

Intrinsic Value of Animals against Anthropocentrism: An Ecocritical Perspective of Lawrence Anthony's *Babylon's Ark*

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The paper entitled 'Intrinsic Value of Animals against Anthropocentrism: An Ecocritical Perspective of Lawrence Anthony's *Babylon's Ark* analyses the book from an ecological point of view. It proposes to analyse man-animal conflict that arises due to anthropocentrism. The term eco-criticism was first coined by William Rueckert in his essay, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", which states that "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (Glotfelty xx).

It is believed that only human beings have values and other living beings do not have values. It is because only humans have goals, only humans have interests. It may be partially true or completely. As a matter of fact, life and nature have not only values but also evince an interest that is to live per ecological rules. Each human and non-human have their own intrinsic value. Several views on the meaning of intrinsic value can be distinguished. The intrinsic value of an animal states that the value it owns is its own right, this concept is completely opposite to instrumental value which degrades its value to other animals including human beings.

Tom Regan is the oldest critic to state intrinsic value in environmental ethics. It is the central concept in contemporary environmental ethics. The perception of intrinsic value can be viewed as an intellectual device in the struggle against anthropocentrism. The prominence on intrinsic value results from the strengthening of the way animals are being used and instrumentalised, especially during the last decades. Most activists of the intrinsic value of animals will use it as the abstract opposite to instrumental value that is the economic value an animal has its usefulness for humans.

There are three forms of respect of the intrinsic value of animals. They are attitudinal respect, formal respect and deontological respect. The attitudinal respect, for the intrinsic value of natural things refers to an attitude of deference and awe, but is not primarily concerned with interests, rights or duties. Rather every being has its own interior, its self, its mystery, its numinous aspect, and to deprive any beings of this sacred quality is to disrupt the total order of the universe. The second formal respect, on the other hand, implies at least some concern with interests of animals and will grant animals certain basic rights.

Deontological respect focuses on certain qualities fundamentally present in animals such as the telos of the animal, the basic needs of animals. It is on these qualities that rights of animals are based and founded on these qualities that animals deserve our attention and care.

In our society, the term cruelty is becoming more powerful as days goes on, as it is proven in the book *Babylon's Ark* by Anthony. He was born in 1950 in Johannesburg. He is considered as wildlife guru in South Africa. He is an international conservationist, environmentalist, explorer and popular author. The cruelty towards the animals in the Baghdad Zoo is unexplainable. The book is analysed using the theory of intrinsic value formed by Tom Regan. It states three forms of respect towards animals by people.

Anthony depicted the pitiable condition of the Baghdad Zoo animals to the society through his writings. He portrayed how the animals suffered in the hands of looters, the black-market dealers and even the common people. These all are global issues which must be discussed. Animal suffering takes place not only in Baghdad Zoo but all over the world. Zoo animals have been diseased, are not provided with proper veterinary care and even at times are starved to death. Animals in the zoo have even died after intaking the plastic waste thrown into their coops by the public. Sometimes animals are tortured through the hands of caretakers also.

When Anthony saw the television footage, he was reminded of Kosovo and Afghanistan war and the sufferings of animals during the wartime. During Afghanistan war, the reporters gathered to collect stories about the Taliban's defeat and oppression of the public. The story of Marjan, the lion fascinated many

Americans in understanding the story of Afghanistan. The lion was gifted by Germany to Afghanistan in the late 60s, when Kabul Zoo was under the control of Prince Nader. When the war broke out, it was an assault on Marjan and the other animals in the zoo. The animals which did not die of starvation ended up their lives in the hands of sadistic mujahideens.

The insensibility of man is not only dangerous to himself but also to the other beings. A mujahedeen fighter who decided to prove his bravery, jumped into the lion's den to tease the animal. Marjan promptly ate him. The mujahedeen who survived the battle with the Soviet Red Army was unable to survive the battle with the lion Marjan. As a revenge, the man's angry brother threw a hand grenade into the enclosure. Marjan mistook it for food and snatched the grenade. It burst out and he lost one eye and 95 percent of its sight in the other.

All the animals at the Kabul zoo were regularly tortured by soldiers, who beat them with sticks and assaulted them with rocks and stones. Hence, Anthony did not want the Baghdad Zoo animals to face the same catastrophe as the Kabul Zoo animals. He decided to mount an international effort to rescue the zoo animals.

Anthony did not know anything about Iraq war. But still he wanted to save the surviving animals in the Baghdad zoo. He states about the wretched situation of animals as, "Unable to flee or defend or feed themselves, they either were slaughtered wholesale in the initial assaults or died agonizingly from thirst and hunger later, locked and desperate in their cages. Or worse, they were callously shot by blood-crazed soldiers just for the hell of it" (BA 15).

The attitudinal respect comes to a person can be attributed to the respect and wonder towards the animals. They consider it is not their duty or responsibility to take care of the animals. Even though they did not consider it as their responsibility, humanity takes up the role. Being human, knowing the value of an individual life, whether it may be humans or animals, it should be treasured. In a similar way, the public of Baghdad, American soldiers and even the journalists paved way for the welfare of the animals. Whenever Anthony thanked Szydluk or the American soldiers for their role in supporting the zoo animals, their reply would be "because of the animals" (BA107). They paved respect for the animals and believed they should provide the animals with their basic rights.

A group of journalists arrived at the zoo to visit the meagre condition of zoo animals. They took several photo clicks of the skinny animals in the zoo and they carried the wrecked and wretched zoo animals all over the world through pictures, "picture spreads of bone-thin animals, smiling Iraqis, and me wearing a Thula Thula baseball cap" (BA 57). This shows the role of media in uplifting the zoo animals. After the news, so many workers came forward to help them. Conservationists too volunteered after the spread of news in the newspaper.

The timely help rendered by common people, American soldiers and higher officials helped Anthony to save the remaining surviving animals in the zoo. The common people's contribution would enlighten the society. This shows human sympathy and caring by inspiring the moral development of individuals to form a concerned, responsible society.

The second aspect of criticism is formal respect, which prompts some basic rights to the animals. There have always been several organisations voicing out their anger towards animal cruelty. In *Babylon's Ark*, various organisations came forward to rescue the surviving animals in the Baghdad Zoo. The first one was Stephan Bogner from Wild Aid Organisation. Later members from IFAW came forward to guard the zoo; some of them were logistics experts like Maritte Hopley and Amed Khan, Jason Thrupp a veterinarian from New Zealand, Jackson Zee, a zoologist who manages IFAW's Moon Bear Sanctuary near Hong Kong and Ashraf Kunhunnu, a wildlife veterinarian from India.

Anthony wanted to connect the Baghdad zoo with the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, who could work closely with the Iraqi administration. AZA is the one of the most respected zoos in the world. They provide international standards and support them in transforming the zoos into habitats rather than caged environments.

In accordance with Tom Regan's point of view, "Creatures with inherent value must be treated as ends in themselves, not merely as means to an end" (Vaughn, 562). The third form of respect is deontological respect, which focuses on the issue of interpreting how animals should be morally treated compared to human beings, and how much of a moral concern we owe them. Anthony was in practice of protecting animal species and their habitats. His goal was to safeguard nature which would be around for future generations as well. He wanted to awaken people to the well-being and importance of animals.

When Anthony reached Baghdad, the repeated question asked to him everywhere was, "You sure you gonna take charge of these animals?" (BA 24). There he met Husham Hussan, the deputy director of Baghdad Zoo. When Anthony explained about his mission and showed the medicines which he had bought for animals,

Husham become emotional and grabbed Anthony's hand and wept. He felt pleased as someone had come forward to help the zoo animals. This proves his love towards the zoo inhabitants.

The zoo keeper's contribution played the major role, without whom Anthony could not have succeeded. They did not mind about the heat that soared to one hundred degree Fahrenheit. They used only what they had; muscle, courage, and a bucket; with these things, they feed the remaining creatures at the zoo. Everybody worried about the condition of Baghdad zoo animals but nobody came forward to help the surviving ones in the zoo. "Reality was starkly different: a handful of us armed with a leaky pipe and a rusty bucket was all that stood between life and death for some of the planet's most magnificent creatures" (BA 34).

Anthony did not only talk about the animal looting but also about the looters who looted during the wartime even rampaged the household appliances. But no soldiers took action against them. This shows the future generation's responsibility toward the nation. "Images of the wild rampage were beamed across the world. For those sitting in comfortable living rooms it was a cautionary glimpse into the darkness sprung tight beneath the veneer of human restraint" (BA 66).

According to intrinsic value theory on animals, the three forms of respect showed by various people and their dedication towards the welfare of the Baghdad Zoo animals should be appreciated. Anthony learned a hard lesson in the warzone. It is the responsibility of each one of them to restore nature in its proper place. The governments, corporations and organisations may provide funds, but it is the duty of individuals to implement it. The looters were not looting from the neighbours, they were looting their own planet.

In today's strictly well-structured world, laws do not only tell what one cannot do but it also tells what one can do. Thus, Lawrence Anthony proved himself what he could do. The Baghdad Zoo is a sombre reminder of the dangers one encountered every moment of then lives. Each man's survival depends on a change in one's attitudes, no longer man can exploit voraciously the earth for his own purposes, but needs to learn to value the limited resources and respect his responsibility to safe guard and preserve the remaining resources for the future generations. This includes recognition of the fact that we are just one of the species living on this planet, and the need to respect other living beings and nature in general. Never has this need for harmony and acceptance been more crucial than today.

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