

ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION: THE MUSLIM VIEWPOINT ON ANIMAL TESTING AND ISLAM

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The question of the use of animals in science cannot be studied in isolation. To appreciate its full implications, it must be addressed against the backdrop of the similarities and differences that exist between humans and the rest of the animated world. How we understand these similarities and differences- indeed, how we answer the question at hand - is greatly influenced by our response to two more fundamental questions:

- (i) Can man's claim to being the apex of value in the world be justified?
- (ii) If a distinctively religious justification of this claim is offered, what are its moral implications for how humans may treat other forms of life, animals in particular?

For the Islamic approach to these questions, we have three sources of guidance. The original source is the Quran, the holy book revealed to the prophet Muhammad during a period of 22 years, from 610 to 632 C.E. The second source is Hadith or "tradition" in English, an instructional corollary to the Quran based on the sayings and deeds of the Prophet. Hadith is considered in Islamic jurisprudence as an explanatory appendix to the Quranic law. In case these two sources do not lay down a clear-cut statute in a particular case, the Muslim jurists (*muftis*) refer to the legal assertions based on precedent, precedents set mainly during the period of the first four caliphs (from 632 to 656 C.E.). Only in that comparatively rare case when there is no precedent does the mufti issue a new judicial decree, and even here it must be consonant with the time-honored customary law that is based on general Muslim practices. To approach the distinctively Islamic answer to the questions before us thus requires that we refer to each of the authoritative sources mentioned - to the Quran, to Hadith, and to customary law. The main tenets of this last source will be summarized further on. To begin with, we will confine our attention to the teachings of the Quran and Hadith.

KORAN MUSLIM ANIMAL TESTING VIVISECTION

1. ANIMAL PSYCHES AND COMMUNITIES

The Quran and Hadith instruct us that all species of animals are "communities" like the human community. In other words, they are communities in their own right and not merely in relation to humankind or its values. The exact words of the Quran are:

There is not an animal on earth
Nor a bird that flies on its wings,
But they are communities like you.
(ch. 6 v. 38.)

According to the learned commentators of the Quran, the word communities is used here in the sense of genera and animals and birds for all kinds of vertebrates, quadrupeds, mammals, birdlike mammals such as bats, crustaceans, reptiles, worms, and insects. They all live a life, individual and social, like the members of the human society.

To define what it means by the "communities of animals," the Quran says:

Allah has created every animal from water:
Of them there are some that creep on their bellies:
Some that walk on two legs:
And some that walk on four.

(ch. 24 v. 45.)

The first category includes all kinds of worms, reptiles, centipedes, insects, and all such creatures. The second category includes birds and human beings; and the third category covers all kinds of mammals. The significant point to note is that, physically, humans have been put in the same bracket as all other creatures.

The following Hadith leaves no ambiguity about the sense in which the Quran uses the word "communities":

Abu Huraira reported the Prophet Muhammad as telling of an incident that happened to a prophet in the past. This prophet was stung by an ant and, in anger, he ordered the whole of the nest of ants to be burned. At this God reprimanded this prophet in these words: "Because one ant stung you, you have burned a whole community which glorified Me."¹

One of the reasons why the human and all other species have been classified together throughout the Quran is that even animals possess a psyche. Although their psychic force is of a lower level than that of human beings, there is ample evidence in the Quran to suggest that animals' consciousness is of a higher degree than mere instinct and intuition.

We are told in the Quran that animals have a cognizance of their Creator, and hence they pay their obeisance to him by adoration and worship. Out of the many verses of the Quran on this proposition, a few must suffice here:

Seest thou not that it is Allah Whose praises are celebrated
By all beings in the heavens and on earth,
And by the birds with extended wings?
Each one knows its own [mode of] prayer and psalm.
And Allah is aware of what they do.

(ch. 24 v. 41.)

The statement that "Each one knows its own prayer and psalm" is worth noting. The execution of a voluntary act, performed knowingly and intentionally, requires a faculty higher than those of instinct and intuition.

In the event that some may doubt that animals could have such a faculty, the following verse points out that it is human ignorance, not animals, that prevent us from understanding their celebration of God.

The seven heavens and the earth and all things therein, Declare His glory,
There is not a thing but celebrates His praise;
And yet ye mankind! ye understand not
How do they declare His glory.

(ch. 17 v. 44.)

The following verse tells us how all the elements of nature and all the animal kingdom function in harmony with God's laws; only some humans disobey and so bring affliction on themselves. The Quran dwells on this subject repeatedly to emphasize the point that humans should bring themselves into harmony with nature, as the rest of creation does:

Seest thou not that unto Allah payeth adoration
All things that are in the heavens and on earth;
The sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, the trees, the animals;
And a large number among mankind?
But there are many [humans] who do not,
And deserve chastisement.

(ch. 22 v. 18.)

It is understood that the inanimate elements of nature perform the act of worshipping God without verbal communication by functioning in conformity with the divine ordinances known as the laws of nature.

In the case of animals, however, the Quran teaches that God actually communicates with them, as the following verse shows:

And your Lord revealed to the bee, saying:
Make hives in the mountains,
And in the trees,
And in [human] habitations.

(ch. 16 v. 68.)

It is anybody's guess what form God's communication with animals takes. We know only that the Quran uses the same Arabic word *Wahi* for God's revelations to all his prophets, including Prophet Muhammad, as well as to the bee. It is obvious that the connotation of God's revelations to his messengers would be different from that of his revelations to animals. But this is too complex a theological subject that cannot be dealt with here. Nevertheless, it proves the basic fact that animals have enough psychic endowment to understand and follow God's messages - a faculty higher than instinct and intuition.

Animals are not inferior to us because they have a different vocal apparatus; nor does the fact that they cannot make articulate speech, like we can, mean that they are "contemptible dumb animals." Science has proved now that they communicate not only with each other but also with humans, at least enough to express their social interests and biological needs. Those of us who enjoy the privilege of a loving and caring relationship with our pets will bear witness to this fact.

With the aid of modern technology, naturalists have made some progress in deciphering bird and animal languages. But, according to the Quranic evidence, humans had acquired this lore as early as the time of King Solomon, son of Prophet David. Perhaps in those times human civilization was nearer to nature than it is today. The Quranic verse runs like this: "And Solomon was David's heir, and he said: / 'O ye people! we have been taught the speech of birds.'" (ch. 27 v. 16.)

MUHAMMED'S BELIEFS ANIMAL TESTING EXPERIMENTS RESEARCH

2. MANS' PLACE IN THE ORDER OF SPECIES ISLAMIC VIEW

Man's superiority over other species does not lie in his physique. As a matter of fact, physically, man is inferior to animals in many respects. The babbler birds of the Nagib desert could teach us a lesson or two in family bonds when the elder brothers and sisters take charge of the fledglings in the arbors; or we could learn much from the acrobatics of monkeys. What chance has a human ballerina against the poise and grace of a flying squirrel's aerial dance?

Imam Ali bin Abi Talib has this to say about animals' exemplary way of life, which is worthy

of imitation by humans "Be like a bee; anything he eats is clean, anything he drops is sweet and any branch he sits upon does not break."²

The real criterion of man's superiority in Islamic thought lies in his spiritual volition, called *Taqawah* in the Quran. This spiritual power bestows on humans a greater measure of balance between their conscious and unconscious minds, thus enabling them to make the best use of their freedom. They are considered the best of God's creation only because of this difference. Without the proper exercise of this power, our superiority would be groundless.

There are quite a few men and women with beautiful and strong bodies walking about on this earth who, because of their lack of willpower, have absolutely no claim of superiority over animals. The Quran describes such people as originally "created in the best make" but, because of their lack of discipline, they are "rendered as the lowest of the low" (ch. 95 vv. 4, 5):

Those who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath.
Those some of whom He debased into apes and swine...
(ch. 5 v. 63.)

They are like cattle, - nay, more misguided; for they are heedless
[of warning.]
(ch. 7v. 179.)

Man has been endowed with the ability to differentiate between evil and virtue and to exercise his freedom of choice.

In the words of Hazlitt: "Man is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be." Animals do not possess this freedom of choice. That is why the Quran characterizes those humans who fall short of this endowment as the "lowest of the low." The following verse emphasizes the point:

And be not like those who said: "we hear"
While they did not pay attention;
The vilest of beasts, in the sight of Allah,
Are the deaf and the dumb-
Those who do not comprehend.
(ch. 8 vv. 21, 22.)

The Imam Ali says about such people: "The worldly-minded people are like barking dogs and wild beasts, some of them roar on others, the strong ones eat the weak and the big ones hurt the small."³ And again, writing of those who misuse their freedom, he says: "A savage and ferocious beast is better than a wicked and tyrant ruler."⁴

Islamic teaching concerning the inter-relation and interdependence between human beings and the rest of the animated world is very explicit, consisting of an elaborate code of laws (Shariah). These begin with the dictum that man has designated the authority as the vicegerent of God on earth. The Quran mentions this repeatedly, but the following verse provides a good example: "He [God] it is who made you vicegerents on earth; / So he who disavows, will bear its consequences." (ch. 35 v. 39.)

While elaborating the responsibilities of this office, the Quran lays great emphasis on the development of godly attributes in man. Compassion, love, mercy, justice, charity – these are among the divine attributes that, as his vicegerent, we are enjoined to acquire as we work to establish his kingdom on earth in harmony with his laws of nature. This kingdom of

God is not meant to be only a human domain. God's mercy encompasses all creation, including the animal kingdom. Called to administer justice and grace over the whole of his kingdom, man cannot succeed if he fails to nurture in himself the attributes embodied infinitely in God.

Contrary to certain scientific theories, Islam believes that the divine design of animated nature includes some unalterable factors, providentially created and preserved in the origin of species, to keep species distinct from one another. Territorial, climatic, and other such evolutionary or devolutionary processes may change the ethological characteristics or anatomical structures of these species. In their struggle for existence, animals may learn how to camouflage themselves to distract attention or to deceive by impersonation or manipulation of their environment. However, no species can transgress beyond the distinct orbit that is ordained for it by the divine law, commonly known as predestination or fate. Within the biological world, some things are unalterable.

The religious concept of predestination or fate has played a significant role in determining the Islamic code of human behavior toward animals. According to the Vedic philosophy, all suffering is meted out by Nemesis, the goddess of retribution, for one's misdeeds in the previous existence, and there is nothing one can do to stop the wheel of any creature's fateful Karma. Unfortunately, some of the believers in all the major religions, including Islam, have failed to understand the real import of the theory of predestination taught by all the religions in their respective ways. This lack of understanding has been one of the causes of human indifference toward animal suffering.

According to Islam, the literal interpretation of the theory of predestination is "pre-fixing the fate of some one or some thing" in the sense of determining the capacity, capability, endowment, function, and other faculties. The Quran uses the Arabic word *Taqdir* meaning fate for the fixed orbits of the planetary motions as well as for the inorganic substances and for animated creatures, including human beings. Within those pre-fixed limitations, however, conditions could be changed for the better - for example, suffering could be avoided or lessened by human effort and skill.

A true conception of the Islamic maxim "there is an antidote for every ailment" could become an antidote for the prevalent apathy and fatalistic resignation not only to the evil plight of animals but also to much of human suffering.

ANIMAL TESTING EXPERIMENTS FOR MUSLIM ISLAM

3. THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM ON ANIMAL WELFARE

Thus far we have discussed the relative status and importance of animals in nature, their psychic faculties, and their communicative capacities. We have also elucidated some of the causes of man's malevolence toward animals and his indifference to their welfare.

The teachings of Islam offer a good deal of guidance for animal welfare. All the sources of Islamic instruction, especially the Quran, place great emphasis on nature study as a prelude to a better understanding of life as one homogeneous organism. The Quran is full of verses exhorting humans to study nature - the planetary systems, the terrestrial elements, the fauna and flora on our earth. The real purport of this repeated appeal in the Quran is to give credence to the existence of the Godhead as the primal originator of the universe. But the point that concerns us here is that the animal kingdom has a very prominent place in these citations. There are so many verses in the Quran on this theme that it is not feasible to quote them in this paper. The overall approach is to accentuate the importance and utility of all life on earth.⁵

MUSLIM VIEWS ON ANIMAL TESTING RESEARCH IN THE KORAN

PRESERVATION OF SPECIES KORAN

Wherever the Quran speaks of creation, it speaks of creation in pairs. According to the Quran, not only the humans and the fauna but also every kind of flora has been created in male and female sexes. Today we know, on scientific grounds, that all plants, like animals, possess generative organs. The Quran could not have been more pellucid in expression on this subject more than 14 centuries ago. The following verses emphasize the salient point that each species has been conditioned biologically to procreate in order to perpetuate its kind and, thus, to go on playing its role in the created order:

[God is] the Originator of the heavens and the earth;
He has created mates for you from among yourselves,
And mates of the cattle too,
Multiplying you thereby.

(ch. 42 v. 11.)

Glory be to Him Who created all the pairs,
Of that which the earth grows,
And of themselves [human beings],
And of that which they do not know.

(ch. 36 v. 36.)

[My Lord is He] Who spread out for you
The earth like a carpet;
And made for you therein paths;
And sent down water from the cloud.
Then thereby We have produced
Diverse pairs of plants-
Each distinct from the other.

(ch. 20 v. 53.)

And We cause floras of every kind
To grow as spouses.

(ch. 31 v. 10.)

And it is He who spread out the earth ...
And of all fruit He produced therein,
As spouses of two and two.

(ch. 13 v. 3.)

The story of Noah's ark is well known. The Quran tells it in chapter 11, verses 36 to 48:

When the deluge came and the flooding of the whole area was imminent, there was the danger that some of the species of animals or birds might be exterminated. At such a time God's main concern was to save at least one pair of each species, along with the faithful followers of Noah; and He gave Noah the following instructions:

"Load in the Ark two of all species-
One male and one female of each pair."

(ch. 11 v. 40.)

These observations of the Quran lay down two basic principles: first, that the preservation of species is of paramount importance; second, that the divine scheme of regeneration works

through the opposite but complementary forces of Nature not only in animals and plants but also in the inorganic matter. Modern science has discovered that the whole order of nature is functioning according to the law of parity. The Quran refers to this law in the preceding verses.

ANIMALS' FAIR SHARE IN FOOD ISLAMIC VIEWS KORAN

In the Islamic view, animals are tenants in common with humans. Let us see now why some humans do not act according to the terms of this partnership.

Man has always been in competition with animals for food, and the problem has been aggravated in the modern world, especially because of human overpopulation.

The Quran tried to allay this fear of man by reassuring him that God is not only the creator but also the nourisher of all that he creates. For human beings, however, the Quran lays down the condition that they will have to work for their sustenance and that their emolument will be proportionate to their labor. The following verse serves as the maxim for this principle:

And that man shall have nothing
But what he strives for.
(ch. 53 v. 39.)

In the next verse, this stipulation is repeated in the words "those who seek," with the additional proviso that God provides according to the needs of the people:

And [God] bestowed blessings on the earth,
And measured therein sustenance in due proportion ...,
In accordance [with the needs of those who seek
(ch. 41 v. 10.)

The conditions laid down in these two verses for human beings to work for the necessities of life seem to be conveniently ignored by some people. Some of us tend to rely on God's beneficence and to just lie down on our backs with our mouths open and wait for the manna from heaven to fall. Others have invented dubious ways and means to get more than their share by as little work as possible. Some of those who do work muscle in and poach on others' preserves:

As for animals, the Quran repeatedly emphasizes the fact that food and other resources of nature are there to be shared equitably with other creatures. Below are just a few of many such verses:

Then let man look at his food:
How we pour water in showers,
Then turn up the earth into furrow-slices,
And cause cereals to grow therein-
And grapes and green fodder,
And olive-trees and palm-trees,
And luxuriant orchards,
And fruits and grasses.

Let us stop at this point of the quotation and ask ourselves the question: For what and for whom has this sumptuous meal been laid out? The last line of the verse tells us that all these bounties of nature are as "provision for you as well as for your cattle." (ch. 80 vv. 24-32.)

Again, in the following verse, the bounties of nature are enumerated, with the accent on animals' share in all of them:

And He [God] it is Who sends the winds
As glad tidings heralding His mercy;
And We send down pure water from the clouds:
That We may give life thereby,
By watering the parched earth,
And slake the thirst of those We have created-
Both the animals and the human beings
In multitude.

(ch. 25 vv. 48, 49.)

And what is the reason for creating everything, viz., the cosmos as an ordered whole, the dark nights and the bright days, the earth with its immense expanse, shooting forth its moisture and its pastures, and the stable mountains - all this has been created for whom and why? The Quranic answer, again, is "as a provision for you and your cattle." (ch. 28 v. 33.)

And do they not see?
That We meander water to a barren land,
And sprout forth from its crops-
Whereof their cattle as well as they themselves eat;
Will they take no notice of it?

(ch. 32 v. 27.)

One could obtain the impression from these verses that refer only to livestock in whose welfare we have a vested interest. But the message of the Quran, in this context, comprehends the entire animal kingdom, as is made clear in the following verses:

There is no moving creature on earth,
But Allah provides for its sustenance.

(ch. 11 v. 6.)

In the words of Moses, as recorded in the Quran:

Surely the earth belongs to Allah;
He bequeaths it to whosoever He pleases
Of His servants.

(ch. 7 v. 128.)

And the earth!
He has assigned to (all) living creatures.

(ch. 55 v. 10.)

The Quran has recounted the history of some past nations to show how they fell into error and perished. We come across a pertinent incident that is relevant to our discussion here. The tribe of Samood were the descendants of Noah. Their name is also mentioned in the Ptolemaic records of Alexander's astronomer of the second century. The people of Samood demanded that the Prophet Saleh show them some sign to prove that he was a prophet of God. At that time the tribe was experiencing a dearth of food and water and was, therefore, neglecting its livestock. It was revealed to the Prophet Saleh to single out a she-camel as a symbol and ask his people to give her her fair share of water and fodder. The people of Samood promised to do that, but later killed the camel. As a retribution, the tribe was annihilated (ch. 11 v. 64; ch. 26 vv. 155, 156; ch. 54 vv. 27-31).

This historic incident sets forth the essence of the Quran's teaching on "animal rights." Cruelty to animals is so offensive to God that it is declared as a serious sin, as quoted in two Ahadith in the conclusion of this paper. Cruelty to animals does not end there. It generates sadistic characteristics leading to acts of cruelty against fellow human beings. The last Hadith quoted in this paper elucidates this psychological weakness of human nature.

ANIMAL RIGHTS AND ISLAM VIEWS

4. ISLAMIC LAWS ANIMALS

Islam's concern for animals goes beyond the prevention of cruelty to them which, logically, is a negative proposition. On the positive side, Islam enjoins us to take responsibility for the welfare of all creatures. In the spirit of the positive philosophy of life, we are to be their active protectors. Even in the case of cruelty, prevention of physical cruelty to animals is not enough; mental cruelty is equally condemned. In the following Hadith, a bird's emotional distress, for example, is called an injury:

We were on a journey with the apostle of God, who left us for a short space. We saw a hummara [a bird] with its two young, and took the young birds. The hummara hovered with fluttering wings, and the prophet returned, saying, "Who has injured this bird by taking its young? Return them to her."⁶

Islam, like most other religions, has laid down a code of law governing the use of animals for the necessities of our life. The second source of guidance, mentioned earlier, comprises specific instructions regarding the treatment of domestic animals, beasts of burden, pets, and other such animals who have become a part of human society.

The spirit and letter of these laws strongly deprecate all direct or indirect acts of cruelty to animals, such as:

- (i) Subjecting animals to pain, both physical and, as we have just seen, mental, or killing them for sport, such as in blood sports and fishing, except for food.
- (ii) Killing them for luxuries (for their fur or tusks, for example) or for other inessential by-products, such as cosmetics.
- (iii) Depriving free-born animals and birds of their natural life by enclosing them in zoos, cages, and aquariums, except when this is necessary for their safety and preservation.
- (iv) Breeding animals and birds in confined and unhygienic conditions, an increasingly common practice in modern farming.
- (v) Using snares, leghold traps, and other contraptions that maim and cause lingering death.
- (vi) Finally, using animals in painful, disfiguring, or terminal research or studies in science.

We will discuss this last category more fully below. First, however, a few words about the Islamic traditions and teachings on animal slaughter and cruelty.

TRADITIONAL ANIMAL SLAUGHTER MUSLIM ISLAM VIEWS

The Islamic traditional method of slaughter, like that of Judaism, dispenses with preslaughter stunning. Western animal welfare workers are at a loss to understand why, in spite of all the Islamic concern we have seen in the foregoing pages for animal well-being, the Muslims are adamant in rejecting the use of preslaughter stunners. Even the apparently convincing sayings of Prophet Muhammad, as quoted below, are not helpful in resolving the issue:

Shaddad bin Aus reported God's Messenger as saying: "God Who is Blessed and Exalted has declared that everything should be done in a good way; so when you kill, use a good method, and when you cut an animal's throat, you should use a good method; for each of you should sharpen his knife and give the animal as little pain as possible."⁷

Even a cursory discussion of this subject is beyond the scope of this paper, especially if the perennial controversy between the vegetarian and the nonvegetarian disciplines is included. In the absence of any central religious authority within the Islamic community of nations, such as the caliphate, each country's accredited jurists (muftis) decide whether or not a particular thought or action conforms to the ecclesiastical tenets of the Islamic law (Shariah). The jurisprudential procedure involved in this approach has been explained earlier. The recent scientific and technological demands for modulation in our respective conventions are putting pressure on all religions. Less than half a century ago, no one had even heard of the stunners and no mufti had ever thought of slaughtering animals by stunning them prior to the use of a sharp knife. Today, mainly because of intercontinental emigration and the interlacing of cultures, such problems have become conspicuous and must be addressed.

The only way to solve the controversial problem of the use of stunners is to go to each of the major Islamic countries and demonstrate to the accredited muftis that the use of stunners meets the laws of the Islamic Shariah. If and only if they are convinced, they will give their written approval of the use of stunners. Such a jointly issued decree or *fatwah* will go a long way in convincing the Muslim population once and for all. The occasionally published opinions of individual Muslim theologians or the *Ulama'a* are not enough to resolve the issue one way or the other. Such opinions become more misleading when they are expressed by people who pose as Muslims when they are not. Many such opinions circulating in the West have been issued by members of a splinter group called *Ahmadics* but generally known as *Mirzaics*. They are a separate cult and have unanimously been declared non-Muslim by the Muslim world.

Animal sacrifice is another issue that is not easy for Westerners to understand or condone. This subject, too, although very relevant to the theme of this book, is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it seems appropriate to explain briefly why and with what provisos this pre-Islamic practice was incorporated in Islam.

From the beginning of the recorded history of religion, man has been offering animal sacrifices at the altars of Deilics. During the early stages of man's spiritual development, it was not uncommon to make human sacrifices. According to the Quranic records, it was through the Prophet Abraham that humans were replaced by animals when Abraham was commanded by God to replace a ram for his son as a sacrifice. The Prophet Moses continued with the sacrifice of animals.

Islam also carried on with this practice, but with a difference. It channeled the whole concept of animal sacrifice into an institution of charity. Instead of burning the meat of the sacrificed animal at the altar or letting it rot, Islam ordered it to be distributed either wholly or partly among the poor. Since then Muslims from all over the world sacrifice animals and distribute the meat among the poor in their neighborhoods. Especially during the Festival of Sacrifice (Idd al-Adha), which the Muslims celebrate annually in commemoration of Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, every Muslim who can afford it is required to offer this animal sacrifice and distribute the meat among the poor, keeping a portion for his own consumption.

Every Muslim is aware of the fact that the sacrifice would lose its intrinsic merit if the meat were allowed to go to waste and did not reach the poor. In chapter 22, verses 28 and 36,

the Quran states this proviso very clearly.

It is very unfortunate that much of the meat of animals sacrificed during the festival of Mecca goes to waste. The pilgrims who offer this sacrifice know that this waste nullifies its merit and reduces their offering to a mere ritual, but they seek consolation in the belief that the moral responsibility lies with the government authorities. Many Muslim theologians have drawn the attention of the Meccan authorities to this breach of the spirit of Islamic law. It is to be hoped that some day something will be done about it.⁸

Another relevant point to understand in this respect is that the age-old concepts of atonement for sins or peace-offerings to God by way of animal sacrifices were discredited by Islam. According to verse 37, chapter 22:

It is not their meat, nor their blood,
That reaches Allah;
It is your piety that reaches Him.

ANIMAL CRUELTY THE KORAN AND ISLAM

ISLAMIC TEACHINGS ON ANIMAL WELFARE EXPERIMENTS

Many practices in the West, because they involve cruelty to animals, are not only against the spirit of Islam but also against the teachings of all religions. Factory farming is an example. Perhaps the most distressing aspect of this development is that the so-called underdeveloped and developing countries of the world have begun to emulate their Western models. Better and quicker profits, plus the feeling that "civilized" Western society has given its tacit approval to the intensive rearing of farm animals, are eroding the gentler and more humane methods once the rule in these countries. The same is true in the case of other cruel practices now current in the West. Cruelty to animals seems to export well.

Islam has a number of things to say about the general treatment of animals. Iman Ali has laid down the following maxim in simple words: "Be kind to pack animals; do not hurt them; and do not load them more than their ability to bear."⁹

The late Maulana Maududi was an internationally honored Muslim theologian of this century and the founder of a movement called *Jama'at-i-Islami*. His views are very pertinent to our subject:

God has honored man with authority over His countless creatures.... This superior position ... does not mean that God has given him unbridled liberty. Islam says that all the creation has certain rights upon man. They are: he should not waste them on pointless ventures nor should he unnecessarily hurt or harm them. We have been forbidden to kill them merely for fun or sport. Killing an animal by causing continuous pain and injury is considered abominable in Islam. ... It does not allow their killing (even of dangerous and venomous animals) by resort to prolonged painful methods. To catch birds and imprison them in cages without any special purpose is considered abominable.¹⁰

Maulana Maududi's advice about beasts of burden is the same as that of Imam Ali, quoted above.

In spite of modern mechanization, animals are still very much in use in farming and transport, especially in the rural areas of the East. Their use, and sometimes their misuse,

often entails great labor and hardship for them.

Islam's directives in this respect are very specific, as the few Ahadith we will cite show: "The Prophet once passed by a camel whose belly claved to its back. 'Fear God,' said he, 'in these dumb animals, and ride when they are fit to be ridden, and let them go free when it is meet they should rest.'"¹¹

The following Hadith lays down the principle that animals should be used only for the purpose for which they are meant and only for the necessities of life: "Abu Huraira reports that the prophet said: 'Do not use the backs of your beasts as pulpits, for God has made them subject to you in order that they may bring you to a town you could not otherwise reach without fatigue of body.'"¹²

Daily prayer is one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith. The following Hadith shows that even this very important obligation used to be deferred by the Prophet and his companions in favor of the comfort of animals: "Anas says: 'When we stopped at a halt, we did not say our prayers until we had unburdened the camels.'"¹³

5. VIVISECTION EXPERIMENTS ON ANIMALS ISLAM MUHAMMAD KORAN

During the pre-Islamic period, certain pagan superstitions and polytheistic practices involving acts of cruelty to animals used to be in vogue in Arabia. All such practices were condemned and stopped by Islam. The following few verses of the Quran and a few Ahadith deal with this theme:

It was not Allah Who instituted [the heretical practices such as] a
slit-ear she-camel,
Or a she-camel let loose for free pasture
Or camels let loose.

(ch. 5 v. 106.)

This verse was cited in condemnation of the pagan superstition that the she-camels, ewes, and nanny goats who had brought forth five young ones, the last of which was a male, should have their ears slit. In the next verse, such practices were declared as Satanic aids in sharp words:

Allah cursed him [Satan], but he [Satan] said:
"I will get hold of some of your men,
And I will lead them [human beings] astray
And I will excite in them vain desires;
And I will incite them to cut off the ears of cattle;
And most certainly I will bid them to alter the Nature
Created by Allah."

(ch. 4vv. 118, 119.)

When the Prophet came to Medina, after his flight from Mecca in 622 C.E., the people there used to cut off camels' humps and the fat tails of sheep. The Prophet ordered this odious practice stopped and declared: "Whatever is cut off an animal, while it is alive, is carrion and must not be eaten."¹⁴ These verses refer to cutting living animals for food or as an offering to idols or gods. But the Islamic prohibition against cutting live animals, especially when pain results, can be extended to vivisection in science. However, vivisection should not be confused with the dissection of a living animal, amputation of parts of its body, and other surgical operations that become imperative as medical treatment, even if they disfigure the animal. We are able to support this interpretation of Islamic teaching by referring to a number of representative traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. In them we find expressed

the principle that any interference with the body of an animal that causes pain or disfigurement is contrary to Islamic precepts.

Jabir reported the Prophet as saying, when an ass which had been branded on its face passed him by; "God curse the one who branded it."

Jabir told that God's Messenger forbade striking the face and branding on the face [of animals].¹⁵

The Prophet forbade setting animals against one another.¹⁶

Abi Huraira narrates that the Holy Prophet said: "Do not store milk in [the dug or udders of] animals."¹⁷ (Storing milk in the dug of animals was perhaps done to beguile a prospective buyer.)

One might also appeal to Islamic law to oppose using animals in military research in general and in the so-called wound labs in particular. The following Hadith would seem to support this position: "Abus Abbas reported the Prophet as saying:- 'Do not set up any living creature as a target.'"¹⁸ Though Islamic thought, as interpreted here, prohibits any and all painful or disfiguring use of animals in science, it does not prohibit all animal use in science. If anesthetic is used and the body of the animal is not disfigured, the scientist's use of the animal cannot be faulted on these grounds. However, to kill animals to satisfy the human thirst for inessentials - cosmetics or yet another "new" household cleaner or brake fluid, for example - is a contradiction in terms within the Islamic tradition. Think of the millions of animals killed in the name of commercial gain in order to supply a complacent public with trinkets and products they do not need. And why? Because we are too lazy or too self-indulgent to find substitutes. Or to do without. It will take more than religious, moral, or ethical sermons to quell the avidity and greed of some multinational corporations and their willing customers.

Some research on animals may still be justified, given the traditions of Islam. Basic and applied research in the biological and social sciences, for example, is allowed if laboratory animals are not caused pain or disfigured and if human beings or other animals benefit as a result of the research.

The basic and most important point to understand about using animals in science is that the same moral, ethical, and legal codes should apply to the treatment of animals as are applied to humans. According to Islam, all life is sacrosanct and has the right of protection and preservation. The Prophet Muhammad laid so much emphasis on this point that he declared: "There is no man who kills [even] a sparrow or anything beyond that, without its deserving it, but God will ask him about it." (Narrated by Ibni 'Umar-Ahmad, Nasai and Darimi.)¹⁹

Like all other laws of Islam, the Islamic laws on the treatment of animals have been left open to exceptions and are based on the criterion that "Actions shall be judged according to intention."²⁰ Any kind of medical treatment of animals or experiments on them become ethical and legal or unethical and illegal according to the intention of the people who perform them. If the life of an animal can be saved only by the amputation of a part of its body, it will be a meritorious act in the eyes of God to do so. Any code of law, including religious law, which is so rigid as not to leave any scope for exceptional circumstances, results in suffering and breeds hypocrisy.

According to all the religions of the world, all life, including animal life, is a trust from God. That is why, in the case of human life, suicide is considered the ultimate sin. Animals, however, do not possess the freedom of choice to willfully terminate their own lives. They have to go on living their natural lives. When a human being subjects an animal to unnecessary pain and suffering and thus cuts short its natural life, he actually commits a suicidal act on behalf of that animal, and a spiritual part of his own life dies with the animal.

Most of our problems and arguments about the use of animals in science as well as about their general treatment would be far easier to solve if only we could acknowledge the realism of nature and learn to treat all life on earth homogeneously, without prejudice and double standards.

Consider, for example, a high security prison where thieves, murderers, rapists, and other such criminals are imprisoned and compare it with a so-called research laboratory where innocent and helpless animals are cooped up in cages. By what stretch of imagination can we justify the difference in the living standards of these two places? What moral or ethical justification is there for the difference in their treatment? In the case of human prisoners you are not allowed even to prick a pin in their flesh, while the animal captives are allowed to be lacerated and hacked by surgical instruments in the name of science and research, most of which is for commercial purposes.

These and many other such disparities are being allowed by the so-called humane societies only because of the double standards of our moral, ethical, and religious values. The real and ideal approach to this problem would involve setting forth for ourselves the criterion that any kind of medical or scientific research that is unlawful to perform on humans is unlawful to perform on animals.

CONCLUSION ANIMAL TESTING EXPERIMENTS AND ISLAMIC VIEWS

After all is said and done, one wonders why, in our so-called civilized society today, man's cruelty to animals is on the increase. Why is it that human attitudes toward animals are hard to change? The organized religious institutions could have played an important role in educating the people. Almost 90 percent of the world's population owes allegiance to one of the major religions. Each of these religions has the benefit of platforms whereupon captive audiences could be influenced and educated. But one never hears from their pulpits any sermons preaching the word of God about animals. The dictum "Love thy neighbor" embraces all neighbors, including animals. Perhaps the clerics of our religions are too busy preparing their respective laities for the life hereafter to spare any thought for the "poor dumb beasts."

Most of the sermons from our religious pulpits are admonitions against sin. If someone were inclined to choose a subject pertaining to animal welfare, there is enough material in every scripture to choose from. For example, there are two sayings of Prophet Muhammad that would make very appropriate themes for such sermons. In the following Hadith, the Prophet placed the unauthorized killing of animals as second on the list of the seven deadly sins: "Avoid ye the seven deadly things; Polytheism; the killing of breathing beings which God has forbidden except by right."²¹

In the following Hadith it has been placed as third in the list of four sins: "The grievous things are: Polytheism; disobedience to parents; the killing of breathing beings; ...,"²²

One of the reasons why most of our religious, social, and cultural education in this respect is wasted when the effort to educate is made is that it is aimed at adults, whose character has already become unyielding and unresponsive to new attitudes and values. If only we could start education on animal welfare at a tender and more responsive age, perhaps the results could be better. An international movement of children such as "Friends of Animals," more or less along the lines of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, deserves serious consideration.

To end this paper, there could not be a better conclusion than the following aphoristic Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad:

"Whoever is kind to the creatures of God, is kind to himself."²³

Comments

- (i) A.C. = *Anno Christum*, i.e., the Christian era or year. Muslims prefer not to use A.D., which means *Anno Domini*, or "the year of our Lord." Muslims believe in Jesus Christ as a messenger of God and not as the son of God or as the Lord.
- (ii) A.H. = *Anno Hijrae*, i.e., the year of migration (622 A.C.), when the Holy Prophet Muhammad⁸¹ had to flee from Mecca to Medina. This date has been established as the first year of the Islamic era.
- (iii) (S) = It is considered highly meritorious and obligatory for a Muslim to pronounce a reverential *Salam* whenever the name of the Messenger of God is uttered or written. S stands for "peace be upon him."
- (iv) Muslim means one who submits to God. Believers in Islam prefer to be called Muslims and not Muhammadans or by any other name or spellings.
- (v) Many of the quotations cited within this chapter are incomplete, since the originals are too long to fully reproduce.
- (vi) In the Quranic references, the first number stands for chapter and the second for verse. In some English translations the verse numbers may be different. In this article the numbers quoted are from the translation by A. Yusuf Ali, (Lahore, Pakistan, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1938). In case the reader's edition gives a different number, please look for the verse one or two verses above or below.
- (vii) In the Hadith references, the name of the book is given.
- (viii) The Quranic references are given in the text following the quotations. All other references and notes are in the following list.

Notes

1. Bukhari and Muslim.
2. *Maxims of Ali*, translated by A. Halal from the famous book *Nahj-ul-Balagha*, Elmi (Lahore, Pakistan, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf 1963), p. 436. Hereafter referred to as *Maxims*. The Imam, Hazrat Ali bin Abi Talib, was the son-in-law of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(S) and the fourth successor (*caliph*) (644-656 A.C.-22-34 A.H.).
3. *Maxims*, p. 203.
4. *Maxims*, p. 381.
5. For further study of this theme, the following verses of the Quran are recommended: 7:73; 16:5-8 and 66; 25:48-50; 26:155, 156; 31:10; 32:27; 35:28; 40:79, 80; 42:29; 45:3, 4; 55:10; 79: 27-33; 81:1-18; and 88:17.
6. Muslim. Alfred Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam* (Beirut Lebanon, Khayats Oriental Reprinters, 1966), p. 106. Hereafter referred to as Guillaume, *Traditions*.
7. Narrated by Shaddad bin Aus. Muslim, vol. 2, ch. 11, section on "Slaying," 10:739,

verse 151. Also "Mishkat al-Masabih," p. 872. English translation by James Robson, in four volumes (Lahore-Pakistan, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963). Hereafter referred to as Robson.

8. I have been informed that the Government of Saudi Arabia has recently made some arrangements to freeze the meat of the sacrificed animals during the festival of Hajj in order to distribute it among the poor. Unfortunately, I have not been able to get detailed and authentic information of this development.
9. *Maxims*, p. 436.
10. Sayyid Abu a'la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*. English translation by Dr. Khurshid Ahmad (a Muslim of renown in Western literary and religious circles), (Lahore, Pakistan, Islamic Publications Ltd., 1967), pp. 174-176.
11. Narrated by Abu Huraira. Guillaume, *Traditions*, pp. 106, 107.
12. Guillaume, *Traditions*, pp. 106, 107.
13. Guillaume, *Traditions*, pp. 106, 107.
14. Narrated by Abu Waqid al-Laithi. Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud. Robson, p. 874.
15. Muslim, vol. 1, ch. 3, section 9:265 on "Duty Towards Animals." Also Yusuf al-Kardawi, *The Lawful and Unlawful in Islam* (in Arabic), (Cairo, Mektebe Vahba, 1977), p. 293 and Robson, p. 872.
16. Narrated by Ibn Abbas. Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud. Also Robson, p. 876.
17. Bukhari and Muslim. Also Muhammad Manzur Ilahi, *Holy Traditions*, vol. 1 (Lahore, Pakistan, Ripon Printing Press, 1932), p.149.
18. Narrated by Abu Abbas. Muslim. Also Robson, p. 872.
19. Narrated by Ibni 'Umar. Musnad of Ahmad. Also narrated by 'Abdallah bin 'Amar bin al-'As, Robson, p. 874.
20. The Arabic version: "*Al-'Amālo bil-niyyah.*"
21. Narrated by Abu Huraira. Bukhari and Muslim.
22. Narrated by Abdallah bin 'Amru. Bukhari and Muslim.
23. Muhammad Amin, *Wisdom of Prophet Muhammad* (Lahore, Pakistan, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1965), p. 200.