

HISTORY OF ANIMAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT : AN OVERVIEW

Tapan Kumar De & Prasenjit Nanda

Abstract: Animal liberation movement, at present, is a burning topic of environmental ethics. From time immemorial animals were treated as lower creature and did not deserve moral right. Animals were also treated as the source of food and fun. Nowadays the concept has been changed and ethically we cannot support the bossing attitude of human beings. There is a long history of the animal liberation movement and in this paper we are trying to sketch the said history in a precise manner. The history of animal liberation movement begins with the writings of the nature writers and continues to the direct action theory of the so called radicalisms. The aim of the nature writers was only to build consciousness regarding nature and natural resources. They all were against the exploitation of animals. In the next step we will find philosophical debates to offer moral status to animals. Lastly we will see that the movement is institutionalized and the institutionalization of the movement believes in direct actions regarding animal liberations.

Key-words: Preservation, Sacrifice, Universal love (Metta), Descendants, irrational, unthinking, deliberately, Non-humans as Machines, 'Silent Spring'.

Animal liberation' is a term widely used in animal ethics to spread awareness among the people, both philosophers and non-philosophers to provide sufficient space for animals, both domestic and wild animals in the circle of morality providing a common ground of minimum interest, i.e., not to be harmed. Some thinkers offered reasonable ground for the animals to be treated as moral beings. It is an open secret that philosophers are divided into two groups in the western country regarding this matter. One group thinks that animals have no moral rights and they are here only to serve the purpose of human beings. Some traditional philosophers like, Descartes, Aristotle etc are not ready to expand the moral boundary to incorporate non-human beings in it. On the other hand some thinkers like, Peter Singer, Tom Regan etc are resided on the opposite corner of the debate with fully armed to hit the opposite circle to pave the way to incorporate the non-human beings into the moral boundary.

So in environmental ethics there is a long debate on animal liberation. Nowadays animal liberation appears in the ethics as a movement with a long history. Here we are going to search the root of the movement along with its present status.

Animal ethics, nowadays, has become an integral part of environmental philosophy. Without the inclusion of animal ethics environmental philosophy cannot get its perfection as a vital field of study. The central question of animal ethics is to decide the moral status of non-human beings. There is a long debate from the time being to throw light on the subject.

In Indian context, we see that there is a deep root of animal welfare concept. The Vedas,

the Upanishads and the other Shastras are well concerned about the preservation of animal lives. The Vedas are much concerned about sufferings of animals and there are some distinct views to be practiced by the human beings to offer respectable attitude towards animals. Not only in the Vedas, but also in some classical books, like, Panchatantra etc. also showed their respectable attitude for animals. And in the classical Indian philosophy, especially in Buddhist philosophy we find space for animals in the moral arena.

Panchatantra is also well concerned regarding the killing of animals in the eve of religious offerings. It says that, if one wants to step into the haven by offerings animals then it is unnecessary and immoral¹.

Manu also imposed some restrictions to preserve animals. According to Manu, elephants, horses, camels, deer, buffalos, goats, sheep, etc should not be killed for fun or for food. There we find a list of animals which are not to do kill for eating, according to Manu, vulture, pigeon, duck, crow, wild hen, tittip, charai, chakrabak, saras, shuksari, pankouri, bok, khanjan etc². On the other hand in the Buddhist philosophy and culture there are some space for animals. No doubt the most compelling support for protection of animals comes from the Buddha's opposition to sacrifice. In the Digha nikaya, there is a description of sacrifice without slaughter: "In this sacrifice, Brahmin, no cows were killed, no goats were killed, no cocks and pigs were killed, nor were the diverse living creatures subjected to slaughter, trees were not cut down for sacrificial posts, nor were grasses mown..... the sacrifice was pursued with clarified butter, oil, fresh butter, curds, honey and molasses."³

Buddhadev, the peace model of India, has also showed his respectable attitude towards animals. In one place when he was informed by a monk that another monk was beaten by a snake and subsequently died, He replied with a firm tone that the man did not practice universal love (Metta) towards snakes. He then advised the other monks to practice the universal love towards snakes for their own protection. In the 'AnguttaraNikaya' he says, "Let me have universal love for the footless; and for those with two feet; let me have universal love for those with four feet; and for those with many feet. Let not the footless harm me; nor those with two feet; let not the four-footed harm me; nor those with many feet."⁴

On the other hand, western tradition, in contrast with the Indian tradition appears as a young part of the game with a shallow history regarding this matter. It is true that in the Old Testament there are a few laws indicating a minimal awareness of animal welfare. The New Testament, in this field, offers a disappointing environment in this context. The mainstream Christianity, for its first eighteen hundred years, remains silent. In this chapter the history of the animal liberation movement will be discussed from the western point of view.

Just 185 years ago the first effort was taken by Britain government to offer a new concept regarding the sufferings of animals. A legal step was taken by the government to protect the members of the other species. That was 1800 and the bill was defeated by the majority. In 1820 the first anti-cruelty law took birth. To give any consideration at all to the interest of animals was a significant step beyond the idea that the boundary of our species is also the boundary of morality.

Yet the step was a restricted one, because it did not challenge our right to make whatever use the choose of other species. Only cruelty causing pain when there was no reason for doing so, merely sheer sadism or callous indifference - was prohibited. The farmers who deprive their pigs of room to move does not offend against the concept of cruelty, for they are only doing that they think necessary to producing bacon. Similarly the scientists who poison a hundred rats in order to find the lethal dose of some new flavoring agent for toothpaste are not cruel only concerned to follow the accepted procedures for testing for the safety of new products⁵.

Before this path breaking law, animals were treated only as property of human beings and it was conventional to treat the world, the non-human beings as the resource zone for the interest of human beings. In New Testament it was said, "Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds and the wild animals."⁶ This view clearly provides a dominating attitude of human beings over animals and permits them to use animals for food, clothing and labour including experimentation and entertainment.

The attitude of European people towards non-human beings was influenced not only by the theological concepts expressed in the New Testament; the then philosophical thoughts are also responsible to create a culture to treat non-human beings as low creatures. The picture was keenly observed by a leading animal liberationist, Peter Singer and he stated it in his famous article, 'Ethics and the new animal liberation movement'. He says, "In the conflict between rival schools of thought in ancient Greece, it was the school of Aristotle that eventually became dominant. Aristotle held the view that nature is a hierarchy in which those with less reasoning ability exist for the sake of those with more reasoning ability. Thus plants, he said, exist for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of man, to provide him with food and clothing. Indeed, Aristotle took his logic a step further- the barbarian tribes which he considered obviously less rational than the Greeks⁷.

The same attitude was prevailed all over the Europe. History says that the morality in Roman Empire was not extended to slaves and animals. At that time animals, along with the slaves were placed outside the moral boundary. Still later, the great reconciler of Aristotelian and Christian thought, St. Thomas Aquines said that animals were irrational, unthinking beings and therefore did not deserve the same degree of moral consideration as human⁸. Moral rights of animals were deliberately rejected by Immanuel Kant. According to Kant, though animals have souls and they are not mere machine, they have no moral status. Because, to Kant, having soul does not mean that an animal is an end in itself. Kant says, "that man can have the idea "I" raises infinitely above all other beings living on earth. By this, he is a person; and by virtue of his unity of consciousness through all the changes he may undergo, he is one and the same."⁹

Descartes also had the same view towards animals. In his paper, 'Non-humans as Machines', Descartes says "...in my opinion the main reason which suggests that the beast lack thought is the following. Within a single species some of them are more perfect than others, as men are too. This can be seen in horses and dogs, some of whom learn what they are taught much better than

others. Yet, although all animals easily communicate to us, by voice or bodily movement, their natural impulses of anger, fear, hunger, and so on, it has never yet been observed that any brute animal reach the stage of using speech, that is to say, of indicating by word or sign something pertaining to pure thought and not to natural impulse. Such speech is the only certain sign of thought hidden in a body. All men use it, however stupid and insane they may be, and though they may lack tongue and organs of voice; but no animals to do. Consequently it can be taken as a real specific difference between men and dumb animals"¹⁰

At the age of Renaissance, where humanism was flourished with big hopes and aspirations, a very little was done for the non-human beings. It can be said that there was nothing for the equal considerations of animals in the intellectual foundation of the renaissance era.

In the famous theory of Evolution of Darwin we get some positive lights regarding this matter. Darwin's theory says that undoubtedly mankind enjoys no special status on earth. There is nothing special in human being so that they can be allowed to exploit nature to fulfill their demand of luxuries. Donald R. Liddick observed that with the enlightenment came the obvious notion that animals do suffer, and therefore deserve at least some consideration. John Locke wrote that children should be taught from an early age that hurting or killing any living thing is despicable, while David Hume argued for gentle treatment of animals. Jean-Jacques Rousseau felt that killing animals for food was murder, and Alexander Pope opposed vivisection¹¹.

Nowadays, this line of thought has been changed by the modern thinkers. To them, the view that animals have no interests, and therefore have no moral status is nothing but a prejudice and an assumption making without sufficient clarifications. Moral philosophers have their own insight. With much clarifications and explanations it is being proved that though animals do not have the developed capacities like human beings, they have some inherent values, as they have the capacity of feelings. They feel pain and pleasure accordingly. That means animals are not only a sort of organic body or they are not only a sort of machine having the body without mind, but they have also their mental lives.

There is a long history of the revolutionary change of the line of thought in western tradition that came out through different stages with different approaches. In the eighteenth century the different attitude came out by the thinking of social reformers and poets and writers. The then writers, social reformers and poets were trying to express their views by criticizing cruelty to, and exploitation of animals to give priority to the interest of human beings.

We can throw light in this subject by providing two different lines of thoughts - one is time spreading and the other is theoretical development. The roots of the modern environmental movement can be traced in the second half of the 19th century. At that time some writers began to write books and articles in favour of nature. They are designated as nature writers. All the nature writers were evoking the power of the land and talking in terms of a respect for nature. The famous book "Walden" was published by Henry David Thoreau in 1848 explaining his direct experience of woods of the adjacent area of the pond 'Walden' situated in Massachusetts in United State of America. Perhaps, this is the first landmark in the history of the development of the

environmental movement. The tongue work or the work of pen started from this publication regarding the integrity and beauty of nature.

Time spreading thought

John Muri was also a famous natural resources protectionist at that time. He played a profound role by establishing Sierra club in 1892 keeping his focus on the conservation of natural resources. Through the club, he successfully used his literary gifts to encourage the US government to protest some of the great wilderness of the country.¹²

In 1970, the consciousness regarding the degradation and defloration of our natural home got a new dimension. The new dimension caused for the development of the philosophers. The joining of the philosophers made the movement a philosophical flavour and the thinking of this field became reached with various philosophical debates.

Environmental awareness began to spread throughout the western culture after the publication of 'Walden' and the establishment of Sierra Club by Henry David Thoreau and John Muri respectively. At about this time national parks were created in Australia, Newzealand and Canada. And Britain began to establish its first conservation based organisations, like R S P B (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in 1893 and the National Trust in 1894).¹³

Aldo Leopold, a famous US Forestry official published 'A Sand County Almanac' in 1949. This publication shakes the world and brings a new holistic idea regarding ecosystem. It includes the whole universe, biotic and a biotic community in the circle of morality. In a nutshell, it throws a new kind of light to the nature to mould the attitude towards nature of human beings by providing a clear and distinct view regarding the duty of human beings to protect the balance of nature with a skill of ecological management. The details of this holistic attitude will be presented later.

In 1962 one of the famous and influential books 'Silent Spring' came out into light by Rachel Carson treated as another milestone in the history of the development of environmental movement. Carson, a nature lover and former marine biologist, told of how chemicals like pesticides and insecticides, used on farms, forests and gardens were contaminating the environment. Wildlife was being poisoned, she said. The insect life was dying (and not just the pest species) which meant no food for the birds. No bird song = a silent spring. People were in grave danger too. She described in detail how the chemicals, like the insecticide DDT, enter the food chain and accumulate in the fatty tissues of animals, humans included, resulting in higher risk cover¹⁴

The publication of Rachel Carson helps to spread the environmental awareness throughout the world. The boundary of the awareness was not limited only in the field of intellectual thoughts, rather it enter into the arena of politics and economics also. The then American President John F. Kennedy was also influenced by this thought expressed in this book and some major steps, like the banned of DDT was taken to protect the environment.

The animal liberation movement stepped on earth for the first time as a radical movement in UK in the early 1970s when a group of scholars of Oxford University appeared as Oxford group led by Roslind and Stanely Godlovitch maid the world a different one through their deep thoughts regarding the situation of animals in the world. Recharad Rider, one of the famous psychologists,

who coined the term speciesism, also took entry into the Oxford group from then a wave of animal liberation movement began to run throughout the world.

A great novelist Brigid Brophy in 1965 wrote an influential article in the Sunday Times which helped to spark the movement of the Oxford group. He wrote "The relationship of homo-sapience(humans) to the other animals is one of unremitting exploitation. We employ their work; we eat and wear them. We exploit them to serve our superstitions; whereas we used to sacrifice them to our gods and tear out their entrails in order to foresee the future, we now sacrifice them to science, and experiment on their entrails in the hope or on the mere off chance- that we might thereby see a little more clearly into the present"¹⁵.

This writings of Brophy clearly expose the robistic (robbery) attitude of human beings towards animals. There is no respect for animals but a tendency to exploit them to fulfil the interest of human beings. It appears that human beings have role to play in this juncture as only a receiver and animals have to play the role as giver. Though as giver animals have no rights to enter into the arena of morality or to be treated as moral beings.

This pivotal writings lighted the lamp of the movement of animal liberation. Since then the movement goes on with a philosophical shape and ethical flavour. In England there we find a legal action regarding the protection of animals. The anticruelty law was established in 1820 for the protection of the interest of animals for the first time. It was really a significant and land mark step to break the encircling dogma of speciesism. This law shows the way to extend the boundary of morality beyond homo-sapience. This law, though was not sufficient to protect the interest of animals was a pioneering step towards the extension of morality.

The nineteenth century anti-cruelty movement was built on the assumption that the interests of nonhuman animals deserve protection only when serious human interests are not at stake. Animals remained very clearly "lower creatures"; human beings were quite distinct from, and infinitely far above, all forms of animal life. Should our interests conflict with theirs, there could be no doubt about whose interests must be sacrificed: in all cases, it would be the interests of the animals that had to yield.¹⁶

There are two separate defenses of the moral status of animals: the utilitarian and the deontological arguments. Peter Singer is the main representative of the utilitarian argument. Utilitarians follow Jeremy Bentham in asserting that what makes beings morally considerable is not reason but sentience. All sentient creatures have the ability to suffer and, as much, have interests. The frustration of those interests leads to suffering. Utilitarianism seeks to maximize the satisfaction of interests whether they be those of humans or animals.¹⁷

Jeremy Bentham, one of the leading utilitarian wrote, The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognized that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to

the same fate¹⁸.

The second type of defense of animal rights is the deontological rights position, of which Tom Regan is the foremost proponent. The equal-rights position on animal rights contends that the same essential psychological properties- desires, memory, intelligence, and so on- link all animals and the human animal and thereby give us equal intrinsic value upon which equal rights are founded. These rights are inalienable and cannot be fortified. Contrary to Singer's position, we have no right to experiment on chimpanzees in order to maximize the satisfaction of interests- that's exploitation. Animals like people are "ends in themselves", persons, so that utility is not sufficient to override these rights. Regan is thus more radical than Singer. He calls not for reform but for the total dissolution of commercial animal farming, the total elimination of hunting and trapping, and the total abolition of animal experiments. Just as we would condemn a scientist who took children and performed dangerous experiments on them for the good of others, so we must condemn the institutions that use coercion on animals.¹⁹

The development of animal rights movement is tagged with the movement of women's right in nineteenth century. Some societies, like American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) were against the exploitation of animals. At the same time they were fighting against slavery. Some organized efforts were there to save animals for their maltreatment and sufferings in the early nineteenth century.

The massive blow of two devastating World War (1st & 2nd) stopped the motion of the movement for a brief period of times. But the resurgence of animal welfare and animal rights issues in the 1960s coincides with the civil rights and women's rights movements of that time. By the 1970s an era of progressive radicalization had began, where the conservatism humane associations participated the splintering of groups into more aggressive functions. Groups grew dissatisfied with the goal of improving conditions for exploited animals and sought instead an end to animal exploitation. Change in moral philosophy and genuine concern over animal suffering triggered an explosion of animal rights and animal welfare organizations in later half of the twentieth century.²⁰

Animal rights movement accelerated by providing legal protection for animals from 1959 when Wild Horses Act stepped into the arena of animal rights movement. From then we see that various laws are there for the protection of the interest of animals. Bald and Golden Eagle Act in 1962, Endangered Species Act in 1966, Laboratory Animal Welfare Act in 1966, Animal Welfare Act (AWA) amendments in 1970, Marine Mammals Protection Act in 1972 are the significant laws in this field²¹ The aim of all the laws is to offer more animal friendly environment than the past to protect the interest of the animals.

The animal rights movement created by Henry Spira, a teacher and civics rights activist in New York against the New York Natural History Museum from 1975 to 1977 was one of the land mark as it was able to mobilize the public support and also abled to involve media for this purpose. The movement was against the conduction of experiments on cats, destroying parts of the of the animals' brains to observe the effects on their sexual behavior. National Institutes of Health (NIH)

was playing there as the main resources of funding.

The movement of Henry Spira was based on the following arguments;

1.No unnecessary and painful experiments should be performed by the scientists.

Experiments on cats in this regard are unnecessary and painful.

Therefore, Experiments on cats in this regard should not be performed by the scientists.

The second part of the argument is like this;

2.Public money should not be used in unnecessary and painful experiments.

The funding of National Institutes of Health (NIH) is public money.

Therefore, the funding of National Institutes of Health (NIH) should not be used in unnecessary and painful experiments.

Both the arguments are valid and they offered a strong platform to the animal rights activists. After a long period of eighteen months the movement reached its destination as the funding was withdrawn by NIH and the experiments on cats came to an end under huge public and media pressure.

The success of the movement of Henry Spira encouraged him and his followers to carry on the movement for the protection of animals. A major success was the repeal of the Metcalf Hatch Act, a law that had authorised the sale of pound animals to medical research laboratories. Spira also led the charge in publicizing and reducing the use by cosmetics manufactures of the infamous Draize and LD50 test.²²

In 1984 another publicity success for the animal rights movement targeted the work of Thomas Gennarelli, a scientist at the University of Pennsylvania. Gennarelli received \$1 million a year from the NIH to study head injuries. A raid on his lab by the fledgling animal rights group the Animal Liberation Front produced sixty hours of videotape that showed experiments in which baboons were subjected to precisely measured blows to the head. ALF turned the tapes over to the group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which produced a thirty minute video and lobbied the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to revoke Gennarelli's funding. The HHS refused to view the tapes, but numerous additional groups such as the American Antivivisection Society, the International Society for Animal Rights, and the Animal Legal Defense Fund joined the fight. After a year of protests, lobbying, and a three-day sit-in at the offices of the NIH, the HHS withdrew

Gennarelli's funding. The melodrama gained the animal rights movement favorable coverage on NBC and CNN and in The Washington Post and The New York Times²³.

Yet another dramatic case that propelled the animal rights cause forward and brought PETA nationwide attention involved an undercover investigation by PETA cofounder Alex Pacheco. Pacheco selected the Institute for Behavioral Research in Silver Spring, Maryland, for an investigation into laboratory conditions. Having acquired a volunteer position as a laboratory assistant, Pacheco gathered a large quantity of evidence of primate abuse in the lab headed by Edward Taub. PETA's undercover operative brought the evidence to Silver Spring police, who raided the lab and confiscated seventeen monkeys. The NIH subsequently cut off Taub's funding, and at trial the

scientist was convicted on six counts of animal cruelty. However, five of the six counts were eliminated on appeal, and the remaining conviction was overturned after the Maryland Court of Appeals ruled that state anti-cruelty laws do not apply to researchers who receive federal funding. Still, the case was a success for the movement, bringing widespread attention to the animal rights cause and setting PETA on a path to becoming the most significant animal rights organization in the world²⁴.

Dissatisfaction with the mainstream animal welfare movement and the slow, incremental improvement in the conditions afforded exploited animals has led many animal rights advocates to become more aggressive in their methods. In fact, the splintering of anti-vivisectionists and others from the mainstream humane societies and animal welfare groups is a pattern that has been repeated many times in both the animal rights and environmental movements. It is an observable sociological phenomenon: radical subgroups within broader movements break off and adopt more drastic methods, set more extreme goals, and espouse a more radical ideology. The process may be viewed as progressive radicalism²⁵.

The role of animal liberation front (ALF) is also significant in this regard. The ALF was established in 1976 under the leadership of Ronnie Lee. "Today, ALF has grown far beyond its British roots, becoming a significant international movement with an unknown number of members and supporters worldwide. ALF cells are or have been active in the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Croatia, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Iceland, Finland, Denmark, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, and the United States more than twenty countries in all²⁶.

The Animal Liberation Front believes in direct actions theory. To stop animal sufferings and exploitations the members of ALF engaged themselves in direct actions to rescue animals and to bring economic damage to the business holders who are in the business of animals. The goals of ALF are as follows:

To liberate animals from places of abuse (i.e., fur farms, laboratories, factory farms, etc.) and place them in good homes where they may live out their natural lives free from suffering
To inflict economic damage on those who profit from the misery and exploitation of animals
To reveal the horrors and atrocities committed against animals behind locked doors by performing nonviolent direct actions and liberations. To take all necessary precautions against hurting any animal, human or non-human.²⁷

Concluding Observations: In the concluding observations it can be said that the animal liberation movements, at present, has become a worldwide movement. The thinkers forced the law makers to change their attitude towards animals. To oppose institutionalized cruelty to animals the movement has also become organized. At present, use of animals in scientific research has already been restricted. Experts committees are there to monitor the research activities with animals. In near future, we hope, that the movement will be able to reach its goal by molding the attitude of the common people towards animals.

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