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Beyond Human Exceptionalism: Animal Representation in Indian and Western Philosophies, Epics, and Literature

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ABSTRACT: Humans are part of the ecological crisis because of their conceptual and material entanglements with nonhumans. In this article, the author reflects on the role of animals in Indian and Western philosophies, epics, religious beliefs and literature. Animals are found in a universal cosmic, moral and spiritual framework by rita, dharma, karma, rebirth, ahimsa, compassion and sarva-bhuta-hita or the welfare of all creatures through the perspectives of India. Animals are portrayed as other beings, moral agents, gods, assistants and teachers in the Vedas, Upanishads, classical philosophical systems, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Puranas, Jataka tales and the Panchatantra. Western traditions include a powerful history of rational hierarchy and of human dominion, evident in Aristotle, Christian arguments of indirect duty, Descartes, and Kant, as well as a still underdeveloped history of animal-centred literature, and animal ethics generally, in the modern world, as represented by Bentham and Darwin. Comparative analysis reveals that Indian thought as well as the western thought is ethically undifferentiated and that there are practices of exploitation in both, as well as intellectual resources for restraint, care and justice. The article suggests that a proper ecological ethics might integrate western ecological notions of sentience, rights, capabilities, relationality and institutions with Indian notions of interdependence and nonviolence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Animals are never depicted culturally in a neutral way through literature and/or philosophy. These can be termed as property, food, labor, sacrifice, danger, companion, god, teacher, or moral topic. These representations shape behavior in that they can make an animal's suffering visible and/or lead to the recognition of its life having an intrinsic value apart from its use to humans. Thus, the economic systems, as well as inherited notions of human superiority, encourage industrial farming, habitat destruction, experimentation, entertainment and wildlife trade.

An important assumption of this research is that there is no easy solution to ecological crisis through technical programmes. Pollution control, conservation laws, policies of sustainable development and policies of animal-protection are still needed but their effectiveness depends also on a change of values. The Bhagavad Gita states, yo yac-shraddhah sa eva sah: a person becomes what his or her faith disposes that person to be.[1] The world as a storehouse of things to be consumed seems to be the right way to look at the world, and then human power is not morally responsible; the world as a community of interdependent beings is the right way to look at the world, and then human power becomes morally responsible. The Indian spirituality can then be interpreted as an underpinning for coexistence, for restraint and for the good of life.

The main issue can thus be summarized: What is the image of the animal in Indian and western philosophy, epics and literature and what are the ethics involved in such images? The one-sided view of it being a compassionate India versus an anthropocentric West is not correct. There's sacrifice, hunting, hierarchy and reverence in Indian traditions and there's domination and strong critiques of cruelty in Western traditions. So, a responsible comparison should, then, focus on the inner tensions and not moral

[1]Bhagavad Gita 17.3: sattvanurupa sarvasya sraddha bhavati bharata; yo yac-chraddhah sa eva sah.

superiority of an entire civilization. It should also make a clear distinction between symbolic respect for animal figures, and material concern for living animals.

2. METHOD AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Comparative textual analysis is used in the study, where the text of the two genres (doctrine and narrative) is placed side by side, as their roles are different. Philosophy of soul, reason, suffering, duty, moral status is made emotionally and socially visible with epic and literature. "Representation" refers to the qualities given to animals, ways they are symbolized, and how well they are allowed to be embodied, with interests.

The comparison is organized by four questions: What is the role of animals in reality? What responsibilities does Man have towards them? What are the ways in which animals are represented as having a voice, agency, suffering and death in narratives? In what ways do imagery help or hinder power? Considering both traditions to be diverse and historical, the article chooses significant works and representative scenes that can all shed light on hierarchy, kinship, property, sacredness, allegory, agency, cruelty, and compassion.

The method also differentiates the historical interpretation from the present application. A Vedic hymn or epic episode, or a biblical verse, or a nineteenth-century novel, is not a policy document of today; meaning varies with genre, language, and setting. However, the public attitude is determined by inherited texts, which can be reinterpreted by the ecological knowledge. The article is not anachronistic, nor antiquarian: the author does not project contemporary rights onto the ancient writers but rather which older rights are now ripe for use in contemporary debates with appropriate historical sensitivity.

Ethical language can be as opaque as it is transparent so that, in addition, the analysis puts the doctrines to the test of their narrative and practical consequences. Statements of oneness, compassion or stewardship are only considered ethically significant if they are counter to avoidable suffering, instrumentalization, neglect, and habitat loss. This criterion maintains the evaluative nature of the comparison without a uniformity of culture.

3. ANIMALS IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

3.1 Vedic Holism and the Community of Life

The Vedic worldview does not regard the human beings as being outside an ordered cosmos, but rather inside it. Rita is a notion of order in which the gods, the nature, ritual, seasons and behavior are sustained. Hymns to dawn, fire, rivers, earth, wind and rain are not very recent environmentalism, but they do not go along with the concept of nature as lifeless matter. The Yajurveda prays for "peace" in the sky, atmosphere, earth, waters, plants, and trees.[2] Peace is imagined as an ecological condition extending through existence.

The Isha Upanishad begins ishavasyam idam sarvam—all this is pervaded by the divine—and associates rightful enjoyment with renunciation rather than possessive greed. The Maha Upanishad formulation vasudhaiva kutumbakam—"the earth is one family"—enlarges moral imagination.[3] These ideas do not automatically produce animal-welfare law, but they challenge unlimited ownership. Human beings participate in a world that exceeds them; consumption must therefore be disciplined by restraint and reciprocity.

Indian cosmological literature also includes a traditional fourfold classification of embodied life: jarayuja beings born from a womb, andaja beings born from eggs, udbhijja beings emerging from the earth, and svedaja beings thought to arise from moisture.[4] It is not Modern Biology, but premodern Cosmology. Ethically it is significant in that it collects a variety of life forms in one story. But life is not limited to the human body – and plural embodiment is a cause for humility.

3.2 Shared Selfhood, Karma, and Rebirth

The spiritual equality is provided by the thoughts of the Upanishad and the Vedanta. The self is not just the ephemeral "body now" and the same ultimate reality maintains multiple existences. The Bhagavad Gita refers to a wise man as 'samadarshinah', who treats equally a learned person, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a person who is considered outcaste! It also says that the

[2]Yajurveda 36.17.
[3]Ishavasyopanishad 1; Maha Upanishad 6.71.
[4]Sadananda, Vedantasara, chap. 2, on the four classes of gross bodies.

living beings are fragments of the life of the Divine which are manifested through the mind and senses.[5] Such passages weaken absolute distinctions between human and animal existence.

Species boundaries are permeable, due to Karma and rebirth. There are different forms of birth, and a being can go through different ones, depending on action and attachment; human birth is considered to be a very auspicious one in which to engage in deliberate spiritual practice, but that doesn't mean that animal life is unimportant or without consciousness. The teaching results in a double effect. It can bring about compassion by kinship across births, but it can also give rise to the viewpoint that what one is suffering is deserved. It needs to be interpreted ethically, to make karma a motivation to avoid doing harm. It must be interpreted in an ethically responsible way, so that it becomes a motivation to not do harm and not be indifferent to victims.

Samkhya explains the world through the relationship between conscious purusha and material prakriti.[6] Embodied beings participate in nature's transformations and experience pleasure, pain, attachment, and limitation. Vedanta locates unity in Brahman, while Vaishnava traditions emphasize dependence upon the Supreme. Their differences are substantial, but they refuse to treat animal consciousness as mere mechanism. Nonhuman embodiment belongs to the same field of bondage and, in several traditions, spiritual possibility.

3.3 Dharma, Ahimsa, and Universal Welfare

Indian moral philosophy is most directly related to animal welfare, compassion and disciplined behavior. Nonviolence is the first ethical restraint in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra and is considered to be a "great vow", one that transcends class, place, time and circumstance. Jainism takes this a step further and introduces extreme caution in eating, walking, working, talking, and owning—this means that the ethical practice must be rooted in a commitment to avoid violence.[7] Jain discipline makes everyday harm visible and refuses to reduce morality to occasional benevolence.

Buddhism reaches a comparable concern through a different metaphysics. It rejects a permanent self but emphasizes dependent origination: beings arise through conditions and remain vulnerable to suffering. The first precept prohibits taking life, while karuna and metta extend compassion beyond humanity. The Dhammapada states: "All tremble at violence; all fear death." It then asks the reader to take another's place and neither kill nor cause killing.[8] Ethical concern arises from shared vulnerability, and not from possession of an eternal soul.

Also, Nyaya and Vaisheshika are put forward in this context. Vatsyayana's commentary defines violence as misbehavior of the body and compassion as good behaviour of the mind; Nyaya also lays down moral restraints for the cultivation of the self. In Vaisheshika, welfare (sukha) and highest good (uttama sharata) are the definitions of dharma and a tendency towards violence (hinsa) is denounced. These systems don't represent contemporary animal rights, but they put actions in causal and moral frameworks. The impact of harm is on the being harmed and also on the character of the agent (doer).

The ideal of universal welfare unites these strands. The traditional benediction "May all be happy; may all be free from illness" does not grammatically exclude animals.[9] The Bhagavata Purana praises the devotee as compassionate, without hostility, equal-minded, and helpful to all; the Gita describes the liberated as devoted to sarva-bhuta-hita, that is, the welfare of all beings.[10] Animal welfare therefore becomes more than kindness to a favoured species: it tests whether spiritual equality can enter material practice.

3.4 Sacred Animals: Protection and Limitation

In Indian religious culture, animals are accorded a special symbolic and devotional significance. Cows represent nourishment, serpents represent fertility, water, danger and protection, monkeys represent Hanuman's devotion and elephants represent Ganesha and royal power and birds represent divine movement. Animal forms are located near the centre of worship by Garuda

[5]Bhagavad Gita 5.18 and 15.7.
[6]Ishvarakrishna, Samkhya Karika 21.
[7]Patanjali, Yoga Sutra 2.30-31; Acaranga Sutra 1.4.1, in Jacobi.
[8]Dhammapada 129-30, trans. Acharya Buddharakkhita.
[9]Traditional Sanskrit benediction, commonly transmitted as a universal welfare prayer; precise textual attribution varies.
[10]Bhagavata Purana 11.11.29-31; Bhagavad Gita 5.25.

and Nandi. In Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), and Narasimha (human-animal) forms, Vishnu's saving power is found in fish, tortoise, boar and human-animal form.[11]

Sacredness can result in protection; however, it can be selective as well. To have a symbolic cow does not imply decency towards working, abandoned, or dairy cows. Devotion to Hanuman does not always safeguard habitats of monkeys and the veneration of a serpent could be combined with bad feeding. Tradition only develops an ethical dimension to it if there is symbolic honour for food, water, medicine, protection from cruel treatment and opportunity for eco-viability.

3.5 From Spiritual Principle to Animal Welfare

Spiritual commitments are manifested in the way that one lives. Indian culture has been promoting the provision of food for animals, water to birds, feeding cattle and dogs, the care of injured animals and even the shelter of places for resting or nesting of animals. In this way, they can educate the moral subject to see the beings who are not usually part of the formal regime of property and citizenship.

The principles of dana (giving) and daya (compassion) extend beyond human recipients. Cities may provide water, veterinary care, sterilization, and vaccination while keeping toxic waste from animals. Rural practice includes humane working conditions, rest, fodder, and protection of shared grazing and water resources.

Out-of-control care can also be detrimental. Feeding wildlife can change their behaviour or escalate conflict or diseases, and can put animals and communities at risk if it is done without sanitation, vaccination or population control when feeding street animals. It is, therefore, necessary that compassion be linked with a knowledge of ecology and veterinary.

The other inference is on the restrictions on consumerism. The over-consumption of meat and leather, entertainment, wildlife products for ornamental purposes, and consumption of resources widens the boundaries of systems where animals are disposable. Vedic restraint or the yogic practice of non-possession doesn't necessarily mean one single life style, rather it is a questioning of the mindset that desire equal rights. The first step towards ecological responsibility is to determine whether the damage can be avoided or whether the individual or institution needs to be damaged.

4. ANIMALS IN INDIAN EPICS, NARRATIVES, AND BOOKS

4.1 The Ramayana

The Ramayana creates a world in which forests and rivers, birds, deer, bears and monkeys all play a role in moral and political action. Rama has a cause for concern when animals suddenly run off near the Mandakini as he suspects that they have been startled by the presence of hunters or predators. While searching for Sita, he speaks to trees and animals, who bring him to his attention that the way towards Sita is south.[12] Nature becomes witness rather than background.

Jatayu is an example of animal moral agency, which is the most obvious instance. The old vulture challenges Ravana; he gets injured in the process of protecting Sita, and informs Rama about it. Rama grieves and gives funeral honour to him. Noble courage, moral decision is his value. The Vanaras and the bears have speech, strategy, loyalty and political organization. Hanuman was reminded by Jambavan about his lost ability, which allows him to make the jump to Lanka.[13] The epic, despite its mythological and anthropomorphic nature, is a distribution of what is intelligent and good throughout species.

4.2 The Mahabharata and Puranic Traditions

Animals are used to test human virtue, time and time again in the Mahabharata. King Shibi gives his flesh to save a dove from a hawk, who also has a need to live; it shows dramatization of conflict between protection and predation. Even in the last trip, Yudhishthira denies heaven, on the condition that he would not have to leave his loyal dog behind. The animal is then found to be Dharma, but the test is a success as Yudhishthira saves apparently a common companion before he knows that it is a God.[14]

[11]Matsya Purana 1.28; Agni Purana 3.8; Bhagavata Purana 3.13 and 7.8.
[12]Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya Kanda 96.8-9; Aranya Kanda 60.23 and 64.17.
[13]Valmiki Ramayana, Aranya Kanda 50-51; Kishkindha Kanda 65.7.
[14]Mahabharata, Vana Parva 130-31; Mahaprasthanika Parva 3.

The story of Sarama and Sarameya similarly condemns unprovoked violence: after princes beat the dog without cause, its mother demands an account, and injustice brings consequences. Elsewhere the epic declares ahimsa paramo dharmah—"nonviolence is the highest duty"—and condemns needless injury.[15] These passages are in harmony with war, hunting, sacrifice and use of animals. They don't represent a proof of a uniformly nonviolent culture, but are significant in the sense that they maintain internal criticism of power.

Animals in the puranic stories add to the religiousness of animals. Matsya rescues life from the flood, Kurma helps with the cosmic churning, Varaha rescues the earth and Narasimha slays a tyrant in a form that transcends the human/animal dichotomy. Garuda isn't a passive mount, it's a powerful agent. Divinity is not just in the protection of animals from above; but it takes animal form or it works through animal form.[16]

4.3 Didactic and Modern Literature

In the Jataka tales the Buddha's lives in human and animal form. The generosity, wisdom, leadership and self sacrifice of the deer, monkeys, elephants, birds and hares are all displayed. The Panchatantra is a story of political intelligence through the prism of lions, bulls, jackals, crows, tortoises and mice. Animals are its protagonists and often represent types of human beings, but they are also protagonists of multi-species cooperation, which question the anthropocentrism of the understanding of strategy and social life.

Modern Indian writing brings the labouring and endangered animal into sharper focus. In Premchand's "The Story of Two Bullocks," Heera and Moti possess friendship, memory, pride, and resistance; their suffering exposes the moral cost of treating sentient labour as property. R. K. Narayan's A Tiger for Malgudi reverses the human gaze through a captive tiger's narration. Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide places dolphins, tigers, islanders, scientists, and the mangrove environment within conflicts between conservation and social justice. These works translate older ideas of shared life into modern conditions of labour, captivity, and ecological displacement.[17]

5. ANIMALS IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

5.1 Hierarchy, Dominion, and Mechanism

Animals are a powerful tradition in the West that is based on a capacity which they allegedly don't possess. Plants and other animals are for the benefit of humans, and his arguments are related to human superiority, rational deliberation.[18] God gives man "dominion" over the animals in the book of Genesis. This is read as absolute sovereignty and can lead to mastery, but it can also be read in the context of Sabbath rest for working animals and God's covenant with "every living creature" and can lead to stewardship and responsibility.[19]

The duties towards animals were viewed by Augustine and Aquinas mainly as indirect, i.e., hurting human character or harming another person's property was the real sin, and the abuse of animals was sinful only because of the consequences.[20] Another blow to animal subjectivity came from the mechanistic differentiation from rational human minds and animal bodies, advanced by Descartes. Kant saw no moral obligation for humans to the animals, and he did not think that humans should be cruel, as this hurts their moral character which is necessary for human obligations. Protection here is based on human interests and not with an animal's rights.

5.2 Western Counter-traditions and Contemporary Ethics

The hierarchical tradition has been opposed over the years. 'Plutarch writes that on account of 'a little flesh we deprive animals of the sun and their life of measure." Montaigne discusses the communication, memory, abilities and social organization of

[15]Mahabharata, Adi Parva 3.5-9; Shanti Parva 162.21; Anushasana Parva 116.28-29.
[16]Matsya Purana 1.28; Agni Purana 3.8; Bhagavata Purana 3.13 and 7.8.
[17]Jataka, ed. Cowell, vols. 1-6; Panchatantra, trans. Chandra Rajan; Premchand, Story of Two Bullocks; Narayan, Tiger for Malgudi; Ghosh, Hungry Tide.
[18]Aristotle, Politics 1.8, 1256b15-22.
[19]Genesis 1.26-28 and 9.9-17; Exodus 23.12.
[20]Augustine, City of God 1.20; Aquinas, Summa Theologiae II-II, q. 64, art. 1.

animals to reveal the arrogance of human beings.[21] These writers do not formulate modern rights, but they shift the burden of proof from compassion to violence.

Jeremy Bentham gives the debate its decisive modern criterion: "The question is not, can they reason? nor, can they talk? but, can they suffer?"[22] Darwin similarly concludes that the mental difference between humans and higher animals "is certainly one of degree and not of kind."[23] Singer develops sentience into equal consideration of comparable interests; Regan argues that many animals are subjects-of-a-life with inherent value; and Nussbaum asks what each sentient creature requires for bodily integrity, movement, play, affiliation, and species-specific flourishing.[24]

Abstract ethics shows some gaps in the feminist, relational and posthumanist theories. Adams is linking the eating of flesh with procedures that reduce the body into the nonpresent and Plumwood with critiques of the related hierarchies of reason/nature, male/female, and human/animal. Derrida challenges the homogeneity of the category 'the Animal' that obscures the distinction between animals. The animal looks at him, and he is naked before it: his encounter with the cat gives him the moral question.[25] These approaches show that suffering is produced by institutions, language, property, and unequal dependence.

5.3 Animals in Western Epics and Books

Animals play the role of a property and symbol in western literature, but also show their subjectivity. The immortal horses that Achilles had in his camp are mentioned in the Iliad – they cry for Patroclus, disrupting war with nonhuman grief. In the Odyssey, the old dog Argos recognizes Odysseus after twenty years, and dies after Odysseus has seen him: Loyalty and neglect reveal the price of hero's absence. This transmutation of species to moral types by Aesop's speaking animals yet distributes intelligence outside of the human body.[26]

Romantic and modern literature makes animal suffering difficult to contain within allegory. After the albatross's killing produces spiritual and ecological disorder, Coleridge concludes: "He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small."[27] Sewell's Black Beauty uses a horse narrator to expose overwork, injury, and fashionable cruelty. Melville's whale exceeds Ahab's interpretation; Kafka's speaking ape exposes coercive captivity; and Orwell's commandment, "All animals are equal / But some animals are more equal than others," connects manipulated language with Boxer's labour and disposal.[28]

5.4 From Moral Theory to Institutions

In particular, the direction of questioning from Western animal ethics on how to reform institutions has much to offer. Both a farmed pig and a laboratory mouse, together with a companion dog, a captive elephant and a free-ranging wolf, can be sentient and experience varying forms of human power. The pig is used for production, the mouse is produced as experimental material, the dog is dependent on its owner and the elephant has its movement and social relations controlled, and the wolf's habitat is being fragmented. These different types of vulnerabilities cannot simply be expressed as an appeal of kindness.

Utilitarian reform is about alleviating suffering via improved housing, transport, handling, experimentation and slaughter. This kind of reform does not need to result in an end to the assumption of animals as resources, but could be an effective way to stop severe pain. According to the rights theory, is there something wrong with these uses even if they minimize suffering, because they treat an individual "only as a means"? A positive standard – the capabilities approach requires opportunities for movement, for sensory activity, for play, for affiliation, for bodily integrity and control that are adequate for the species to live

[21]Plutarch, On the Eating of Flesh 4.1, Moralia 994A, trans. Cherniss and Helmbold, 551; Montaigne, Apology for Raymond Sebond, Complete Essays.
[22]Bentham, Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, chap. 17, n. 1.
[23]Darwin, Descent of Man, 2nd ed., chap. 3, 126.
[24]Singer, Animal Liberation, chap. 1; Regan, Case for Animal Rights, 243-48; Nussbaum, Justice for Animals, chap. 3.
[25]Adams, Sexual Politics of Meat, chap. 2; Plumwood, Feminism and the Mastery of Nature, chap. 2; Derrida, Animal That Therefore I Am, 29.
[26]Homer, Iliad 17.426-40; Odyssey 17.290-327; Aesop, Complete Fables.
[27]Coleridge, Rime of the Ancient Mariner, lines 614-15.
[28]Sewell, Black Beauty, chaps. 2 and 23; Melville, Moby-Dick, chap. 41; Kafka, Report to an Academy, 250-62; Orwell, Animal Farm, chap. 10.

a satisfactory life. Though these frameworks differ, their differences shed light on the kinds of factors institutional justice needs to take into account.

Domesticity also brings with it obligations which are not amenable to a policy of 'leave alone'. Through human breeding and containment, these animals have become reliant on human beings for their sustenance, well-being, security and companionship. Abandonment in the name of "nature" can thus make human suffering exacerbated by humanity further. Relational ethics is the question: Who benefits, who controls and who risks? It turns love into a duty and it does not see emotion as enough when the freedom of humans to move, breed, care for and kill an animal is unlimited.

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The most obvious difference between Indian and Western traditions is the predominant language of the metaphysics. Animals are often placed in a variety of contexts such as in a state of rebirth, in shared consciousness, in dependent life or in some way that is similar to a divine manifestation. These concepts have opened up the species boundaries. Much more common in the history of western philosophy is to start with a created hierarchy, or a rational hierarchy, and then ask the question of whether animals have the capacity for qualifying. This is a real contrast, but only relative: Darwinian continuity is similar to the challenges put forward by Indian philosophers to the "species boundary," and Jain and Buddhist philosophies diverge significantly on the question of whether a permanent self exists or not.

Their ethical lexicons are complementary as well. Ahimsa is a behavior training before injury happens and a form of restraint in daily behavior. Compassion starts with being vulnerable, and it is this vulnerability that is the essence of being a Buddhist. Pain is counted whether it is experienced by a man, a woman, a boy or a dog. Rights take care of not being thrown away for the sake of the collective good, capabilities shift the focus of ethics from mere survival to flourishing. Added to this are the responsibilities engendered by domestication and dependence that are part of relational ethics. All of these strategies cover intention, suffering, protection, positive life and social context.

Both the narrative traditions have a common peril: animals can vanish into the guise of human virtue, politics, religion or desire. Animals are used as social types by the Panchatantra and Aesop; Puranic animals are symbols of divinity; best known modern novels use animals as social critique of class, empire or totalitarianism. While symbolism can never be wrong, it can be restrictive if the living referent is no longer there. But those wounds of Jatayu, the dog of Yudhishthira; or those wounds of Argos, or those wounds and bruises of Black Beauty, or those labouring bullocks of Premchand won't disappear; they will join moral meaning with embodied experience.

Selective protection is also found in both traditions. Honour can be given to sacred animals but ordinary animals are neglected. Companion animals can be loved and farmed animals are not seen. A charismatic species might be saved at the expense of other, less popular species, which are displaced, or humans. A good animal ethics, then, must evaluate reverence on material grounds: reducing avoidable suffering, access to food and water, physical integrity, adequate social life, habitat protection and limits on ownership/exploitation.

The comparison shows also two different approaches to the enlargement of the moral circle. Many Indian texts start with the premise that animals are already a part of the Cosmic, Karmic or Spiritual order with human beings. But a lot of modern western ethics starts with a contentious threshold and a question as to whose quality - sentience, subjectivity, agency or flourishing - is sufficient to cross it. Inclusion can provide the moral vision and capacity-based reasoning can provide clear and specific criteria for law and policy. Each corrects the deficiencies of the other – one can be lacking in enforceable rules, and the other can be lacking in a culture of restraint – and one can be ceremonial, while the other can be only addressing the most visible harms.

Both strategies are complicated by the fact of predation and ecological conflict. Nonviolence is not a philosophy that says there should be no death in nature, and animal rights are not always an easy solution to the problems of conservation of species, habitats and individuals. The human responsibility is highest where it is human intervention which has created the danger through breeding, pollution, confinement, habitat destruction, introduction of exotic species or climate change. Decisions should then, employ the least harmful effective method, consider alternatives and not look upon an animal's death as coming up to administratively unimportant.

Last, the comparison alters the significance of the distinctiveness of human beings. Humans have some special linguistic, technological, and political abilities, but this doesn't mean that they have unlimited rights. It expands responsibility as it means human institutions can cause suffering to happen over distance, time and species. So whether human are different is not a moral

question, but rather, what are they to do with that difference? Power is necessary to answer to vulnerable life if it is to be dharma and justice.

7. CONCLUSION

These Indian traditions analyzed in this article present a rich set of concepts to be tapped into when answering ecological crisis. Their core conviction is that an expanded awareness of life extends to animal welfare: everything in the cosmos is interconnected, manifestation is multiple, actions have moral implications and freedom is not possible without compassion. There is a larger order of which humanity is a part, as seen in the Vedas and Upanishads; self-discipline linked with nonviolence and welfare in Jain, Buddhist, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisheshika and Vedantic traditions; animals as helpers, witnesses, devotees, moral claims, and divine forms in the epics and Puranas.

A much needed critical vocabulary is provided by the western traditions. Rational hierarchy, dominion, mechanism, and indirect duty are all part of their history and explain the institutional use of animals, whereas the development of sentience, evolutionary continuity, rights, capabilities, relational responsibility and a critique of human exceptionalism are all traces of counter-traditions. Like Indian literature, animals can be allegorised in western literature and they can also render labour, captivity, grief and resistance visible.

The comparison thus does not lend itself to being used either to support romantic celebration or to condemn the civilization. The principle of sarva-bhuta-hita – the common welfare of all beings, spiritual kinship, and restraint – ahimsa, is most powerful when put into practice. Western theories are most effective when legal and philosophical recognition transforms the institutions – as opposed to merely being abstract. Ecologically responsible ethics should incorporate both accomplishments. They should not be treated simply as sacred symbols, or simply as property of humans, but as protagonists in their own worlds, and as victims and beneficiaries of suffering, flourishing, relations and environment, which give moral constraints to human power.

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