

# **SCHOOLS AND ANIMAL WELFARE**

**A SPEECH DELIVERED BY**

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Mr. Chairman, Honourable Invited Guest, CEO, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honour to be part of this programme to share my views with you on the subject: *Schools and Animal Welfare*.

In my attempt to dilate on the subject, I will look at:

- The concept of animal welfare.
- The role of schools.

Mr. Chairman, I will begin my speech by reflecting on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. This poem is an account of a sea voyage to distant places. On the way, the crew members were facing a lot of difficulties due to waves and tides, but all of a sudden a bird, called an Albatross, appeared to them so the problems immediately ceased. The bird, to them, was a good omen or good luck. The leader of the crew members did not have love for any creature at all, both great and small. Out of this mere hatred, thus with no apparent reason, he killed the Albatross and the problems started again. The members were very furious, so they symbolically hanged the Albatross around the neck of the leader, a sign of throwing the whole guilt on him. Mr. Chairman, to have an Albatross around one's neck means a piece of back luck that drags him/her down. The leader suffered a lot until miraculously God changed the appearance of the creatures, making them beautiful in the eyes of the leader. It was then that he had love for God's creation. His problems immediately vanished for the mere love that he had for God's creation. This gives us the theme of the poem as:

*All creatures,  
great or small,  
were created by God  
so we should have love for them,  
for he who loves God's creation will be loved by  
God  
for the same Hand that created humanity created  
the ant or the animal.*

Mr. Chairman, whenever I ponder over this poem I have a series of questions to ask: What is our concept of God's creation? What is our attitude towards God's creation, specifically animals?

### **The Concept of Animal Welfare**

The concept 'animal welfare' is synonymously used with 'animal right.' The two are used interchangeably. The exponents of animal welfare, however, believe that animals should be treated humanely. Humane treatment comprises proper housing, nutrition, disease prevention and treatment, responsible care, handling, and humane euthanasia or slaughter. They believe that animals can be used for human purposes, but that they should be treated so that discomfort is kept to a minimum.

The exponents of animal right, on the other hand, propose that animals should not be exploited. They believe that animals should not be used for food, clothing, entertainment, medical research, or product testing. They also believe that it is ethically, morally, and inherently wrong to use animals for human purposes under any condition. According to them, living animals should not be used for surgical operations and experiment where the structure and function of organs are studied. They further believe that animals should not be used in experiments in which diseases and various therapy methods are studied. These categories of people are mostly vegetarians.

In between the two extreme beliefs is the modern animal right movement, the founder being Peter Singer, an Oxford University-trained Australian philosopher and vegetarian. In his book, *Animal Liberation*, he condemned the use of animals produced for food and their use in research. The outcome of such movements was that laws were enacted to protect the animal. Some of such laws include:

- The first anti-cruelty law of 1828: "Every person who shall maliciously kill, maim, or wound any horse, ox, or other cattle, or torture such animal, whether belonging to himself or another, shall upon conviction, be adjudged guilty of a misdemeanor." (The first Anti-cruelty law passed by the New York legislature in 1828).

- An Act for the more effectual prevention of cruelty to animals - 1867 drafted by Henry Bergh. This act had ten sections and has served as the example for drafting of many succeeding anti-cruelty laws.
- Animal Transportation Act of 1906 to protect animals travelling long distances by rail. The law was passed to provide humane care and treatment of animals destined for slaughter.
- The Humane Slaughter Act of 1958 (amended in the 1970s) to handle animals humanely prior to and during slaughter.
- Laboratory Animal Welfare Act (AWA) to regulate animals meant for research.

The law even continues today.

Mr. Chairman, the modern animal welfare activist believes that:

- animals should be treated humanely and without cruelty. The activist is of the view that animals can be used in research as long as all measures are taken to ensure that the animals are cared for humanely. The activist believes that animals should only be used in research when no other alternatives exist to achieve the objectives of the research.

Three major research areas that animals are used include:

Research in biomedical and behavioural sciences.

Testing of products for their safety. Education where animals are used for demonstrations and dissection.

- a diet containing meat, milk, and eggs is appropriate. According to the federal government and the American Heart Association, there is no studies that can substantiate that a vegetarian diet is healthier than a diet that includes meat, milk, and eggs.

## **The Role of Schools**

Schools are the embodiment of knowledge. Anybody who passes through a school is assumed to have

gained knowledge. Knowledge, Mr. Chairman, is, however, departmentalized due to various disciplines such as Economics, Geography, History, Biology, etc. Some schools have areas of specialization. Such 'specialization has an impact on students in such schools. A particular school can play a major role through its students. It can also play a role through an association like the Society for the Welfare of Animals as we have it here. The role that the school plays is through its products or associations.

The members of this association therefore have an important role to play:

- They themselves must have love for God's creation.
  - They must propagate the idea of the welfare of animals.
1. The members must make it clear to their listeners that taking care of animals is a job of itself. For example, we have pet care workers with earnings and benefits; zoo animal caretakers; laboratory animal care workers; small animal breeders; animal Trainers; dog groomers; veterinarians; animal health technicians, etc.
  2. The members must approach friends from a very modest manner because the one to approach might already have his or her view about the concept of animal welfare or right.
  3. The members should first of all share the same sentiment about the animal welfare with their colleges before proposing forward what they believe can help protect animals.
  4. The members should not be aggressive in their bid to show case the importance of animal welfare.