



Animals' rights in Molavi's Masnavi-I Ma'navi

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Abstract: *All God's creations have their own rights, and animals are not an exception in this regard. Respecting others' rights is a must whether it is for a human or an animal. In this article, we are to study the animals' position and rights in Masnavi-I Ma'navi - one of the world's most known masterpieces of Persian poetry- which is like looking at animals' rights from a Sufi and a true lover's perspective, one who is devoted to the regulations set by his loved one, God, inevitably considering that God is fair and wise enough regarding animals' rights, the respect of which is necessary. As it was expected, this subject has been reflected from Molavi's beliefs and thoughts since he was mostly a Sufi and was fully knowledgeable about juridical issues. In all sections of Masnavi-I Ma'navi, he has drawn readers' attention to animals' rights and invocated them to respect them. Moreover, the poet's Sufism obliged him to have a loveable and compassionate look at animals and see their respect as something beyond human's duty.*

Keywords: *Animals' rights, Masnavi-I Ma'navi, Molavi*

I. Introduction

Since long ago, animals' rights have been an area of concern. In all religions and holy books, correct usage and benefiting from animals have been advised. In Islam also, this has been a concern with a long history in its background and many juridical discussions. Numerous sayings and hadiths have been quoted from religious leaders in which the most unapparent and smallest points and aspects regarding animals' rights have been surprisingly and admirably seen; whereas many Muslims may not be informed enough as their information has all come from global announcements and some campaigns' advertisements and performances. In the literature that comes from the culture of each country, animals' rights could be seen in an artistic way. Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi is a famous and well-known Iranian poet, in 7th AH century, whose all talent, mentality, and inspiration are derived from Islam and has had a considerable concern to animals and their rights. Molavi's pioneering and progressive attitude towards animals and their rights has been so special that finds not only animals' abuse but also mocking and neglecting them unacceptable.

He recounted the dog's faults at some length: no one who perceives faults ('aybdán) has got (even) a scent (inkling) of him that knows the things unseen (ghaybdán). (Masnavi, Book 3: 571)

We will do a brief analysis on the animals' rights in ancient Iran, in Islam and Shia, in global announcements, Persian old literature, and also animals' rights from Sufis' view in the following.

II. Animals' rights in ancient Iran

In ancient cultures, animals have different positions in regard with their holiness and value and each one is a mythical symbol. In ancient Iran, being kind to useful animals has been one of the main duties. Kindness to animals has been really important in Zoroastrianism which was quite popular in Sasanian era, so that is why many interesting points have been written in Ardavyraf Epistle in the same era. In Code of Mani and Mazdak also animals had significant rights. Leaders of this divinity refused to eat meat and do any harms to animals and plants insistently. In Vice and Virtue Epistle which was written before Islam and has remained so far, killing and hunting animals have been severely rejected. 'One thing is that killing sheep without a good reason must be prohibited. If one kills sheep, the fleece of the sheep will convert to a sharp blaze and come to the body of the killer' (Mazdapor, 1990: 123-124). In another chapter of Vice and Virtue Epistle, we have 'killing of lamb, kid, cow, sheep, horse, rabbit, hawk, rooster, ..., hen, dove, swallow must be seriously avoided' (Mazdapor, 1990: 124) In Zoroaster's book, kindness to animals is recommended. In Avestan texts, Jamshid is known as one who saved animals many times; he is the owner of many herds of sheep and saves animals from starving. 'Mazda curses the ones who

slaughter beasts with happiness' (Doust Khah, 1982: 50). 'As the emperor commanded, Crepons are not cultivators because of the verbal and physical harm they do to their beasts' (Doust Khah, 1982: 99)

III. Animals' rights in Islam and Shai

In Islam, all living creatures' life is well respected unless it is harmful for human; some legal rules and regulations have been set as a result of this. Several lectionaries could be seen in Quran which have referred to animals as being a proof for God's power and a lesson for human as they have numerous benefits for the mankind. God has encouraged all human to think deeply about the quality of animals' creation and get to know animals and what they do in such lectionaries; besides, in some other ones, it is recommended to human to learn some lessons from some animals, such as beasts, birds, ants, and bees.

Reading all juridical and justifiability books, we could conclude that doing harms and killing them is an unacceptable nasty action, and Islam respects animals' right to live the same as it does for human. Islamic rules to support animals are juridical and legal rules which must be necessarily obeyed as they are directly referred to in juridical and justifiability books. (Moghimi, 2001: 70)

The most significant rights of animals in juridical and justifiability books are as follows: right to live; right to have alimony, right to have hygiene, right to have accommodation, right to have justice, right to breed, right to be safe and secure, right to be respected, right to have friendship, right to have a protector, right to have a good and pleasant practicality.

IV. Global announcement regarding animals' rights

Animals' rights statement was first introduced in UNESCO in Paris in 1978. The stated items of it were revised by the international union of animals' rights in 1989 and were finally handed to the head of UNESCO public union in 1990 which was published in the same year. This statement includes ten items in details regarding animals' rights. Some of its items are as follows:

Respecting the animals' right to live (item 2),

Any action against the survivance of any species of wild animals or any decision ending in it is considered as genocide (item 8. Line 1).

V. Animals' position in Sufis' view

One of the most conspicuous subjects in mystical books is caring about animals, respecting their rights, and being kind to them. Great Sufis have all advised their followers not to tease their animals, especially their beasts; moreover, from the instances seen in mystical books – both poetry and prose-we could understand that animals are God's gifts in Sufis' view and they must not be teased. In Tazkeratololia in Abo Osman Heiri's section – one of the Sufis of 3rd century- there is a narration as this 'a donkey had an injury on its back; a crow sits on its injury and hurts it. The poor donkey could not make the crow fly away and was badly in pain. The Sufi feels pity for the animal and puts his rope on the animal's injury and ties his own turban on it' (Attar, 2007: 415). To see other examples, you could go to the book and see BaYazid Bastami and Safian Souris' parts.

VI. Animals' rights in literature

In old books, such as Avesta, animals' rights and rituals have been mentioned. After Islam, sententious and doctrinal book *Kelileh va Demneh*, which is a literature work that owes much to the time before Islam, includes moral lessons and doctrinal stories which are embedded in metaphorical and symbolic life and dialogues of animals' world. There is no doubt that Sanskrit is the most ancient sample of symbolic literature in the world, it has a special attitude to animals which has a root in Sughdi literature. In the same process, Sadi also filled Boostan and Golestan stories with exemplifying figures most of which were animals. Persian classic literature and gnostic sayings have also benefited from symbols derived from animals. Attar Neishaboori has a magnificent poem called *Mantegh Alteir* which narrates birds' destiny with gnostic doctrines about unity and oneness. In Ferdowsi's epepee which comes from ancient notes and forgotten sermons from our ancestors, it is seen that fathers exemplify animals for their children to draw their attention to their behavior and teach them about life and world. An obvious example of a poem in which the poet has respected the animals' rights is the famous following verse: 'On the ant bearing the grain bring not strife/He is alive and joyous is sweet life' (Ferdowsi, 2007: 120).

According to this, the rich attitude and huge vision that Iranian culture and literature have to animals became a pioneer for animals' symbols in modern literature like *Animal Farm* by George Orwell.

VII. Animals' rights in Masnavi-I Ma'navi

The love Sufism of Molavi has two aspects: one is vertical love which explains and determines the relation between God and vassal, and the other one is horizontal love which shows the relation between the vassal and his surroundings. This is the same as social Sufism which is another characteristic of Molavi's love Sufism, it could be somehow claimed that Iranian Sufism has got such a characteristic. It is in horizontal love that Sufi is in peace with all human without considering their race, language, religion, and culture, and is also adapted to his environment which means he does not pollute the water, does not do harms to the trees and nature, does not tease

any animals, and breaks no heart (Sufism and Poets, A talk with Karim Zamani). Molavi, in *Masnavi-I Ma'navi* which is an exceptional and magnificent phenomenon, places the greatest Islamic-Iranian Sufism conceptions in narrations illustrating animals' life, such as *The Parrot and the Merchant*. The mentioned narration is known as one of the world's most out-standing works which teaches lessons regarding animals' rights and their protection and caring very delicately; moreover, it refers to some of their rights, such as living, alimony, caring and not teasing, hygiene, respect, and etc. In some verses in *Masnavi*, Molavi has referred to his own beliefs and mentality regarding animals' rights; for instance,

1. Animals must not be taken as a play toy (the right not to be teased).

'Somebody sticks a thorn under a donkey's tail; the donkey does not know how to get rid of it, he starts jumping' (*Masnavi*, Book 1, 154).

It seems one of the unfunny jokes that people used to play on animals in the past was putting a thorn under the tail of a donkey and laughing when the poor animal was teased and jumped out of pain (Forouzanfar, 2001: 102). From the several narrations told about different subjects, it could be concluded that any work teasing and torturing an animal is not acceptable and permitted. Shia leaders have had discussions based on these sayings and have prohibited doings, such as whipping, branding, paralyzing, and etc. (Moghimi, 2011: 183).

2. Unnecessary killing of animals which are dependent on human must be prevented (the right to live).

'Because of his usefulness, the (domesticated) ass ought not to be killed; (but) when he turns wild, his blood becomes lawful' (*Masnavi*, Book 1, 3315).

Donkey is a domestic animal which must not be killed; however, if it gets carried away and wild in a way that may do harms to others, its killing is justifiable (Shahidi, 2001: 100).

Saheb Sharayeh writes:

لوجنی علی صائلة جان فان كان للدفع لم یضمن ولو كان لغيره ضمن

If one does harm an animal which has attacked him to defend himself, he is not to blame, but if it is not for defense, he is to blame (Kalantari Arsanjani, 2002: 7).

3. The right of blood money and nemesis must be considered for animals (the right to live; right of respect). In the following verse, it is said that camel is respected and has blood money. 'The vengeance, which is God's minister, demanded from them an entire town as the blood-price of a single camel' (*Masnavi*, Book 1, 2514).

In many sayings, animals' killing has been prohibited and even in some of them it is mentioned that animals' torture can lead to one's torture on doomsday (Moghimi, 2008: 192). This poetry clarifies how nasty and wrong animals' killing is in God's view.

4. Compatibility and patience with both wild and domestic animals are advised.

'O Solomon (of the age), amidst the crows and falcons be thou (a manifestation of) the clemency of God: sort with (adapt thyself to) all the birds' (*Masnavi*, Book 4, 779).

Suleiman, who was a prophet of God, was recommended to be kind and merciful with birds and animals so that he could guide others thanks to his good behavior. This point shows that respecting animals' rights is an introduction to respecting human's rights.

5. Being kind to birds, preparing good conditions, leading them to a peaceful life, animals' compatibility are also recommended.

'To the necessitarian bird speak the language of necessitarianism; to the bird whose wings are broken speak of patience (quietism)' (*Masnavi*, Book 4, 853).

'Keep the patient bird happy and free from harm; to the bird (resembling the) 'Anqá recite the descriptions of (Mount) Qáf' (*Masnavi*, Book 4, 854).

'Bid the pigeon beware of the falcon; to the falcon speak of 8 forbearance and being on its guard (against acting unjustly)' (*Masnavi*, Book 4, 855).

'And as for the bat that is left destitute (of spiritual illumination), make it to consort and to be familiar with the Light' (*Masnavi*, Book 4, 856).

In those verses, Molavi refers to the acceptable and correct treatments of animals since he believes that animals are sensible enough to understand aggression and compassion.

6. Making animals fight and then forcing them to reconcile must be prevented.

'Cause the warlike partridge to learn peace; to the cocks display the signs of dawn' (*Masnavi*, Book 4, 857).

This verse draws our attention to a nasty tradition which was quite popular in the past. In the past, people made some animals like dogs or some birds, such as roosters and partridges fight so that they could be entertained seeing them fighting and injuring each other.

7. Doing harms to the animals and paralyzing them are prohibited and blood money is considered for animals, as well (the right of respect and not being teased).

'Since the two eyes of an ox are (rated) as one eye (of a man) in (the case of) damages for (their) destruction—for it (the ox) hath no excellence—' (*Masnavi*, Book 4, 1711).

'The blood money for one eye of a cow is equal to a quarter of the whole cow's price, so for both eyes of it, it will be half of its cost which is equal to the blood money for one eye of a human' (Shahidi, 2001: 253). Such punishments could prove the significance and importance that animals' rights have in Islamic and Sufi's ideology.

8. Taking care of an animal that is dependent on human in an appropriate way is a must. Human must not be inconsiderate towards his animal's life, condition, and other needs. One of animals' rights is providing them with food and water (the right to be supported, right to have alimony, right to have hygiene).

The Súfi said, "First wet his barley, for 'tis an old ass, and his teeth are shaky."

"Good gracious!" said he, "why are you telling (me) this, Sir? They are taught by me (to make) these arrangements."

The Súfi said, "First of all take off his saddle and (then) put the salve of *manbal* on his sore back."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the servant. "Why, O purveyor of wisdom, I have had a thousand guests of your sort, And all have departed from us well-pleased: the guest is (dear to us as) our life and our kinsman."

The Súfi said, "Give him water, but (let it be) lukewarm." "Good gracious!" cried the other, "I am ashamed of you" (Masnavi, Book 2, 207-212).

The real expenses for animals could not be correctly estimated. However, what is necessary is that their basic needs, such as food, water, accommodation, packsaddle, and others must be met. These are the requirements which may change based on passage of time or change of place.

Our prophet said, 'whoever prepares barley for his horse and then feeds it with the clean barley, God will consider a reward for him for each grain of barley he has given to the animal' (Kalantari Arsanjani, 2002: 19)

9. Not only doing physical harms to animals and killing them, but also offending them emotionally is not acceptable (the right not to be teased).

'He recounted the dog's faults at some length: no one who perceives faults (*'aybdán*) has got (even) a scent (inkling) of him that knows the things unseen (*ghaybdán*)' (Masnavi, Book 3, 571).

This verse refers to a main belief in Sufi's ideology based on which Sufis know the existence system as the best system, and they believe whatever is created by God is beautiful and faultless, so it is not wise or even justifiable to talk badly about God's creatures.

10. While using the animal for work, its physical condition, health, strengths and weaknesses must be taken into consideration. The animal must not be treated in a way that it gets hurt. (the right not to be teased, the right to be treated fairly, the right to be used fairly and properly).

'One cannot place on sore-backed luckless asses the load carried by horses and mules' (Masnavi, Book 3, 1453).

'Animals must not be overloaded or even made to travel a long way beyond its endurance; as a result, three people riding on one animal or forcing it to do a task which is demanding for the animal are unrighteous' (Kalantari Arsanjani, 2002: 267). A herd of camels were passing before Emam Sadegh; Emam Sadegh happened to see a camel which could not walk straightly (due to the heavy load). He called the bondsman who was in charge of the animal and said, 'be fair to this camel, and then God will be fair to you' (Kalantari Arsanjani, 2002: 267).

Islam has set some rules and regulations regarding benefitting from animals fairly and without any extremes. It has also given special concern and consideration to some issues in this regard: necessity of considering the animal's power and endurance, necessity of considering animal's health and hygiene, necessity of providing the tools and accessories which are essential for the animal's use (Moghimi, 2011: 164).

11. Kindness and mercy to animals and praying for them regardless of being even harmful to human is advised.

I have pity and forgiveness for dogs, saying (to myself), 'Why do they suffer chastisement from the stones (which are cast at them)?'

I utter a prayer for the dog that bites, crying, 'O God, deliver him from this (evil) disposition!

Keep also these dogs in that (good) thought, so that they may not be stoned by the people' (Masnavi, Book 3, 1801-1803).

In these verses, Molavi illustrates the attitude and intent of real Sufis towards the animals which do harms to them. There is no sense of revenge but it is sympathy. They also pray for a better behavior for other animals.

VIII. Conclusion

Careful studying of various narrations and hadiths which discuss different animals' rights delicately in addition to analyzing some verses from Masnavi-I Ma'navi in which Molavi directly refers to animals' rights prove that he has had an Islamic upbringing, and also his intimacy to Quran, Hadiths, and his respect for animals and their rights are all undeniable. These are all characteristics of Molavi's ideology. Going through the analyzed verses clarifies that thanks to the unique wisdom cognition that Molavi has gained towards God, not only does he prohibit teasing and torturing, but also he indirectly recommends being kind and sympathetic to harmful and snaky animals and preventing from their being killed. This is an important point which demonstrates lovely and merciful behavior of a real Sufi with different God's creatures; he is not wreakful with wild animals and does not kill them; moreover, he prays for them, as he does for other human, to have God's compassion and benefice.

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