creatures" (Al-Quran 55:10).

In another verse of the holy Quran: "See you not (O Muhammad, PBUH) that Allah, He, it is Whom glorify whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, and the birds with wings out-spread (in their flight)? Of each one He (Allah) knows indeed his *Salat* (prayer) and his glorification, [or everyone knows his *Salat* (prayer) and his glorification]; and Allah is All-Knower of what they do" (Al-Quran 24: 41).

One of the scholar's views about these verses is: Animals are sentient beings with the ability to feel emotions and connections to the wider physical and spiritual worlds. Their life must be valued and loved by us. These verses act as a reminder that both people and animals were made with a purpose. They are a portion of the divinity and have emotions. They also have the right to live and to be shielded from misery (Suliman, 2016).

Killing (slaughtering) is permissible only in emergencies:

Without the need for eating or emergency needs, killing or slaughtering an animal is prohibited in Islam. Allah said: "Because of that, We ordained for the children of Israel that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or to spread mischief in the land it would be as if he killed all mankind" (Al-Quran, 5:32).

In the explanation of this verse, some Islamic scholars said: "Cutting roads and trees, without necessity, killing animals and burning cross is also included here" (Al-Andalusi, 2001).

Additionally, the Apostle vehemently forbade the killing of animals unless absolutely necessary. Anybody who kills a pigeon or something higher to it without Allah's permission will be held accountable for that act, the Prophet declared. (Al-Tabrizi, p-171).

Though it is permitted to kill animals for essential needs, but some animals are out of these facilities.

Pity to animals:

Showing softness, compassion, and mercy to all living beings is among the finest symbols and signs of Islam. Allah, the Omnipotent, said: “And We have not sent you (O Muhammad), except as a mercy to the worlds (mankind, jinn, and all that exists).” (Al-Qur’an 21:107)

It is narrated from Abdullah ibn Amr that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Allah favors those who are benevolent. So if you show mercy to those on Earth, He who is in the heavens will show mercy to you.” (al-Tirmidhi, 2012)

Islam considers a good deed toward animals to be as virtuous as one toward humans. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: “An act of kindness toward an animal is just as admirable as an act of kindness toward a human being, and an act of cruelty toward an animal is just as wrong as an act of brutality toward a human being.” (al-Masabih, Mishkat)

From these verses and hadiths, we understand how much emphasis Allah and His Messenger placed on compassion toward animals. Kindness to animals is an essential element of Islamic civilization.

As narrated from the Messenger of Allah (PBUH): Once, a man was walking along a road and became extremely thirsty. He found a well, climbed down into it, drank, and then came back up. Upon emerging, he saw a dog licking the soil out of thirst. The man thought to himself, "This dog is suffering from thirst just as I was." So, he went back down into the well, filled his sock with water, held it in his mouth, climbed back up, and gave the dog a drink. The man thanked Allah, and Allah, the Almighty, forgave all his sins. This story shows that Allah, the Most High, accepted his act of kindness and rewarded him. (As-Sayyid, 2002, pp. 17-18)

When the Prophet (PBUH) finished the narration, the Companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah! Is there a reward for kindness shown to animals"?

He replied, "Yes, there is a reward for showing kindness to every living being." (Bukhari, 2017, p. 375)

Kindness in time of slaughtering:

One of the delicious foods for human beings is meat, no doubt. The meat comes from various animals and birds. Allah the most high created all creatures for the benefit of humankind but gave them the responsibility to take care of all creatures as well. Even in the time of slaughtering it is man's duty to Secure and ensure the rights and welfare of animals and birds.

We can realize the Islamic importance of kindness to animals in time of slaughtering, from these two Hadiths. Saddad b. Aws said: There are two qualities that the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) mentioned: Allah has commanded that everything be done in a proper way, so choose a good technique when you slaughter.

The narrators of the story other than Sahih Muslim, say: So kill honourably. You should use a decent method when you slaughter; each of you should sharpen your knife and cause the animal as little pain as possible (Dawud, 2005, Hadith-2809). Hisham b. Zaid said: Along with Anas, I approached Al-Hakam b. Ayyub.

He observed some young men or lads shooting at a hen they had set up. Anas mentioned: The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) condemned murdering an animal in captivity (Dawud, 2005, Hadith-2810).

From narrated strong instructions Muslim scholars say, it is necessary that the animal should be fed well and water may be supplied to it if thirsty. The knife should be sharpened enough so that its throat could cut easily.

To be kind to animals in time of slaughtering, Caliph Umar (R). used to say: A sheep may not be butchered in the view of another sheep.

In another story, once a man was dragging a sheep for slaughtering and was striking in its breast. Umar (R.) saw it and said: Shame on you.

Kindly transport it to the location of its slaughter (As-Sayyid, p-23). Considering these instructions, we can perceive how much emphasis Islam gave on kindness to animals!

Besides these, some careful steps must be taken in the time of slaughtering according to the Prophet's traditions. Such as: Make sure to end immediately the animal's life and save it from suffering when you slaughter it.

Not be chained and lifted if they are bleeding. Should only rip the hide once the animal has expired life. The animal should feel comfortable while using the

restraints. The carcass must wait until all traces of life and the brain reflex have vanished before being further prepared and dressed off.

Both the compassionate objective of Islamic slaughtering rule and the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) remarks on the practice of slaughtering seem to be violated by the shackling and lifting of aware animals. (Rahman, 2017).

The slaughtering laws of Jews and Christians are almost similar to those of Muslims. The matter in the New Testament says: Because these requirements that you refrain from eating foods offered to idols, drinking blood, touching things that have been strangled, and engaging in fornication seemed necessary to the Holy Spirit and to us, we did not want to place on you any additional burdens. If you abide by these rules, you will do well. Wishing you well. About the Jewish laws, Doctor Herbert Dinby writes that what was given to Musa (Moses) on the mountain can be summarized in five points. Among them are there must be no delay, but the knife must be kept continually moving backwards and forwards; no pressure may be exerted (Usmani, 2005).

Tormenting them is prohibited:

With the encouragement of kindness to animals, Islam has strongly prohibited tormenting and harming them. As narrated by the companion Abu Hurairah (R.), the Prophet said, once a man kept loaded goods on a cow and trying to drive him away, suddenly the cow looked at the man and said: I wasn't made for this, rather I were created for the plough. The people were surprised and afraid of this incident that a cow was speaking!

The Prophet of Allah affirmed: I believe it, and Abu Bakr and Umar likewise (Muslim, Hadith- 6334). In another Hadith, narrated from Ibn Umar, The Prophet of Allah remarked: A woman went into the flames of Hell due to a cat. The cause is that she bound it in trappings and shut it up.

She refused to give it food or water. She also refused to allow it to consume any of the earth's pests. (As-Sayyid, p- 24, 25). In fact, Islam wants soft and kind behaviour from people to animals, but sometimes they hurt animals and birds. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) cursed those who make animals a targets.

A bird was once tied up and shot at by some lads. Then Ibn Umar was passing by them, the youngsters fled when they saw him out of concern for his wrath. The companion asked: Who is responsible for this?

May Allah curse the perpetrator. The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) cursed anyone who utilized something with a soul in it as a target. (As-Sayyid, p- 19, 20).

Cutting any part of the body or blurring it is prohibited:

Cutting any part of an animal's body is strongly prohibited in Islam. Allah said about it: "Verily, I will mislead them, and surely I will arouse in them false desires; and certainly, I will order them to slit the ears of cattle, and indeed I will order them to change the nature created by Allah.

And whoever takes Shaitan (Satan) as a Wali (protector or helper) instead of Allah, has surely suffered a manifest loss" (Al-Quran, 4:119). What is clear from this verse of the holy Quran is that cutting the organ of any animal is indeed the harsh work of Satan and completely illegal for human beings.

Besides, blurring in any animal's organ, especially in the mouth is also illegal in Islamic law. Such as: when an animal with a mark on its face passed by the Prophet (PBUH), according to Jabir, he said: Did it not approach you that I cursed one who marked the beasts on their faces or hit them on their faces.

He therefore forbade it. (Dawud, 1984, p-711). So it is clear that no Muslim could cut down any of an animal's organs or blur in them.

Arranging competitions and reviling them is illegal:

Nowadays, we see in various countries that various kinds of competitions are arranged among animals. Even in Muslim countries, these illegal practices are present. Ibn Abbas said: that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) forbade stirring up the beasts to battle (Dawud, p- 710, 11).

On the other hand, Mujahid described that Ibn Umar dislikes inspiring competitions among animals (Bukhari, Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, p- 422).

In the same way, reviling animals and cursing them is strongly prohibited as well. The Prophet (PBUH) is quoted by Jaid b. Khalid as saying: do not hate the cock, for it wakes for prayer. (Dawud, Vol-3).

In fact, we could understand that if there were no instructions from Hadiths, it should be a simple thought of the human brain that reviling speechless animals or arranging competitions among them is not a good deed.

Work for them is charity:

Islam has given much more emphasis and encouraged people for the welfare of animals and birds. Even if people are willing or unwilling to work with

animals and birds, then the work will be counted as charity on behalf of the worker. The Apostle of Allah (PBUH) said: A Muslim's planting of a seedling (tree) or growing of a crop will be considered charitable if any persons, animals, or birds eat some of it (Malek and others, p-69, Bukhari, p-376).

Rights of labouring animals:

Islam not only emphasized the rights of labouring peoples but also emphasized the rights of working animals. How much weight could make a bear on an animal, Islam provides a description for it. Islam strictly prohibited to overload an animal with goods and prohibited to work by them that is impossible for them. As narrated by Ya'la bin Murrah, he was with the Apostle of Allah on a travel, they stopped in a place and a camel came to the messenger of Allah with tearing eyes. The Prophet (PBUH) summoned the owners of it and said: `What is with this camel of yours that it complains about you? In other narration, it laments having little to eat and doing too much work. Therefore, treat it well (As-Sayyid, p- 29-32). Besides there are specific directions for rest, feeding enough and ensuring residence for working animals.

Suhail bin Al-Hanzllyyah said, that when the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) saw a malnourished camel, he exclaimed, Fear Allah over these dumb creatures. When they are healthy, ride them, and when they are healthy, feed them (Dawud, p-707).

As human beings do not understand the languages of animals, people should feel their problems.

Feeding Animals:

It is mankind's duty to feed animals, especially cattle, because they are under humankind, the representatives of Allah, as the best of his creatures. Allah the almighty said about it: "Who has made the earth for you like a bad (spread out); and has opened roads (ways and paths) for you therein, and has sent down water (rain) from the sky. And we have brought forth with it various kinds of vegetation. Eat and pasture your cattle (therein); verily, in this are *Ayat* (proofs and signs) for men of understanding" (Al-Quran, 20:53, 54). From this verse's instruction, we can realize that a man's responsibility is to feed his family, in the same way it is too his duty to feed subordinate animals.

Problems and proposals for the current era:

While Islam has such extraordinary rules, regulations, and behavioural instructions towards animal rights and welfare, in fact, the real scenario is fully opposite in many Muslim countries. Today, animals face huge torments, especially in times of slaughtering and transport. While Islam indicates kindness to animals, in many Muslim countries, including Bangladesh, animals are being tortured when being slaughtered. On the occasion of Eid-al-Adha cows, oxen and goats frequently slaughter one in eyewitness of another. Even if we don't feed them and don't make them drink enough. The harsh reality is that in some cases animals are being slaughtered with edgeless knives. As a result, with half-slaughtered pain, some speechless animals flee sometimes and cause many mishaps. Such as a headline: 'Slipped knife hits, kills 10-year-old girl watching cow slaughtering in Bangladesh' (bdnews24.com). Such tragedies and even more dangerous accidents occur sometimes on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. So,

everyone should be careful enough about animal rights during the time of slaughtering, as well as the dangers of the situation.

Transport:

Another hard problem facing animals today is in time of transport. When cattle traders transport their cattle on the occasion of Eid-al-Adha or others, they frequently don't care about the stress and problems of the cattle. Transport stress is a complex issue. Many things factor into transportation stress, including transport management, climatic factors (temperature, humidity, gases and so on), handling methods and facilities, feed and water deprivation, and so on. An animal's response to the effects of transportation stress creates a complex interaction between neurons and hormones. The results of such interactions are manifested clinically by changes in physical (external changes), haematological, biochemical and hormonal parameters. (internal changes) of the body (Alom and Others, 2018). In another research, it was found that in time of transportation, about 26% of the cattle had injuries on their bodies in the primary market (Portkhali market) and the frequencies were significantly increased ($p<0.01$) after transportation to the central cattle market (47%) at Sagorika cattle market, ctg (Rakib, 2016).

Recommendations:

To make life smooth and pain-free, slaughtering of animals as the guardian and the representative of Allah, people should take some steps. Such as arranging training sessions for cattle traders and those related to slaughtering. Here could be included butchers, imams, religious sermon givers and volunteers.

Besides, a campaign is needed to apprise religious leaders of the current cruelty that occurs during transport and slaughter. This should be done by competent and knowledgeable individuals who are also aware of the Islamic principles of animal welfare, preferably Muslims in order to give authenticity to their claims (Rahman, 2017).

Example to follow:

Our behaviour with animals should be fair and nice. These could be the remarkable examples in this regard: 'As his (Muhammad) men marched towards Makkah just before the conquest they passed a female dog with puppies; and Muhammad not merely gave orders that they were not to be disturbed, but posted a man to see that the orders were carried out' (Shah, p-69). What Adi bin Haatim (R.) used to do whenever there were any bread crumbs remaining after a meal? He would collect whatever bread was left and give it to the ants that were walking on the wall outside of his house. When he was asked about his action, he would say: 'They are my neighbors! They have a right upon me' (As-Sayyid, p- 12, 13).

Conclusion:

Nowadays, there are many animal rights groups working all over the world for the benefit and welfare of animals. Obviously, it's an optimistic and courageous sign for humanity. But the unfortunate truth is that in Muslim societies, such kinds of activities are less in comparison with other societies, although Islam gives and preserves all kinds of rights and welfare for animals and birds. Muslim societies all over the world should be aware enough and take leading positions about animal' rights and welfare according to their religious directions.

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