

An Ecological Human Bond With Nature In Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*

Ms. D.Aswini ^[1], Dr.S. Thirunavukkarasu ^[2]

Research Scholar ^[1], Assistant Professor ^[2]

MuthurangamGovt Arts College

Otteri, Vellore

Tamil Nadu - India

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the thematic desire to establish an ecological human bond with nature in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*. Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship. India is a country with variety of ecosystems which ranges from Himalayas in the North to plateaus of South and from the dynamic Sunderbans in the East to dry Thar of the West. However our ecosystems have been affected due to increase in population and avarice of mankind in conquering more lands. As Environment and Literature are entwined, it is the duty of everyone to protect nature through words. Ecocriticism takes an earth centered approach to literary criticism. Although there are not many, there are few novels that can be read through the lens of ecocriticism.

Keywords:- Chozhan, gurukulas

I. INTRODUCTION

In the same way, Indra Sinha has riveted in unveiling the concept of ecology in his novel. In *Animal's People*, Indra Sinha brings to limelight, the corporate crime of Bhopal gas attack in 1984. He has done a rigorous research in their specific area of writing. Nature has been used as an important backdrop in which the story of this novel develops. Natural ecological threats and Man-made environmental crisis can be traced in the novel. Emerson says "Nature is the language of the creator, the human language which is the medium of perception sees divinity in and through its counterpart." [1] According to certain group of Tribal sects, the land cannot be bought or sold because they imagine it as their mother. In the ancient days children are exposed to various plants and animals and are explained the significance and the use of such species. Environmental ethics were taught to young people through verbal in their childhood itself.

Ecocriticism has attained prominence in the past few decades due to the environmental crisis all over the world. Ecological perception and awareness are not new to our nation. Even civilization of the nation has flourished on the banks of the rivers. India has been a country of mighty rivers and oceans. The name of India is derived from the river Indus though the river Ganga occupies the dominant place in

literature and epics. Nature has been intimately connected with life in Indian tradition. Mountains, particularly Himalayas are said to be the abode of God. Rivers are considered and worshipped as goddesses, especially the holiest of holy rivers Ganga is a source of salvation for anyone. Forests have been the abode of great sages and were the center of great intellectual activity as most of the gurukulas were located in forests. In addition to this, the five elements of nature are worshipped as Gods in our nation.

In the present scenario environmental issue is banal throughout the world. The reason for the immediate crisis is due to the lack of interest and unawareness regarding the protection of ecology. As people have become self-centered and selfish, only very few take steps to make the environment clean and green. The great ancestors each and every one saved their atmosphere with eco consciousness. They have drawn Kolam only with the rice flour so that it can be eaten by ants as their food. They seldom used pesticides and killed small insects, instead natural manures were used for the production of healthy fruits and vegetables. People have started realizing the perishing condition of the land and the ecological awareness is created worldwide through literature. Always there is a great response for things which are transmitted through printed forms. It may reach the target audience within the stipulated time. The need of

the present paper is to create awareness among people about nature through green revolution. In the same way few writers have taken much pain in writing eco centered fiction.

Indra Sinha has taken absolute effort to reveal the environmental degradation inside our nation to people across the globe. He prefers to write about the ecological deprivation that happened in India. Indra Sinha spent nearly one and a half years in helping the victims of Bhopal. He does not write only for the sake of money and fame, rather, he wants each and everyone to know about the difficulties that are undergone daily by the socially downtrodden of our nation. The voices of such unheard people are brought to limelight only through literary works.

The ecological dharma could be traced from the ancient kings who were well known for their love even for small plants, birds and animals. The King Paari had offered his chariot for the jasmine creepers to live its life to the fullest. In case of the King of Kings Cibi, he had proffered the share of his thighs in order to equal the weight of the arrowed pigeon. Another king of our nation Manu Neethi Chozhan was daring enough to sacrifice his son's life in order to equal the pain of dead calf's mother cow. Such was the kind of ecological justice that was maintained by our great ancestors. Hence, there was a harmony between people and nature before some decades. Vallalaar grew remorse whenever he witnessed the dried crops in the fields due to lack of water. Even at the time of harvest in the month of aadi, people of this land celebrate it as a grand occasion in the name of thaitthirunal. At the time of breeding season of fish, people seldom go for fishing. The nation has come to the stage of perishing as people do not realise their responsibility. The ancient kings were aware of ecological justice and showered their love for all the living beings without any partiality.

In *Animal's People*, knowing that the environmental massacre was done by Union Carbide, Government did not take any necessary steps to arrest the Chairman of the 'Kampani'. In September 1982, Bhopal Journalist Raj Keswani wrote a terrifying story that Bhopal was about to be annihilated soon. In the words of Keswani "It will take just an hour, at most an hour and a half, for every one of us to die." [2] The unrevealed truth about the Union Carbide Factory was unveiled by a staff who said that one of the workers has been killed in a Phosgene spill. 'The first world

war gas was used in the production of MIC (methyl-isocyanate), a substance five hundred times deadlier than hydrogen cyanide and so volatile.' [2] Union Carbide Factory was set up in Bhopal in order to produce pesticides for India's 'green revolution.' Yet, even after warning about the hazardous effects the company going to cause, politicians and the Chairman of the 'Kampani' did not take any safety measures for the surrounding people before the tragedy took place. "Pyaar Bai was married to Aftaab, and he worked in the Kampani's factory, and he told her how dangerous the chemicals in there were. If by chance you got any on your hand, Aftaab said, the skin would blister." (83)

The Government of India tried to hush up the matter when the incident was brought to their notice. The duplicity of the politicians is exactly revealed in the climactic scene of *Animal's People* in which the 'Kampani' lawyers try to broker another undercover deal with the government. The compensation was given to the victims only after a long period without knowing that the money they offered will not help the poor people in any way. Because the damage they have caused is not only for one generation, but for many generations together. For many years after the tragedy, the factory was not given orders to clean the leaked gas. As a result, soil, air and water are contaminated totally.

Environmental issue can be categorized as Man-made crisis and Natural environmental crisis. Man-made crisis is lucid in the novel *Animal's People*. Like Indra Sinha, Rabindranath Tagore had fear of scientific advancement in our nation. He even unveils his fear in his notable play *Muktadhara*. In the play he even addresses machine/dam, a symbolic development of science as a 'demon.' When the debate gets on to the 'kampani', in the name of producing pesticides to help the farmers, the company has ruined the lives of people in tens and thousands. December 2/3, 1984 was one of the coldest winter nights in Bhopal. The majority of more than 3.5 lakh people living in 30 out of 56 wards of the city were wrapped up in sleep. Suddenly, something wrenched the people from their slumber. They felt a burning sensation in eyes, then fits of choking and breathlessness. [4] Thousands of people have become prey for the MIC gas leak "One child was born with holes where his eyes should have been." This cruel attack was happened due to the lack of altruism in people who belong to the particular

factory and politics. Health damage is inevitable through the leak of powerful gas.

Due to the exhalation of such strong gas, people are reported to have respiratory problems, i.e., lung infection; eye sight problem, impairment of physical inability and abortion. “Cerebral damage was also found in those victims who died within three to five hours of exposure to the gas.”[5] When are they going to get any change in life? What sin have they committed to undergo such cruel death sentence and physical pain? If the disaster is natural, then the victims have to suffer only for some days over their loss. When it comes to man-made ecological crisis, then the impact of such dreadful condition lasts for many generations. Even the human bodies are contaminated including water, soil and air. If such is the case, there is no hopeful future ahead of them. ‘My breasts are killing me.’ ... ‘I won’t feed my kid poison.’ She’s leant forward to cast the last dribbles of her milk onto the ground... The granny replies, ‘We have looked upon the milk and it seemeth to muchethinne and watry. Plus it enclyneth to reddenesse, which is unnaturall and euill... Says the mother to Elli ‘Our wells are full of poison. It’s in the soil, water in our blood, it’s in our milk. Everything here is poisoned. If you stay here long enough, you will be too. (107)

Through the title *Animal’s People* IndraSinha tries to represent a group of victimized people who were not paid any attention so far in the society and the voice of such people will not be heeded and given significance by anyone like the myriad voices of the animals. Animals can’t appoint anybody to raise their problems in the society. In the same way, people of Khaufpur (fictionalized Bhopal) do not have any one to talk or protest on behalf of them. In the same way, he has portrayed a character as jawar, an animal who doesn’t think himself as human. Janwar’s could not remember his good old days. He can only “remember from that time, my first memory is that fire. It was so bad I could not lift my head.” Through this noteworthy character, he also means that the people of Bhopal underestimate themselves though they have high potential to fight against the ‘kampani.’

He pays much attention to two characters i.e., Janwar, an animal and Zafar who give moral support for the animal. IndraSinha tries to exhibit the cruelties of the ‘Kampani’ through the character Ma Franci.

However, she tells very often that the apocalypse would take the life of everyone. She tells Jaanwar “The people ache; their bodies are bottles into which fresh pain is poured every day. Their flesh is melting, coming off their bones in flakes of fire, their bones are burning, they’re turning into light, and probably they’re becoming angels.” The writer was influenced by the real life incident and has inserted as the characters in the novel. In a conversation between Mark Thwaite and IndraSinha, the writer said: “One day a friend said he had met a boy who went on all fours. Two days later my daughter Tara told me about an old Frenchwoman she had met, who had forgotten how to speak all languages except her childhood French and thought everyone else was just making meaningless noises. Thus were Animal and Ma Franci born.....” He also adds that he worked for eighteen-hour days as a volunteer for the Bhopal justice campaign. “What triggered this was the fear that a friend would die in a desperate hunger strike. The story is told here. This is how I knew what it was like to fast without water in temperatures of 140 degrees Fahrenheit. [6]

Summation

II. CONCLUSION

Each and every one should protect the ecology of our land. Both man-made disasters and natural crisis occur due to the avarice of man-kind. If people are aware of using renewable resources and non-renewable resources in a right way, nature will be saved. When the natural resources are not used properly it results in natural crisis. Hence, the ecology of a land depends on the mind and maturity of people who abodes in the land. The land is not ready to face yet another tragedy like Bhopal, Hiroshima and Tsunami. Let this tragedy keeps end stop for the ecological imbalance. Let the concept of saving nature be taught to the younger generation right from their childhood days.

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