

**REPRESENTATION OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME AND  
STRUGGLE FOR ECO-JUSTICE IN  
ANIMAL'S PEOPLE BY SINHA: AN  
ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract**

This research paper aims to describe environmental crime as the most significant apprehension of ecocriticism. The study explores the influences of environmental crime on nature and inhabitants who suffered just because of the scientific experiments done by outsiders. The research also brings into focus the continuous so struggle of indigenous people for eco-justice against this eco crime, which is analyzed through an eco-critical lens. Laura Westra introduced the term 'Green Politics' to illustrate how developing countries are ecologically imperialized by developed countries. Indra Sinha, in his novel *Animal's People*, represents the unwanted changes in society that make people hollow and helpless. The study focuses on the ecological violence in India by outsiders and the endless efforts of Indian people to question environmental justice. The research is a contribution to the field of Ecocriticism which points out environmental degradation and its impacts on the lives of human beings resulting from Industrialization.

**Keywords:** Eco-crime, Eco-criticism, Environmental Justice, Environmental Rights, Genocide, Green Politics

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Ecocritical studies' main area of interest is environmental discourse. The word "environmental crime" is "a problematic one that suggests conflicting connotations to lawmakers and environmental justice activists" (White, 2009). It is advised to pursue deliberate forms of exploitation, which cover a wide variety of offences from ecocide to pollution (including massive ecological damage). If

you think What is ecocriticism, exactly? via Cheryl Glotfelty (1996). People who "inspire people to think critically about the relationship between humans and nature, the ethical and aesthetic challenges caused by the environmental crisis, and how language and literature reflect values with serious environmental ramifications" are called "eco-critics" (Glotfelty, 1996, p. 1). For the foreseeable future, environmental literature will probably still be produced in order to spread knowledge about ecological problems and garner support for potential remedies. As time passes on, eco-criticism is becoming significant because of its agenda of 'Green Politics'. The established countries in this world consider the environment as a less important issue because environmental preservation does not support capitalistic ideals. In simple words, if industrialization follows strict rules to save ecology, then capitalism will be affected badly. So that's why Environmental Conservation is not supported by capitalism. Writers, when feeling uncomfortable with the undesirable changes in their social setups, especially by others, create characters with the same unrest, and so is done by Indra Sinha. So eco-criticism is an essential step to bring awareness to the complications of the environment confronted by the world today, but it will merely graft if more and more societies get aware of it. The only way to modify this stance is to edify people

Sinha (born in 1950 in India) is a British writer of Indian and English descent. His most recent novel, *Animal's People* was shortlisted for the 2007 Man Booker Prize and winner of the 2008 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Europe and South Asia. The title *Animal's People* presents attention-grabbing intuition into the novel, as it delivers us an outlook of the conducts of living of the individuals residing in Khaufpur by which their physical and mental conditions are explained. The narrator of the novel is an orphan who was born a few days before the night of disaster that is 'Bhopal Gas Tragedy'. Due to this catastrophe, Animal's spine got so twisted that he has to walk on all his fours. The story is narrated in a fictional town named Khaufpur which means 'village of terror'. It centers around Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984) and its disastrous aftereffects on the survivors. The story is told from the perspective of a 19-years old khaufpuri boy who was disfigured 'that night' of the apocalypse. The novel focuses on the dehumanization and callousness of Western capitalism. In the story, the narrator tells that when he was a child, an American company did an experiment in his area's factory which was unsuccessful due to gas leakage. This huge blast destroyed the whole scenario of town. Due to this blast, so many people in his town died and the remaining survivors got physically and mentally disabled. Still, after so many years, their atmosphere is contaminated with that poisonous gas. So Animal and his people raised their voice for environmental justice. But the American company, which is responsible for this loss, is still refusing to face the court or to decontaminate their factory which is still continuing to make people sick with the chemicals that seep into their land and water. The consequences of this disaster have not only been observed suspiciously on the land of the poor

ones but have also been enlarged by a devious deferment of justice that has permitted numerous kinds of malpractice, illicit ferocity, and disdain pronounced by an Indian critic Bidwai in the epigraph to rankle mostly unpunished. In *Animals People*,

Sinha examines how the book illuminates ecocrime, tragedy, and injustice committed against those who are left behind after a natural calamity.

Nixon notes that Animal positions himself at "an angle to Khaufpur's environmental justice movement," which emphasises how Animal's skepticism of legal treatises reflects "picaresque" narrative techniques for illustrating the "crimes that society's overlords commit and from which they are structurally exonerated" (Nixon, 2009, p. 452–53). The novel places the reader in the same institution of production and consumption that Bhopal, "the real face of globalisation," concentrates on, calling for a similarly beneficial modification of global edifices to be erected against such criminalities despite its emphasis on extremely localised fears (Zavestoski, 2009, p. 384). According to Sinha in an interview, the setting of *Animal's People* "might have been set in an area where chemical-based companies have wreaked havoc on people's lives." (Nixon, 2009, p. 446; cf. Sinha, 2007, p. 296).

The massacre of that night caused genocide that killed people at a huge level and destroyed the lives of people of a specific area. Above all of this, the second big unjust is that sufferers' quest for environmental rights is not appreciated. In the novel, Zafar raises the point of eco justice and says if eco-justice is unbiased action irrespective of color, race and national origin then is Eco crime still prevailing?. Rather green politics is being practiced by which capitalism pretends to be eco-friendly than in reality.

Among the societies of colored people, such sort of effort centers on the ecological discrepancy that raised the People of Color ecological Movement. This movement encompassed lots of societies, including African Americans, local Americans, Latinos, Asian Pacific American people, and a variety of settler crowds. This movement is unconventional in its unique place and is common, in many ways, with that of the Anti-Toxic Movement. The People of Color Environmental struggle has laid much stress on its objectives and social establishments to focus ecological apprehensions. There are two basic criminal aspects of eco-footprint crime: direct and indirect. The direct aspects of eco-footprint crime affect the health and the life of the local/indigenous communities. While indirect aspect contains detrimental effects on the community's habitats, the water, and land upon which they depended for generations for their survival. These indirect aspects of eco-footprints crime likewise involve the impression of provision for suppression of protests by the susceptible populations. For illustration, the direct effects of western eco-footprint crime do not product in direct physical criminalities but originate indirect troubles in the form of harm to

the local environment and public health of native inhabitants. These indirect tribulations make them upset more subtly; as by illegal business practices, facilitating racism, and appealing in endorsing industrial accomplishments through silencing the complaints against human rights violations. These eco-footprints harms are typically imposed by Northern corporate organizations on vulnerable populations in the South, where the ruling powers for protecting human beings are not fully entrenched. It is because of the insatiability of the impoverished governments for the economic remunerations brought by these organizations. So it is the systematic manipulation of those downtrodden who themselves are not in a defensive position against these crimes that personify the criminality of tribulations imposed.

Many of the philosophers, thinkers, artists, ecologists, and scientists have exposed pronounced concern for promoting the care of the ecological balance. Though man has moved to the topmost of economic progress the significance of ecological stability cannot be overlooked. Literary writers, poets, novelists, and nature lovers, in their literary works, have also offered the same apprehension for the environment. Literature of any culture highlights respect for natural and ecological importance.

In the twentieth century, the two most significant books were written that are ecologically significant: The first one is Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, concentrating on the threatening ecological dreadful conditions, and the second one is *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson paying attention to the degradation of the atmosphere caused by the use of chemical pesticides for wildlife inhabited on land and water.

Bertram's *Travels Through the Carolina's Georgia, and Florida* (1791); and afterward Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) was the classic of this stated genre as the successor of William Bertram's works. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Thoreau and other eco-critical writers were already writing on the shreds of evidence that pay attention to the extortions to climate by industrialization. Later in the same century, rapid extension of nature's manipulation by industrialization caused the emergence of the 'environmental movement'.

Lawrence in "*Sons and Lovers*" (1913) writes, "The Bottom; The Bottom, succeeded to 'Hell Row': Hell Row was a block of thatched bulging cottages that stood by the brook ran under alder trees, scarcely soiled by these small mines, whose coal was drawn to the surface by donkeys podded wearily in a circle round a gin" (Lawrence, 1913, p.7). Giulia Pissarello in her article "Industrialism as 'tragedy of ugliness': D.H. Lawrence's ecological consciousness" praises Lawrence's condemnation for mechanization and exploitation of nature. This article appreciates the sensible anticipation of ecological problems by Lawrence. Raja Rao in *Kanthapura* (1938) portrays the village culture and environment of

South India dexterously. Mountains are known by names and are respected as humans. He shows an unusual love and dedication for nature and commendably shows the man-nature relationship with true spirit and soul in the novel. In Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), the tannery assaults the villagers' lives with an explicit noise, and this noise is termed by Rukmani as callous or 'Clamor' (Markandaya 31). This noise caused by tannery is cited rarely in the novel but it mainly disturbs the environment.

Zolfagharkhani and Shadpour state that in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1959) the notion of colonization and eco-critical perspective are collectively discussed in the African context. This novel presents the situation before colonization when the society was in a sturdy bond with nature and on the incursion of the colonizer was trying to preserve nature. Achebe tried to draw attention towards the revitalization of African culture. In African culture, nature consists of supreme power which confines human beings from being unfair and immoral. Being eco-friendly is the vital feature that retains African people for being motivated against exploitation and colonization.

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) offers an atmosphere that is the victim of synthetic pesticides with significant emphasis on DDT. Carson highlighted that when these pesticides spread over the climate then they not only kill pests but they threaten the inhabitants of the water, air, and land. Though Carson's conclusions are not new before the scientific invention she was the first to get it before the general public and make them aware of its consequences across the board.

Kamila Shamsie (2007) analyses Sinha's labour of love and calls *Animal's People* a "cynical and romantic, profane and philosophical" novel. She goes on to describe the narrator's personal life, where it seems that the "Kampani's" major crime had more of an effect on the suffering of his town than it did on his appearance, making him unattractive to women, and the political activist community has persisted in their pursuit of justice even 20 years after the crime took place. "At its best, Sinha's language is a razor sparkling in the moonlight," she says of his writing. And the book is a profoundly human piece despite its suffering. *Animal's People* portrays a grim society flecked with moments of joy and craziness through a combination of vulgarity, unvarnished honesty, and caustic humour.

Richard Marcus (2007) first notices damages made by the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal and about the chemicals released in the environment causing shocking damages to human health. As he claims, what is leftover unidentified to this day is the full degree of the lasting harm to the town's environment.

Marcus criticizes the theory by the officials at Union Carbide about hopping for a solution of criminality by refusing to follow the orders of the court in India. They

not only caused the physical and mental distress of people but deep despair and loss of hope are seen in the characters of the novel. As a whole, Marcus describes the scenario by saying that *Animal's People* is a wonderful manuscript about a terrible set of environments that might alter the way of looking at shots of disaster.

Murrough O'Brien (2008) comments on *Animal's People*, Khaufpur, a fictional Indian city, is plagued with unpleasant recollections. Animal's persuasiveness as he evolves from a rude beggar to a person is astounding. Unfortunately, everything depends on the presentation. It's tedious to read because of the forced frenzied energy, confused patois, and heavy-handed smut. Animal's People is uplifting even at its ugliest; it is scathingly funny and genuinely wonderful.

Indra Sinha's bawdy novel, *Animal's People* (2007), principally deals with the tragic impacts of Bhopal Gas Tragedy and methodical injustice that leads to eco-crime. The novel is about reacting to eco-crime by legal subjectivity. *Animal's people* are also perceived as crime-fiction which is a catastrophe and the characters of the novel are consistently busy in retaliation for this calamity but end in legal-democratic failure. The novel has also focused on the interdisciplinary exchange between green-criminology and post-colonial eco-criticism. Concerning Bhopal, Sinha sustains the existence of interregional eco-crime just as in Bhopal (Carrigan, 2012). Sinha is the most debated writer discoursed by scholars, readers, and critics as a socialist, Marxist and postcolonial writer but the current study endeavours to prove him an eco-critical writer who nurtures a voice against exploitation of nature and human rights as eco-crime.

### **Research Objectives**

The aims and objectives of the present study are:

- To point out factors and elements of victimization of subaltern under eco-crime along with their effects on physical and mental conditions expressed in *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha.
- To focus on justice for the disastrous conditions of human beings and non-human elements.
- To notify writer's approach towards the endless effort of sufferers and their ultimate compromise with Imperial powers

### **Research Questions**

- What concepts and aspects of Eco-criticism have been expressed in *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha?

- How does Sinha describe indigenous peoples' victimization by interregional eco crime in *Animal's People*?
- How far is Sinha successful in presenting the character's struggle for environmental justice at the end of Sinha's *Animal's People*?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This world is depleted with challenges of health, economic value, and even our existence where we have to live in. Moreover, our globe has been threatened by climate change which leads to ecological disasters. Westra's basic focus is on environmental health and 'human rights. In *Eco violence and the law: Supranational Normative Foundations of Eco-crime*, Westra claims avidly that contamination cannot merely be supposed as a civil wrong moderating way to compensate its sufferers economically but it should be seen as a pure form of criminality that is a warrant to violent sanctions.

In *Environmental Justice and the Rights of Indigenous people* (2008), although Westra here discovers the conditions that 'peoples' instead of newborn children but these peoples are also highly vulnerable and yet have the capacity to pursue and act communally. In this very book, she investigates the threat conditions challenging these native people of the world and the different challenges that they confront to protect their traditional lands, identity, and their interdependence on each other. In this book, she conveys specific circumstances of indigenous societies of different countries and also ecologically risky factors which threaten their survival collectively. Laura Westra first raises the two most common models; cultural identity and self-determination, but these two models needed suitable attention in addressing the threat to lands, waters, and air on which indigenous peoples are dependent. So she highlighted the importance of the third model- the biological/ecological integrity model directing human rights and political action to be raised for it. Westra focuses on the unjust done in the form of the devastation of the natural and man-made environment, which is discussed in the sense of destroying their reproduction and regenerative powers, is not universalizable.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Animal people have been examined and analyzed from an eco-critical perspective. Many issues can be put in eco-critical theory. The methodology relies upon the textual analysis of the novel to see the effects of environmental degradation on indigenous people and the ultimate consequences of their struggle for eco-justice.

### 3. TEXT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The basic aim of the analysis is to find out eco-critical features in the text of *Animal's People* (2007). The pure and natural environment has been transformed to ecological degradation in agrarian, rural South, and other developing countries. Environmentalists are now focusing on taking a position in favor of caring ecology and forming reverence for nature. History represents the subtle and transcendent association between man and nature. The novel *Animal's People* starts with a pathetic tone and too many heart-touching sentences which shows human deprivation, "I used to be human once. So I'm told. I don't remember it myself, but people who knew me when I was small say I walked on two feet just like a human being" (Sinha, 2007, p. 1). These are the words by Animal (the narrator) which created in him a sense of realization of not being normal like other humans. Now he walks on all his fours with his bent-back which is very tough to tolerate. He seems to be like an animal and he is remembered that, in his current appearance, he is not loved by his surrounding people as they always make him feel sensitive by saying: "Such a beautiful little boy you were when you were three, four, years" (ibid, p.1). On one side, he is suffering from the constant discomfort of looking like an animal and at the same time, it is a more discomfoting condition for him to think about the days that he can never adore in his existing life. This means he is suffering not only physical but mental torture also. He was normal before the disastrous night (called Apocalypse) by the experimentation of an American Company. On this night, Khaufpur (the slum area of animals and his people) was surrounded by the poisoned air of chemicals which caused too many physical and mental infections and due to these syndromes people suffered a lot, even people in Khaufpur didn't want to recall that night but it was unforgettable. These were the foreigners who caused to be fixed in inhabitants' minds and these outsiders don't even bother for this harm.

*Animal's People* and *Animal's* city named Khaufpur, which is also symbolic, has become too dreadful that it seems like a horrifying and terrible place and is called Khaufpur. And the condition of Animal as being bent-back and his people not enjoying their constitutional rights as they've right to be; is just because of that apocalypse that held on that night. What is for the improvement of this wrecked place is not decided yet. So many journalists come from other countries to this intoxicated area, hear different stories of loss from the affected people and go back to their countries, nothing else. As a journalist comes to visit Khaufpur and Animal says to this journalist,

"Several novels have been written about this issue, yet little has changed as a result. You will bleat like the other sheep. The topics of law, justice, and human rights will come up. These phrases sound the same to me as they do to you, yet they signify something altogether different. You searched the area in a never-ending quest for wealth. I thought I heard hunger pangs coming from

within of you. If you had unlimited access to everything, you would eat it all up. You journalists are a group of vultures. more specifically Sinha (2007), p.

If the journalists' primary goal is to share these victims' tales with others, it is useless for them to listen to them. Reporters are ill-equipped to understand the struggles faced by the poor since they have never spent the night in such debris.

Accepting responsibility for the catastrophic gas leak that happened at Union Carbide's pesticide production facility in Bhopal on the evening of December 2 and 3, 1984, is necessary as a criminal act. The American company's feeble attempts to pin the plant's Indian management for its lax safety standards—which led to the worst industrial tragedy in history—now pale in comparison to the several pieces of evidence. According to Everest (1986, p. 156), the spill wasn't an "accident," but rather a "massacre" that resulted in the poisoning of the groundwater supply, the death of thousands of humans and animals, and the injury of 500,000 people. The incident is not described as a "crime" in the book, but everyday expressions like "Kampani-style lie" (Sinha, 2007, p. 234) show how widespread corruption is. Animal proceeds to narrate his tale in two parts, one for each night of the apocalypse. Sinha (2007) asserts that when an important event, like that night, takes place, time splits into before and after, the before period dissolving into dreams, and the dreams dissolving into darkness.

He now has knowledge of his age and the appearance of a hunched beast thanks to this night. He becomes sad and agitated when he thinks back on the pleasant experiences he had before that dreadful night. Ma Franci remembers that you would jump in with your arms and legs out in a straight line (ibid, p. 14). When he was younger, Animal's greatest fantasy was to dive in headfirst and leave his crooked shadow behind. We find out what happened at this midnight hour in Animal. "Nothing more to do. The fire is the first thing I remember. I was unable to even lift my head because of how awful I felt. In terms of speed and nimbleness, I used to be able to keep up with other kids my age, but now I can hardly hold my balance. My arse was the highest area of my body due to the hairpin-like bending of my bones". (Sinha, 2007, p. 15).

These are the after-effects of that experiment by the American company that ruined not only the life of Animal but too many other people in his town. These people can't even quest for justice for their poisoned atmosphere. This is because they are helpless, weak, and powerless due to their economic position as they are considered to be the 'other'. But these indigenous people are motivated by the statements of Animal as he says "I learned that if u act powerless, you are powerless, the way to get what you want is to demand it" (ibid, p. 19). Animal People are certain of the fact that American people are cruel and don't poison their own country's air but spoil the 'other' country's environment. The environment is one thing that is not divided the land to land rather atmosphere is commonly shared by all. Though a bad environment mostly affects the

downtrodden yet, to some extent, it also affects the powerful ones. So it must be necessitated to ponder on solutions to environmental degradation. Animal says, ‘If I had been born in America, I’d never have had to walk on all fours all these years (ibid, p. 247). This is because in America if someone gets ill, one would be facilitated as soon as possible due to her being a developed country.

The whole novel is about genocide, its impacts on people, and people’s struggle for environmental justice. The Khaupuris were demanding that the company must pay proper reimbursement to those whose health it tumbled down, whose loved ones it killed, whose breath has gone by inhaling its poisons and that it should decontaminate the factory. But the problem is that the company bosses live in America and they decline to come to Khuafpur and till now no-one could force them to come to court. But Zafar arises hope in his people and says to them ‘if we want justice, we’ll have to fight for it in the street’ (Sinha, 2007, p. 34).

Zafar directs his people to contest against the company in an orderly manner. Although he suggests going into the streets he also stresses that there must not be any violence. Likewise, he says that if the company owners still won’t come to court, their other business could be seized that they can’t risk. These are the conducts by which Zafar acknowledges his people about how to fight for their environmental rights. He tries to make them understand the loss by the destruction that can be termed Genocide. Kampani keeps on justifying this huge genocide by pursuing that the deaths of many people and their ruined health by the factory’s poison are not as harmful as supposed. They also say that people are not so seriously ill and their illness is due to hunger and lack of hygiene. In this way, company bosses justify this genocide done by them on that night.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The study is done by using the lens of Eco-criticism regarding the struggle for eco-justice against eco-crime, degradation of nature, and genocide committed by outsiders. Nature and indigenous people are exploited and exhausted at the hands of imperialism. Both are distinct apparently but end in relation with nature because every social phenomenon implies a certain relation with nature. Progress of the developed countries is robbing of soil, labour, and environment of the developing ones. The exploitation of the environment affects the health of indigenous people on a large scale. In general, this loss of health is supposed to be curable but actually cannot be recurred because the countries causing this eco-crime instead of being guilty justify their doing the act of genocide. This genocide left its effects on the health of indigenous people. Burkett wrote that “What now remains compared with what then existed is like the skeleton of a sick man, all the fat and soft earth having waste now, and only bare framework of the land being left...”(Burkett, 2006, p.84).

Eco-criticism demands economic equality and fair distribution of fresh climate in all societies along with conservation of the ecology and natural resources for future generations. To get these objectives positive and broad perspective is needed. No doubt a complete solution to the problem is not possible in the crucial imperial scenario which is creating a noticeable distinction in present societies but hope for equal justice, fulfilment of environmental rights, and accommodation with compassion for other humans are still alive. The huge distinction among all human beings concerning colour, race, creed, and especially national level should be overcome at an individual level to have a well-balanced and sensible society. Because polluting other lands for cleaning our environment would gradually cause a return of these pollutants to their origin.

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