

Animal Kingdom

By Zujaja Khan, London

In His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad's Friday Sermon on 18 March 2016, he related a story from the childhood of His Holiness Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him), Second Caliph and son of the Promised Messiah (peace be on him). His Holiness Musleh Maud recounted that when he was a young boy, he hunted a parrot and brought this home to his father, who said:

“Mahmood, eating of its flesh is not forbidden but every animal is not for [human] consumption.” The Promised Messiah (peace be on him) explained that some animals are pleasing to look at while others have fine voices which are pleasurable to listen [to]. Thus different animals please different senses and all animals should not be used simply for the sense of taste”.ⁱ

His Holiness Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him)'s memory of his father's words left an impression on him, and taught him that all of Allah's creatures have their own purpose to serve. The treatment of animals and the appreciation of their unique qualities are mentioned many times in the Holy Qur'an, and thus it is our duty as Muslims to ensure we follow these teachings and are kind to all creatures, humans and animals alike. One example of this in the Holy Qur'an is:

“And in your own creation and in that of all the creatures which He scatters in the earth are Signs for a people who possess firm faith.” (45:5)

Discoveries about the capacity of the human body continue to amaze scientists around the world, and prove time and again that Allah's creations are so intricately and purposefully designed. The same can be said for the boundless information we uncover about animals each day. Only a few weeks ago a study confirmed that honey bees are capable of understanding arithmetic. Now, the benefit or need for this is disputable, but what is clear is that in every new piece of information we discover about animals, the signs of Allah's omnipotence are irrefutable.

As a young girl, I was equal parts terrified of and fascinated by animals. I watched countless documentaries about dolphins and whales with my parents, scribbling down every little detail that came up so that I could tell my teachers. When I was 10 years old, I wrote a letter to the Canadian Prime Minister to protest the treatment of baby harp seals (this letter, I later discovered, was never posted). At primary school I started a petition to close all zoos in the UK, and asked for donations for a wildlife reserve. And through all of this, I would still run as far from a wandering dog in the park as my legs could carry me (sometimes I'm still tempted).

I don't know where this love for animals came from, but I always felt a deep connection to the wider world through them. I still can't quite explain my intense feelings of awe and kinship when I listen to the sounds of whales underwater, or watch polar bear cubs emerge from their snow dens for the first time. We are reminded through the

acute adaptations of each animal that Allah's designs are flawless, and heed our respect. Indeed, was it not a spider's web that lay across the entrance to the Cave Thaur that protected the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) from being seen by his enemies?

The beauty and breadth of Allah's creations are a wonderful reminder of the Almighty's sublime creativity. In the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him)'s own life, he was known to be a champion for the kind treatment of animals. It is related by Abdullah bin Mas'udra that on a journey with the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), the group saw two young doves in a nest. The group caught the small doves, but when the mother of the doves returned she was distressed to not find her little ones. The dove flew wildly, and when the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) saw this, he said "If any one

of you has caught its young ones he must release them at once to comfort it."ⁱⁱ

The examples of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the teachings of the Holy Qur'an show us that kindness to Allah's creations should be a steadfast notion in the hearts of Muslims. We live during an age in which climate change and corporate interference has damaged the biodiversity of our planet, and animal safeguards are waning. Species across the world are becoming increasingly vulnerable and even dying out. As Muslims, we should be making an active effort to ensure the vitality of the animal kingdom is maintained and treated with compassion, as said best by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him): "All the creatures are the children of God and the best among you is he who treats His creatures well."ⁱⁱⁱ

REFERENCES

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