

DISABILITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN *ANIMAL'S PEOPLE* BY INDRA SINHA

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Abstract

The study on *Animal's People* represents the sufferings of the people with disability and the injustice prevails in the society. Indra Sinha is a British writer of Indian and English lineage. *Animal's People* portrays the repercussions of the chemical disaster in Bhopal and it takes place in a fictitious town name Khaufpur in the novel. *Animal's People* is a perfect example of Disability studies in literature. Disability studies investigate the disability and their oppression in the abled society. It often concerns with the right based framework of human beings. Social justice is a political and philosophical theory which asserts the concept of justice for individuals in terms of social, political and economical life. This paper investigates the toxicity prevails in human life that leads to chronic diseases and disability in the background of the Massive gas tragedy. It also vividly exposes the inefficiency of the political authority on the rights of common man. It explores the injustice inflicted by the government and multi corporate industries towards the law and humanity.

Disability And Social Justice in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*

Indian English Literature is an account of literary works written by Indians, whose vernacular language is one of the numerous languages in India. Indra Sinha was a prolific Indian British writer. He had undergone his schooling in India (Mumbai) and England. He moved with his family to Britain in 1967. He had become an advertising copywriter in London, particularly with Collett Dickenson Pearce. He was chosen by his colleagues as one of the top ten British copywriters of all time. On working in advertising, he had translated Vatsyayana's Kama Sutra into English as The Love Teachings of Kama Sutra in 1980. Later, he had worked a monograph on the origins of tantrism. He published Tantra: The Search for Ecstasy in 1993. Indra Sinha wrote a memoir The Cybergypsies. Indra Sinha made his fiction debut with The Death of Mr Love (2002) which was encouraged by Mulk Raj Anand to write it.

Indra Sinha has campaigned and raised funds for the poisoned citizens of Bhopal since 1993. In 1994, Indra Sinha published an appeal in The Guardian asking for the funds to start up a cost free clinic for the sufferers of the Poison explosion of the Union Carbide gas disaster in Bhopal. The clinic had opened in 1996 and helped nearly 30,000 people to survive. He had worked nearly five years for *Animal's People* and published in 2007. The novel "*Animal's People*" was finalized for the 2007 Man Booker Prize and had won the Commonwealth writer's Prize for Europe and South Asia in 2008.

In this novel *Animal's People*, Indra Sinha brings out the realistic view on the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy. *Animal's People* sets in the backdrop of Bhopal gas tragedy in 1984 that changed the people's life in one night. Thousands of people died on the night in the explosion of Methyl Isocyanate. *Animal's People* has been set up in a fictitious town named Khaufpur, mostly filled with slums and alleys. A sharp tongued young boy of nineteen years old is the protagonist of the novel. He is one of the victims affected in the gas tragedy. He has been born as a human but he seriously got ill in his childhood. Due to the chemical effects that retained in his body, he has got twisted spine and began to walk in his fours. So, he has been called as Jaanvar means Animal. The novel revolves around the victims of the tragedy and injustice prevails for them in the society.

Animal's People is a novel that depicts the life of a young boy whose life changed drastically over night of chemical explosion. He has been born before the night of the gas leak tragedy. In the Chaos he has been left alone on the road as an infant. He was not aware of his father and mother. He was orphaned in an orphanage under the care of nuns. "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..." (1).

He was born as a human but due to the chemical explosion he is affected and that chemicals showed an impact on his spine at the age of six. He has got ill at the time and soon his spine became twisted and he has begun

to walk on his fours (with hands and legs). And soon in the society, he has been named as “Jaanvar” or “Animal”. He was brought up by a nun named Ma Fransci, who lost her sense of differentiating English and Hindi. She tells Animal that once he played around, swam at the lake behind the company but now he can’t swim or walk in two legs anymore. He became a disabled because of the outbreak of the Gas leak tragedy. He was isolated from the abled society and treated as an animal among the humans.

Once Animal has played with the kids in the orphanage and a boy fell on him as a crippled Animal can’t relieve himself under his classmate. So, he has bitten the boy in pain and got red stain on his mouth. This was the first incident in his life that addressed him as an animal in the society. Animal (Jaanvar) also behaves like a real animal because of the enforcement of the society on his impairment and disableness of his body. Thus the orphanage children treated him as a laughing stock in the society and ill-treat him in accordance with his disability.

Animal develops hatred towards the human beings because he has not treated as one among them. He envies on his friends who play hopscotch, the dancers, bears performance in the street, stilt walkers and even beggars who can stand in one leg at the Pir Gate to beg for money. His mind has filled with hatred on the things that can stand one or two legs. For example, he even envies on the goalposts, ladders leaning on the wall.

Thus, it connects and interprets how the disabled characters are longing for their life to become an abled-person to survive in the social, cultural and political life in the society. Once when the children view the mating of street dogs, they ill-treat the Animal by saying

In my street years I hated to see dogs fucking, my mates would shout, ‘Hey Animal, is this how you do it?’ They’d make a fist, ram two fingers in and out with loud sucking noises, then let on the fingers were trapped, they’d yell, Hey Fourlegs, you get glued up like this, you and your girlfriend? You and Jara? (16)

And they insist that Jara (a dog petted by Animal) is a girlfriend of Animal and he used to mate with her. These children mistreat Animal due to his Physical disability. Thus, the society gives the framework of binary opposition between the abled and disabled people. The people in the society have been conceived with the notion that abled as the normal beings and the disabled are considered as abnormal ones.

In the perspectives of DS, it shows how the individuals are designated as ‘disabled’ are treated in a manner that diminishes their economic, interpersonal, psychological, cultural, political and physical well-being relegating them to be a membership in a minority group. (Ghai 2)

Animal has walked on his fours so, he has considered Jara as his friend because of his disableness. Once Animal and Jara used to be rivals in order to get the food that scattered in the street. When Animal has feasted himself with a brown flesh in garbage, Jara started to roar. At the time Animal has lost his conscience as a human and acts as a real animal. Thus, he has growled louder than Jara as a warning of a hungry animal. Jara has frightened and stayed back. Later Animal has left some meat pieces for Jara. This explores the psychological mind set of Animal who accepted himself as an animal that he is no longer belongs to the human race. Thus, he has become an Animal mentally and physically.

Animal meets a doctor in the clinic with Ma Fransci. Animal sees the kha-in-jar, it is an aborted foetus found in the gas tragedy. He considers himself as a pair of the kha-in-jar because both of their lives were changed in one night and today seen by the people with spectacular view and has been segregated from the society as sporadic creature.

Animal has a love interest on Nisha, who has treated Animal as a normal human being. Animal does not have an opportunity to woo Nisha because of his disableness. So, Animal has been sexually frustrated. Animal hides his love for Nisha. Animal has been frightened that he will be mocked for loving a normal girl. When Animal has found Nisha’s interest on Zafar, Animal has got help from Faqri and gave some tablets for Zafar to suppress his sexuality. Animal envies Zafar and his personality. Animal envies Zafar not only for the love of Nisha but also his inferiority in terms of his physical Disability. The perspectives of the society on him as a disabled person forced him to do that to Zafar and made Animal to feel inferior in the society. Because of the notions of the society Animal thinks that he is not a normal person who is capable to receive love and respect in the society. The thought of Animal making love with Nisha is considered as an unnatural process in the eyes of the society due to his physical disability. “Animal mating with human female, it’s unnatural, but I’ve no choice but to be unnatural” (78). Thus, the society made the disabled people to believe that they are abnormal.

We often experience the fascination that non-disabled people have with ‘just
How do you manage?’ They have a consuming curiosity about how we pee,
How we shit, how we have sex (do we have sex?) Many of us have
experienced the total stranger or slight acquaintance coming up and asking us
the most intimate things about our lives. Our physical difference makes our

bodies public property. (Morris 25)

Animal's People also gives a reflection of social justice in the society of Khaufpur. Animal's People mirrors the human rights abuse in terms of poverty, hegemony of the society and marginalization of the people which often results in social injustice for the people. It portrays the pain and sufferings of the people who struggle for justice. The people of Khaufpur has affected by the gas explosion and become the victims of the tragedy. Millions of people died in a single night and many loss their abilities and senses in the explosion.

Zafar is a social activist left his studies and helps the people of Khaufpur. Zafar inclines justice for those people. He has appealed on the court about the multi corporate company but the owners of the company didn't come to the court. The court is not effective in summoning them. Thus, the case prolonged for eighteen years and still injustice has left for the Khaufpur's people. Nearly thirteen judges changed but there was no improvement in the case. This shows the inefficiency of the government and court in terms of the justice for the marginalised people of Khaufpur. It also indicates the corruption of the government officials.

My point, sir, is that thousands in this city have died since that night, for them was no justice. The factory is abandoned full of chemicals which as we speak are

poisoning the water of thousands more. Must all perish before these

Amrikan defendants appear? Speaking plainly, with no disrespect to you, I think

in no other country would the law be allowed to become such a farce, if the will

existed to resolve this matter, it could have been done long ago. (52)

Thus, the main focus of *Animal's People* is about the Animal, who has born as a human but treated as an animal. Animal believes that he cannot live his life with the disability. It is not only the treatment of the society that isolated him from the society but also his own consideration that separate his life from the abled society. His life may begin with the tragedy but he chose to fight continuously for a better life. The tragedy leads Animal to have the shades of love, envy, frustration, stupidity in his life. At last Animal lives his own life without regret of his disability by considering him as the only one Animal in the human society. In the terms of social justice the khaufpuri's people brought their hopes up and continue to claim for justice.

The carelessness of the multi corporate industries in terms of maintenance leads to the tragic life of the Khaufpur's people. If there was no gas leak then there won't be any death. So, the six year old boy won't walk on his fours and won't be named as Animal (Jaanvar) in the society. The difference of notion between the abled and disabled people should be eradicated from the minds of people. If the Khaufpur's people treated Animal as a normal human being, then he won't be suffered from inferiority complex and won't develop any hatred towards the humans. If the law and government are effective, the Khaufpur's people will not be suffering from injustice. The laws should be uncompromising and it should not work for the hegemony of the society or Government. The corruption among the civil servants, public servants and representatives should be abolished. In front of law, every individual should be treated equally with liberty and justice.

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