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Understanding Qur'anic Examples of Living Beings in Contemporary Times: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

The Qur'an speaks about various living beings, including humans, angels, jinn, and animals, each playing a distinct role. These are not mere symbols; they reflect deep aspects of Islamic philosophy-touching on theology, ethics, and cosmology. This study, based on both traditional and contemporary perspectives, explores how the Qur'an describes different forms of life and examines their meanings.-

Drawing on specific verses and interpretative traditions, this paper investigates the roles and characteristics assigned to these beings, focusing on their moral, spiritual, and environmental implications. The research also explores modern scientific and philosophical ideas related to the Qur'anic descriptions-such as how humans are distinguished, how animals feel, and the nature of unseen entities like angels and jinn.

By linking ancient knowledge with modern discourse, this study demonstrates how these examples remain relevant in current debates around bioethics, environmental ethics, and artificial intelligence. It also shows how the Qur'an presents life as a holistic system, where all beings submit to God. This helps us understand the universe and our broader responsibilities within it.

Finally, the paper argues that the Qur'anic approach to living beings continues to inspire thought across various fields, offering timeless wisdom that can be applied in new ways as intellectual and scientific perspectives evolve.

Keywords: Interpretation of the Qur'an, Living beings, Forms of Life in Islamic Thought, Animal Life in the Qur'anic Perspective, Islamic Environmental Ethics, The Distinct Nature of Humanity in Islam.

Introduction

The Qur'an is the central religious text of Islam, offering a comprehensive perspective on the universe and defining the purpose and essence of all living creatures. Humans, angels, jinn, and animals are integral to divine creation, each playing a significant role in the Qur'an's moral, spiritual, and cosmological teachings. For instance, Surah Al-An'am states: "There is no animal on earth, nor any bird that flies on its two wings, but they are communities like you. We neglected nothing in this book. Then to their Lord they will be gathered." (Qur'an 6:38)

In Islam, this verse suggests that every form of life carries a spiritual significance.

This reflects the concept of divine guidance and the idea that all living beings exist in a purposeful and orderly manner. The aim of this research is to connect traditional Qur'anic interpretation with modern thought by exploring how the Qur'an describes various forms of life and what these descriptions mean in today's intellectual and scientific contexts.

The main objective is to analyse how the Qur'an depicts living beings from both classical and contemporary perspectives to understand their roles, significance, and relevance to human understanding.

This study focuses on key living beings mentioned in the Qur'an, such as humans, angels, jinn, and animals, as well as symbolic or metaphorical figures like Dabbat al-Ard (the Beast of the Earth) and Ahl al-Kahf (the People of the Cave). A qualitative and analytical approach is used, involving close reading of selected Qur'anic verses, combined with insights drawn from classical sources and modern academic research in fields such as theology, ethics, and science.

In this context, "living beings" refers to all entities that possess life, consciousness, and a role within the divine order. "Qur'anic examples" are specific instances in the Qur'an where these beings are described, narrated, or symbolically represented to convey deeper meanings.

This study attempts to demonstrate how the Qur'an's perspective on life continues to inspire reflection across various fields such as science, ethics, and environmental thought, offering timeless wisdom that remains relevant to emerging ideas today.

Types and Purposes of Animate Beings in Islamic Scripture

The Qur'an offers a detailed understanding of the universe, highlighting a wide range of living beings humans, angels, jinn, and animals each serving unique roles within God's greater plan. These beings are not just parts of creation, but powerful signs (āyāt) of divine wisdom, power, and purpose.

As stated in Surah Al-A'raf: "It is He who created you from one soul and produced from it its mate that he might dwell in security with her." (Qur'an 7:189)

This verse talks about the creation of human beings and their role as stewards (khalīfah) of the Earth. In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30), Allah announces His plan to appoint humans as His representatives on Earth. Before this decision is confirmed, the angels raise their concern, asking, "Will You place upon it someone who will cause corruption and shed blood?" Allah replies, "I know what you do not know," highlighting the deep wisdom behind giving humans this special responsibility.

Living Creatures in the Qur'an-Classical Interpretations and Modern Perspectives

The Qur'an gives a detailed and meaningful description of living beings, explaining how they were created, their roles, and their spiritual importance in God's plan. For a long time, Islamic scholars have used tafsīr (Qur'an explanation), re-

ligious study, and moral thinking to understand these descriptions. Well-known scholars like At-Tabari, Ar-Razi, and Ibn Kathir have shared important ideas about living beings such as humans, angels, jinn, and animals, that are still important today.

Modern scientific and philosophical thinking provides fresh insights into how the Qur'an describes life, going beyond traditional interpretations. Today's scholars try to connect the idea of 'khalīfah' (stewardship) with the theory of biological evolution in understanding human development. They suggest that God's guidance could have worked through natural processes. They believe that divine guidance may have been achieved through natural processes. (Nasr, Science and Civilisation in Islam, p. 142)

The Qur'an's profound conceptualization of living beings continues to inspire multidisciplinary research, demonstrating its enduring relevance across historical epochs, diverse cultures, and various scientific fields. Its comprehensive framework encompassing humans, animals, jinn, and angels offers a unique ontological perspective that bridges theological, ethical, and scientific discourses. Contemporary scholars find in the Qur'anic descriptions remarkable compatibility with modern biological classifications while maintaining distinct metaphysical dimensions. The text's nuanced understanding of stewardship (khalīfah), consciousness, and ecological balance resonates particularly strongly with current discussions in environmental ethics, cognitive science, and artificial intelligence. This interdisciplinary appeal stems from the Qur'an's ability to articulate fundamental truths about creation and existence that transcend temporal and cultural boundaries. As scientific paradigms evolve, the Qur'an's holistic view of life continues to offer meaningful insights, confirming its status as both a spiritual guide and a source of intellectual inquiry that adapts to - while simultaneously challenging - contemporary worldviews. The scripture's dynamic interpretative tradition allows its teachings to engage dialogically with emerging knowledge systems while maintaining its core ontological principles.

Comparative Analysis and Implications

The Qur'an's perspective on living beings transcends religious theology and has significantly influenced contemporary multidisciplinary discussions. Its worldview continues to inspire academic inquiry across diverse fields such as environmental ethics, bioethics, artificial intelligence, and inter-faith dialogue. Central to this framework is the concept of *tawhīd* (divine unity), which underscores that all forms of creation humans, angels, jinn, and animals are interconnected elements within a divinely ordained order.

This perspective carries significant ethical implications, particularly in fostering Islamic environmental consciousness. Surah Al-A'raf (7:56) instructs believers: "And do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption. Calling upon Him in fear and aspirations. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good." (Qur'an 7:56)

The Qur'an provides foundational principles that inform contemporary bioethical deliberations surrounding genetic engineering, cloning, and assisted reproductive technologies. While the scripture does not explicitly mention these modern scientific advancements, its core teachings regarding the sanctity of life, inherent human dignity, and divine wisdom offer essential guidance for ethical decision-making in these complex areas. The Qur'anic framework enables believers to evaluate emerging biotechnologies through the lens of Islamic values and theological insights.

The Qur'an offers fundamental ethical principles that continue to guide contemporary bioethical discussions, particularly in areas such as genetic engineering, cloning, and assisted reproductive technologies. Although these modern scientific developments are not directly addressed in the scripture, the Qur'an's emphasis on the sanctity of life, the inherent dignity of human beings, and the overarching presence of divine wisdom provides a moral and spiritual framework for navigating these complex issues. These teachings help Muslims assess the implications of emerging biotechnologies in a manner that aligns with Islamic values. By grounding ethical decision-making in Qur'anic principles, believers are encouraged to critically engage with scientific advancements while upholding the balance between innovation and religious responsibility.

The Qur'an's depiction of living beings initiates a profound and ever-evolving conversation between traditional Islamic thought and modern perspectives, demonstrating the scripture's remarkable capacity to engage with changing times while maintaining its core principles. Its holistic vision presents existence as a carefully designed, interconnected system where all life forms embody divine purpose and wisdom—a perspective that finds meaningful applications in diverse contemporary contexts ranging from environmental stewardship to bioethical dilemmas, technological advancements, and interreligious dialogue. This research highlights the enduring significance of Qur'anic teachings by examining how they continue to inform current debates through a dual approach: investigating time honoured exegetical traditions while simultaneously engaging with modern scholarly interpretations. By bridging these temporal horizons, the study reveals how the Qur'an's ontological framework offers nuanced solutions to pressing modern challenges, affirming its role not merely as a historical religious text but

as a living guide capable of addressing humanity's most urgent questions across generations and disciplines. The dynamic interplay between the Qur'an's immutable truths and their evolving applications underscores Islam's intellectual vitality in confronting contemporary existential and ethical concerns.

Conclusion

The Qur'an presents a remarkably comprehensive taxonomy of living beings ranging from humans, angels and jinn to animals and metaphysical creatures that continues to offer valuable insights across academic disciplines and historical periods. Our analysis demonstrates that these Qur'anic descriptions serve not simply as theological concepts or ancient accounts, but rather as sophisticated frameworks addressing contemporary ethical dilemmas, environmental concerns, and philosophical questions. By employing both traditional interpretive methodologies and modern analytical approaches, this study elucidates the Qur'an's vision of a profoundly interconnected cosmos where every creature possesses intrinsic worth and divinely ordained purpose.

The pioneering exegetical works of classical Islamic scholars such as al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir and al-Razi laid essential conceptual foundations for understanding these beings within an Islamic worldview. Building upon this rich intellectual heritage, current research has extended these discussions into cutting-edge domains including biotechnological ethics, machine consciousness, and cross-species relationships. Through systematic examination of pivotal Qur'anic passages combined with interdisciplinary research, our findings illustrate how Islamic teachings can meaningfully contribute to urgent global debates surrounding sustainability, animal rights, and the responsible development of emerging technologies.

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