2.1 MEANING OF THE TERM

The term ‘killing’ has comprehensive meaning. In the ordinary discourse, it refers to an act of causing destruction, such as killing money, killing lives, killing times etc. This is the wider meaning of the term. In the narrower sense, killing implies an act of causing destruction of lives only. Here in the present context, we shall use the word to denote an act done either by humans who put non-humans to death or by non-humans, which put another non-human or human to death.

But non-human animals cannot discriminate good and bad and their activities are not capable of being evaluated as moral. So, we need not trouble ourselves with the sort of activity performed by non-humans, and we may circumscribe our present discussion to human action, which puts non-humans to death.
It is true that we observe speciesism in respect of killing of non-humans. For the benefit of our species, killing of non-humans becomes human necessity. We always think that it is our right to kill non-humans, and this right for over centuries remains unchecked and unquestioned. In our day-to-day life, we never accord importance to pain of non-humans, nor do we make moral assessment of our treatment towards non-human species. In fact, we kill non-humans for the purpose of our self-defence. But the patent fact is that non-human animals killed for our self-preservation are remarkably smaller in quantity than animals killed for other purposes.

2.2 TYPES OF KILLING

We generally find variegated purposes behind killing of non-human animals, and we may list the varieties as follows:

(a) Killing of non-humans for self-defence,
(b) Killing of non-humans for food,
(c) Killing of non-humans as sport,
(d) Killing of non-humans for luxury,
(e) Killing of non-humans for experimentation, and

(f) Killing of non-humans for religious sacrifice.

Now, before we discuss the above varieties, it is to be said that killing of non-humans for religious pursuit is another important facet of this issue, which will be discussed in the religious perspective of this problem.

2.3 NON-HUMANS KILLED FOR SELF-DEFENCE

We kill non-human animals for self-defence and situation sustains our drive for self-defence. It is of course obligatory as well as sacred duty on our part to preserve our own being, and if for self-preservation killing of non-humans becomes unavoidable, it is not certainly a wrongful act. Our duty towards own life constrains us to protect it at any cost and animal ethics also cannot restrain us from killing of wild animals under such grave necessity. If we remain non-violent too, we cannot think it otherwise which could put our life at stake. For example, if a ferocious wild animal enters a public place, causes
destruction of lives at random, the situation fixes our responsibility to protect lives by all means and killing of this ferocious animal becomes an urgent necessity. Being non-violent, one cannot have harsh attitude towards non-human species, but at the same time he cannot dissociate himself from the moral responsibility for self-protection or protection of fellow humans. M.K. Gandhi, the giant social and political thinker of this country also approved killing of wild animals for self-protection while he preached non-violence.

2.4 OUR FOOD HABIT CONCERNS WITH KILLING OF NON-HUMANS

The most widespread form of killing of non-human animals is associated with our dietary chart. At the primitive level, killing of non-humans for food was a necessity and hunting was most dependable means of livelihood. Even today people have their weakness towards animal-flesh for its taste, and our most common feast or dietary chart includes it as delicious item. As Gruen observes:

In order to satisfy the human taste for flesh, over
five billion animals are slaughtered every year in the United States alone. Most chickens, pigs and calves raised for food never see the light of day. These animals are often so intensively confined that they are rarely able to turn around or spread a wing. .... An estimated 250 million wild animals are shot and killed each year by hunters in the United States. Over 650 different species of animals now threatened may be extinct by the turn of the century.¹

Killing of non-humans for food is a primitive practice. And it is a natural order that higher species would kill lower one for its purpose. For the primitive man, killing of non-human animals for gratifying hunger was an established right, and thinking in this line, our ancestors did not care for the protection of wild life. But today environmental ethics and animal ethics seek for the preservation of wild life and protection of animal rights. Of course, killing of lower species by higher
ones is an animal habit, and our ancestors had to adopt this animal habit for survival. But today situations have changed and killing of non-human animals for flesh becomes a luxury rather than a necessity. We have now many improved means of livelihood and we can have our balanced diet without animal flesh. Environmental ethics, which seeks to bar animal slaughter utterly, condemns the animal habit for the man of modern enlightenment. Some ethicists would insist that human beings should not participate in meat-eating, because they are only moral animals and they should not justify their food habit by following animal behaviour.

We may, in this context, say that to some extent, we can minimize the amount of pain of non-humans if we adopt changes in our food habit and exclude meat eating. But it would be a difficult step. In fact, we need changes in our treatment towards non-humans, because we have bias towards the conservation of a section of non-human animals disregarding the interest of others. Our society considers meat eating as part of our tradition and approves sophisticated methods of meat
production. Even some members of civilized society who favour meat-eating and rearing animals in factory firms think that there is no wrong in killing animals, because they are replaceable, and if it amounts to any loss at all, it can be compensated by bringing similar being into existence.  

With a view to reducing the amount of pain of non-humans, we may speak of developing the habit of vegetarian diet, which is sometimes suggested by many as an alternative. But practically, it is difficult to reach the goal, because human beings are evolved as omnivorous. For argument’s sake we may speak of making changes in the relationship between the eater and the eaten, but practically it remains a difficult job. As because our habit of eating fish is such a cognate issue which we never consider worthy for ethical discussion. At least we can hope that if we become sufficiently conscious of minimizing cruelty towards non-humans in different fields, if not readily, to some extent, changes in dietary chart could be thought of. Or if we consider the issue from the perspective of practical ethics, we have situational reference, which
considers morality as contextual. In practical ethics, we cannot define morality in absolute term. Therefore, killing of non-humans for food remains a matter of situational necessity.

2.5 KILLING OF NON-HUMANS AS SPORT

Another oldest variety of killing of non-humans is associated with entertainment or pleasure. In ancient times, hunting as mere sport was a justified royal art and symbol of heroic spirit. Ancient Indian kings happened to kill deer for pleasure and sometimes for their flesh, and killing of tiger was such a kingly art associated with name and fame of ancient Indian kings or members of royal families. And this practice was prevailed in British India also. Though the present Ecology Movements are making endeavours to develop awareness for the value of wild life, nevertheless killing of non-humans as mere sport is not abolished from our civilized society. For example, the brutal killing of bulls in bullfight still remains an object of public entertainment in civilized culture.
But if we consider seriously the value of non-human existence, we do not find any moral rationale in killing of non-humans for entertainment. This sort of killing of non-humans is not necessitated by the question of survival. We, in this sense, can justify an act of Eskimo who for survival is to kill non-human animals. But surely we cannot justify an act of mass killing of birds at Jatinga, N.C.Hill, which is the customary habit of Jayantia people. In fact, killing of non-humans as mere sport is a barbaric act wherefrom people derive sadistic pleasure. But if we claim ourselves as moral guides of the universe, we must impose moral restraints on our thoughts and deeds and we should not repeat barbaric or uncivilized practice in our civilized society. Killing of non-human animals cannot be a significant moral feature of human culture, far from adding anything to our culture; it develops bloodthirstiness or cruel attitude towards life.

2.6 KILLING OF NON-HUMANS FOR LUXURY

Killing of non-humans for luxury is certainly not associated with our primary need, though it becomes a common phenomenon of these days.
It is partly a product of our utilitarian assessment of valuable species. Though the Wild Life Protection Act 1972 imposes restraints on killing of rare species, but killing of valuable species and exporting the various parts of animal-body still remain a great threat to the well being of wild life. Today some valuable parts of wild animals, like tusks of elephants, horns of rhino etc., have utility for those who happen to spend more unhesitatingly and consider the worth of those innocent lives as luxury items for drawing room.

If we make keen observation of human attitude of using non-human animals as object of luxury, it can be said that we are seen as more cruel in respect of killing of non-humans than the primitive men. Killing or use of non-human animals for luxury is closely associated with human civilization in which secondary interests of human beings override the primary right of survival of non-humans. Therefore, if we reckon ourselves to be ethical guides of universe, we should rethink our cruel attitude towards non-humans, and whether human civilization makes room for the interest of non-humans remains an important problem.
2.7 EXPERIMENTATION INVOLVES KILLING OF NON-HUMANS

In recent days, killing of non-humans has become increasingly popular in experimentation, which are directed towards the prevention of human suffering. The most common animals used for this purpose are--frogs, rats, mice, guinea pigs, rabbits, chickens, pigeons, dogs, cats, sheeps, goats, and so on. These animals are used mainly

.....for research in panmedical sciences (including medicine, dentistry, pharmacology, Veterinary medicine, and the basic biological disciplines); for education and training in these sciences, including the development of surgical skill; for the manufacture of vaccines, toxoides, antiserums, anti-toxins, and anti-venins; for testing and standardization of drugs, biological, and food additives; and for diagnosis of disease.
Today all advances in medical sciences are made possible, because they are more or less dependent on animal experimentations. We cannot deny the role of animal extracts\textsuperscript{10}, which are of great use in many diseases. Today, behind any successful surgery, there is a long history of animal experimentation, which led to increase our normal survival rates. The only rationale associated with animal experimentation is that it relieves more suffering than it procures, that is, to relieve global suffering; killing of non-humans for experimentation is not bad. But it is worth noticing a fact that in some experiments we inflict pain on non-human animals, which are not necessary to lessen the amount of suffering. For example, for testing many shampoos and cosmetics, dripping concentrated solution of them into the eyes of rabbit or for testing food additives including its artificial colouring and preservatives, which cause death of a considerable percentage of sample animals are not necessary to reduce the amount of pain in this world\textsuperscript{11}. 
2.8 ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION: ITS PRACTICAL AND MORAL STAND

We can simply say here that though for own advantage we overlook pain of non-humans, but the truth is that experiments always cause pain to them. And taking this fact into account, an organized opposition against animal experimentation was developed from the middle of 19\textsuperscript{th} century in England and America, which resulted in formation of some antivivisection societies.\textsuperscript{12} But whatever may be the success or failure of such organizations, today we cannot hold a radical view in rejecting all sorts of experimentations. Speaking from moral standpoint, we can at best stop experiments on non-human animals for our secondary purpose but we cannot try to bar animal experimentation for medical advances, which is associated with our survival. But in inflicting pain on non-human animals for medical purpose, we should fix limit, and we should avoid useless and unnecessary experiments. We should morally acknowledge our debts to non-humans that had there not been non-humans for experiments, there would not have been such remarkable progress in medical science, and our normal survival rates would have
been tremendously affected. Of course, we do not say anything as to what extent such acknowledgement would reduce the amount of cruelty towards non-humans, still we may hope for changes in our attitudes towards non-humans used for experimentation. As Peter Singer says:

...if a single experiment could cure a major disease, that experiment would be justifiable. But in actual life the benefits are always much, much more remote, and more often than not they are non-existent... an experiment cannot be justifiable unless the experiment is so important that the use of a retarded human being would also be justifiable.¹³

But it should be mentioned here that some might think that these lines suffice to say in favour of experimentation of mentally retarded humans. But it is a sheer misconception. In fact, Singer has never articulated such a thought. His contention is that if we take one human
being and one non-human animal that have same capacity to experience their situations, it is sheer immoral to use the non-human one for experimentation on the simple plea that it belongs to the class of non-humans.

Thus Peter Singer tries to make an impartial assessment in weighing pain felt by both humans and non-humans, and thereby comes out of speciesist bias in making an ethical assertion. To substantiate his stand, we may again refer to his own comment:

...when I make an ethical judgment I must go beyond a personal or sectional point of view and take into account the interests of all those affected.... This provides us with a basic principle of equality: the principle of equal consideration of interests.¹⁴
2.9 OUR ANTHROPOCENTRIC BIAS AND ITS CAUSES

It is worthwhile to say that behind the entire scene of killing of non-humans, we find a deep-rooted anthropocentric bias. Speciesism is another name of anthropocentrism. Our culture and civilization are all products of anthropocentrism. We generally hold a rigid conservationist or speciesist attitude in making culture and civilization exclusively for human beings, where non-human species have no entry. We, in our way of living, assign value to different species according to our preference and necessity or their utility to human beings, and we usually think that nothing equals the worth of human beings. We think that non-human animals fall well below humans in hierarchy as they cannot think and reason or judge and interpret situation or they cannot acquire language at sufficient level to take part in culture. The famous saying of Protagoras “Man is the measure of all things” places man at the top of hierarchy as the most valuable and precious creation.

The reason why the modern enlightenment is guided by anthropocentric bias or speciesist attitude or why it has not been sensitive to the rights of non-humans is more or less associated with Cartesian legacy\(^{15}\) and
the Christian belief. We too, like the Cartesians, in our all walks of life think that non-human animals are mindless, living-matter, which feel nothing, will nothing, think nothing, and hence devoid of any moral value. We, following this tradition, accord priority to the interests of human being as autonomous, self-conscious being who are only morally considerable. The Christian belief, which heightens the position of human beings, grants exclusive ownership of soul to them, and thereby makes an obvious difference between human beings and non-human species. According to the Christian belief, God created man out of His own image and after having created the non-human entities, God put them under the dominion of human beings for the fulfillment of human purpose. We may, in this context, refer to following verses of Genesis showing anthropocentric bias:

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.¹⁶
And God blessed them, and God said unto them,
Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,
and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of
the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every
living thing that moveth upon the earth.\(^{17}\)

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto
them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the
earth.\(^{18}\)

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be
upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl
of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and
upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are
they delivered.\(^{19}\)

Thus in Christianity, nature has no intrinsic value. It has only
instrumental value in relation to human beings. And apparently it makes
sense to say that as human beings are custodians, they could kill non-humans for their purpose.

Islam also develops anthropocentric bias in respect of treating non-human animals. Let us consider following verses from Qur’ān:

And the cattle, He has created them for you. You have in them warm clothing and (other) advantages, and of them you eat.\(^\text{20}\)

And therein is beauty for you, when you drive them back (home) and when you send them out (to pasture).\(^\text{21}\)

And they carry your heavy loads to regions which you could not reach but with distress to yourselves.\(^\text{22}\)
And (He made) horses and mules and asses that you might ride upon them as an ornament.  \(^{23}\)

Besides the Christian-Islamic-Cartesian tradition, classical humanistic ethics considers humans to be masters having the environment at their disposal. It looks upon humans as only moral beings and assumes that only humans count morally. Human beings have intrinsic worth due to rationality possessed by them. Therefore, the interests of humans should take priority over other species.

It is by dint of rationality, we make changes in our environment, take environment as the playground of human activities, frame environmental policies on the basis how they effect human benefits, and finally try to justify our behaviour and approach towards non-human species. Actually classical humanistic ethics whether or not it is directed towards environment is out and out anthropocentric, because ‘human being’ is its chief concern. Therefore some utilitarians who seek for the maximization of human happiness can be classed as anthropocentric.
But Jeremy Bentham cannot be construed as anthropocentric; he appears to speak for animal right when he writes:

The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withheld from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognised that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin…are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable
animal, than an infant of a day or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose they were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they reason? nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?  

2.10 ECOCENTRIC ATTITUDE AS A GRAVE NECESSITY

If we consider human beings to be moral guides of universe, we are morally obligated to protect human civilization, and hence we are all anthropcentrics. But to say that human beings are masters and entire environment is at their disposal is an extravagant claim. Today ecology movement considers man to be part of nature, makes it obligatory on the part of humans to protect wild life, not to exploit the variety of nature or its complex web of relations for the benefit of humans alone. As Peter Singer says:

...we are not the only species on this planet and should not value everything by its usefulness to human beings...
Therefore, in view of present ecological crisis, we need an ecocentric attitude. And like Rolston\textsuperscript{26}, we should ascribe intrinsic value to all life and nature or ecosystem as a whole. And in this regard, it would be quite relevant to mention some lines of S.K.Chahal from his book “Environment and The Moral Life” in which he tries to explicate Sikh religious perspectives:

Since the earth is created by God, everything has a right to live, exist and flourish, we are not within our rights to destroy any species for neither have we created it nor do we have a right to make it extinct. We may be permitted to use the natural resources but we must remember that these resources are not merely for the existent generations but for the future too…. We have to not merely love and identify with nature and the existent generations but also the generations to
2.11 KILLING OF NON-HUMANS: A RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

On some festive occasions sacrifice of animals is a popular religious phenomenon. In the earliest days, the main motive behind the sacrifice was to propitiate God to overcome awful moments of life, unknown natural calamities, and unknown distress or sometimes for material prosperity including name and fame. But this right to sacrifice was not open to all in ancient days. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa restricted this right to three upper castes. In Hinduism meat eating is traditionally sanctioned as a part of sacrificial process and the Laws of Manu approves meat eating through rituals sacrifice. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa carries many rituals of animal sacrifice and one such ritual is about Horse sacrifice or Aśvamedha Yajña, which was meant for the Kṣtriya and performed by priests on behalf of kings. As regards the
purpose of Horse sacrifice, it is said that-

…the Maharaja had demonstrated his strength and that of his kingdom if the ceremony was completed, the completion proved his point and was at the same time, a celebration of that same superiority.\textsuperscript{30}

The tradition of animal sacrifice is also found in Islām during pilgrimage at Makkah (Mecca), and for this purpose camels are used. The main purpose of such sacrifice is to express gratitude to Allāh, for all those He grants to humans. The implied meaning of sacrifice is submission towards Allāh, not offering blood and flesh of animals to Him. Thus Qur’ān says:

Not their flesh, nor their blood, reaches Allāh, but to Him is acceptable observance of duty on your part. Thus has He made them subservient to you,
that you may magnify Allāh for guiding you a right. And give good news to those who do good (to others). 31

2.12 RELIGIOUS STAND AGAINST ANIMAL SACRIFICE

It is worthy to be pointed out that both the Buddhists and the Jainas lobbied against any form of animal sacrifice and mainly against Hindu tradition of animal sacrifice. Both Buddhism and Jainism oppose killing of animals for making offering to God as it directly violates the fundamental ethical principle of non-violence. Jainism urges upon the importance of non-violence on the part of its followers, advises them to be tolerant towards other non-humans even if the latter cause harm to humans. 32 Buddhism too holds a rigid attitude towards animal sacrifice, expects its followers to be compassionate and kind to all living creatures 33, not to slay any living being for any reason or in sacramental way.

Perhaps, behind the condemnation of animal sacrifice, a purpose was
directed towards conservation of animal life associated with agriculture, and realizing the impact of agriculture on society at large, Yajñavalka sometimes argued against the killing and eating of animal flesh, particularly cows and bulls. However, contrasted with past, today animals killed in name of religion are relatively smaller in quantity and it might be due to the impact of non-violence practised by Jainism, Buddhism and the latter Hinduism. But it is true that though not in its full vigour, as in past, animal sacrifice is still prevailed in our culture. Goat sacrifice, for example, continues to be practiced in our society as a customary religious phenomenon.

2.13 NEED OF EXPANDED NON-VIOLENT ETHICS

Animal sacrifice, in whatever form it may be, has no moral justification. Such a practice has its root in false belief which has no visible benefits as in the case of animal experimentation, and it is no other than an act of violence in name of religion. In fact, religion in essence, never encourages cruelty and violence towards other and in this sense such a practice should be abolished properly. Therefore, to
combat present environmental crisis and destruction of wild life effectively, we need “a constructive theology of reverence of life”.  

We must imbibe the moral lesson that life is essentially sacred which needs protection and we must have compassion for all being, because all life is fundamentally one. Thus we must have an expanded non-violent ethics, which concerns with the sanctity of nature. The conservationist John Muir also shares this stand when he writes:

...bears are made of the same dust as we, and breathe the same winds and drink of the same waters. A bear’s days are warmed by the same sun, his dwellings are over-domed by the same blue sky, and his life turns and ebbs with heart-pulsings like ours...

Now, before we conclude the present issue, we must say that now a days animal welfarists and animal rightists go hand in hand in protecting animal rights and many organizations like Vegetarian
Society, The Animal Liberation Front, Northern Animal Liberation League etc. came into being. Some radical animal rightists speak of equal treatment to non-human animals. Peter Singer, for example is a radicalist, who opines that both humans and non-humans should be treated as per as they have interests which deserve equal consideration.

But in practice, we seldom treat interests of both humans and non-humans equal. Normally the interest of a gravely deformed infant is not treated on a par with the interest of a non-human one. However, to make change in our behaviour and response towards non-animals, we should not confine morality to our species alone, we should, on the contrary, apply the principle of equality beyond our species. And to do so, we must bear in mind that life has sanctity. Our thoughts and deeds should be ethical. We should be morally obligated to revere intrinsic worth of life whether it is human or non-human. As Albert Schweitzer writes:

A man is really ethical only when he obeys the
constraint laid on him to help all life which he is
able to succour, and when he goes out of his way
to avoid injuring anything living.... To him life as
such is sacred. He shatters no ice crystal that
sparkles in the sun, tears no leap from its tree,
breaks off no flower, and is careful not to crush
any insect as he walks. 39
REFERENCES


4. cf. Singer, Peter, Practical Ethics, op.cit. Pp.100-105

5. cf. Ibid. P.55

6. cf. Personal Communication With Dr. Dubey.IFS., Divisional forest Officer, Forest resources survey Div., Halflong, Assam, during 1986-88.

(His idea about ‘Jatinga Bird Mystery’ which has attracted the global interest of ornithologists and environmentalists is that during the months August-October every year on rainy days, when the wind is blowing from southwest direction and the weather is foggy, the birds of various sorts and habits are seen to be attracted towards light and congregate around light source. And it has become a customary
habit of Joyantia people to catch birds using fire as bait, and kill them as a part of their sport and sometimes for their tastes.)


9. Ibid. P-960

10. cf. Ibid. P-962

11. cf. Singer Peter, Practical Ethics, op. cit., p-52


14. Singer, Peter, Practical Ethics, op.cit. P.19


16. cf. The Bible, Genesis I-27

17. Ibid., Genesis I-28.

18. Ibid., Genesis IX-1.


21. Ibid., chap-16, verse 6, p.519.

22. Ibid, chap-16, verse 7, p.520.

23. Ibid., chap-16, verse 8, p.520.


26. cf., Piet, John, H and Prasad Ayodhya (eds), Applied Ethics, op. cit., p.93


30. Drury, Naama, *The Sacrificial Ritual In the Satapatha Brähman*, op. cit. p. 57


35. Chapple, Christopher, Key, *Non-Violence to Animals, Earth and Self in Asian Traditions*, op. cit. p. 112


38. cf., Singer, Peter, *Practical Ethics*, op. cit. pp.18-19