

# Quran and Animals

"There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book, then unto their Lord they (all) shall be gathered." (Surat Al-An'âm (The Cattle): 38)

## Some interpretations of The ayah:

- Ibn-Kathir (may Allah have mercy on his soul) wrote what can be summarized as: Mujahid said: Every categorized species is identified by its name. Qutada said: There is a separate community for each: Birds, Man and the Jinn. Sady said: "...except that they are nations like you." i.e. creatures like you.p
- The book 'In the Shade of the Qur'an,' (*Fi-Dhilal Al-Qur'an*), may Allah (SWT) have mercy on its author, stated: "... it is an amazing reality, which put animals, birds and insects into communities that have their own characteristics, systems and structure as well. The more advanced man's knowledge becomes, this reality becomes increasingly evident. Nevertheless, Man's knowledge of a specific creature does not add or change anything to that species! This ayah and these evident seen facts show Allah's (SWT) knowledge of the seen and the unseen as well as His (SWT) planning for everything...
- The writer of the book, *Safwat Al-Bayan* (may Allah have mercy on his soul) says that this part of the ayah "...except that they are nations like you," refers to all the different communities that are similar to man. They all live and die, are in need of Allah (SWT) for their livelihood, organizing their matters, the subjection of the settlement of their affairs to His omnipotence ...etc.

## Scientific implications in this ayah:

Biologists have discovered more than 1.75 million different types of species which exist on this earth and are living on land, at sea and in the air. In addition, paleontologists have discovered more than a quarter of a million extinct species. Taking the average number of yearly discoveries, of new species, in these two fields into consideration, scientists estimate that the expected total number of different species present on this earth may be as high as 4.5 million. Each of these species is probably represented by billions of successive and contemporary individuals.



There are more than 1.75 million different types of species exist on this earth

It has been found that the life expectancy of each species ranges from 0.5 to 5 million years (an average of 2.75 million years) after which they normally become extinct. The oldest fossil found on earth is 3.7 to 3.8 billion years old. It is, then, evidently a near impossible task to discover every one of those billions of individuals out of those millions of species that ever existed or even exist on this earth no matter what advancements, knowledge, or means of calculations man has. This is why it became important to categorize them as the ayah, we are looking at, has done, **"There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book, then unto their Lord they (all) shall be gathered."** (Surat Al-An'âm (The Cattle): 38).

The ayah refers to the main type of classification which is the species. It is divided into groups which include numbers of this species living together in specific areas in the world, each forming a community of its own. For example, humans are divided into different races, each representing a population and all these different populations descend from one father, Adam (Peace and blessings be upon him) whom Allah (SWT) describes by saying what can be translated as, **"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person**

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(Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwâ (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women; and fear Allâh through Whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allâh is Ever an All-Watcher over you." (*Surat an-Nisâ' (The Women):1*).

And He (SWT) says what can be translated as, "It is He Who has created you from a single person (Adam), and (then) He has created from him his wife [Hawwâ' (Eve)], in order that he might enjoy the pleasure of living with her..." (*Surat Al-A'râf (The Heights):189*).

And He (SWT) says what can be translated as, "He created you (all) from a single person (Adam); then made from him his wife [Hawwâ' (Eve)]. ..." (*Surat Az-Zumar (The Groups):6*).

The Prophet (SAWS) described the origin of human from one man by saying, "You are sons of Adam, and Adam came from dust". (Good Hadith, Sahih Al-Gamea' Al-Albany No. 1787).

The ayah that we are discussing in surat Al-An'am is referring to the fact that just as humans are divided into different races, each representing a population having the same origin, the same is true for every other species on earth, each is divided into populations having the same origin. Despite being in some ways independent, the different species have shared characteristics with other species. This proves the oneness of the creator as all creations, starting from the atom to the solar system to the galaxy, or from a single living cell to the human body, all are clearly synchronized and based on the same paired system which is a witness of Allah's (SWT) creativity, divinity and power as well as the attributes of being the one and only creator who is above all His creations.

### Types of living organisms (species) in the Noble Qur'an and in the science of classification.

In an attempt to gather this infinite number of creatures, biologists classified them into two main categories: Animals and Plants. They defined plants as those living organisms that are fixed to the ground through their roots. Allah (SWT) has given the plants the ability to produce their own food. Animals, on the other hand, have been granted the ability to move and obtain food from the surrounding environment from which they eat and digest.

This classification into these two main categories prevailed until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, despite discovering a lot of living organisms which were very difficult to place in either of these groups. These living organisms were discovered using the microscope which was invented in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. They included a lot of tiny single-celled organisms. Some of them had some resemblance to plants and others had some resemblance to animals, while a third category had some resemblance to both plants and animals.

These single-celled living things were eventually classified as a third category known as "Protista". With the discovery of bacteria, it was found that they could not be put in any of the three main classifications- Protista, Plants or Animals as it lacked a nucleus which was a characteristic of all the three groups. Similar to the bacteria there was another simple type of living organism known as "Blue Green Algae", which was also a single-celled organism with no definite nuclei and the carriers of the genetic codes are spread in the cell's liquid.

With the discovery of "Viruses", it appeared that they can be distinguished from the other organisms as they live on other organisms. It was found that a virus could replicate by inserting its simple genetic material into the cells of an animal, plant or protista. Since the genetic material in these primitive living things are not linked in a definite way, such viruses are sometimes referred to as "Naked genes".

Based on these findings, living organisms were classified into 4 kingdoms: Monera, Protista, Plantae and Animalia. Studies then proved that fungi were considered to be a different living organism that should be put into a separate category. Fungi are known to absorb their nutrition through the walls of their cells, which is a characteristic of plants. However, unlike plants, they do not produce their own food. Moreover, they do not swallow up and digest their food as animals do. Therefore, they had to be classified into a new category. By separating fungi into a new category, there became 5 different kingdoms of living things:

1. **Kingdom Monera: this includes:** bacteria, blue green algae and spirochetes. They are normally single-celled organisms with no defined nucleus.
2. **Kingdom Protista:** this includes protozoa and all algae other than blue green algae. They are also single-celled organisms but with a defined nucleus.

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3. **Kingdom Fungi:** this includes all kinds of mushrooms, molds, fungi, yeasts, mildews, and smuts. It may be single-celled or multi-cellular. Every cell has its definite nucleus. Fungi differ from plants because they lack chlorophyll and therefore, depend on other living organisms and decomposed material to survive. Hence, there are saprophytic fungi, that live on dead corpses and the remains of decomposed plants and parasitic fungi that rely on other living organisms for its nutrition.
4. **Kingdom Plantae:** this includes multi cellular organisms, each cell has its defined nucleus. These cells are organized into tissues and organs which include pigmentation that allows them to produce their own food through photosynthesis. The cell walls of plants are characteristically not living and the plants are normally rooted in soil.
5. **Kingdom Animalia:** this includes multi-cellular living organisms with nucleated cells and a living outer cell membrane. They are organisms that are able to move and rely on other organisms (plants and animals) to obtain their food.

This type of classification is to aid biologists in being familiar with these extensive amounts of living organisms. Viruses do not belong to the above 5 kingdoms of life. They are much smaller and much less complex than cells. They are macromolecular units composed of DNA or RNA surrounded by an outer protein shell. Similarly, prions and other non-cellular entities do not fit into any of the five kingdoms. The five-kingdom system of classification for living organisms, is further complicated by the discovery of archaebacteria., now recognized by most authorities as a 6th kingdom.

A prominent contemporary scientist describes it as: "Even though the method of classifying living organisms into 5 kingdoms is preferred in this book, it is like any other system created by the human mind. Therefore, it is an attempt to place arbitrary limits to nature which is too varied to be placed into such specific and narrow classifications and is therefore a very difficult, if not an impossible task." (Biology: Richard A Goldzbi, 1980, page 394)

#### **Current classification of living organisms (Taxonomy)**

In an attempt to simplify the picture, which in fact made it more complicated, was further classification of each (kingdom) into (Phyla), every Phylum into (Classes), every Class into (Orders), every Order into (families), into (Genera), into (Species), into (Varieties) into (Strains) which consist of individuals.

Things got more complicated with the addition of sub-categories to multiply each classification up to three times of what it originally was. There came to be sub- and super-before each of the above mentioned categories. For example, there is now a super-kingdom, a kingdom and a sub-kingdom.

This reflects the desperate attempts of evolutionists in a trial to deny the absolute truth about creation and to deny the Creator (SWT) Himself. They are attempting to prove that everything comes from nature. However, new successive scientific advances, especially in the field of genetics and inheritance, are increasing the proof that the true system of classification of living organisms is the species, which Allah (SWT) has distinguished into billions of individuals distributed throughout the world and has brought together as populations living in specific places and environments. Each species has originated from one origin which Allah (SWT) has created and knows of.

The classification of living things according to species is therefore the only accurate method of classification established by modern science. As for the remaining higher categories of classification allocated by different biologists, they are not accurate because they depend on a lot of assumptions, which rely on personal points of view. A biologist classifying these categories would be prone to information bias through choosing which characteristics to consider and which to ignore in order to simplify the process of classifying this extensive number of creatures.



**The classification of living things according to species is therefore the only accurate method of classification**

Therefore, every species of living organisms on earth comprises groups or populations which are brought together by shared characteristics. These characteristics include external, phenotypic, genetic and internal anatomic similarities. They would also have similar physiologic and biochemical behavior, basic genetic characteristics, proximate environmental conditions even if separated by terrestrial distances, as well as the ability to interbreed to produce fertile offspring. These characteristics bring together all the individuals of any one population as well as bringing together individuals of different populations of the same species. This is the case even if populations of the same species exhibit differences as a result of variations in the surrounding environmental conditions, or due to genetic isolation, because they all have a common genetic code.

Therefore, individuals from two different species can never interbreed and produce a fertile offspring. Each species cannot possibly breed with another different species. There are only minor differences within a population of any one species based on the genes inherited by the individuals which was originally placed by Allah (SWT) in the origin of this species. These individual differences may become more evident among individuals of two separate populations as a result of genetic isolation as well as differences in environmental and climatic conditions.

This remark alone is enough to disprove the idea of the hierarchical classification of the living organisms which is based on assumptions of similarities within the individuals of any specific kingdom, whether it starts from the species or the strains up to the kingdom and between all the other kingdoms according to the evolutionary theory. That theory has also been disproved by modern advancements in science including the Genome Project which has unraveled the genetic code of humans as well as some other living organisms despite the attempts made by scientists such as Charles Darwin.

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Carlous Linnaeous was a Swedish botanist, who published a book called '*Systema Naturae*' in 1735, a 100 years before Charles Darwin's publication of the book '*On the origin of Species*'. Linnaeus sought a natural method of arrangement, he stopped short of accepting the evolution of one species into another. Linnaeus' book called for the necessity of a classification system of all living things based on Binomial Nomenclature. This naming system is based on the assumption that all living organisms originate and descend from a common origin. However, The ayah that we are looking at in Surat Al-An'am rejects this as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "**There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you.**" (Surat Al-An'am (The Cattle):38). This Ayah specifically says what can be translated as that every species of the living organisms, with its populations and individuals, is a special entity separated and isolated from other individuals, populations and species. Any similarities are within the individuals of the same species and do not in any way go beyond to any other species.

This is a reality which modern advancements in genetics, molecular biology and biochemistry have begun to clearly show. This fact was mentioned 1400 years ago in the Holy Qur'an which only re-affirms the fact that the Qur'an could only be the word of Allah (SWT) which He revealed upon His Prophet and Messenger (SAWS). No man could have ever produced it. It also proves that Allah (SWT) has protected every letter and word of it as He promised. He (SWT) kept it just as it was revealed in its original Arabic language for more than 14 centuries and will continue to do so until this earth and all that is on it returns back to Him (SWT). We thank Allah (SWT) for blessing us with the Qur'an and Islam.



Ants show a type of co-operation and other properties in their community resembles ones exist in human community

**"All the praises and thanks be to Allāh, Who has guided us to this, and never could we have found guidance, were it not that Allāh had guided us!"** (Surat Al-A'rāf (The Heights):43)

Peace and blessings be upon the seal of the Prophets and the Messenger of Allah, who received the Holy Qur'an from his Lord (SWT), and passed it onto us with complete honesty, through his perfect character and morals, and it is all truth. Peace and blessings be on his beloved companions, family, pure wives and on all those who followed his guidance and acted upon it until the Day of Judgment.

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