

## Animal's Protection for Environmental Sustainability: An Islamic Perspective

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### Abstract

Animals' protection is crucial for environmental stability and sustainability. Animals are the sign of magnificence and benevolence of Allah Almighty. The divine teachings of Islam provide a complete code for the welfare and protection of animals. Today the world has recognized the need for animals' protection to maintain ecological balance. The ecological scientist has laid stress on animal rights and there is a great debate over the basic rights and liberties of animals. In the last few decades, humans have made great tremendous achievements in providing legal rights and protection to animals such as the "Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare". The roots of recent animals protection and welfare paradigms can be traced back to Islamic injunctions provided 1400 years ago. Though man has subjugated animals still he is not authorized to do anything to animals. Environmental equilibrium will be damaged if animals are extinct as they are a part of the genesis pyramid. Islamic sacred scripture provides privileges and protection to animals. According to Islam, animals' manipulation by man must be lawful as he will be accountable for that. In the contemporary

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world, there exist diverse legislation, practices, and concerns regarding animals' protection and rights. Highlighting some of these legislations, practices, and concerns, this article will provide an overview of Islamic teachings regarding animal protection and welfare that is much needed for biosafety today.

**Keywords:** Animal, Protection, Rights, Legislation, Environment, Islam

### **Introduction**

Animals are a crucial part of the ecosystem. The arrangement and development of the ecosystem depend a great deal on animals. In modern times a human has recognized the need to protect animals and provide them right as living beings. In the eighteenth century, many organizations and activists are trying to provide legal protection to animals.

Masses are now getting more conscious about animal protection because the number of endangered animals and ecological problems are increasing day by day. Ecological scientists today are trying to understand animals' significance for environmental stability and law experts are struggling to provide legal rights to animals. The main requirement for biosphere stability is to maintain genetic diversity in distinct ecosystems by protecting wild animals, inhabitant traditional way of life, and farming plant/animal genetic resources.<sup>2</sup>

Islam provides universal rights to terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial animals. It offers extensive orders and principles to animals' protection and welfare. Although Allah has made animals subjected to human service at the same time human is accountable for the utilization of the resources he has been provided with. Animal manipulation is allowed for lawful acts but exploitation is prohibited.

## Importance of research

Animals are crucial for the stability of biosphere balance as they are essential for the food chain that sustains life in the environment. Today, many species of animals are endangered due to pollution, population explosion, excessive use, and barbaric treatment by a human. There is legislation for animals' rights but it has failed to protect animals. Islam has imparted extensive teachings regarding animal protection. This research is important because it will explore the Islamic perspective of Animals protection and its significance in the ecological system. Islamic teachings are universal and practical that can provide much-needed animals rights.

### Research Methodology

A descriptive and qualitative methodology has been applied in this research paper to explore the Islamic perspective of animals' protection for safeguarding biodiversity. Various journals, books, magazines, reports as well as chronicles have been consulted. Different laws and acts are referred to in the article to describe modern legislation for animals' rights and protection. Mainly, references from Quran and hadith are provided to explain the Islamic viewpoint regarding animals' protection.

### Animals' significance for environmental sustainability

Animal species are the backbone of maintaining biodiversity. Whenever a species gets threatened, it indicates that the ecosystem is deteriorating. The extinction of a species causes the demise of other species in its environment because a natural food chain exists there. Man relies on functioning ecosystems to filter the air he breathes. Man will not have clean air, water, or land without healthy animals, forests, grasslands, rivers, oceans, and other ecosystems.

For mankind and its environment, animals are the blessing of God. As man is benefited by animals in many ways, such as they provide food items (milk, eggs, meat and other dairy items), clothing (woolen clothes and

leather items), economic profits such as transportation and cultivation aid, social benefits such as house security and safety as well as political aids such as detecting explosives, reserves, and criminal.<sup>3</sup>

#### Legislation for animals' protection

Animals have been subject to maltreatment by human beings since ancient times. Animal protection as a mass movement is a relatively new phenomenon, having emerged in England in the early eighteenth century. Conservatives fighting to rescue animals have sought the help of affluent and influential people whose political influence and economic clout have helped to promote the animal-protection mission from the start. At the very same time, there has always been a high level of friction among those who advocate for continuous progress and those who advocate for revolutionary change. Animal protection organizations were established in both England and the United States in conjunction with the passage of the first wildlife conservation statutes.<sup>4</sup>

Since then, there have been many enactments and laws for the protection of animals. Some of the notable laws are as follows:

- Martin's Anticruelty Act 1822
- Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals 1875
- Protection of Animals Act (England, UK) 1911
- Protection of Animals Act (Scotland, UK) 1912
- Animals Protection Law 1950
- The Protection of Animals (Anesthetics) Acts (UK) 1954
- The Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act (UK) 1962
- Marine Mammal Protection Act 1972
- Animals Protection Act (Germany) 1972
- Protection of Animal Facilities Act 1992

Since the last century, the European Commission has been supporting animals' protection and rights with the assistance and effective

coordination of Member States, steadily improving the lifestyles of farm animals. In 1998, the Council Directive 98/58/EC on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, established general standards for the protection of animals managed to keep for food, wool, skin, or fur, or for another agricultural purpose, such as fish, reptiles, and amphibians, was a significant step forward (EC, 2009).<sup>5</sup>

They are representative of "Five Freedoms" which are recognized all over the world as a standard of animals' welfare.

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst
2. Freedom from discomfort
3. Freedom from pain
4. Freedom from injury
5. Freedom from disease<sup>6</sup>

According to the directive, animals must enjoy these five basic freedoms.

Though there has been frequent legislation on animal rights and welfare in western countries they are failed to get the desired change in scenario.<sup>7</sup>

The modern animal-protection movement has failed to translate the theory of animal rights into a practical and logically consistent strategy for social change, despite its seeming support of the rights perspective.<sup>8</sup>

Theoretically, both human's and animals' welfare needs can be met in both developing and developed countries if resources are effectively managed.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from developed countries, developing and underdeveloped countries are also providing protection and rights to animals. Pakistan has also provided many legal rights to animals in different acts and laws.

Pakistan has specially adopted these laws for the animal's protection:

- The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1890
- Pakistan Karachi Cattle Slaughter Control Act 1950
- The Punjab Animals Slaughter Control Act 1963

- The Pakistan Animal Quarantine (Import and Export of Animals and Animal Products) Ordinance, 1979
- Pakistan Trade Control of Wild Fauna and Flora Act, 2012

Though there are laws and enactment all over the world for animals' protection and rights they are unable to completely protect the animals' species. The proper legislation and rule of law are necessary for this sake, all over the globe.

#### Animals' Significance in Quran

Animals' significance in the ecological system is well-defined and well-known, as they are associated with human needs and demands. Allah Almighty has created animals as an outstanding symbol of his excellence. The significance of animals gets more evident from the fact that Allah has referred to animals in more than a hundred verses of His Holy Book, the Quran. Al-Baqarah (Cow), An-Nahal (The Bee), An-Naml (The Ant), Ankabut (The Spider), Al-Fil (The Elephant) as well as Al-Ina'am (The Cattle) are the verses named after animals.<sup>10</sup>

Allah himself stresses the importance of animals in Quran. As stated in Surah Nahal:

وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا ۚ لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ  
وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بِلِغِيهِ إِلَّا بَشِقًا ۗ وَالْأَنْفُسَ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ  
لَرَّءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

He has created cattle in which there is warmth and other benefits for you, and from them you have food, and in them, there is a beautiful look for you when you drive them home in the evening and take them out to graze. And they carry your loads to a city where you were not able to reach without putting yourselves to arduous labor. Surely, your Lord is Very-Kind, Very-Merciful<sup>11</sup>.

Animals are the creatures of Allah Almighty, just like men. And Quran refers to animals as "Umam" which means nation. Animals are revered as a nation just like human beings.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَيْرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّةٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ  
مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ

There is no creature moving on the earth, nor a bird flying on its two wings, but they are all communities like you.

We have not missed anything in the Book. Then, to their Lord, all of them shall be gathered<sup>12</sup>.

Animals resemble man in many characteristics such as they live in groups as humans; they do feel pain and emotions as humans; they have affection for their newborns just like humans; and much more. So, being species in the ecological setting, they enjoy rights given by Islam. Animals are revered the same as human beings in Islamic tradition.<sup>13</sup>

So, animals protection is a notion that is integrated into basic sources of Islam.

Before Islam, animals used to suffer a lot due to the barbaric behavior of Arabs. They were forced to match or hurt each other for the sake of entertainment. They were targeted by arrows or their body parts were while they were alive. Without sufficient food or water, they were forced to work or travel. There exist no protection laws for animals.<sup>14</sup> Islam protected Animals from this brutality. Islam provided a source code of animal rights. Holy Prophet awarded so many rights to animals that were not even offered to humans of other communities at that time.<sup>15</sup>

All living species, including mankind, animals, birds, and insects, are worthy of kindness and concern since they are Allah's creatures. Animals have a definite place and function in the creation system, according to Islamic teachings. They were created to meet the diverse needs of

humanity. Humans, on the other hand, have been instructed not to waste animals' life and treat them in a good way.<sup>16</sup>

Islam forbids its adherents from abusing and torturing animals. Numerous examples of love, mercy, and empathy for animals may be found throughout the Holy Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic civilization's history.

Many kinds of animals exist on earth, in the air and water habitats. Numerous classes of animals are found in sciences but animals are generally classified into three major groups:

- a) Terrestrial Animals
- b) Aquatic Animals
- c) Aerial Animals

#### 1) Terrestrial Animals and Islam

Terrestrial or land animals are the animals that spend their whole or partial lifespan on earth (mountains, grounds, deserts or grassland, etc.). It consists of the major group of animals that are in danger because of human development and scientific advancement. Islam gives due importance to animals on earth and mentions them in Quran in different ways. Sometimes the Creator points to some animals to show his greatness, majesty, and perfect creations.

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ

So, do they not look at the camels how they are created<sup>17</sup>,

Most of the terrestrial animals are mentioned in Quran in the context of Halal and Haram. Allah has made plenty of terrestrial animals permissible for men except some grimy animals. The polytheists of Makkah had forbidden some animals to themselves due to Satan's seduction, Allah said in Quran addressing his Prophet (PBUH) that the animals which you have made lawful or unlawful on their part are not mentioned anywhere in the

command of Allah. So, the animals are permissible for mankind, until they find any forbiddance.

قُلْ لَا آجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا  
مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رَجْسٌ أَوْ فَسَقًا أَهْلًا لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ ؕ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ  
وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say, I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything (out of the cattle under discussion) prohibited for anyone who eats it, unless it is carrion or blood that pours forth or flesh of swine - because it is impure - or there be an animal slaughtered sinfully by invoking on it the name of someone other than Allah. However, if anyone is compelled by necessity, neither seeking pleasure nor crossing the limit, then your Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful<sup>18</sup>.

It shows the significance and importance of animals in Islam that it is disliked not to use permissible animals.

## 2) Aquatic/Marine Animals and Islam

Aquatic animals need a constant supply of water to sustain life. Distinct traits of aquatic animals help them to live in water. Animals living in water habitats are permitted by Allah, as mentioned in Surah Maidah,

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ

Made lawful for you is the game of the sea and eating thereof, as a benefit for you and travelers.<sup>19</sup>

Islamic scholar (Ulama) and jurists (Fuqaha) have discussed many aquatic animals (Either it's lawful or unlawful to eat them). All the animals are lawful (Halal) for eating purposes after slaughtering, but a prominent aquatic animal, fish can be eaten without slaughtering. According to a Hadith of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), two dead animals have been made lawful, naming locusts and fish.<sup>20</sup>

A narration shows that the companions of the Holy Prophet had their living from fish. As narrated by Jabir bin Abdullah (R.A): The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent us, (we were) three hundred men, carrying our provisions on our necks. Our provisions ran out until there would be for (every) man among us one date (a day)." Then it was said: "O Abu 'Abdullah, how can one date satisfy a man?" He said: "When we no longer had it, we realized how much it was worth. Then we came to the sea and found a whale that had been thrown up by the sea, and we ate from it for eighteen days."<sup>21</sup>

Explanations show that when the Companions returned to Madinah, they mentioned it to the Holy Prophet (PBUH), he commented: "This is the food that Allah sent you". So marine life is a blessing of Allah.

The first meal that will be served to Heavenly people will be seafood, too.

The first thing people in heaven will eat is an enlarged portion of the fish's liver.<sup>22</sup>

### 3) Aerial Animals and Islam

Aerial animals are those creatures that can float in the air on their strength, usually attributed to the capacity to fly such as birds and some insects.<sup>23</sup> The major group of aerial animals is the birds that are crucial for the ecological system.

Birds play an important part in pollination. Birds help fertilize plants as when they feed nectar flying from one plant to another plant, pollination occurs. Because of this mutualistic relation between plants and birds, the environment sustains. If birds are extinct, plants will not nourish because of losing a major pollinator.<sup>24</sup> So aerial animals need to be protected as, without them, plants species will also disappear. Allah has mentioned aerial animals in Quran, as His praising and worshipping creatures.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرِ صَفْتٍ ۖ كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ  
وَتَسْبِيحَهُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ

Did you not realize that purity of Allah is proclaimed by all those in the heavens and the earth, and by the birds with their wings spread out? Everyone knows one's own (way of) praying (to Allah) and one's own (way of) proclaiming Allah's purity. And Allah knows well what they do<sup>25</sup>.

Birds are revered in Islam and there are many birds mentioned in Quran, such as Hoopoe (Hud-Hud) is mentioned twice In the story of Prophet Suleiman (A.S) in Surah Namal.<sup>26</sup>

Before Islam, birds were cursed and blown in the sky as ritual disbelief. Holy Prophet (PBUH) referred to blowing birds as one of the rituals of disbelief.<sup>27</sup>

Protection of Animals: An Islamic Perspective

a) Protection of Life

Animals are crucial to sustaining biodiversity. Unnecessarily killing of animals is banned in Islam. In Islam, due protection is provided to animals and it is strictly prohibited to kill animals unlawfully. As 'Abdullah ibn Amr narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever unjustly kills a sparrow or even a small bird, Allah will ask him about it."<sup>28</sup>

This hadith shows the reverence of even a small animal and gives it the right to live. Islam is the unique religion that makes the man accountable even for killing a small sparrow.

b) Protection of being tied/targeted to kill

Islam has given due protection to animals. Before Islam, it was normal to tie an animal and kill it targeting by arrows or any other weapon. After tying up, an animal feels much more pain, as he even can't move to show his agony. Islam made it prohibited to kill the animal that is tied up.

Sa'id bin Jubair reported that Ibn 'Umar happened to pass by some young men of the Quraish who had tied a bird (and then, made it a target) at which they had been shooting arrows. Every arrow that they missed came into the possession of the owner of the bird. So, no sooner did they see Ibn 'Umar they went away. Thereupon Ibn 'Umar said: Who has done this? Allah has cursed him who does this. Verily Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) invoked curse upon one who made a live thing the target (of one's marksmanship)<sup>29</sup>

Usually, people used to tie up the birds and target kill them for the sake of entertainment. This act was condemned by Islam. Even Holy Prophet (PBUH) is prohibited to eat a bird that has been targeted after tying up.<sup>30</sup>

#### c) Protection from Cruelty and Sufferings

Islam is the revealed religion that protects and sustains all the creatures on earth. Islam has strongly condemned agonizing and suffering animals. Arab nomads used to treat animals in a barbaric manner such as the killing of animals after tying them, targeting them, or cutting their body parts alive. Holy Prophet (PBUH) forbade cutting the flesh of a living animal. And if someone, do it, eating that body part is prohibited (Haram).<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) barred people from making animals fight each other.<sup>32</sup> As it is cruel on animals to force them to contest and harm each other.

The cursing of animals also causes suffering. Jabir bin Abdullah (R.A) narrates: We set out along with Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) on an expedition of Batn Buwat. He (the Holy Prophet) was in search of al-Majdi b. 'Amr al-Juhani. (We had so meager equipment) that five, six or seven of us had one camel to ride and so we mounted it turn by turn. Once there was the turn of an Ansari to ride upon the camel. He made it kneel to ride over it (and after having, mounted it), he tried to raise it but it hesitated. So, he

said. May there be the curse of Allah upon you! Thereupon Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Who is there to curse his camel? He said: Allah's Messenger, it' is I. Thereupon he said: Get down from the camel and let us not have in our company the cursed one. Don't curse selves, nor your children. nor your belongings. There is the possibility that your curse may synchronize with the time when Allah is about to confer upon you what you demand and thus your prayer may be readily responded to.<sup>33</sup>

Before Islam, people used to cauterize animals on the face or body parts that cause aching of the animal. Once the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) passed by a donkey whose face was burnt. He (PBUH) said: May Allah curse him who did it (as it caused hurt his face).<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, Islam strictly prohibits beating, torturing, hitting, and causing agony to animals. Even while slaughtering, Islam directs humane patterns to save the animals from unnecessary pain.

#### d) Caring for animal

Animal protection is not limited to safeguarding animals from murder or cruelty, rather it also includes taking care of animals. If a person is made the owner of an animal, he will be answerable for him. And if he is unable to care for him and uninhibited him, then the person who can protect him and provide him care will be his owner.

It is narrated by Amir-Ash-Shabi that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said that: If someone obtains an animal whose possessors were destitute or failed to offer feedstuff to it and so they turned it out (of their house), and he took it and looked after it, it will belong to him.<sup>35</sup>

It clearly expresses that the ownership of an animal is conditional on his care and sustenance. So, Islam as a universal and comprehensive religion not only protects animals' species but also provides them rights to nurture.

## Conclusion

Every creature of the animal species has a distinct role to play in the ecosystem. Endangering animals are a sign of risking the ecological system. Islam has safeguarded animals by providing them with inviolable rights. Man, despite being a superior creature is not authorized to maltreat animals. Animals' protection is encouraged by Quran and Hadith. Islam threatens people of accountability and punishment in the hereafter who abuse, hurt, and endanger animals. This article concludes that Animals are crucial for maintaining the biosphere's equilibrium and there are many laws made by humans for animals' protection. Islam has rich, universal, and extensive traditions, laws, and principles for the protection and welfare of terrestrial, aquatic and aerial animals that can practically provide solutions to ecological problems. Animals are free from geographical discernment, so uniform legislation and other approaches should be opted in accordance with Islamic teachings to protect animals for environmental sustainability.

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