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Purification of Animals

Warm-blooded animals can be fit for consumption by using any of the two ways prescribed by Islamic law for its killing; hunting or slaughter. There are two methods of hunting, one is to hunt by a trained dog who is obedient; it must move when ordered and stop when commanded. It should not have the habit of eating its prey. Also the person who releases the dog on a prey must be a Muslim and he must utter the name of Allah (S.w.T.) at the time of releasing the dog, and throughout the hunt the dog must not go out of the sight of the hunter.

The second method of hunting is by pointed iron weapons like sword, spear or bullet etc. This should pierce the animal's body. Whether this weapon is of a ferrous metal or made from some other mineral, it makes the prey *Halal* upon condition that the archer should be a Muslim and at the time of releasing the arrow he must utter 'Bismillah'. If all such conditions are fulfilled and the animal is killed during this process, the flesh of the hunted animal is fit for consumption (*Halal*). However, if the hunter finds the animal alive he must slaughter it according to the prescribed rules of slaughter.

Animals caught in all kinds of traps could only be *Halal* if the trapper finds them alive and slaughters them in the prescribed manner.

Apart from this all the *Halal* flesh animals can be consumed only if they are capable of running away or flying away. If one shoots at the young one of a deer incapable of running or the young one of a partridge that cannot yet fly, their flesh is not *Halal*. They should be first caught and then slaughtered with a knife etc.

A Discussion regarding Non-vegetarianism

In *Tafsir al-Mizan* under the exegesis of the 3rd verse of Surah al-M'ida is a Three-part discussion which we present below.

Different beliefs regarding Non-vegetarianism

Man also possesses a digestive system like other animals therefore theoretically he can eat anything that he is capable of digesting and whatever can be absorbed into his body. It is possible for man to eat anything that he could chew and swallow. But he is selective and would never consume anything that he feels would harm him or that which is poisonous. Similarly he also avoids eating things that he considers harmful for his soul. That is food prohibited according to the religion that he follows.

Detestable things – If a person considers something Najis he refrains from consuming it, e.g. a person doesn't eat his own excreta because he considers it as dirty and filthy and sometimes he considers it Najis due to his religious belief. For example Muslims consider Pork Najis but Christians consider it permissible. Non-Muslims eat frogs, crabs and mice while Muslims consider them dirty.

Thus it becomes clear that different people have different views regarding the consumption of meat. Buddhism considers all types of meat prohibited. This rule was promulgated to put a stop to the practice of all types of meat eating. The African people and other wild tribes used to eat every kind of meat even going as far as Cannibalism. The Arabs used to consume the meat of all kinds of quadrupeds and even animals like rats and lizards, whether they died of their own or were suffocated to death. They used to say that you people kill the animal by your hands but we eat those who are killed by Allah (S.w.T.) (that is the animals who die a natural death and have not been purified by the prescribed method of slaughter).

As mentioned in authentic writings the idol worshipping Chinese eat every type of animals like dogs, cats, insects, snakes, frogs, oysters etc. But Islam has prescribed the middle path. That is, it has permitted only that meat which man considers naturally beneficial. The details of this will be presented below.

Islam has designated as Halāl the quadrupeds like sheep, goat, cow, camel etc. Some of the quadrupeds like horse, donkey etc is makrūh (Detestable) according to Islam. Birds, excluding the birds of prey are permitted if they possess a gizzard, flap their wings during flight and do not possess claws like that of pigeons. Islam has also permitted some marine animals. The details of all such animals are given in the books of jurisprudence. Also prohibited are the blood of animals, carrion and all those animals that are slaughtered, without reciting upon them the name of Allah (S.w.T.). The aim of promulgating such rules was to enlighten man regarding the regulations of meat eating and to permit only that meat which is considered naturally healthy and beneficial for man and refrain him from all that could prove harmful for him or that which is distasteful and dirty.

2. Is Killing a living thing against Mercy?

One could claim that animals also possess soul and like humans find death painful. Then how is it possible that we deprive them of the sweetness of life and force upon them the bitter taste of death?

While Allah (S.w.T.) Almighty is Beneficent and Merciful. How is it possible for such a God to order the slaughter of animals so that men can enjoy their meat? While the soul and feelings of both human and animals are same. The reply to this question is that whatever has been said against meat eating is because of sentiments and feelings overpowering reality. (Remember) Shari'a and legislation is subservient to wisdom and not prone to sentimentality and emotions.

This could be explained by saying that the material world is a world of changes. The rule prevalent in the world of matter is that of "the eater and the eaten one". The dwellers of the earth feed on the earth and shape themselves with it. (Like the human beings, animals and birds etc.). After this the earth eats them up a second time. Earth changes into vegetation and vegetation is transformed into earth in a continuous cycle. Moreover, the living things derive benefit from plants and water and some animals feed on other animals. For example animals of prey hunt other animals and consume their flesh. Their natural system is such that they cannot eat anything else. Like the clawed birds that catch birds like pigeons and other birds and devour them. The smaller birds feed on grains, grainy substances and insects like flies, fleas and mosquitoes etc.

Blood sucking insects benefit from the blood of humans and animals and finally the earth devours all of them. On the basis of this it is proved that the natural food cycle that is existing on the earth is based on natural laws without any hindrance. Everything is subservient to this natural law. The creator of nature has permitted consumption of flesh by some creatures and has designed their organs to accomplish the task. He has created man in such a way that he could consume vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian food. He is not like a sheep who can neither cut with its teeth nor pick up something with them. Neither does man resemble carnivorous animals that can neither chew or soften their food. In addition to these abilities man is equipped with the capacity to taste. He enjoys the taste of meat. And apart from this the natural make up of man throws light on the types of foods that his organs could digest and those that are beneficial for him. Since Islam is the religion of nature it has permitted all such things that are compatible with the natural makeup of man.

Also, it has prescribed some other rules formed by the creator of Nature. That is, all that flesh that could prove harmful to the body or spirit, all those things that one finds detestable and dirty are to be compulsorily avoided. In brief all those things that prove harmful to the body or soul or against the well being of human society like gambling and distributing of meat through drawing of lots. All such things are prohibited by Islam. Also banned are filthy things that normally people find to be disgusting.

Other objections against animal slaughter that are apparently based on mercy can be answered as follows: Indeed, mercy is a natural and created feeling that is found in the psychology of human beings and in a large number of animals. But it does not mean that this mercy has to be absolute. If it had been such, there wouldn't have been any kind of diseases, sorrows and difficulties. Apart from this, mercy and kindness are not like human justice which is from an accomplished moral quality encompassing every aspect of life. (That is one must be merciful under every circumstance). If it had been it would not be

correct to arrest the unjust people and punish the criminals, or to hate the enemies. If we act upon such type of absolute mercy, the earth and its inhabitants would be destroyed by corruption and transgression.

Therefore, commonly it is commanded that mercy and kindness be practiced. That is, animals must not be slaughtered in a cruel and painful manner. And we must not sever any part of the slaughtered animal, before its completely dead nor skin it.

Animal that is choked to death or that which is beaten to death is not allowed. Islamic law also prohibits the slaughtering of an animal before another beast. The same chapter prescribes watering the animal before it is led to slaughter. As far as possible we must be kind to the animal that is about to be slaughtered. Detailed laws regarding slaughter are present in the books of jurisprudence.

As far as the divine mercy and beneficence is concerned. Divine mercy does not imply the satisfaction of heart and the perceived effect. It denotes bestowing benefits to a deserving one to the extent that he deserves. Therefore, sometimes we consider something harmful and punishing whereas it is a divine mercy and goodness for one, and similarly the other way around. Then it is not appropriate for the divine wisdom that at the time of framing laws our false feelings belie a divine command and give a decision against established reality. From the above discussion it is established that Islam has allowed meat and the rules that make it permissible for us are promulgated in keeping with the law of nature.

“The nature made by Allah in which he has made men; there is no altering of Allah’s creation; that is the right religion...” (Surah ar-R^um 30: 30)

3. Why has Islam prescribed slaughter?

Second objection: We accept that nature and creation permits the consumption of meat. Then on the basis of mercy why are we not satisfied with the meat of animals that have died a natural death?

The reply to this question can be found in the second part of the above discussion. Because to ascribe such a meaning to mercy leads to the nullification of the very laws that Islam has prescribed. And Islam has framed laws in order to keep this feeling of mercy in the make up of man.

Moreover if only dead animals had been permitted instead of being beneficial in any way it would be harmful to men as eating carrion causes numerous diseases of the body and is also a bane for human soul. This would itself be against divine mercy as this would have caused untold problems to human beings and people would always be waiting for animals to die so that they may enjoy their meat. (Quoted from Tafh^ume al-M^uzan)

Remember! Slaughtering of an animal to consume its flesh is not cruelty. In fact it is the completion of the purpose for which it was created. Because before the slaughter the animal is dumb, unintelligent and senseless. It does not understand anything. But after it is slaughtered and consumed by man, it is

transformed into a part of human body that has the power of speech, understanding and reason. For example, no kind of merit or perfection can emerge from the tongue of a sheep. But when it becomes a part of human body it unravels realities and chants the praise of Allah (S.w.T.). In the same way other good actions are performed by other parts of the human body.

Purification through the Prescribed method of Slaughter

The main reason for slaughter is to purify the animal. The procedure is to completely cut off the four big veins of the neck below the bulge of the Adam's apple. (These four pipes are: wind pipe, food pipe and two big veins near the windpipe). The five additional conditions for purification are:

1. The person who slaughters must be a Muslim whether man or woman. Even a child can do it if he is old enough to distinguish good and bad.
2. The neck of the animal must be cut with a sharp iron weapon. But if an iron weapon is not available and if the animal would die soon if not slaughtered immediately, then a weapon of any other material is allowed. For example glass or sharp edged stone.
3. At the time of slaughter the face, all four legs and the stomach of the animal must face the direction of Qibla. But it does not matter if one forgets or if one does not know the direction of Qibla or if it is not possible to lay the animal in that direction.
4. At the time of slaughter one must recite the name of Allah (S.w.T.) and it is sufficient to say 'Bismillah' (In the name of Allah (S.w.T.)). However, it doesn't matter if one forgets to do so.
5. After being slaughtered the animal must move somewhat. It is sufficient if it even moves its eyeballs, or tail or thrash its legs. It is also a necessary precaution that as much blood must gush from the animal as it normally does.

In case of camel slaughter in addition to the above five conditions it is necessary to pierce it with a sharp weapon at a depression between the neck and the chest. If the animal becomes uncontrollable or it gets into a situation where it is impossible to slaughter it in the proper way; for example if it falls into a well and is about to drown, then one can pierce or wound it with a weapon at any part of its body that would kill it. It would become permissible. It is not even necessary that it should face the Qibla. However, the other conditions are applicable.

The purification of fish is that it should be removed alive from the water. Therefore if a fish with scales is caught alive from the water and dies out of water, it is tahir (pure) and it is permitted to eat it. If it dies in water it is nevertheless tahir (pure) because it does not have warm blood, but it is not permitted to eat it. Also, it is not necessary that the person who catches fish be a Muslim. Hence it is allowed to eat fish caught by a non-Muslim. But one must have the knowledge that the fish has died after coming out of water.

The purification of locust is that it must be caught alive by hand or other means. And it becomes Halāl to eat after it dies. It is not necessary that the person catching locust be a Muslim or that the name of Allah (S.w.T.) be recited upon it. Eating the locust that has not yet developed wings and is not capable of flying is Harām.

If after hunting or slaughtering an animal one finds a young one in its belly it is tahir only if its limbs have developed or it has hair or fur on its body. It is allowed to eat this young one because its mother too was a Halāl meat animal.

Purification affected by slaughter

Whatever has been discussed so far shows that except for dog and pig all other Harām animals if slaughtered in Islamic way are considered tahir, although eating them is not permitted. And if it has not been correctly slaughtered, its dead body is najis (impure). But if it doesn't have warm blood it cannot be considered najis even if it dies without purification; its eating is obviously Harām. For example, snake, insects etc. And every Halāl flesh animal, which dies without purification becomes najis (impure) and its eating is Harām. If it does not possess warm blood, eating it is Harām but it is not najis (impure). For example fish that dies in water. Carrion whose eating is Harām is an animal that dies without slaughter prescribed by the Shariah. Whether it dies of some disease or a natural death, or due to external factors, whether it dies suddenly or a slow death. As animal do not usually die a sudden death it is possible that people think this kind of death does not make it a carrion. The Qur'anic verse (Surah al-Mā'idā 5:3) has specially mentioned it among the five kinds of carrion.

1. Munkhafta, animal that dies due to strangulation whether accidental or intentional, whether it is strangulated with an instrument like a rope etc, or by pressing its neck between two sticks. Such and many other types of methods were prevalent during the period of Jahiliyya (Pre-Islamic).
2. Mangooza, an animal that is beaten till it dies.
3. Mutaraddiya, animal that falls from a great height or that which falls into a well.
4. Tatahayya, animal that dies after being wounded by the horns of some other beast.
5. Mā Akala Bassao, an animal that was hunted by a beast and part of it was eaten up.

The phrase “and what is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols)...” prohibits the method of slaughter practiced in Jahiliyya. In the pre-Islamic era the polytheists used to install stones around the Ka'aba and consider them sacred. They used to worship these stones and sacrifice animals upon them. And the phrase, “and that you divide by the arrows...”, prohibits the consumption of the meat of animal that is slaughtered and its meat divided into the participants by drawing arrows. This is also a kind of gambling and it has been explained in detail in the chapter on gambling.

Why is Carrion Harām?

Mufaddal Ibn Umar is quoted in the books *al-Kāfi* and *Amali* to have asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.) why Allah (S.w.T.) has prohibited Carrion, blood and pork? Imam (a.s.) replied,

“Allah has not prohibited anything for men to take it Himself (we seek refuge in Allah (S.w.T.)). And He has not permitted things that He Himself didn’t like. (In other words Allah (S.w.T.) has not framed the rules of Harām and Halāl on the basis of His personal whims and fancies. The truth is that when Allah (S.w.T.) is Creator of everything, He alone knows what is good and necessary for the human body. Therefore he made it permissible due to His grace. He Alone knows what is harmful for the human body and, therefore prohibited it and made it Harām. But one who is helpless and there is no other way for survival is allowed to eat the same (prohibited) things. However, he must eat only as much as is necessary to save one’s life.”

After that he said, “Eating carrion makes ones body weak and thin. It destroys ones physical prowess and cuts off his generations. One who eats carrion dies a sudden death.”

It appears therefore that in the process of slaughtering, the blood gushes out and the meat is free of the impure blood with its toxic substances which flow in the veins. When an animal dies naturally or by any process where the blood remains in the body, the meat is contaminated with toxic substances, the consumption of which is injurious to health.

A heretic asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.) why Allah (S.w.T.) had prohibited carrion?

Imam (a.s.) said,

“Carrion is made Harām so that there should be difference between it and an animal upon which the name of Allah is recited. Also, the blood of a dead animal is not expelled from its body. It returns to its organs and makes its meat heavy and distasteful. Its meat is eaten with its blood.”

The heretic said, “Then the flesh of fish must also be carrion and Harām because blood is not expelled from it.”

Imam (a.s.) told him,

“The purification of fish is just that it should be removed from water and left outside to die by itself. It is not necessary to slaughter it because it does not possess (warm) blood. The same applies to locust.”

In the fourth volume of *Bihār al-Anwār* it is mentioned that the Imam also said that it is not necessary to slaughter fish because it doesn’t have much blood. And the blood that remains in its body is like the blood that remains in the body of an animal after it is slaughtered, which is harmless and Halāl.

Blood

Blood is of two kinds, Najis (impure) and tahir (Pure). The blood of man and all warm-blooded animals is Najis. It is a characteristic feature of warm-blooded creatures that when the main vein is severed the blood gushes out with force. If blood is found while milking a cow or buffalo, however little it may be, it is Najis and the milk is also Najis due to it. To consume this milk is Harām. On the basis of precaution (Ehtiyat) one must also refrain from consuming the minute particles of blood in an egg.

However, two types of blood are tahir (pure). One is the blood of all cold-blooded animals, like fish and mosquito etc. Secondly, the blood left over in a slaughtered animal. Hence if an animal is slaughtered according to the prescribed Islamic manner and some blood flows out, the blood remaining in its body is tahir. But if due to breathing or due to its head being placed on a raised spot the blood that has gushed out again flows back into the body, the remaining blood will not be tahir.

Apart from this it is absolutely Harām to consume blood whether it is tahir or Najis. However, that tahir blood which is a part of a fish or a slaughtered animal, and which can be considered as a part of its flesh; can be consumed. But if it is considered as blood its consumption is Harām.

Why is blood Harām?

In Tafsir of al-Ayyashi Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) is quoted to have said,

“Drinking blood causes diseases of the dryness of throat and madness and also makes one stone-hearted and merciless. One who drinks blood can anytime murder his own parents, relatives or a friend.
“

Then Imam (a.s.) said,

“Drinking blood cause production of yellow water in ones body.” (al-Kāfi) It makes human body to stink and makes a person bad-character. His descendants inherit a kind of madness and it makes the heart merciless.”¹

The heretic asked Imam Ja'far-as-Sadiq (a.s.) the reason for prohibiting the consumption of blood.

Imam (a.s.) said,

“Drinking blood causes the hardness of heart and mercilessness. It causes ones body to stink and changes ones complexion, and mostly causes leprosy.”²

According to Imam Ri'āa (a.s.),

“Drinking of blood causes plague, wounds and boils that ultimately lead to death.”

Pork

Pig and dog are two such Najis animals that every part of their body is Najis. Even those bloodless parts like hair and claws or hooves are Najis. To slaughter a pig or dog is a useless act. That is, these animals cannot be purified in any way. To consume their flesh is Harām and a greater sin.

Imam Riḍā (a.s.) mentions regarding the prohibition of pork,

“The Almighty Allah has prohibited (made Harām) Pork. Because it is a horrible and dreadful animal that Allah has created for men to derive lessons from. People should also refrain from sensuality and shameless deeds that cause such a terrible appearance. And that they fear from being transformed into pigs by Almighty Allah. (in the description of past nations it is mentioned that people who committed sexual promiscuity are changed into pigs in Barzakh and they shall be raised as pigs in Qiyāma.) Also, pigs were allowed to exist so that they are a reminder of the conversion (Maskh) of previous nations into pigs. The second reason for prohibiting pork is that the staple diet of pigs consists of extremely Najis and filthy things, and its blood contains innumerable harmful germs.”³

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said,

“The Almighty Allah converted many nations into animals. Among them are pigs, monkeys and bears etc. After this these animals were prohibited from being eaten, so that people derive lessons from them and do not consider the sin minor.”⁴

It is mentioned in the book *Islam wa Ilme Imroz* of Anjuman Tablighat Islami that pig is an animal that is classified by specialists among the thick-skinned animals. The rhinoceros wild pig and hippopotamus are all classified in this family. Pork is very harmful for the body but we mention below only some of its harmful effects.

Details Regarding some harmful effects of Pork

Spiritual and Moral harms

Pig is known for its shameless and wanton behaviour and for its sexual perversion. It does not honour its own females and invites other males to have sexual contact with it, and enjoys it. In addition it is awfully filthy, it thrives on excreta and has no hesitation in eating its own. Consumption of pork therefore leads to moral degradation and spiritual bankruptcy.

It is unbelievable that such a loathsome creature can eventually end up on the dinner table, where its meat is savoured and eaten with relish and this in spite of the fact that those who consume it are fully aware of its filthy and despicable characteristics. In fact many of these people when they want to abuse somebody in the most vile and insulting terms, they call him a pig, but pig it is, that they seem to relish

and enjoy the most. The same surprising attitude is shown by Christians. Whenever Christians depict Satan in religious anecdotes they present him in the form of a pig. The Gospel of Barnabas mentions that Pig is Satan personified and that the pig's body has the spirit of Satan. The present Bible among the Christians (Matthew 8–32 Marks 5–13, Luke 8: 28–39) describes how Jesus thrust the soul of Satan inside the herd of swines and sent them towards the river. In spite of the satanic nature attributed to the pig by their own religion, the Christians continue to eat it.

Physical Harms

Pork is harmful to the body in many ways, but two serious diseases caused by its consumption are Trichinosis and Dysentery.

Trichinosis. This disease is caused by the Trichina worm which breeds in the flesh of pig. In a period of one month the female lays 10 to 15 thousand eggs. The worms enter the human system only through consumption of pork. If the individual succumbs to the infection, the worms attack the walls of the stomach and the walls are weakened.

Three weeks after entering the stomach they enter the blood stream and spread to the entire body. They multiply at lightning speed in the host body.

The first symptom is giddiness and a strange kind of fever. This fever is connected with the digestive system and soon the person is afflicted with Diarrhoea. Initially there is mild fever which gets severe day by day. Other symptoms that follow are: Stiffness of the limbs, itch in the body, tiredness, weakness, pain in various parts of the body.

It is most apparent in the abnormal way of chewing, swallowing and breathing of the patient. The mild sickness assumes enormous proportions and finally kills the patient in seven weeks.

A kilogram of pork can harbour as many as 400 million Trichina worms.

Dysentery. One of the dreadful diseases that afflict those who eat pork is dysentery. This dysentery is solely caused by the organism 'Karam Kadoo'. This worm has a head that has two chains around the head and four branches with which it attaches itself to the walls of the stomach. The outer portion of the worm that produces eggs gets separated from the main body and is expelled along with stool. The eggs that are expelled with the stools are eaten up by pigs and in this way the eggs enter the stomach of the pig. These eggs again initiate the reproductive cycle. If the flesh of this pig is eaten by man there is every possibility that the germs which enter the stomach of man, will rise to infection. It has been proved beyond any doubt that these particular worms are only associated with the consumption of pork and the only way to be safe from them is by avoiding pork.

This infection is rampant in countries where pork is consumed in large quantities.

Besides being a source of infection, pork is heavy for digestion and causes great stress on the digestive system.

Islam prohibited pork 1400 years ago before anyone knew anything about its harmful effects. It is a pity that 1400 years hence, when the wisdom of this prohibition has been clearly defined, people still continue to consume it.

Similarly, Islam has designated dog to be absolutely Najis (Najisul A'in), and advised against keeping it in the house. Since then scientific developments have proved that various diseases are transferred to man from dogs. For example, rashes, baldness and other skin diseases caused by germs, and diseases caused by lice which breed in the fur of dog. Rabies, the most dreadful of all diseases that a human can contract, is transferred to man from dog.

All these diseases are explained in detail in the above-mentioned book. It is also mentioned that a utensil licked by a dog cannot be purified except by scrubbing it with mud.

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1. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 2. Ihtijaj. Vol. 4, Bihār al-Anwār page 250
 3. Uyun al-Akhbar ar-Riāa, Wasa'il chap. 1
 4. Tafsir Ayyashi, Book of Food and Drink of Wasa'il chapter one page 248

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