

## **MODULE 4**

**Class Title:** Animal Rights – Part 1

**Aim of Lesson:** To recognise and respect the rights of Animals in Islam

**Category:** Personal Development

**Lesson Format:** Power point presentation with narration and discussion.

(Greeting to students) *Assalamu 'alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

*(Ta'awwudh) A 'oodhu billahi min Ash Shaytaanir Rajeem*

*(Tasmiyah) Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

*(Du'a) Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul 'uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli* [Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verses 25-28]

Slide 1:

*InshaAllah* today and in the next class we will discuss about animals and their rights in Islam; the Islamic perspective of animal rights.

There are certain controversial things that we need to clarify as well. Before I go on however, how many of you are fond of animals?

You have some feelings for animals; you wouldn't want to watch a dog getting beaten up, right? Would you do something about it or would you just walk away thinking that you don't like dogs? There are people who are quite scared of cats. You may not like touching animals, but still be fond of them and do something if you saw them being treated cruelly.

The point is that you don't have to be an absolute animal lover in order to know what their rights are. Today and in the next class, we will talk about what Islam says about animals and their rights. What are our rights on them? How much can we use them? In what ways is it appropriate to use them? Can we kill them? Can we eat them? We will talk about killing them and using their parts for our needs.

We will also discuss how to take care of them. Do they have emotions? Do we need to respect that? These are the few things that we will be discussing today. Last but not the least; we will talk about the consequences of not giving them their rights.

Slides 2 – 3:

What is the biggest difference between a man and an animal? There is one big difference.

Humans can think; animals can't. Any other difference? We have a conscience, we think and we have the freedom of choice; animals don't. Allah (swt) says in the Qur-an:

“He (God) it is Who made you vicegerents on Earth.” [Surah Al-Faatir 35: Verse 39]

Who is a vicegerent? It is a person appointed to act as an authority on behalf of a ruler. Who is the ruler in this case? Allah (swt). Who are the vicegerents? We, the human beings.

What are the responsibilities that have been given to us? We have the responsibility to obey His commands; this is the reason why we are created. The purpose of our lives is to worship Allah (swt) and obey His (swt) commands.

Along with privileges however, we have responsibilities as well. There is not just a particular responsibility given to us like a badge of some sort, there are many responsibilities that come with this authority.

Slides 4 -5:

Muslims have also been advised to learn some lessons from certain species of animals. For example, Ali (ra) said:

“Be like a bee, anything he eats is clean, anything he drops is sweet, any branch he sits upon does not break.” [ Nahj-ul-Balagha]

What are the three qualities that we need to acquire from bees?

- 1) Be clean.
- 2) Be sweet and kind to people.
- 3) Be gentle, don't throw your weight around.

Slides 6 – 8:

There is a *hadith* in Bukhari which says:

“All creatures are like a family (*Ayal*) of God: and He loves the most those who are the most beneficent to His family.” [Bukhari]

Basically, we need to be kind and gentle to animals. There are people who mistreat them; they don't provide them with food and water. We will talk about that in detail later on.

There are people who are not afraid of animals, in fact they actively dislike them and deny them their rights. Once, one of the prophets was stung by an ant and he then ordered the whole nest of ants to be burnt; this is mentioned in Bukhari and Muslim. Allah (swt) reprimanded him because he burnt a whole community that glorified Him (swt). Can you now imagine how important it is to understand the rights of animals?

Slides 9 – 11:

I'm sure you must have heard many stories about Muslim holy men having conversations with animals and giving them orders. But obviously, there is no evidence regarding this. There is just one proof in the Qur-an, from which we get to know that there was one person who actually understood the language of animals. Who was that? Sulayman (as); he was the son of Dawood (as).

Allah (swt) mentioned in the Qur-an:

“And Sulayman is David’s heir. And O you people! He has been taught the speech of birds.”  
[Surah An-Namal 27: Verse 16]

This is the only proof that he could actually talk to animals. If someone tells you a *qissah* (story) of a saint or a pious animal, don't bother to believe it as we don't have any proof.

In the Qur-an, Allah (swt) actually tells us that He communicates with animals too and what did He say?

“Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in (human) habitation.”  
[Surah An-Nahl 16: Verse 68]

This was an instruction given by Allah (swt) to the bees.

Slides 12 – 13:

Just as Allah (swt) has communication with human beings, Allah (swt) has communication with animals. Do you think animals have knowledge about Allah (swt)? Are they aware of Allah (swt)?

In Surah An-Noor 24: Verse 41, Allah (swt) says that each one of them has his own prayers and worships Allah (swt). All the animals are aware of the existence of Allah (swt). We also get to know that they have emotions; there was a Dutch team of scientists who found scientific evidence for a lot of animals experiencing mental suffering. If you experience mental suffering, it means you have emotions. They discovered that like human brains, animals also have a substance called endorphin, which is released in times of pain and stress and it is a hundred times stronger than morphine.

Morphine is a drug which kills or numbs the body or the pain. This endorphin is to cope with emotional pain like stress, conflict or anger. Effectively, animals do have emotions and this is scientifically proven.

Slides 14 – 16:

The Qur-an repeatedly emphasizes that food and other resources in this world have to be shared with animals too. This is mentioned in the Qur-an and not just that, there is a story of the people of *Thamud*. Have you heard the story about *Naaqatullah*, the she-camel? The people of *Thamud* asked Saleh (as) to give them some kind of sign that he was from Allah (swt), that whatever is coming from him is from Allah (swt) and he is the Messenger. At that time, the tribe was actually experiencing a shortage of food and water and therefore they were neglecting the livestock. That's what we do when we have a shortage of food and water; neglect livestock and cattle etc.

It was revealed to Saleh (as) to single out one she-camel and call her the camel of Allah, *Naaqatullah*.<sup>1</sup> Allah (swt) asked Saleh (as) to let his people know that she should get a fair share of food and water. These were the instructions coming from Allah (swt). The people of *Thamud* promised to do so, but after a little while they started to feel that she was eating up all the food and drinking up all the water, so they killed her. Because of that, the whole tribe had to suffer; it was completely wiped out.

The lesson we learn from this is that if you possess an animal; it can be cattle or a pet; you have to feed that animal properly and make sure that it doesn't starve.

Slides 17 – 21:

Have you heard of experimentation on animals? Scientific experiments are carried out on animals to find cures of diseases. Do you think it is the right thing to do?

Why is it not? They are talking about diseases; we are not killing them for the sake of killing. It is for the benefit of humanity. It is in an effort to find cures for humans that they are using these animals. They are killing them and using them as guinea pigs.

Why is it wrong? Do you know that 2.2 billion animals were slaughtered to conduct experiments in 2005? Overall 12.1 million animals died in laboratory experiments. This happened in the European Union in 2005. What does this tell you? Do you think this is the right thing to do? We are not talking about illiterate or under developed nations, we are talking about developed nations; they did this.

Many if not all human problems; emotional, physical, spiritual or mental - are our own creation. We are responsible for most of the problems that we have. We cannot make animals suffer for any of our troubles and assassinate them. If we have created most of these mental and physical

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<sup>1</sup> The Qur-an describes how the people of Thamud demanded that Saleh (as) show them some sign to prove he was a prophet of God. Qur-an 7:73, 11:64, 26:155, 156; 54:27-31

problems, then we are to be blamed. Why make animals suffer for them? This is something that we need to understand.

Most of these experiments are non-essential; they are fanciful and wasteful. They are done for cosmetic purposes; for things that are really not necessary. We are not even talking about vicious diseases; this is something that they do all the time. According to Islam, all living beings are sacred and have the right of protection.

“Take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus He commands you, that you may learn wisdom.” [Surah Al-Ma-idah 5: Verse 151]

This is something we owe to animals.

Slides 22-28:

Fur and other parts of animals being used is also something that needs to be talked about. There is large scale bloodshed of fur bearing animals - to satisfy what? Human needs; this is happening all around the world. Most of these needs are non-essential; it is not even required. Have you seen these? They are all over the place; you will find them in many houses, especially in colder areas. There are very fancy things that they make out of fur, but it is not something necessary and it is wasteful as well. The killing of animals just for these...what would you call these? Necessities? Absolutely not!

Look at this; look at the rugs made from animal hide. This is reality; this is how we treat animals. Look at this, is it worth it? Even if you don't look at it from the Islamic angle, this should disturb all of us. How can it be right to kill an animal for this?

Slides 29 – 35:

The excuse that these are necessary for human beings is also no longer valid. Are these essential for human beings; the fur and the coat? They were, but now they are not. Can anyone tell me why this excuse is not valid anymore? What can be the reason? Obviously it is very cold, you need to keep yourself warm. When you need to keep yourself warm you need something very thick. Animal fur was used for that and in Islam you can use animal skin to keep yourself warm. [Surah An-Nahl 16: Verse 5]

But I am saying that this is no longer valid, because there is already a large quantity of animal skin in the market; modern technology has produced synthetic versions of all these materials. They are easily available all over the world and in most cases they are even cheaper. Many times you can't even tell the difference. If you go to a supermarket, you cannot even tell if it is real fur or the synthetic material that is being used; that is the best part.

Even though the Qur-an does mention using animal fur for keeping yourself warm in Surah An-Nahl, modern day clothing provides a very good alternative.

It is mentioned in the Qur-an <sup>2</sup> with reference to the use of animal skin and fur, only those of domesticated animals or cattle, which either died a natural death or were slaughtered for food, are to be used. These are the conditions under which you can use the cattle's fur and skin to make necessary clothing; that is the only permission given to us. Prophet Muhammad prohibited the use of skins of wild animals. (Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)

However, in the world of today, millions of animals are killed commercially just for fur and skin while their carcass is left to rot.

Fourteen centuries ago, Islam realized the absurdity of this reality. There is a *hadith* in Tirmidhi in which Muhammad (pbuh) forbade the use of wild animals. Ahadith are for all times, so he forbade the use of wild animals <sup>3</sup>.

Slides 36 – 38:

There is a *hadith* in Abu Dawood that says;

“Do not ride on saddles made out of leather and leopard skins.” [Abu Dawood]

That is also prohibited and there is a reason why. Perhaps the hikmah in it is to stop people becoming commercial minded about animal skin

All kinds of animal fights are strictly forbidden in Islam; bull fights, cock fights etc. The Prophet (saw) forbade Muslims from making them fight. (Bukhari)

Have you ever been to the beach? What have you seen there? Mongoose and snake fights. Do you know what happens? I took my son there and I was totally oblivious to what was going to happen. They said that we would see a *tamasha* (show) but then the mongoose and the snake started to fight with each other. Eventually I saw blood coming out of the snake and I asked what was going on? The man said, “Well somebody has to die eventually.”

I asked them to just stop right there but by then the snake was seriously injured. How can this be right? This is happening in a Muslim country? Why aren't we stopping it? Where is that animal rights lobby which creates a hue and cry about so many things?

Slides 39 – 41:

There is no suggestion in the Qur-an that eating meat is good for your physical or spiritual health. But Islam has a very neutral approach towards this matter. It doesn't talk about meat or

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<sup>2</sup> ( surah nahl ayah 80. "And Allah has made for you in your homes an abode, and made for you out of the hides of the cattle (tents for) dwelling, which you find so light (and handy) when you travel and when you stay (in your travels), and of their wool, fur, and hair (sheep wool, camel fur, and goat hair), a furnishing and articles of convenience (e.g. carpets, blankets, etc.), a comfort for a while.)

<sup>3</sup> Prophet (pbuh) forbade the skins of wild animals being used as floor-coverings. (Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)

vegetables, so it is left to the choice of an individual that you might like vegetables, you might like meat or you might like seafood. It is up to you; these are the options open to you. Those who opt to eat meat have been told to do so in moderation. <sup>4</sup>

So what diet is out? If Allah (swt) says you need to eat meat in moderation, what particular diet is out? Atkins, high protein diet! That is out. You have to eat in moderation. It is not good for you. One has to have a balanced diet. The flip side is that people who think that vegetables are the thing to eat and meat is not good for the health are wrong too.

There are very strict and detailed laws on how animals should be treated. For example

‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas narrated that Prophet Muhammad (saw) forbade the killing of animals without a justified reason. [Bukhari, Muslim]

If you are making a mongoose and a snake fight, then that is sinful. You cannot kill any animal without a justified reason.

Slides 42 – 51:

Now coming to the slaughtering of animals and using them for food:

We know that Islamic slaughter of animals has been criticized and attacked by non-Muslims very frequently. They have serious problems with the way we slaughter animals and there are some vegetarian lobby which says that eating meat the way Muslims do, is absolutely forbidden

So basically there are two distinct issues that we need to address.

There is the vegetarian agenda which wants to ban all consumption of animal products. They feel that animals should not be used for anything; let alone for fur or accessories, not even for food.

Secondly, there is the animal rights lobby, which is against the supposedly inhumane method of slaughtering of animals that Islam has. So we need to address these two issues.

Let’s talk about the killing of animals first. What do the vegetarians say? They say that killing of animals for the benefit of humans is cruel. You must not kill an animal; this is what they say. Basically they are putting humans and animals on the same level. They feel that humans and animals have the same rights. The question then arises is that if animals have the same rights, then do they have the same responsibilities too? Their duties must be equal to human beings’ as well. In other words we must be able to blame them or punish them if they fight with each other. Can we do that? When humans fight we punish them and blame them. Do they have the same responsibilities? No!

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<sup>4</sup> [Qur-an 7:31; 5:87 and other verses].

They say it is considered a crime for a human being to kill a goat, but when a lion kills a goat then it is fine. Does it make sense? It does not make sense.

Why are plants spared? They are living beings too, they shouldn't be eaten either. So imagine, if you can't have plants and you can't have meat then how can you survive? Is there any third thing that you can eat? No, there isn't. The conclusion is that the vegetarian agenda is absolutely baseless. Islam does not support this agenda at all. You can eat everything. You can eat meat, seafood, lentils whatever, but in moderation; this is the Islamic stand on it.

Slides 53 – 57:

Now coming to the Islamic slaughter (*Zabeeha*), why do they call the Islamic way of slaughtering very cruel? Let's just talk about that.

It is true that when blood flows from the throat of the animal, it looks violent. Let's just agree on that. It does look violent but that does not mean that now when we can get meat properly and hygienically packed from the supermarket, they did not kill the animal. They still kill an animal. That is one thing. The other thing is that according to the non-Islamic way of slaughtering, they make the animal unconscious before slaughtering. This way, when the animal is killed, they either electrocute the animal or they just put a ring around their neck and chop the neck off; this is their procedure of killing the animal. Is it less painful to make an animal unconscious and then kill it? That's the question. Non-Muslims believe that the way they slaughter the animal is more humane. By just watching the procedure, you cannot tell what the animal feels.

Slides 58 – 60:

How can we know how the animal feels?

Through scientific facts; let's see what science says about it.

A team at the University of Hanover in Germany examined the two claims by using EEG and ECG. Do you know the difference? ECG tells you what is going on with your heart and EEG tells what is going on in your brain. The team planted electrodes at various places on the skull of all the animals used in the experiment and then some of them were slaughtered in the Islamic manner and some were slaughtered in the Non-Muslim way; they made them unconscious and chopped the heads off or electrocuted them. The EEG and ECG allowed monitoring of the heart and brain; the EEG told you exactly what went on in the brain and ECG told you what happened in the heart.

Slides 61 – 64:

Let's see what happened in the *halaal* method; the Islamic way of slaughtering. There was no change in the EEG; there was no change in the graph for the first three seconds, indicating that the animal did not feel any pain from the cut, and it makes sense because when your finger gets



cut, for the first few seconds you don't feel any pain. The pain comes later on, in any kind of bleeding that you have. You do not feel the pain initially if the blood is oozing out. In the same way, the animal did not feel the pain in the first three seconds and then went into a deep sleep. We know that because the brain stopped working; the EEG graph was straight because blood was oozing out of the slit at the throat and there was no oxygen going to the brain so the brain was dead. How do we feel the pain? Where does the pain come from? The brain.

The heart was still beating and since the heart was beating, the blood was being pumped out. The EEG recording was zero, giving the indication that there was no pain felt by the animal.

What are the conversations that we usually hear? "*Janwar tarap raha hai,*" (the animal is being tortured) "we just can't stand it." We say, "*Bachon ko mat dekhao.*" (Don't let the children watch) and some of us actually have doubts about Islamic slaughtering because of the way we think animals suffer. Apparently, it seems like the animal is suffering but it is not; it is just the blood oozing out which makes it appear so. This is the way the body works; the heart is pumping out the blood from the animal. That is all that is happening. What do we call it? Suffering. We feel that the animal is suffering pain.

Slides 65 -74:

Let's look at the Non-Muslim method. The animals were made unconscious after stunning; this method appeared to be much more peaceful for the animal, as when somebody is unconscious it doesn't move. When something is not moving then obviously it won't be as unpleasant to see; there won't be as much blood oozing out. However, the EEG recording indicated severe pain immediately after stunning; whereas in the first example, the animal ceases to feel pain right in the beginning, because the blood wasn't going to the brain. Oxygen does not reach the brain and the brain dies. There were no convulsions in the western way; pain was being experienced by the animal but you and I couldn't see it. Appearances can deceive however; this is exactly what happened in the western way. It's not what it seems.

Those who object to the Islamic way of slaughtering are more concerned about the viewers. It is not pleasant for us. Should they be called animal rights activists? What should they be called? Human rights activists. They are more worried about us. What is pleasant for **us** to look at, what is not pleasant for us to look at? The stunning was commercially a very good idea; because the job of butchery became easier, and the meat looks more palatable when you see it.

There are many Muslims who don't watch the *qurbani*. This is because they say that they won't be able to eat the meat after witnessing the *qurbani*. It is the mindset that you need to change; just because it's on the shelf does not mean that the animal did not die. Scientists have proved that their way of killing is more painful. Islamic slaughter does not mean that the animal will not die but it is designed in such a manner that the least possible pain is inflicted on the animal.

So the conclusion that we draw, is that the Islamic way guarantees a healthier way of life for an animal and healthier meat for the consumer.

It's the only way to make sure that animal's blood fully drains out of his body because we slit just the throat and main artery and leave the backbone intact so body to brain connection is still on and body does not die before the whole blood drains out.

*InshaAllah* in the next class we will be discussing the way an animal should be slaughtered and the rights of different types of animals which are mentioned in *ahadith*.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul 'Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salaamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'aalameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalamu'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

**Student Question:** Is it permissible to be vegetarian or is it *haraam*?

If you're asking me if it's sinful to be a vegetarian, the answer is no, it is not; unless the reason for not eating meat is that you're being cruel to the animal. If it's because of the taste buds then it is absolutely fine. However, if you don't eat meat, where will you get your protein from? You see, *daal* (lentils) does have protein but it cannot replace meat.

Islam says to try and eat everything. There are many people who do not like meat, and there are many people who do not like vegetables. However, one must choose something that gives you a balanced diet.

If something is *halal* and you make that *haraam* on yourself from your own logic, it is not permissible. There is no hard and fast rule about eating or not eating meat and vegetables, but we all have preferences. I know a lot of people who eat meat once a week. That is fine. But the reason is very important; is it because they don't like meat or is it because they feel that they are being cruel to the animal? There are a lot of people who think that you are wasting the animals. Animals are not getting wasted.

There are a lot of people who think that the concept of *qurbani* (sacrifice) is wasteful. There is massive slaughtering in Makkah for which some people say, just give the money. Some say that they don't do *qurbani* (sacrifice) because they would rather help somebody with the same money.

Most scholars believe that slaughtering the Eid sacrifice is better than giving its value as alms. The Eid sacrifice should be in a good state and fat enough so that its meat could be eaten as this is a symbol of Allah. And Allah Says (Interpretation of meaning): (And whosoever honours the symbols of Allah, then it is truly from the piety of the heart) .[22:32].

*Udhiyah* (sacrifice) is an act of worship ('ibadah).

Messenger of Allah (pbuh) is reported to have said : “Whoever can afford to offer a sacrifice but does not do so, let him not approach our place for prayer. (Ahmad and Ibn Maajah).

Offering *udhiyah* (sacrifice) during `Eid Al-Adha is regarded as wajib or mandatory according to Imam Abu Hanifah and as *sunnah mu'akkadah* or confirmed Sunnah according to other jurists.

You must not argue with a commandment that is given in black and white. Let me tell you one more thing, you might feel that these are things that are scientifically proven; maybe tomorrow they will come up with another experiment. Maybe not in Germany, maybe in Switzerland, or England proving that an animal suffers more in an Islamic way of slaughtering. Then you will think, ‘now what do I do?’

The commands that are coming our way are better than the scientific experiments that are being conducted. If it does relate with the Islamic rules, then *Alhamdulillah*; it makes it easier for us to understand the rulings. But if goes into a clash, then what do you do? Science keeps developing because theories keep changing. They say egg yolk is good for you and then the next day they say egg yolk is not good for you. They keep changing, but the Islamic rule is standard. There isn't any change in them. We have to understand that if we are considering the scientific facts, it is only to make our case stronger; but if they don't correlate, then you are simply to do what our *deen* (religion) tells us to do. It is as simple as that. But if you have something in black and white then you can go up to anyone and say this is also been proven by science.