

## *The Holy Prophet Muhammad's kindness towards animals*

**Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 29 October 2021**

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَيْرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّرٌ أَمْثَالَكُمْ<sup>ط</sup>

“And there is no animal in the earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but (they are) communities like yourselves.” (6:38) — ch. 6, v. 38.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ<sup>ط</sup>

“And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it, and He knows its abode and its repository. All is in a clear record.” — ch. 11, v. 6

There are many incidents in the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad which show his care and concern for the welfare of animals and other creatures. As I said in a recent *khutba*, he is called “a mercy to all the worlds” in the Quran, and “worlds” are not only the nations of humanity but also include the animal world. He was a mercy to the animal world as well. His care and concern for animals was not only the kind of human tenderness that many human beings display by their very nature, but it also stemmed from the teachings of the Quran. According to the first verse which I read out, all kinds of animals and birds constitute communities just like human beings constitute a community, or one could say humans are divided into a number of communities, for example on the basis of race. As animals and birds are recognised in the Quran as communities, it means that the Quran gives them the right of existence, and human civilisation is not allowed to wipe them out of existence.

According to the second verse, God Himself provides the means of sustenance — food and water — for all animals. In fact, the verse says that it is binding upon God (*‘ala-llāhi*) to provide sustenance for animals. He knows the habitation (*mustaqarra*) of all animals and also their repository (*mustauda‘a*). Some translators take these to mean the place where an animal lives and the place where it dies. It could mean the place where it lives openly and the place where it hides itself. As the word *mustauda‘a*

means the place where something is deposited, it could mean here places where the fossils of pre-historic animals are to be found. In any case, the verse tells us that the food and accommodation of animals, their living spaces from the beginning to the end of their lives, are provided by God according to His laws. “All is in a clear record” means the knowledge of God, which man can also glean by research and discovery. This verse disallows mankind from depriving animals of food and water, and from destroying their habitations and shelter.

Another passage in the Quran is as follows:

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْزُونٍ ﴿١٦﴾ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ  
فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنْ لَسْتُمْ لَهُ بِرِزْقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

“And the earth — We have spread it out and made in it firm mountains and caused to grow in it of every suitable thing. And We have made in it means of subsistence for you and for those (creatures) for whom you do not provide.” —  
ch. 15, v. 19–20

This again informs us that God Himself has provided the means of living, *ma'āyish*, not only for humans but also for those for whom humans do not provide. Apart from domestic pets or animals confined to a zoo, humans don't provide sustenance or *rizq* for any creatures. God provides for them, and therefore no human is allowed to prevent this provision from reaching those animals. The Quran elsewhere mentions the food which the earth grows and the water on the earth and says that it is: “a provision for you and for your cattle” — *مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ* (see 79:30–33 and 80:24–32). In fact, the Quran makes it a duty of the God-fearing among Muslims to use some of their money to help animals in the same way as they help people who ask for help. After mentioning that the righteous are those who do good and say prayers at night and in the morning, the Quran says about them: *وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْزُورِ* — “And in their wealth there was a due share for the beggar and for one who is deprived” (51:19). “Beggar” here means anyone who asks for financial help, not

literally what we think of as a beggar. “One who is deprived”, *mahrūm*, is taken to mean one who needs financial help but does not ask for it. This means that those who give their wealth in charity must also keep a look-out for those needy ones who do not or cannot ask for help. But some have taken *mahrūm* as also meaning “deprived of the power of speech”, and this includes animals.

In the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s life there are many incidents in which he declared it a good deed to rescue and help animals, and he condemned ill-treatment of animals in the strongest terms and told people to stop it. He told this story to people:

“Allah’s Messenger said: ‘While a man was walking he felt thirsty and went down a well and drank water from it. On coming out of it, he saw a dog panting and eating mud because of excessive thirst. The man said: This (dog) is suffering from the same problem as me. So he (went down the well and) filled his shoe with water, caught hold of it with his teeth and climbed up and watered the dog. **Allah thanked him for that deed and forgave him.**’ The people asked: ‘Messenger of Allah, Is there a reward for us in (doing good to) the animals?’ He said: ‘For every creature having a liver fresh with life, there is a reward (for doing good to it)’.” (Bukhari, book 42: Distribution of Water, ch. 9, hadith 2363.)

In the same chapter in Bukhari, there are two other reports in which it is stated that the Holy Prophet related that during a prayer he was shown hell very close up in a vision. He saw in it a woman who “was put in Hell because of a cat which she had kept locked till it died of hunger.” The Holy Prophet added that **Allah said to the woman:** “You did not feed it or give it water when you locked it up, nor did you set it free to eat the insects of the earth.” (Bukhari, book 42: Distribution of Water, ch. 9, hadith 2364 and 2365.)

The Holy Prophet also related to his followers a story of a people of the past, that there was a prostitute who saw “a dog moving around a well whom thirst would have killed ... she drew water in her shoe and made it drink, and she was pardoned because of this” (Sahih Muslim, book 39: Greetings, ch. 41, hadith 2245b).

He taught a simple principle regarding the use of animals by man: “The Messenger of Allah came upon an emaciated camel (literally, ‘its back was meeting its stomach’). He said: “Fear Allah regarding these dumb animals. Ride them when they are in a fit condition and eat them when they are in a fit condition” (Abu Dawud, book 15: Jihad, hadith 2548).

After the above hadith an incident is related as follows: “He (Holy Prophet) entered the garden of a man of the Ansar. All of a sudden when a camel saw the Prophet it wept tenderly, producing a yearning sound and its eyes flowed. The Prophet came to it and wiped the temple of its head. So it kept silence. He then said: ‘Who is the master of this camel? Whose camel is this?’ A young man from the Ansar came and said: ‘This is mine, Messenger of Allah.’ He said: ‘Don’t you fear Allah about this beast which Allah has given in your possession? It has complained to me that you keep it hungry and load it heavily which fatigues it’.” (Abu Dawud, book 15: Jihad, hadith 2549). The last two reports are in a chapter in the Abu Dawud Hadith collection which is entitled *What Has Been Commanded Regarding Proper Care For Riding Beasts And Cattle*. This title shows that these are commands of the Holy Prophet.

Another incident in the same Hadith book, Abu Dawud, is as follows: “We were with the Messenger of Allah during a journey. He went to ease himself. We saw a bird with her two young ones and we captured her young ones. The bird came and began to spread its wings. The Messenger of Allah came and said: ‘Who distressed her for its young ones? Return its young ones to it.’ He also saw an ant colony that we had burnt. He asked: Who has burnt this? We replied: ‘We’. He said: ‘It is not proper for anyone to punish with fire, except for the Lord of fire’.” (Abu Dawud, book 15: Jihad, hadith 2675).

The Holy Prophet once related the story of an earlier prophet: “Once while a prophet of the prophets (of Allah) was taking a rest underneath a tree, an ant bit him. He, therefore, ordered that his luggage be taken away from underneath that tree and then ordered that the dwelling place of the ants should be set on fire. Then Allah sent him a revelation: ‘Wouldn’t it have been sufficient to burn just one ant?’ ” (Bukhari, book 59: Beginning of Creation, ch. 16, hadith 3319). In another version of this report

it is stated that Allah revealed to him: “Because one ant bit you, you have destroyed a community (*ummah*) from among the communities which glorify Allah” (Bukhari, book 56: Jihad, ch. 153, hadith 3019). What did he mean by calling ants “a community which glorifies Allah”, or does *tasbīh*? He must have had in mind the following verse of the Quran: “Do you not see that Allah is He Whom do glorify all those who are in the heavens and the earth, and the birds with wings outspread? Each one knows its prayer and its glorification (*tasbīh*)” (24:41). In other words, ants are a creation of God and are a community or *ummah* in terms of the verse I quoted at the beginning of this *khutba*. While individual members of a community, who pose a danger or who cause us harm, can be killed by us if necessary, but it is wrong to wipe out an entire group due to danger posed by one or a few of that group.

This brings to mind how, in human civilisation throughout history, and even now, ruling powers apply wide-ranging punishment if their power or rule is threatened by one or a few people. A few people of a village or town upset the government, and the government punishes the whole village or town. Here the Holy Prophet has disallowed such retribution.

بَارِكْ اللَّهُ لَنَا وَبِكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعْنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ  
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-