

## **The study and survey of Imam Ali's trainings in the importance and observance of animal's rights with emphasis on Nahj al-Balagha**

**Nasrin Sayadi Anari**

MSc Student, Quran and Hadith University, Tehran Pardis, Iran

**Hamed Shariati Niasar**

Quran and Hadith University, Tehran Pardis, Iran

**\*Mohammad Hossein Sayadi**

Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Birjand, Birjand, Iran

Mh\_sayadi@yahoo.com; mh\_sayadi@birjand.ac.ir

### **Abstract**

*Today by increasing population growth, development of technology and increased welfare, the environment is ruining and many of animals either extinct or are endanger to extinction. The purpose of this study is to survey Imam Ali's trainings about the importance and observance of animal' rights with emphasis on Nahj al-Balagha in the basis of environmental ethics. In this research, we used theoretical method along with descriptive methods and content analysis base on gathering information by library studies, gathered information from electronic and non-electronic sources including essays and books in the field of Nahj al-Balagha and Hadith. In Nahj al-Balagha, the name of 13 animals, 8 birds, and 3 insects has been mentioned. Imam Ali prohibits Muslims from ruining the earth and even injuring and bothering animals and recommends human being to learn some good attributes which exist in animals and he emphasizes on the justice in behavior with animals and observance their rights. He says: May God curse those who curse animals. He had no willing against seven climates with that is in the heavens to get the berry skin from an ant by oppressing it. He expresses the importance and details of birds in the environment to force human being for thinking and consideration in creation and existence and also make profit from them. We can say in one word that all creatures of God should be considered by human being and they shall accept responsibility against God creatures as they are responsible and obedient to their God and they should observe their rights which exist in Islam religion and try to keep and protect them.*

**Keywords:** Nahj al-Balagha, Environmental destruction, Environmental ethics, Animals.

## Introduction

The collection of relations between living and non-living organisms which affect the life of a person or species is called environment. The environmental ethics is an applicable behavior which pays attention to the treat of human beings with living or non-living environment (Abolhasani et al., 2011). Today, industrialization, development of technologies and increasing welfare is lead to incorrect use of natural sources which result in ruining of environment and natural sources and appearing different diseases because of environmental contaminants and so many of the animals either are extinct or areendanger to extinction (Sayadi et al., 2011, Sayadi and Rezeai 2014). Like other religions, Islam has many recommendations about humans and natural environmental problems. In Islam, the environmental ethics is originated from monotheistic worldview in which protection of environment is equal to protection of God creations (Hosseini Shad et al., 2012). In verse 61 Surah Hud, God says: “it is He who created you from earth and hath made you husband it”. We can find from the message of this verse that God has commanded us to develop and flourish the earth and don’t do anything against it and abstain from ruining the environment.

## The basis of the research

Imam Ali (AS) in letter No. 53, in his governmental commands says: “your effort in cultivating the earth should be more than collecting tribute which there is no tribute without cultivating, and the one who wants to achieve tribute without the development of farms, will destroy cities and servants of God”. Also he wrote to Malek: “your effort for cultivating and flourishing the earth should be more than your effort for gathering tribute and taxes” (Dashti & Mohammadi, 2001). All living or non-living created beings are creatures of God and so we have to try in preserving and flourishing them by doing divine commands which are based on the justice in behavior and interaction with surrounding environment. As Imam Ali (AS) found people responsible and respondent for earth and says: “you humans will be questioned even in the case of lands and livestock”. He also recommends that “observe the care of God in your properties and cattle (sheep, cow, and pigeon)” (Hore Ameli). The foundation of Islam is on the basis of human natural and genesis needs so that some of the commands are fixed and some others are variable considering the conditions and policies. As a result, because all of the needs of human being for guidance and salvation are existed in Islam religion, so we can say that Islam is a complete religion. God has said in verse 3 Surah Maede: “Today, I have completed your religion, and completed My favor upon you”. So that human being needs to be guided and to have inspiration directing in all stages and conditions of life. The divine commands have been expressed. This is the characteristic of Islam religion that in different conditions of life including environmental, political, and cultural, can be a guide for human being in all individual and social aspects. Environment which has considerable interactions on the social and individual life of human being is a great affair and there exist many commands in Islam religion in this field. Many researchers worked in this field and there published many books and essays about it. Now, the purpose of this research

is to study Imam Ali (AS) trainings about importance and observance animal's rights which used different sources including Nahj al-Balagha.

### **Research Methodology**

In this research, we used theoretical method along with descriptive methods and content analysis base on gathering information by library studies, gathered information from electronic and non-electronic sources including essays and books in the field of Nahj al-Balagha and Hadith.

### **Results**

Today, in reciprocity with environment, many of animal species either extinct or are endanger to extinction. Therefore, many of the governmental and non-governmental organizations have paid specific attention to preservation and observance of animal's rights. In many west countries after industrial revolution, they approved some laws about observance of animal's rights. Although these laws were not comprehensive and were partial (Rezaei, 2010), it was included a universal 9-article statement about animal' rights which pronounced by Central Board of UNESCO. While many centuries ago, Islam religion had expressed comprehensive laws in this field. 5 Suras exist in Quran which have the name of animals including Baghare (Cow), Nahl (Bee), Naml (ant), Ankaboot (Spider), Phil (Elephant) and it mentioned the name of 31 animals. The name of animals has been mentioned in 52 Suras and 154 Verse of Quran and it shows the specific attention of Quran to animals. So that it placed a pair of each animal in Noah's ark and spoke about the companionship of Suliman with ants and hoopoe as messengers and God inspired Bee in it. Quran has many verses about the observance of animal's rights including: "No beast in the earth and no bird that flies with its two wings, but they are nations like you. We have nothing in this book neglected then they will be gathered unto they Lord" Anaam, 38. "How many are the creatures that carry not their own sustenance? It is Allah who feeds (both) them and you: for He hears and knows (all things)" Ankaboot, 60. "Satan says that I will lead them astray! And vain desires! And to command them that (do superstitious acts, and) split cattle ear and to change the clean creation of God (and force them to make their monotheistic naturepolluted to dualism) and everyone chooses Satan instead of Allah, has a profound loss" Nesae, 119. Imam Ali (AS) also paid attention to this case which comes in the following.

In his first sermon, Imam Ali (AS) pointed out to the responsibilities and rights of Muslims and Says: Fear God about servants and towns and cities; lest anyone apply oppression and destruction and criminality in towns and cities. [You all are responsible and will be questioned, even about lands and livestock] that why have destroyed fields and forests, cities and homes and have injured animals. Obey God and avoid from sin.

## Discussion

In Nahj al-Balagha, there mentioned the name of 13 animals (elephant, wolf, horse, sheep, camel, crocodile, whale, viper, hyena, lion, zebra, snake, goat) and the name of 8 birds (vulture, bat, peacock, eagle, pigeon, ostrich) and 3 insects (ant, locust, spider) which we will mention some of them in the followings.

Imam Ali (AS) recommend us to learn some good features which exist in animals and Says in somewhere: “there exist 10 features in dogs, and anyone who keeps these features, will be prosperous (Mirsadeghi Zanjani, 1997), and these characteristics are as follows: 1- it has no home, and this belong to his solitary features. 2- it is vigilant during the night, and this is of worshippers features. 3- when goes to trip, carry nothing with it, and this belongs to trusting people attributes. 4- when you give something to it, take it to a distance and eat it there, and this is of humbles characteristics. 5- if someone beats it and takes it away, it will comeback even by nothing, and this is of devotees signs. 6- it never leave its owner in difficulties, and this is of patients features. 7- when it dies, it doesn't leave any heritage, and this is of ascetics signs. 8- it is hungry all the time, and this is of zealots characteristics. 9- it is fearing all the time, and this belongs to pious signs. 10- it is satisfied to a small thing of world, and this is of lovers features.

Imam Ali (AS) has many commands about the way of behavior with animals, and says in somewhere: “if animal was used as palfrey, it should not be tired. Do justice between that palfrey camel and other camels and relieve the tired camel, and ride slowly the one who injured a little or can't depart. Also, he has a command about entering among animals and he says: “do not enter to them like someone who wants to dominate animals and flocks and aims to injure them”. In letter No. 25, Imam Ali (AS) advises to the gathering official of Zakat: “send us the property you gathered from Zakat in order to use them in the cases which God ordered. When you gave the livestock to your honest person, notify him that do not separate the camel from his child and do not milk them completely so that no harm reaches to its child. Don't ride them more than need and don't make them tired and observe justice in riding them, and relax the tired livestock and compromise with a beast who injured its hoof and can't depart, and let it drink water when arrive to a river, and do not change its route from green and grassy lands to the dry and empty roads, and let it rest occasionally and graze in places which have water and grass, thus by the command of God, they will come to us with a fat and chubby and relieved body”. And he says in the importance of this matter that: May God curses those who curse animals. Here, Imam Ali (AS) emphasizes on the avoidance of separation between animals and their children, and on the justice in behavior with animals and observance their rights.

Furthermore, Imam Ali (AS) has many recommendations about unable animals and says to the tax official: ((don't accept the old, sick, and defective animals for Zakat and don't deliver them except to one who you trust his religion and he concerned about properties of Muslims, and he will carry it to the leader of Muslims and so he divides these between them. Be careful

in conveying animals to the shepherds of sheep and camels who is benevolence and kind, honest and preserver, who is neither strict nor unjust, neither ride it fast nor make it tired.

The old, sick and defective animals who broke their hands and legs, if approved as taxes, should traveled a long distance in order to arrive the destination, and no doubt that they exposure to torture and injury. Imam Ali (AS) has emphasized on the observance the animal's rights that do not misbehavior with them and says in somewhere that he had no willing against seven climates with that is in the heavens to get the berry skin from an ant by oppressing it. He even considered the feelings of animals and recommends that do not sacrificingsheep in front of sheep and camel in front of camel while the one is looking at the other.

Peacock is one of the most beautiful birds that in sermon 165, Imam Ali (AS) mentioned it as one of the wonders of creation and says: "By creating birds, God has created wonderful creatures and has set up clear evidences for His delicate manufacturing and His great power, so that has made the eagles obedient, confessor and surrender. He created various shapes of birds. Those birds who He resides them in land gaps, wide valleys and mountains peak, those who have variegated wings and various shapes. The rein of which is in His hands. From the most wonders of creation is peacock which God has donated the most excellent harmony to it and has decorated it to the most beautiful colors, with pretty feathers and a drawn tail that when it faces to a peahen, opens it as an umbrella and makes a parasol over his head. Exactly like the sails of ships that sailors open them. Peacock is proud of its pretty colors and flaunting of its tail. The strings of its feathers are like silvery rods which marvelous circles similar to sun grow up from them. Circles like pure gold and chrysolite. If you seek an identical on the earth for them, they are like blossoms of spring flowers when bunched. It walks swaggering as proud ones and looks at its pretty wings and tail. It smiles to its colorful dress, but when sees its feet, it shouts sorrowfully which is similar to crying and sings sadly, because its feet are as narrow as the feet of a rooster and a clove is grown from its thin leg. There appear a bunch of colorful and green hairs in the location of its wings. The bulge of its neck is straight and drawn. Below its neck is black up to its belly, a black color which is like green one, as a silk which is spread on a glossy mirror".

And he says about bat: "Glorified is Allah who set the night for bats as a bright day and for gaining sustenance, and like the dark night, set the day for their rest and calm. And created its wings from flesh for their flying to use them when is necessary. These wings are like auricle, without feather and main vein, but you can see the place of veins and their signs very well". In this sermon, Imam Ali (AS) points out to the great power of creation and then expresses the variety of birds as a sign of God uniqueness. No doubt that considering the details of a bird including the color of its feather, wing, the way of walking, the way of reproduction, and looking at its feathers, shows the importance of birds existence in the environment to force human being to think in creation and make a profit of it (Jafari, 1995).

Imam Ali (AS) has pointed out to the biggest creatures of the world, whale in the sea, and elephant in the earth, and also small creatures like ant and locust. He says: ((look at the ant with its small body, that how its delicate creation is perceived by human eyes and thought. Look at it when walking on the earth, and try to gain its sustenance. Speak about the wonder and amazement of locust, if you want, which God has created two red eyes and two pupils like shining moon for it, and denotes it hidden ear, and a mouth proportional to its body. Locust has a powerful sense and two incisors to pick plants, and two sickle-like feet to pick up things. Farmers fear from them and have no ability to take them away; even though all to be united. Locusts enter the farm strongly and eat what they want, while the whole of their body is not more than a narrow finger.

Obviously, the precision and attention of Imam Ali (AS) in describing these creatures shows the importance of them in the world of being. According to the verse 18 surah Haj: “didn’t you see that everyone in the heavens and the earth, and the sun and the moon, and the stars and the mountains and the trees, the animals and a lot of people prostrate against God and many are in torment constantly, and the one who God despised him, so he never honored, God will do whatever He wants”. And verse 44 Surah Asra: “The seven heavens and the earth and everyone in them praise Him, and you do not comprehend their praise. He is ever clement and forgiving”. All creatures of God should be considered by human being and they shall accept responsibility against God creatures as they are responsible and obedient to their God and they should observe their rights which exist in Islam religion and try to keep and protect them.

### Conclusion

In many verses of Quran including verse 61 Surah Hud, God says that He has created all things existed in heaven and earth and in general, all thing in the world for the use of human beings as the superior of the creatures. So that He prepares all human needs for his evolution. Thus, human must thank God by true usage of them. God has introduced human as the one who is responsible for developing and improving them. But unfortunately, today according to the unrestrained misusing of nature and God creatures, many of them either extinct or are endanger to extinction. Despite this fact that the use and fruition of natural sources and environment along with the true way of behavior and observing their rights and carrying out the justice is expressed in religious sources and Nahj al-Balagha which is the main purpose of this study, so that it propounds specific limits in behavior with animals including palfrey (camel) and expresses the wonderful features of creatures particularly birds, it forces human to think in their creation. According to the mentioned subjects, based on the Islamic trainings, observing the environmental ethics is necessary and aggression of them is not permitted. Furthermore, the Creator of world has placed laws and provisions for nature and everything existed in it for equilibrium. This shows that the creation of each animate is with thinking and management. The creation and nature are purposeful and we should respect to their limits. Hope that with propounding and more teaching of religious trainings along with optimized

and permitted usage in the field of keeping and preserving the environment particularly animals, try to avoid from their extinction.

## References

Abolhasani N, Sayadi MH. (2011). "The Role of Education in Promoting Environmental Ethics and Culture". Planning and Environmental Management Conference, Tehran, Tehran University.

Dashti M, Mohammadi K. (2001). "Concordance of words in Nahj al-Balagha, Qom, celebrity. p. 578, 53.

Hore Ameli MH, "Wasael". publisher of Al-Bayt Al Alslamlahya Altras, 11:510-518.

Hosseini Shad M, Sayadi M. (2012), "Comparative Study of Environmental Protection in Islam verses and hadiths times". the first national conference on environmental protection and planning, Hamadan.

Jafari M. (1995). "Beams of Nahj al-Balagha (with quotes sources and based on traditions other sources)". editors, gathering Mohammad Ben Hussein Sharif Al-Radi, translated by Mahmoud Taleghani, China Secondly, Tehran, Printing and Publishing Ministry of Culture Islamic.

Mirsadeghi Zanjani H, Hosseini SM. (1997). "Showing the unmarked". 18: 301-310.

Rezai P. (2010). "Animal Rights in Islam from the perspective of environmental ethics Nahjolbalagha". Journal of Moral Knowledge, 3: 145-158.

Sayadi MH, Movafagh A, Kargar R. (2011) "protection of the environment on religious teachings". Planning and Environmental Management Conference, Tehran, Tehran University.

Sayadi MH, Rezaei MR. (2014). "Impact of land use on the distribution of toxic metals in surface soils in Birjand city, Iran". Proceedings of the International Academy of Ecology and Environmental Sciences. 4:18-29.