

Care for Animals

A man once came to Prophet Muhammad (S) carrying with him his belongings and a box. He said, “O Prophet! While I was passing through a jungle, I heard the voice of some bird's babies. I took them and put them in this box. The moment I did that, their mother came fluttering round my head.”

And the Prophet said, “Put them down”. When the man put the box on the ground, the mother of the young birds joined them. Seeing this, the Prophet asked the man who now had a look of surprise on his face, “Are you surprised by the affection of the mother towards her young? I swear by Him (Almighty Allah) who has sent me, surely, God is more loving to his servants than the mother to these young birds. Return these baby birds to the place from where you took them, and let their mother be with them.”

“Fear God with regard to animals”, said the Prophet of Islam, “ride them when they are fit to be ridden, and get off their backs when they are tired; surely, there are rewards for being kind and gentle to animals, and for giving them water to drink.”

Islam has taught that in the eyes of Allah, animals also have rights in the same way as man has. They should not be treated badly, tortured or left to starve without food or water.

Imam Ali (a) had some ducks under his care in his house. At the time of his death, he had given particular advice to his sons to take good care of those animals, or to set them free if it was not possible to look after them properly.

The Holy Qur'an has also guided us by telling us that, in the eyes of God there is no difference between the human world and the animal world.

“There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end.” (6:38)

The Prophet of Islam was once performing ablution (Wudhu) for prayers from a pot of water. A cat passed there and turned its eyes at the pot of water with a thirsty look. The Prophet realised at once that the cat was very thirsty, so he stopped the ablution (Wudhu) and placed the pot before the cat. Only

after the cat had fully quenched its thirst, did the Prophet resume the ablution (Wudhu).

By this action, the Prophet has shown that quenching the thirst of even a small dumb animal is a noble act full of virtue and should be given first attention before one prepares for offering prayers to God.

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