

TITLE- ANIMAL LABOUR: AN ETHICAL STUDY**ABSTRACT**

The paper aims to showcase the human practice of using animal labour as ethically problematic which cannot be adequately justified. Recognition of suffering on the very animal being utilized, is what positions animal labour as an ethical problem. Thus it becomes essential to question: Whether the suffering meted out by humans to sentient animals for the purpose of labour is justified? Ethical theories, namely Animal Welfare theory and Animal Rights theory have responded to this question. By evaluating their respective stands, the paper would establish Rights theory as a relatively better response to the ethical problem of animal labour.

INTRODUCTION

Nonhuman animals have been used since the very origin of mankind for a plethora of things. With time they were domesticated for purposes such as for food, clothing, entertainment and research. Using animals for above-mentioned purposes has proved immensely beneficial to the society. However this has resulted in the debate of their being used as means. For instance, the human practice of using animals for food or clothing purposes has been viewed globally as a subject worthy of discussion. It was largely the outcome of discussion that led to a section of people subscribing to the practice of abstaining from using animals for the purposes of both food and clothing (also known as Veganism¹). However, there still remain certain human practices of using animals for a specific purpose which have not been sufficiently debated, one such being ‘Animal Labour’.

UNDERSTANDING ANIMAL LABOUR

Labour also known as *work* or *toil* refers to exerting one’s power of body and mind for some productive activity.² Since time immemorial, humans have indulged in labour for purpose of bread and butter. But with the advent of agriculture and overland routes for transportation, the amount of physical labour required to run them largely exceeded the physical capacity of humans. Thus they started utilizing non-human animals for labour purposes.

Till now, countries especially Global South employ animals in quite significant numbers for performing labour. To take India’s case, marginal farmers often seek support of animals such as oxen, buffaloes, bullocks, camels and so on for carrying out tasks such as ploughing and tilling of land. In remote regions of India that remain inaccessible by mechanized vehicles, animals play a vital role as means of transport. For reaching Vaishno Devi temple, a famous Hindu pilgrimage site situated on a hilly area in Indian Union

¹ Vegan Society. “Definition of Veganism.” Accessed May 14th, 2024. <https://www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/definition-veganism>.

² DICTIONARY.COM. S.V. “labor,” Accessed May 24th, 2024. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/labor>

territory of Jammu and Kashmir, animals such as horses and mules are regularly used as a popular means of transport to ferry the pilgrims and luggage up and down the hill.³ Further, brick kilns industries use horses and donkeys to transport wet and dry bricks by cart or pack within the brick kilns and from the brick kilns to exterior locations for use in the construction industry.⁴ Across forested parts of South India the significant strength of elephants is used for pulling wagons, uprooting trees and lifting large logs.⁵ Apart from assisting in carrying out agricultural operations of ploughing, tilling etc and transporting people and goods, animal assistance is also sought for carrying out certain kinds of law- enforcement work. Animals such as dogs are trained to assist police and other law-enforcement personnel for performing tasks such as finding evidences related to crime and culprit.⁶

COMPARING ANIMAL LABOUR AND HUMAN LABOUR

Just like animals that are made to undergo labour that is mandated by humans, similarly humans are also made to undergo labour that is mandated by their human employers. For example, take the case of the brick kilns industry operating in some parts of India. The production of bricks involves a long series of processes such as finding the right raw materials, moulding the raw material in the shape of brick, drying the moulded bricks and finally firing them to high temperatures in furnaces. In the absence of advanced brick making technology, India's brick kilns rely on using manual labour provided by both humans and animals(such as donkeys and horses) for the production of bricks. Whereas a human labour is utilized for purposes such as finding the right material and moulding the raw material in the shape of brick, animal labour is typically used for transporting wet and dry bricks by cart or pack within the brick kilns and from the brick kilns to outside locations for

³ Saha, Polomi. "Stop use of mules, ponies in Vaishno Devi route: Maneka Gandhi to Mehbooba Mufti." INDIA TODAY, April 28, 2018. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/stop-use-of-mules-ponies-in-vaishno-devi-route-maneka-gandhi-to-mehbooba-mufti-1222384-2018-04-28>.

⁴ The Brooke. "BRICK KILNS: A HIDDEN INDUSTRY." Accessed May 24th, 2024 <https://www.thebrooke.org/our-work/exploitative-industries/brick-kilns-a-hidden-industry>

⁵ Fao.org. "ELEPHANTS IN LOGGING OPERATIONS" May 14th 2024. <http://www.fao.org/3/v9570e/v9570e02.htm>

⁶ Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. s.v. "Police dog." Accessed May 14th, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police_dog

use in the construction industry. The amount of labour that humans carry out at workplaces is compensated with incentive of some kind. Whereas in case of animals, irrespective of the amount of labour that they are made to put in by workplaces, they are only at most awarded with basic necessities of life such as food, water and shelter.

However the crucial aspect which altogether delineates an animal labour from human labour is that of suffering. Animals that are used for the purpose of labour frequently are a victim of endless suffering. Throughout the process of labour, animals are rigorously subjected to various kinds of physical and psychological suffering. The suffering that is prevalent in instances of animal labour is not so much manifested in instances of human labour. This is because humans who are engaged in labour activity remain immune to suffering at the hands of workplaces by virtue of certain legal provisions. For example, Indian labour laws such as Minimum Wages Act (1948), Factories Act (1948), etc are few laws that guarantee human workers with fair compensation for the work they perform, safe and healthy working conditions, maternity benefits, payment of bonus out of company's profits, a workplace free of discrimination and harassment and so on.⁷ In contrast, for animals that are used for labour purposes, there is no such provision of 'rights' and as a result they remain ridden with pain and suffering.

SUFFERING AS AN INHERENT ASPECT OF ANIMAL LABOUR

The human practice of using animal labour is not without animal suffering. To use animals for the purpose of labour requires taming them, which eventually impacts the animals leading to their physical and mental suffering. In order to make a horse pull a loaded cart, her

⁷ Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. s.v. "Indian Labour Law." Accessed April 05th, 2024.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_labour_law

very owner whips her which no doubt makes the very animal suffer. In addition, the loads that they are required to carry usually exceed the authorised limits of the loads to be carried. This additional weight contributes to the suffering of animals as they often suffer from swollen knees, necks and shoulders, and the strain of loads often damage their immune system and cut down their lives.

Given the immense pain and suffering endured by animals which are made to undergo human-mandated labour, the Parliament of India enacted **The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960** in order to protect the animals from painful treatment.⁸ Section 11(1) (a) to (o) of the act defines various instances that amount to cruel treatment upon animals. Beating, kicking, torturing, over-loading, extracting labour despite being unfit and being left without sufficient supply of food, water and shelter are some of the instances that reflect the animal that is being used for purpose of labour is a victim of cruelty.

Despite the acts being in place, the suffering of the animals involved in human-mandated labour largely goes unchecked.

Taking cognizance of the deplorable state of the animals involved in labour, **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals** (PETA) penned down an application to the Chief Minister of Delhi requesting prohibition of animal drawn carts in Delhi. The excerpt from the letter that highlights the poor state of such animals is as follows

“Working animals such as bullocks, donkeys, horses, and camels are highly affected by air pollution, since they’re on the road throughout the day inhaling polluted air emitted from the vehicles that surround them. In Delhi, there are approximately 250 bullocks labouring in 20 market yards and some 150 horses pulling carriages in seven areas. Desperate owners force animals to work even when the air is polluted, the animals are sick, or they’ve been injured in traffic accidents. The owners use whips, painful nose ropes, and spiked bits to force them to haul overloaded carts.”⁹

A probe by PETA into the lives of elephants being used for carrying the tourists at Amer Fort (located in the state of Rajasthan), reflects the extreme harshness that they have to

⁸ THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT 1960 s 11. Accessed May 07th, 2024. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1763700/>

⁹ PETA. “PETA India Files Petition in Delhi High Court Seeking Enforcement of Tonga Ban”. Accessed May 07th, 2024. <https://www.petaindia.com/blog/peta-india-files-petition-in-delhi-high-court-seeking-enforcement-of-tonga-ban/>

undergo. According to it, the elephants that are used for carrying tourists are exploited from the time they are born. In other words, right after their birth, they are captured and thus become detached from their mothers. The babies so captured are later on beaten with instruments designed to inflict pain so as to make them learn to obey their trainers. This kind of abusive training aiming at carrying tourists impacts the elephants both physically and psychologically. Further, when the elephants become efficient in carrying the tourists, they are made to work for long hours under the scorching sun without adequate supply of food and water.

These manifold kinds of suffering that they go through impacts them both physically and psychologically which is why the practice of using animal labour becomes an ethical problem.

ANIMAL LABOUR AS AN ETHICAL PROBLEM

There was a time when it was thought that animals were beings that remained outside the category of moral consideration. Only human beings were thought to have moral standing. Various philosophers also shared the notion that animals did not deserve any moral standing. This was because they were of the notion that the capacity to reason had moral value and consequently those who possessed this capacity, were only eligible for moral consideration. This notion is evident in the thinking of philosophers like Aristotle, Descartes and Immanuel Kant.

As per Aristotle, “Nature is essentially a hierarchy in which those with less reasoning ability exist for the sake of those with more: Plants exist for the sake of animals, and brute beasts for the sake of man-domestic animals for his use and food, wild ones (or at any rate most of them) for food and other accessories of life, such as clothing and various tools.”¹⁰

Similarly for 17th Century French Philosopher Rene Descartes, animals are not eligible for moral consideration because they are mere automata or mechanisms. “A crying dog, Descartes maintained, is no different from a whining gear that needs oil.”¹¹ Just like Aristotle and Descartes treated animals as morally worthless entities with the sole purpose to advance the interests of humans, German philosopher Immanuel Kant too perceived animals in a similar

¹⁰ Aristotle, 1905: 1256b.

¹¹ Francione, 2008: 29

vein. According to him, there was nothing wrong in using animals as a means to human ends given that animals lack rationality and therefore should be treated as “things” having worth merely as a means to the ends of rational beings.

However, thinking about animals as being devoid of moral status did not survive for long. The numerous scientific experiments carried out on animals revealed their similarity to humans in terms of physiology. This similarity brought to light that animals also suffer and thus should be entitled to some consideration. David Hume, recognizing the suffering of animals urged for a gentle usage to these creatures. -

Though there were gradual changes in perspectives regarding animals, it was Jeremy Bentham who embarked upon the case for including animals within the category of moral beings. The English philosopher Jeremy Bentham who worked out the principle of Utilitarianism, stated that to degrade animals into a class of things on the basis of lacking intelligence is unsatisfactory. This is because human infants being less rational than many animals are still ascribed moral worth. Thus to leave animals outside the scope of moral consideration on the basis of alleged irrationality is unjustified. All that is required for deciding who/what to be counted as a moral being is only his/her capacity of sentience. “Sentience refers to the capacity to suffer or experience enjoyment and happiness.”¹² In other words, “the question is not, Can they reason? Nor, Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?”¹³ that should be asked while entitling an entity as being worthy of moral standing.

This capacity of sentience initially recognized by Bentham has gained enough popularity among those advocating for animals to the extent that every use of animals now is regarded as an ethical issue as it involves the question of whether humans are justified to use sentient animals whose interest lies in not suffering.

¹² Proctor, Helen. “Animal Sentience: Where Are We and Where Are We Heading?.” *Animals* : an open access journal from MDPI vol. 2,4 628-39. 14 Nov. 2012, doi:10.3390/ani2040628

¹³ Singer, 1975: 173

In order to explore this ethical issue, the paper would be taking up discussion of two-fold philosophical theories- Animal Welfare and Animal Rights along with analyzing their respective positions on animal labour so as to decide which theory emerges as a better response to the ethical problem of animal labour.

PETER SINGER'S THEORY OF ANIMAL WELFARE

The phrase “animal welfare” refers to the well-being of animals. Well-being can be understood either in terms of absence of negative states (such as pain, suffering, frustration and the like) or presence of positive states (satisfaction, joy and pleasure) from/in the lives of animals. Nevertheless, it is thinking in terms of absence of negative states that has widely dominated the discussions of animal welfare. This is evident from the publication of Brambell Report in 1965 by the British government that defined animal welfare in terms of Five freedoms that were:

“(i) Freedom from Hunger and Thirst (ii) Freedom from Discomfort (iii) Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease (iv) Freedom from Fear and Distress (v) Freedom to Express Normal Behavior.”¹⁴

Though the report defined animal welfare, it was Australian moral philosopher Peter Singer who through his ground-breaking work *Animal Liberation* (1975) popularised animal welfare as a philosophical theory.

Criticising traditional philosophy's stance of taking into account human interests and not that of animals, Singer effectively unravels the speciesist tendency of philosophy in particular and of humans in general. As per him, our preferencing of human interests over those of animals is an outcome of our speciesist attitude.

¹⁴ Brambell Committee . Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Livestock Kept under Intensive Conditions. Her Majesty's Stationery Office; London, UK: 1965.

Uprooting this speciesist tendency of ours so as to be considerate to the interests of animals, requires, as per Singer, us to abide by the principle of equal consideration of interests. The principle of equal consideration of interests is a utilitarian principle. It is the principle of moral equality which asserts that the interests of every being who is affected by a particular act must be given equal consideration while calculating the consequences of the very action. It is through this principle that we are able to say all humans are equal irrespective of their factual or actual inequality (i.e. being unequal in terms of race, sex, sexual orientation, intellectual or physical abilities, and so on). It obliges mankind to cease themselves from exploiting any human or discounting his/her interests just because the person belongs to a category that they hold as undesirable. In addition this principle also obliges mankind to take into account the interests of non human animals. This is because non-human animals being sentient have interests in avoiding pain and therefore be given equal consideration in decision-making.

Thus, according to Singer, in order to decide the rightness of an action that affects the interests of both humans and animals, one should give equal weightage to the interests of both the species because an interest is an interest. In order to demonstrate the above-point, he puts forward the following instances¹⁵:

- To decide whether using animals for testing cosmetics is right or wrong, one should impartially weigh the animal interest in not suffering with human interest in bodily beautification. Since the animal interest in not suffering is more serious in comparison to trivial human interest in bodily beautification, the practice cannot be termed as a right one.
- On the other hand, if animal experimentation would directly lead to a cure of disease that affects many humans, then the practice can be termed as the right one.
- To decide whether killing animals in a region where humans will starve if they didn't kill the animal, the practice would be justified. This is because significant human interest in not dying overrides animal's interest in averting death. This is because of human life being more valuable than an animal's as the former life is "a life of a self-aware being, capable of abstract thought, of

¹⁵ Singer, 1979: 52-53

planning for the future, of complex acts of communication and so on.”¹⁶ While for Singer, animals have no interest in continued existence because of their limited cognitive capacities.

Though some of the above-mentioned practices are not justified but it does not mean that advocates of animal welfare would favour their abolition. As per Singer, animals can be used for food purposes but in a non-speciesist way i.e. we should take care not to use them in a way that disregards or discounts their interests. Thus in case of using animals for food, it is essential to ensure that the animal being used is given humane treatment i.e. in the form of satisfaction of their basic needs, not keeping them in poor or unhealthy conditions, enabling them to mix themselves with the right kind of social groups suited for their species and so on.

Thus as per Peter Singer’s theory of animal welfare, there is nothing problematic in using animals in farms, in laboratories and in other areas where animals are used for human purposes unless the very animals used are being treated inhumanely.

ANIMAL WELFARE’S POSITION WITH RESPECT TO ANIMAL LABOUR

As elaborated earlier, advocates of Animal welfare argue for allowing the use of animals for various purposes on the grounds that they ought to be humanely treated. Likewise, for the purpose of using animals for labour or work, welfarists would grant one to use animals on the condition that they must receive humane treatment by their owner.

This position of animal welfare has been endorsed worldwide. Nearly every animal rights movement, animal protection legislations and non-profit organisations advocate animal welfare view. The famous American animal rights organisation PETA argues in favour of Animal welfare. Closely scrutinising **The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960** relating to animal protection in India will lead us to its being a manifestation of animal welfare view.

¹⁶ Singer, 1979: 53

This attempt to achieve conditions that make possible humane treatment of animals within the system/industry that uses them for various purposes, reflects the reformist approach of animal welfare view. For instance, poultry farming's practice of keeping the hens in battery cages is generally viewed by animal welfarists as a case of inhumane treatment towards hens. This is because in a housing system like a battery cage, the space available to each hen is approximately less than the size of a sheet of A4 paper (624 cm²). Limited space contributes unnecessary suffering on part of hens as they cannot perform normal behaviour like perching, scratching, nesting or even stretching their wings. Thus in order to do away with this inhumane treatment, they call for a reform in poultry farming by demanding replacement of battery cages with bigger cages. The bigger cages with substantial space allow hens to comfortably move around, lay eggs and breathe and thereby prevent them from unnecessary pain and suffering.

TOM REGAN'S THEORY OF ANIMAL RIGHTS

Animal rights theory was propounded by the American philosopher Tom Regan. Though he edited several books and wrote numerous articles on animals related issue, his two well-known texts namely, *The Case For Animal Rights* (1983) and *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights* (2004), stand out as major works on theory of Animal Rights. Regan's Rights theory arose in response to Singer's animal welfare account. According to him, humans are not ethically justified in using or abusing animals, no matter how humanely they treat them and painlessly abuse them. In order to put forward his point about being critical of humane use of animals, he comes up with the following analogy: it is always preferable that a rapist does not torture the victim, in addition to committing rape. However, a painless rape would not permit the heinous act of rape as being morally acceptable. On similar lines, it is not morally permissible to use animals, no matter how humanely we treat them.

According to him, humans have no moral justification for using animals no matter how humanely and painlessly they treat them. This is because animals are moral beings, not because

they are sentient but because they are “subjects-of-a-life”. To be a “subject of-a-life” is to be more than being merely alive and conscious.

“Individuals are subject-of-a-life if they have beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; an emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference and welfare-interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychological identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independently of their utility for others and logically independently of their being the object of anyone else’s interests.”¹⁷

For Regan, humans over one year old who are not extremely mentally retarded or permanently comatose are ascribed the above-mentioned qualities and therefore are subjects-of-a-life. In addition, animals (belonging to the class of mammals) that we use for our various purposes also qualify for this category. This is because normal mammalian animals are not only sentient but also have memories, beliefs, cognition, sense of future and thus are subjects-of-a-life.

By including animals within the subjects-of-a-life category, he does away with the hierarchy that is widely assumed while distinguishing between a moral agent and moral patient. Moral agents refer to normal adult humans who are able to act morally and take moral decisions. Whereas human babies, mentally retarded, comatose patients, nonhuman animals, and so on who are not able to act morally fall under the category of moral patients. Unlike moral agents who are able to decide what is morally right or wrong, moral patients owing to their inability to act morally cannot be said to do any wrong. This limited moral capacity of moral patients places them at a level lower than what is occupied by moral agents. To be precise, a moral patient is seen as someone with a moral status below than that of moral agent. It is Regan, who by recognizing animals as being subjects-of-a-life, not only does away with their status of being only moral patients but also locates them on a moral status which is at par with that of humans.

¹⁷ Regan, 1983: 243

Further, both animals and humans who deem fit for subjects-of-a-life criterion, possess inherent value. Conventionally, inherent value is ascribed to a human being rather than to an animal, owing to the former possessing enriching experiences (for instance, intellectually fulfilling experiences of humans). This is evident from Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative of "end-in-themselves" which is exclusively limited to human beings. As per Kant's understanding, humans with the faculty of reason only qualify for inherent value and thus are to be treated as an end and not as a means to someone's ulterior end. However, Regan extends the scope of inherent value so to include animals within it. According to him, inherent value does not lie in the individual being receptacles (i.e. containers of experiences) but in the individual itself. In order to explain his concept of inherent value, he uses cup analogy. It is the cup itself that gives an entity called cup an inherent value and not what kind of liquid is contained within it. Thus to determine whether an entity has an inherent value, instead of investigating its having faculty of reason or emotion, one should focus on the very entity itself. Thus, even without possessing higher cognitive capacities, animals just being subjects-of-a-life can be rightly entitled as having inherent value.

Lastly, adopting Kantian approach, Regan asserts that all those who possess inherent value demands respect and therefore cannot be treated as things or means. Those individuals who have inherent value must be treated in ways that respect their inherent value. Respecting inherent value of a subject-of-a-life requires, for Regan, bestowing them with a basic right to respectful treatment. The right to respectful treatment is a natural right in the sense that it is neither an outcome of social contract nor something that is voluntarily given by humans to other humans and animals. This natural right is rather an outcome of subjects-of-a-life criterion. All subjects-of-a-life are equal holder of this right to basic treatment.

For Regan, when we use animals for our purposes, we violate their basic right to respectful treatment as we treat them as instruments/means for our specific end/purposes. Respecting their right requires on the part of human to abstain from using animals as a means to their ends. Thus, any form of animal use by humans becomes unethical and unjustified. This revelation of animal use as being unjust puts an onus on humans to totally abolish it in every form. In other words, as advocated by Regan, efforts should be made to totally abolish the use of animals in practices relating to science, commercial animal agriculture and hunting.

ANIMAL RIGHTS' POSITION WITH RESPECT TO ANIMAL LABOUR

From the understanding of animal rights view, it is clear that its advocates would favour elimination of any and every form of animal use by humans. Similarly, they would favour abolition of the practice of animal labour as well. This is because the animals that are usually used for labour purposes belong to a class of mammals, which, as per Regan, are subjects-of-a-life. Thus, the practice of using animals for labour purposes just like any other animal use, treats animals as a mere instrument and therefore is morally unjustified. Being morally unjustified, it ought to be abolished.

Thus Animal rights position endorses an abolitionist approach to animal use. Endorsing abolitionist approaches would put an end to animal exploitation that widely occurs at the hands of humans. The inherent suffering that comes with every animal use in the name of science, sports, exhibition, labour, food, fashion, enjoyment and so on will come to an end.

ANIMAL RIGHTS POSITION AS A BETTER RESPONSE TO ETHICAL PROBLEM OF ANIMAL LABOUR

By initiating the discussion about well-being of animals, animal welfarism has undoubtedly drawn animals as the object of serious concern. Every legislation concerning animal protection recognizes animals as creatures of sentience which have an interest to avert pain and suffering. Various reforms and measures concerning animal use in science, sports, entertainment, labour, food, and so on are regularly drafted and implemented as well. However, Welfarism as an approach fails in bringing about any meaningful change in the lives of animals engaged in the labour process. This is because of the following two reasons:

- (i) Its assumption of human life being more valuable than an animal life will render any effort made towards achieving equal balance between human interests and animal interests, mostly, in vain.

- (ii) Proposing humane treatment of the very animal being that is used for labour as a basis of justification for the human practice of using animal labour is too weak to bring out meaningful change in the life of an animal.

The ineffectiveness of animal welfare arises from the fact that their efforts to seek a balance between human interests and animal interests always end up in failure. In order to stress upon the above point, let's take an example of a poor Indian farmer who uses bullock as a resource for ploughing his field. As per animal welfarist, the act of a farmer using bullock to lessen his labour is morally justified given that the farmer's interest in not dying due to poverty is more important than bullock's interest in not suffering due to labouring in scorching heat. Preferring farmer's interest over bullock's interest is not an outcome of human's speciesist tendency. Rather it lies in the farmer's interest in continued existence which would be greatly harmed if he dies due to work overload as a result of being left alone without his only resource (i.e. bullock) to plough the field. In other words, the fulfillment of manifold human interests by using labour of animals will outweigh animal's own interest in not suffering, which in turn will sideline the well-being of animals. No matter how impartially the welfarists attempt to weigh human interests and animal interests, the result will often be in favour of humans. Thus, even if the welfarists succeed to weed out speciesist tendency, a tinge of anthropocentrism will continue to loom over decision-making regarding acts that affect both human and animal interests.

In a nutshell, though, the animal welfare view effectively draws public attention to widespread exploitation and abuse of animals occurring in their use by humans, but still falls short in coming up with meaningful improvement in distressed lives of animals. Instead, it is Animal rights view that serves as a better response to the ethical problem of animal labour.

Animal rights view thinks about animals in terms of being a subject-of-a-life. Rather than limiting itself to viewing animals as sentient creatures, it sees animals as active subjects with a capacity to live their life in their own terms. Further, the rights view takes the interests of animals more seriously as compared to welfarist approach. This is because a rights view protects the interests of animals by a "right" and not by merely "obliging" humans to

humanely treat animals. The nature of a right is more forceful than an obligation. For instance, the obligation to act compassionately or humanely towards animals could be a matter of choice for humans with some either abiding by it or some refusing it. However, by granting an animal the right to basic treatment as done by Rights view, a protective fence is built around the very animal that binds everyone not to trespass it.

“Rights establish areas where the individual is entitled to be protected against the state and the majority even where a price is paid by the general welfare. For example, if one’s interest in free speech is protected by a right, his interest is generally protected even if the general welfare would benefit from his being deprived of that right.”¹⁸

The introduction of animal rights by the rights view thereby opposes animal use, irrespective of enactment of strict measures governing the very use. Given that the animals that are usually being used for purposes in agriculture, transportation and construction sectors belong to a class of mammals, all of them can be rightly called as subjects-of-a-life. They possess inherent value and thus to use them as a means for carrying out labour, violates their dignity. In no way can suffering inflicted on animals during the process of labour can be ethically justified and thus the practice of animal labour calls for absolute abolition. By abolishing animal use, the animal rights view enables animals to exercise their natural functions in the settings deemed suitable by them and thus live a more enriched life.

CONCLUSION

¹⁸ Francione, 1996: 2

The above discussion makes it clear that the Rights view fares better than the Welfarist view not only in terms of taking the interests of animals more seriously but also in terms of boldly demanding the abolition of animal use for labour purposes. The demand for abolition of animal use makes it an appealing theory that gives due weightage to animals. However despite it being a potent theory aiming towards the good of animals, the difficulty lies in conceiving abolitionism as becoming a possibility in the current world. Given the current social, economic and political conditions of human lives, one could turn sceptic to this idea of abolition of animal use. In other words, one might hold that to think that widespread animal use will come to an end is analogous to thinking about an unicorn existing in the space-time continuum. While recognizing that putting an end to animal use for purposes of labour is a future possibility, abolition of animal use for labour purpose is nevertheless both possible and achievable. This is evident from gradual abolition of animal use for food purposes. The increasing trend of veganism throughout the world is in a way slowing down the demand of animal-based foods, which in turn is leading to gradual abolition of animal use for food purposes. Similarly, animal use for labour purposes can also be possibly abolished with the coming up of substitutes for animal labour. So to view the theory of animal rights as being unrealistic is a mistaken view. Rather it is the Rights view that actually stands up for the well-being of animals by establishing every form of animal use no matter how humane it might be as being ethically unjustified.

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