
Singer's Notion of Animals Rights

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Abstract

The ambition of writing on Singer notion of animals' rights is to possibly bring to our attention that we should change from the way we look at nonhuman animals. Singer understands nonhuman animals as having rights because they can experience pain. We may logically argue that, he understands rights, as that which protects animals from exploitation. Though he is out to defend nonhuman animals, he seems to end up not bridging the conviction that man is a central part in the universe hence deserves treatment of other animals as mechanism for his survival. When he argues that, man has the right to do away with nonhumans especially those which threaten him. The act of giving room for brining nonhuman animals to impulsive death is an act of domination over them and a violation of sentience which he basis animals rights on. The researcher shall employ analytic method as a means of addressing the Singer's notion of animals' rights which shall probably make it possible to show his ambivalent on this issue of nonhuman animals' rights. Once we understand rights in holistic manner, we may have reached the culmination of human understanding of nonhuman as having rights

Keywords: Singer's, notion, animals, rights.

Introduction

Generally, the chapter will enable us to understand about animals' rights and we will also be in position to understand Singer's argument for animals' rights as, right for pleasure, right for equal interests and right for freedom from pain or suffering. The bottom-line for the argument on animals' rights is founded on sentience ability.

1.1 Singer's concept of animals rights

When animals' rights are mentioned, we should be aware that, we are referring to the rights of all sentient creatures. Advocating animals as having rights, is accepting that animals are able to experience pain and suffering. When Singer is talking about animals rights, is therefore referring to the rights of animals to be free from any form of exploitation. That is the reason as to why animals rights are founded on sentience. Ability to experience pain is found in human beings as well as nonhuman animals. Singer is not for the animals to have those rights which humans are entitled to, like the right for voting or for education but the right for equal consideration of interests. Animals' rights therefore foster protection of nonhuman animals.

Animals have interests and they are entitled to the most elementary rights. Nonhuman animals have interest of being free from pain and suffering hence deserves the right to live their own lives without been imposed to premature death. Singer says, "All sentient beings have interests and are entitled to

equal consideration of interests that they have.”¹ Since animals have interests they should not be oppressed in any way, they should be free from any use by human beings.

According to Singer, “if we think that all human beings, irrespective of age or mental capacity have some basic rights, how can we deny that the animals like apes, who surpass some humans in their capacities also have these rights?”² There some animals especially those in primates family with better memories than some human beings, like infants and people who are mentally challenged. Since we cannot deny such humans their rights, we should also not deny animals their rights.

The problem with animals’ rights does not only involve individuals’ reactions from various philosophers, but also different sects, for example the Hindu religion and the Buddhist behind others. The attitudes we have towards animal’s influences the way we relate to them. The attitude that man should dominate other animals is what promotes our feeling that animals should not be considered as having rights. We think that granting rights to animals will be belittling humans and elevating animals to the same level with human beings. The matter whether animals have rights do not only involves individual philosophers like Singer, but also different religions. Different religions have different views concerning the matter at hand.

Singer understands that our manner of acting ought to consider nonhuman animals as they could be affected by our actions. “Basic moral postulate is that equal consideration of interests is not arbitrarily limited to members of our own species. Avoidance of pain is a characteristic of all sentient creatures, that is, an organism that is responsive to or conscious of impressions.”³ Animals rights are entitlements based on equal consideration of all animals interests as been equal, whether of human beings or of nonhuman animals. Exploitations carried in animals have greatly induced much of suffering in sentient animals; hence Singer sees the need of bringing such suffering to an end. All sentient animals have to be equally valued in regard to the ability to feel pain.

1.2 Religion and animal rights

There are dynamic views as far as religions are concerned, on the debate about animals’ rights. The perceptions may range from the view that animals are sacrosanct to the view that animals are purposely created for human use. The teachings of various religions have greatly influenced the way in which nonhuman animals are treated. Some religions may not therefore see any need of Singer’s argument for animals’ rights. Animals may end up conceived as inferior to man, whether in terms of experiencing pain, or in terms of interests.

2.0 Buddhism

There are varying diverse assertions towards animals and how we should relate or even treat them. Buddhists for example, “acknowledges the unity of all living beings and believe that humans are not privileged above other living creatures. They believe that the ‘self’ (the *atman*) passes through many stages, including many potential lives as animals, before reaching the stage of full and perfect enlightenment.”⁴ Man cannot, therefore, claim to be different from other animals, because he shares similar developmental stages and characteristics with other animals. Maybe that is why Buddha says, “Whenever there are the evolutions of living beings, let people cherish the kinship with them, and that

¹ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³ Clifford J. Sherry, *Animal Rights* (London: Greenwood Publishers, 2009), p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

all beings are to be loved as they were an only child.”⁵ There is no room for the exploitation of animals since animals are beings with some commonality with humans.

2.1 Hinduism

There is a close relationship between man and other animals; science has even shown that man shares very close similarities with nonhuman animals. In this kind of religion:

Animals are seen to be sacred because they also believe in the transmigration of souls. Earth and the life that exists on it are virtually part of god’s body. Cows are considered sacred because they are symbols of the provision of god and providers of milk, cream, and butter. They are also considered symbols of Krishna, the eighth incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu.⁶

Relating well with animals is what as humans we should adjust to, because it reveals much about ourselves and how we relate with not only our fellow human beings but even with our God. “It becomes ill for us to invoke in our daily prayers the blessings of God, the compassionate if we, in turn, will not practice elementary compassion towards our fellow creatures. The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”⁷ In other words, the manner in which we treat sentient animals reveals a lot about our character.

We should always give an account of our actions towards animals; *Islamic* teaches that “one, who kills even a sparrow or anything smaller, without justifiable reason, will be answerable to *Allah*. When asked what would be a justifiable reason, he replied, to slaughter it for food not to kill and discard it.”⁸ A man should only kill animals for consumption and not for the purpose of killing and throwing it away. Though the teachings from the various religions may vary, at least what they underline is that animals should not be abused.

2.1.2 Christianity

View is summarized in the words from King James Version:

God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth. And God said, Behold have given you every herb bearing seed, which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for meat, and to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat and it was so.⁹

The Christians assert that man has dominion over animals and they can use animals according to their interests. Animals are in place to serve man’s desires. The general understanding on animals’ rights, from a Christian perspective, has to be understood in terms of stewardship. We have the responsibility of caring not only for animals but also for the environment.

Man should treat animals properly without any cruelty. “Cruelty to animals is wrong for it encourages people to behave in similar cruel fashion towards others. In addition if people practiced compassion

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁷ Mahatma Gandhi, As cited by Clifford J. Sherry, *Animal Rights* (London: Greenwood Publishing group, 2009), p. 9.

⁸ Sherry, *Animal Right, Loc. Cit.*, p. 9.

⁹ King James version of the *Bible*, Genesis chapter one verses 28-30.

towards animals, they would be disposed to do the same towards humans.”¹⁰ The way we relate with nonhumans therefore speaks a lot about ourselves, about our relationship with our fellow humans. Saint Francis of Assisi is for the notion that, “animals should be treated with compassion. If you have men who will exclude any of God’s creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who deal likewise with their fellow men”.¹¹ Animals are not beings that are there and we are here, we all occupy the same environment. Christianity though does not see anything wrong with the use of animals, whether in sports, in medical research, as food behind other uses; it does not allow mistreatment of animals. Man should take care of all animals.

3.0 Liberating animals

We may not be in position to understand animals’ liberation without bringing in the argument, for animal rights. Animal rights are those rights which are geared towards freeing animals from human exploitation and oppressive activities. Human beings through the use of animals continue to induce suffering or even death in nonhuman animals. Activities like killing animals for the sake of their flesh, using animals in sports like horse race are some examples which abuse animals. Animals that have been domesticated are also abused when they are put in poor structures, with poor ventilation or even with no enough space for the animal to make movements. A good example is the modern cage system used in rearing poultry which restrict the birds so that they cannot turn their bodies, or even flip their wings. Use of such systems in rearing birds aims at maximizing production for profit gain.

Animals’ liberation is the right means through which nonhuman animals can be liberated from man’s exploitation and mistreatment. Freeing animals involves the use of principles and laws to enhance the war on animals’ rights. Justification of animals’ rights is echoed by the words of Charles Darwin, who showed that the difference which exists between us and animals is only in terms of degree but not of kind. In other words, there exist many similarities between us and other animals, animals have interests in pleasure and always try to evade all that may cause suffering to them.

Those who support animals’ rights, do so from the different point of view, there are those who argue from a natural rights’ point of view, which is based on “treating animals’ rights as basic limiting principles which may not be ignored.”¹² Animals’ interests in natural rights sense cannot precede those of human beings. Man and animals are not equal and cannot be granted the same rights. Natural rights supporters, therefore, are not true animals’ rights advocates. In their understanding, man must be first among equals. We cannot get a ground of equality based on natural rights.

Other campaigners of animals’ rights defend the idea from the utilitarian point of view. Utilitarian extend consideration of animals’ rights on basis of, pleasure for all. “Animals must be given equal consideration to what human beings receive. Thus, only if there is a really demonstrable contribution to the overall pleasure or happiness sacrificed for the sake of some human purpose. Barring such demonstrable contribution, animals, and humans enjoy equal rights.”¹³ Humans, as well as animals interests in the utilitarianism understanding, counts equally. Since animals have interests with what brings pleasures to them and tend to avoid what may bring suffering in them, we are therefore justified to take their rights into consideration. Singer rose from the utilitarian school of thought and

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*: The Old Law, edited by David Bourke, Vol. 29. (London: Blackfriars, 1969), p. 225(1a2ae.102.6-8).

¹² Tom Regan, as cited by Tibor R. Machan, “Do Animals Have Rights”, *Public Affairs Quarterly*, Vol.5, No.2 (1991): 5-39.

¹³ *Ibid.*

embraced rights based on the principle of equality, which considered the interests of nonhumans as equal to those of humans.

Singer expresses what he meant by the term, "equality." "The extension of the basic principle of equality from one group to another does not imply that we must treat both groups in an exact, the same way, or grant exactly the same rights to both groups, whether we should do so, will depend on the nature of members of the two groups."¹⁴ The argument for equality is not to say that all rights entitled to humans is extended to nonhuman animals. That is why Singer asserts that "The basic principle of equality does not require identical treatment, it requires equal consideration."¹⁵ The principle is interested in the consideration of interests. Since animals have interests, they should count just like that of human beings. The implication of the argument for equality is, therefore, the consideration of all interests equally, whether of sentient nonhuman animals or of humans.

The principle of equality takes interests of not only man but also nonhuman animals. According to Singer:

The principle, on which the equality of all human beings rests, is the principle of equal consideration of interests. Only a basic moral principle of this kind can allow us to defend a form of equality which embraces all human beings, with all the differences that exist between them. The principle provides a basis which cannot be limited to humans.¹⁶

The principle is not only useful for humans alone but also for the other animals. The principle of equality, aims at forming the base of a good relation between man and other sentient beings. That is why Singer sees it as, "a sound moral basis for relations with others of our own species, we are also committed to accepting it as a sound moral basis for relationships with those outside our own species- the nonhuman animals."¹⁷ We should, therefore, accept equality on the basis of interests. Animals' rights are those rights which aim at promoting animals interests, eliminating any form of exploitation. Animals have desires; have interests in what brings contentment and therefore those human acts, which subject animals to suffering are wrong.

Animals equality for Singer is, "extending the principle of equality beyond our own species and is so simple, so simple that it amounts to no more than clear understanding of the nature of the principle of equal consideration of interests."¹⁸ The principle does not fight for equality of all human rights to be given to animals, but for equitable consideration of interests. Interests of all animals have to count whether of humans or of nonhuman animals. Animals have feelings and are justified to have rights. That is why Singer writes, "if a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that its suffering is counted equally."¹⁹ All animals are equal by the fact that, they experience pleasure and pain. All animals are equal; humans as well as non-human animals such as beasts. Though it may not be easy to conceive, how nonhumans can have rights, it should be clear that singer, takes animals' ability to suffer as well as to experience pleasure as the foundation of animals' rights.

¹⁴ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1975), p. 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 48.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Humans should change their perception of seeing nonhuman animals as beings that are in place for human benefits. Most of us see animals as property, which we can use according to our wishes. Our responsibility towards animals is to ensure that we do not cause suffering to them. "Even if we were to prevent the infliction of suffering on animals only when the interests of humans will not be affected, we would be forced to make changes in our treatment of animals."²⁰ Many of the practices carried in animals should not be encouraged because most of them do not take into consideration animals' interest. Singer in facts urges us to change from, "our diet, the farming methods we use, experimental procedures in many fields of our approach to wildlife and to hunting, trapping and the wearing of furs, and areas of entertainment like circuses and zoos."²¹ Our motive towards animals should not be for our self- interest gain rather we should be mindful of the animals comfort and interests. Animals as beings endowed with desire to live should, therefore, be entitled to the right to live free from suffering.

We cannot deny animals interests, "animals may have interests, in the sense that they are capable of distinguishing between states of consciousness which are painful and those that are pleasurable, and that they seek the latter and avoid the former as much as possible."²² Humans and sentient beings are equal by the fact that, they have not only common origin but also common interests. Nonhuman animals are therefore justified to have rights, the rights which aim at safeguarding their interests. Interests in both parties have to be equally considered.

Liberating animals involves, making demands on the expansion of rights, as demanded by the principle of equality. Singer argues that "we must be prepared to re-think even our most fundamental attitudes. We need to consider them from the point of view of those most disadvantaged by our attitudes and the practices that follow from these attitudes."²³ The way we use animals shows how we do not consider their interests. The aim of proposing the principle of equality is to ensure that, both interests of humans and other animals counts equally. "All sentient beings have interests and are entitled to equal consideration of the interests that they have."²⁴ Understanding animals as having equal rights with human beings is tantamount to acknowledging that animals have interests. Our interests are not to be termed as superior to those of nonhuman animals.

4.0 Animals as sentient beings

The ability of feeling pain is one of the major reasons used in showing that animals deserve a better treatment. Animals are to be granted rights because they are sentient beings. Singer asserts that animals like humans can feel pain. "We know that we feel pain and we know this from the direct experience of pain. Pain is a state of consciousness, a mental event and as such, it can never be observed. Pain is something that we feel and we can only infer that others are feeling it from various external indications."²⁵ Feeling pain in animals is not an assumption but, a reality. Animals because they have a similar nervous system to that of humans, hence they function in the same way as those of human beings. Therefore we may conclude that they "produce similar feelings in similar circumstances."²⁶ Animals reveal signs when in pain which is a clear pointer to us that, they do not wish to undergo suffering. Animals have desires of what is pleasurable and do not wish to undergo suffering. When we inflict pain in animals we do so against their wish.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²¹ Singer, *Animal Liberation, Loc. Cit.*, pp. 16-17.

²² Michael Fox, "Animal Liberation: A Critique", *Animals in Rights* Vol. 88. No. 2, (1978) : 1 - 2.

²³ Singer, *Animal Liberation, Op. Cit.*, p. 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12-14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Singer says that “nearly all the external signs that lead us to infer pain in other humans can be seen in other species, especially the species most closely related to us-the species mammals and birds.”²⁷ The difference between humans and animals regarding the issue of emotions is that animals are not able to articulate the cause of a certain pain. Such a difference does not give us room for mistreating animals. “Nonhuman species share with us-consciousness, emotions, the ability to experience suffering-entitle them to the basic rights to be free from the control of human beings.”²⁸ Animals are to be set free from the bondage of exploitation.

“There is no good reason, scientific or philosophical, for denying that animals feel pain. If we do not doubt other humans feel pain, we should not doubt that other animals do so too.”²⁹ Animals are in this sense justified in having rights. Animals should not be subjected to suffering or even have pain induced in them for human benefits. Interests of both animals and human beings should be equally considered.

According to Singer, “Pain and suffering are in themselves bad and should be prevented or minimized, irrespective of the race, sex, or species of the being that suffers. Pain is bad, whether felt by man or by other animals.”³⁰ Animals’ rights as understood by Singer and other utilitarian theorist are to be entitled to animals, not because they are animals just like man is, but because they are sentient. Pain is seen as evil and therefore ought to be avoided, in humans and nonhuman animals. That is why Singer writes, “Human tyranny over other species the simpler, straightforward principle of equal consideration of pain or pleasure is a sufficient basis for identifying and protesting against all the major abuses of animals that human beings practice.”³¹ Causing suffering in animals is a form of abusing animals’ rights because it denies animals’ pleasure and causes pain and suffering.

5.0 Speciesism

Singer draws the idea of what he calls “*speciesism*” from the analogy of “sexism” and “racism”. Just as sexism and racism are objections towards the liberation of women’s rights, in the same way, *speciesism* hinders animals from being seen as having rights. In the same way, sexism and racism are condemned, in the same way we should condemn *speciesism*. Singer argues, “*Speciesism* translates to “prejudice” or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of the members of one’s own species and against those members of the other species.”³² A human being, therefore, considers the interests of their fellow humans, and not of nonhumans.

According to Singers, the opponent of animals’ rights is occupied with *speciesism* and racism. “Racists violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of their own race when there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race.”³³ Hence animals’ interests cannot be equally considered with those of humans. “*Speciesism* is an attitude of bias against a being because of the species to which it belongs. Typically, humans show

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Kevin Hile. *Animal Liberation Rights* (New York: Chelsea house Publishers, 2004), p.

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²⁹ Singer, *Animal Liberation, Op. Cit.*, p. 15.

³⁰ Singer, *Animal Liberation, Loc. Cit.*, p. 41.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³³ Singer, *Practical Ethics, Loc. Cit.*, p. 51.

speciesism when they give less weight to the interests of nonhuman animals and not to the interests of human beings.”³⁴ *Speciesism* does not rhythm with the idea of animals as having rights.

The interests of other nonhuman animals should be something of concern to the humans. Nonhuman animals are not mere ‘vessels’ which are just in place to serve our interests. Lisa says:

Human beings, who create moral guidelines for human interactions with animals, have vested interests, including an emotional attachment to themselves and to others of their kind. Human beings have a particular relationship with the human species over and against all other species and are likely to have a vested interest in human life. It is not possible for *Homo sapiens* to move outside this position of bias-it is inherent.³⁵

Humans are filled with certain feeling that, their interests are superior to the ones of nonhuman beings. Equality cannot be attained with such a conception since animals appear to be taken as inferior to human beings. “Human *speciesists* do not accept that pain is bad when it is felt other animals like pigs or mice as when it is felt by human beings. That then is really the whole of the argument for extending the principle of equality to nonhuman animals.”³⁶ The principle of equality aims at liberating animals by setting an equal consideration of interests. *Speciesism* and racism are against the idea of equal rights. They tend to argue that, “surely pain felt by a mouse-is not as bad as pain felt by a human. Humans have a much greater awareness of what is happening to them, and this makes their suffering worse. You can’t equate the suffering of, say, a person dying from cancer, and a laboratory mouse undergoing the same fate.”³⁷ In other words the value of human beings out stands that of nonhuman animals. A suffering human being deserves much attention and consideration, than an animal undergoing the same problem.

Speciesism and racism have many negative effects on nonhuman rights. Most of the decisions made out of such conception may not be of any benefit to animals. “Just as most human beings are *speciesists* in their readiness to cause pain to animals when they would not cause a similar pain to humans for the same reason, so most human beings are *speciesists* in their readiness to kill other animals when they would not kill human beings.”³⁸ Perpetuating such an attitude of *speciesism* affects nonhuman animals greatly and can be avoided.

Singer writes, “to avoid *speciesism* we must allow that beings who are similar in all relevant respects have a similar right to life-and mere membership in our own biological species cannot be a morally relevant criterion for this right.”³⁹ *Speciesism* is a wrong attitude for man to apply in relation to the rights of animals. “Giving greater weight to the interests of members of one’s own species is indefensible. Animals and humans share the same rights relevant characteristics which provide each with equal claims.”⁴⁰ Equality for all animals advocated by Singer takes no variation of interests, all interests are equal whether of human beings or of nonhuman animals.

³⁴ Peter Singer, Racism, Animal Rights and Human Rights. on [https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/](https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2018/04/07/speciesism/) (Retrieved on 4/7/2018).

³⁵ Lisa Kemmerer, *In Search of Consistency: Ethics and Animals* (Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 2006), p. 40.

³⁶ Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Loc. Cit., p.51.

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ Singer, *Animal Liberation*, Loc. Cit., p. 41.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ Peter Singer, *A Companion to Ethics* (New York: Blackwell Publisher, 1991), p. 350.

5.1 Speciesism as unjustified

According to Singer *speciesism* cannot be justified because “there are some features of certain beings that make their lives more valuable than those of other beings. There are some nonhuman animals whose lives, by any standards, are more valuable than the lives of some humans, by any standards are more valuable than the lives of some humans.”⁴¹ Some animals show more advanced characteristics beyond those of some human beings. “A chimpanzee, dog, or pig, for instance, will have a higher degree of self-awareness and a greater capacity for meaningful relations with others than a severely retarded infant or someone in a state of advanced senility.”⁴² If giving rights to humans may be done on the basis of the ability to reason or speech, then such animals ought to have such entitlements.

The suffering of animals should not be neglected because animals have interests. The continued exploitation of animals on the basis of self-interests benefits is an ongoing activity. Though such happenings take place around us few pay attention to them. “How is it that we see this happening around us and allow it to continue, yet when humans are subjected to similar conditions, we are horrified beyond measure? If we are to follow a consistent system of ethics, there would seem to be no reason to inflict vast suffering simply because those who suffer are not human.”⁴³ Animals’ rights apologists deny any form of violation of animals’ rights. Taking not into consideration nonhuman animals interest is therefore immoral. What it means by equality in the sense of humans as well as animals, is simply that though the suffering is not like there is a common relationship between the ‘oppressor and the oppressed’. Thus, “Whether it is sexism, racism, or *speciesism*-all forms of prejudice seem to stem from a worldview that leaves out the interests of some beings.”⁴⁴ The issue of animals’ rights is not a matter of whether humans ought to be superior to other animals but is on how man has to treat and relate with animals as sentient beings.

Much discrimination against animals has their origin in man. Human beings acquire attitudes of which conforms to them as being superior to other animals. That is why:

In all the various forms of discriminations in the world, one most common can be found in the way in which humans have treated nonhuman animals, both in history and in the present day. As long as *speciesism* (prejudice on the basis of species membership) has led most humans to treat animals as if they were mere tools for human fulfillment with no signs of rights.⁴⁵

Speciesism is thereby not a good attitude because it does a lot of harm to nonhuman animals. Animals do not only have interests but also occupy the same environment with us. We should not behave as if we are superior to them or to the environment. Treating animals in an inhumane manner is therefore wrong and cannot be justified at all.

6.0 Inculcated attitudes towards animals rights

One may reflect on the various attitudes we have towards animals, the question which may come out of the reflection, maybe, about the cause of negative attitudes and how they become part of us. Some of the questions may not need answers but one may end up realizing that, man is not born having such a negative mentality towards animals. Man is the problem of animals’ rights; animals have no problem with their rights and what they are. Human beings often violate animals’ rights and defend

⁴¹ Singer, *Animal Liberation*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Boston university vegetarian society. on <https://buvegetariansociety.wordpress.com> (Retrieved on 7/7/2018).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Speciesism as an unjustifiable form of discrimination.* on www.debate.org (Retrieved on 7/7/2018).

the violence as though it is something worthy of praise. There are habits which make us develop varying attitudes towards animals.

6.1 Dining habits

Some of the attitudes we have towards animals are inoculated in us through the ways in which we are brought up. Such attitudes may be acquired through the various lifestyles we engage in or through various cultural practices. "Our attitudes to animals begin to form when we are very young, and they are dominated by the fact that we begin to eat meat at an early age."⁴⁶ Animals' rights are therefore violated in every daily activity. The habit of eating animals is something we are oriented to by our parents, is not something we were born aware of, but are inclinations which we achieve through been fed with meat. Supposing we could be trained on being vegetarians, maybe we would all be vegetarians.

Singer says that:

Interestingly enough, many children at first refuse to eat animal flesh and only become accustomed to it after strenuous efforts by their parents, who mistakenly believe that it is necessary for good health. Whatever the children eat initial reaction, though, the point to notice is that we eat animal flesh long before we are capable of understanding that what we are eating is the dead body of an animal.⁴⁷

Innocent children are in this matter been oriented to developing the attitude that, animals are in place to satisfy man's interest. The decision made by man concerning animals is how man shall benefit from the use of animals but not how animals' rights can be upheld. Though we are aware that animals have interests, we do not make decisions aiming at promoting their rights. "Thus we never make a conscious, informed decision, free from the bias that accompanies any long-established habit, reinforced by all the pleasures of social conformity."⁴⁸ Our way of living is full of discrimination against animals' rights. We seek what brings pleasure to us; we put our interests first at the expense of nonhuman animals.

6.1.2 Academic habits

According to Singer feminist have played a key role in pointing out this matter. "Recognizing the importance of the attitudes we form when young, the feminist movement has succeeded in fostering the growth of a new children's literature, to alter the stories about animals that we read to our children will not be so easy, since cruelty is not an ideal subject for children's stories."⁴⁹ Our academic system perpetuates the attitude of considering animals as beings that have no rights. "Children are brought up on fairy tales in which animals; especially wolves were pictured as cunning enemies of man."⁵⁰ Such kind of stories enables the young already to begin developing a negative attitude towards animals. Whatever we are oriented to during our tender ages, has great effects on the way in which we perceive things as adults.

The way our caretakers introduce us to the animals during our childhood influences our manner of looking at animals. We may be made to develop a mentality that animals are part of our community and as living beings; hence we need to care for them. Some parents have provided their kids with pets,

⁴⁶ Singer, *Animal Liberation, Loc. Cit.*, p. 213.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

in such a situation the parent ought to presuppose that, such a milieu will teach the child some responsibility towards animals. The relationship between the children and their pets may be of use, “such experience can indeed be valuable if it is accompanied by parental caring for both animal and child.”⁵¹ The way we have been brought up in homes and in schools affects our attitude towards animals either positively or negatively. Our guardians whether in schools or in the families as well as in the churches ought to enhance the extension of good relationship with not only animals but also with nature. Caring for animals is something good which orient us to caring to our fellow humans and the entire biosphere.

The information written in books and the kind of pictures we see contributes a lot regarding our relationship with animals and forms our background towards animals. “It should be possible to avoid the most gruesome details, and still give children picture books and stories that encourage respect for animals as independent beings.”⁵² Animals most of the times may suffer because of putting into practice what has been taught to us regarding the animals. Nonhuman animals are only in place for human gain, animals, therefore, appear to have value in themselves that they can be allowed to exist for such values.

Most information about farm animals to be gained from watching television is in the form of paid advertising, which ranges from ridiculous cartoons of pigs who want to be made into sausages and tuna trying to get them canned. The social media coverage of nonhuman animals is dominated by human interests.⁵³

The dominance of humans over the use of animals cannot therefore go un-noticed. Animals are seen as “means” not ends in themselves. Their existence is not something of value, since they appear to be in place to serve man. That which is termed as “means” has therefore an intermediary purpose.

7.0 Ecofeminist and animals rights

In fact, the liberation of animals begins with the analogy of liberating women from discrimination. Singer recognizes the great role, feminism plays in liberating animals. Ecofeminism claims that the oppression and exploitation of women and the oppression and exploitation of nature are intimately connected mutually reinforcing. Some eco-feminists see oppression of nonhuman animals as linked to that of the oppression of women, and that the same domination is responsible for both the oppression of women and oppression of non-human animals. The central claim of eco-feminists is that “we cannot liberate nature or specifically nonhuman animals without taking into consideration the oppression of women seriously and furthermore we cannot liberate women without taking oppression of nonhuman animals seriously.”⁵⁴ Animals just like women have been undermined in the environment by the domination of male chauvinism. Animals are to be considered as part of nature and should not be mistreated at all. They should be granted rights and respected on all grounds.

Non-human animals should not be exploited and the call for not exploiting them attracts new human understanding of animals in which man has to develop a ‘new animal ethic framework’. The man has to come to a better understanding of how he ought to relate to sentient animals and nature at large, with an aim of developing an ethical conduct that does not exploit the sentient beings. “Instead of sitting in an armchair and calculating what we owe to non-human animals, we should instead take seriously our experiences and the actual world we live in, consider the close relationships and bonds

⁵¹ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), p. 126.

⁵² Singer, *Animal Liberation*, *Loc. Cit.*, p. 215.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁵⁴ Nonhuman Animal Ethics. at <https://nonhumananimaethics.wordpress.com> (Accessed on 9/7/2018)

we form with others and use the emotions(sympathy) as well as care to guide our ethical conduct toward nonhuman animals.”⁵⁵ Human beings have to behave in such a way, that animals are not discriminated from the realm of rights. A man ought not to see himself as better placed in the environment than other animals which exist within the same environment. Singer argues that liberating animals necessarily attracts “public attention and sympathy.”⁵⁶ Animals deserve our attention which is revealed through caring for them.

Animals just like humans do not like being mistreated. “The limit of sentience that is the capacity to suffer or experience enjoyment or happiness is the only defensible boundary of concern for the interests of others. To mark this boundary by some characteristic like intelligence or rationality would be to mark it in an arbitrary way.”⁵⁷ Even though man has a feeling that pain experienced by animals is not the same as the one experienced by man since for man pain experienced by animals does not mean anything to him. Man and sentient animals have various similarities, “To back up our inference from animals behaviours, we can point to the fact that the nervous systems of all vertebrates and especially of birds and mammals are fundamentally similar. Those parts of the human nervous system that are concerned with feeling pain are relatively old, in evolutionary terms.”⁵⁸ Sentient beings are conscious of the surrounding and therefore animals have a right to life since they can experience pain and just like man they do not like being treated in any manner which subjects them to pain.

Since man is an animal and wishes to live, sentient animals too have lives and wish that they may live and therefore it is our duty to treat animals in a humane and respectful manner. “All animals fear death, if they did not they would not survive for long, all creatures fear pain and avoid contact with situations and things in their environment that bring about pain. The avoidance of both death and pain are instinctive in all animals including man. All animals feel pain, all experience the flight or fight response, a survival mechanism triggered by fear.”⁵⁹ Moral agents have a role to play in protecting animals from unnecessary pain which can be avoided.

Animals’ rights in an actual sense are not the rights which are entitled to a man like rights for freedom of speech, freedom of politics behind other freedom but are rights for considering them as animals that have “interests”. Man, therefore, should always guard himself against any activity which violates animals’ comfort. Being human therefore is being aware that our way of living should not be a cause of suffering directly or indirectly to other beings within the same environment. Therefore caring for oneself must begin with caring for other beings who we share the world with.

Speciesism leads us to discrimination of animals, not because animals have no rights, but because we think we are superior to them. “Discrimination against beings solely on account of their species is immoral.”⁶⁰ We should not rely on differences between us and animals as a point of affirming our denial to animal rights. The appeal to sentiment is what should be our point of reference when arguing for animals rights. The mentality of rights implying duties is not to be applied when arguing for animals rights, because animals do not have any duty directed to them. Human beings have a direct

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Singer, *Animal Liberation, Loc. Cit.*, p. 11.

⁵⁷ Singer, *Practical Ethics, Loc. Cit.*, pp. 50-51.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵⁹ Shakyamuni Buddha, *Animal Rights and why they Matter*. <https://www.animalslaw.info/article>

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on 9/7/2018).

⁶⁰ Singer, *Animal Liberation, Loc. Cit.*, p. 243.

duty when it comes to rights, because of the capacity to reason and they can, therefore, enter into a contract.

Conclusion

The understanding of Singer concerning animals' rights reveals that animals have rights entitlement even though it does not mean that their rights are exactly like those of human beings. We hereby conclude that animals have rights for equal consideration of interests and the right to freedom from suffering. Animals desire what is good and whatever is good is that which brings contentment to them. Humans are therefore not loftier in any way than nonhuman animals. The position of human beings in the universe should not be an issue of preeminence rather it is an issue of ought stewardship.

Recommendation

Rights should be granted not only on the basis of sentience but rather on the basis of natural location. Man and nonhuman animals occupy the same universe hence we should not rule out animals as though they exist in a different universe from the one we live in. Centering rights on not only on sentience but also on natural inhabitation may rule out the human attitude of feeling that, he is superior to nonhuman animals, which may mark the epic of holistic understanding of rights.

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