

Exploring Disability and Identity in The Context of Ecological Disaster in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*

Kumari Manjari¹, Dr. Sanjit K. Mishra²

¹Research Scholar, HSS IIT Roorkee

²HSS, IIT Roorkee

Abstract: This research paper investigates the complex relationship between identity and disability as portrayed in Indra Sinha's novel "Animal's People," within the context of an ecological catastrophe. The story progression occurs amid a simulated ecological disaster, providing an occasion to explore the complex aspects of disability and its connections to the development of one's identity in environmental anarchy. Animal, the protagonist, navigates these challenges with an added layer of complexity due to his physical disability, which profoundly shapes his interactions and perceptions within the chaotic environment. This investigation endeavours to shed light on how disability influences both individual and collective identities amidst an environmental crisis by conducting an exhaustive examination of the characters' experiences, relationships, and societal dynamics. By utilizing disability studies, ecological criticism, and identity theory as theoretical foundations, this scholarly article endeavours to provide intricate analyses of the multifaceted depiction of disability and identity in Sinha's novel. Through such an approach, it aims to augment understanding of the intricate links that are present between ecological difficulties and the variety of human beings. To reveal the intricacies of disability representation and identity negotiation within the narrative structure, the investigation would adopt a qualitative methodology, employing close textual analysis and thematic exploration. Through a critical analysis of the depiction of disability in the novel "Animal's People" during an ecological catastrophe, this investigation aims to illuminate wider socio-cultural and environmental ramifications. In doing so, it seeks to promote discourse and increase consciousness regarding the interdependence of identity, ecological crisis, and disability in contemporary literature and society at large.

Keywords: Ecological Disaster, Animal's People, Disability and Identity

1. Introduction

Indra Sinha's 'Animal's People' deftly traverses the complex landscape wherein identity and disability converge in the wake of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy [1] [2]. Sinha skillfully depicts the characters' challenging ordeal as they contend with the immediate and long-term consequences of the catastrophe, placing particular emphasis on the profound influence it exerts on their existence [3]. Sinha effectively portrays the victim's hopelessness and distress in their pursuit of justice, as well as the perilous circumstances that characterize the post-tragic realm, by employing a narrative structure that reflects these emotions. The character of Animal, through whom Sinha examines the limitations of human nature and the complexities of identity within the narrative, is especially pivotal to the investigation [4].

In his work "Animal's People," Indra Sinha explores the complex dynamics between disability and identity in the context of an ecological catastrophe. Sinha deftly employs narrative construction to delve into ecological deterioration, human-animal relations, and the personal challenges faced by those with disabilities [5]. By doing so, he constructs a storyline that stimulates contemplation regarding the intricate nature of being human in an ever more precarious global environment. The purpose of this introduction is to furnish a thorough synopsis of Sinha's treatment of the aforementioned themes, elucidating the novel's depiction of disability, investigation into identity, and the wider ramifications of an environmental calamity [6]. This overview endeavours to decipher the intricacies of Sinha's narrative through the utilisation of a literary analysis framework. It does so by scrutinising the ways in which the intersection of disability and environmental concerns influences the characters' perspectives on themselves and others. Moreover, it establishes a foundation for a more profound examination of the novel's recurring themes, prompting readers to reflect on the significant ramifications of disability and identity in relation to the ecological crisis portrayed in "Animal's People."

1.2 Central Themes of Disability and Identity

In Indra Sinha's novel "Animal's People," the central themes of identity and belonging in the context of an ecological disaster scenario are intricately woven into the narrative. The novel explores the intricate interplay between animality and humanity, posing a challenge to conventional understandings of personhood and the human-nature relationship [7]. The novel delves into the indistinct boundaries between human and animal existence using the protagonist Animal, who, on account of his physical deformity, rejects conventional human identity. It highlights the perilous quest for acceptance and self-actualization within a society afflicted by an ecological catastrophe [8]. In addition, the novel explores the societal perception and response to disability, placing particular emphasis on the significance of culture, empathy, and candor in comprehending the experiences of those who are oppressed and marginalized as a result of the catastrophe. Sinha's scholarly contributions advocate for a paradigm shift in the understanding of empathy, urging for a deeper bond founded upon sincerity, responsibility, and authentic recognition of one's place in the global community. This theme emphasizes the necessity of transitioning from a superficial sense of empathy to a more profound comprehension of the varied hardships and obstacles encountered by individuals who have been defaced and marginalized as a result of the industrial catastrophe in Bhopal. Furthermore, the novel offers a critical analysis of the absence of embodiment within liberalism and urges readers to participate in the embodied politics of reading. This entails confronting the intangible facets of human existence and the detrimental spectacle of environmental deterioration. By rejecting conventional conceptions of personhood and insisting on retaining his form, Animal embodies a more extensive critique of societal conventions and the insufficiency of empathy as a moral underpinning. Sinha's narrative encourages readers to critically examine established power structures and categories, thereby advocating for a more comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of identity, belonging, and the human toll of ecological catastrophes [9].

2. Literature Review

Misra, et.al., (2024) [10] examined Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People*, which depicts the compound crises of disability and a postcolonial chemical disaster that killed and disabled many people. The story recounts the 1984 'Bhopal Gas Disaster' in fictional Khaufpur, India. Sinha describes how the tragedy turns the eponymous character Animal into a 'creature' with a crooked spine and four 'legs', a descendant of the 'Apokalis', who struggles to survive in Khaufpur with many others. This piece would also examine how Sinha makes Animal the symbol of the economically disabled nation. Understand how the global corporate economy, imported 'Biopolitics', and neo-colonial exploitations cripple a postcolonial nation while critically examining these metaphors.

Shoba et.al., (2023) [11] highlighted how disciplines like Disability Studies and Ecocriticism, predominantly in Western contexts, shape historical narratives. Disability history explores anthropocentrism and social categorizations, while Ecocriticism challenges human-nonhuman distinctions. This review advocates for reassessing binaries between humans and the environment, as well as between abled and disabled individuals. It delves into the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984 and analyzes the portrayal of disabled individuals' relationship with nature in Sinha's novel "Animal's People" (2007), using both Western and Indian literature. The work suggests that toxic environments can create "attitudinal barriers" for the disabled, offering a fresh perspective on the intersection of environmental and impaired consciousness.

Sarkar et.al., (2022) [12] examined the association between disability and the concept of animality/humanity dualism. They argue that societal constructs such as anthropocentrism and ableism perpetuate the perception of individuals with disabilities as 'Others', while also denying the agency of animals and nature. Through an analysis of Indra Sinha's novel "Animal's People", the work explores how environmental disasters shape perceptions of identity and place, particularly through the lens of the animal/human binary. The investigation highlights the creation of local/global spatial binaries post-disaster, where deformed humans are relegated to an animal-like status locally, while elite humans maintain their humanity globally. Drawing from critical disability scholarship and bioregional perspectives, the work suggests that resolving such binaries necessitates the establishment of local bioregions that acknowledge and integrate human-nonhuman/animal/nature relationships, thereby fostering a more inclusive sense of belonging.

Sharma et.al., (2022) [13] explored the ecological themes in Indra Sinha's "Animal's People", narrated by a teenager known as 'Animal'. The protagonist's physical deformities and close bond with his dog, Lara, prompt reflections on the intrinsic worth of all life forms, challenging the distinction between humans and animals.

'Animal' expresses disdain for humanity, influenced by his experience of the Bhopal gas tragedy, and finds solace in nature and animals. Through a deep ecological lens, the work argues that blurring the human-animal divide allows for a deeper emotional connection with nature and highlights the intrinsic value of all living beings.

Basumatary et.al., (2019) [14] analyzed human rights abuses in conflict zones in India, attributing them to factors such as poverty, social hierarchy, corruption, and inaccessible justice systems, which undermine India's democratic principles. They discuss the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy as a poignant example, where innocent lives were lost due to industrial negligence. Indra Sinha's novel "Animal's People" (2007) is cited for its portrayal of marginalized individuals and their struggle for recognition in the face of societal and state indifference. Sinha's protagonist, Animal, symbolizes the exploitation of human rights by both state and society. The work contributes to understanding the concept of human identity and the plight of marginalized individuals in India's alternative history as depicted in "Animal's People".

Kosar et.al., (2021) [15] identified environmental crime as a central concern in ecocriticism, focusing on its impacts on nature and affected communities. They explore indigenous peoples' struggles for eco-justice against such crimes. Laura Westra coined the term 'Green Politics' to describe how wealthier nations endanger the environments of poorer nations. Sinha's novel *Animal's People* illustrates societal upheavals leaving people vulnerable. The essay delves into ecological abuses in India and the local pursuit of environmental justice. Overall, the work contributes to ecocriticism by shedding light on industrialization's environmental degradation and its human toll.

Donig et.al., (2018) [16] analyzed Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People*, which explores the challenges of documenting collective suffering in a globalized world. Sinha's portrayal of the Bhopal Gas Disaster oscillates between authenticating atrocity through its universality and highlighting its uniqueness. The investigation examines how the fallout of the disaster, stemming from a globalized corporation's negligence, intersects with local and global legal frameworks. It also explores how postcolonial literature navigates between the universal and the particular to make local atrocities understandable to a global audience.

Table 1. Comparison Table

Author	Study Focus	Findings
Mishra,et.al., (2024)	Examined the compound crises of disability and a postcolonial chemical disaster in <i>Animal's People</i> .	Explored how Sinha portrays <i>Animal</i> as a symbol of the economically disabled nation and critiques global corporate economy and neo-colonial exploitations.
Shoba, et.al., (2023)	Explored disabilities and Ecocriticism in Western contexts, focusing on the relationship between disabled individuals and nature.	Investigated how toxic environments can create 'attitudinal barriers' for disabled individuals and offered a new perspective on the connection between environmental and impaired consciousness.
Sarkar, et.al., (2022)	Explored the relationship between disability and ambiguous identity through the animal/human duality in <i>Animal's People</i> .	Analyzed how environmental disasters create a local/global spatial binary and proposed creating a local bioregion to foster an inclusive sense of belonging.
Sharma, et.al., (2022)	Examined the human-animal relationship in <i>Animal's People</i> from an ecological perspective.	Argued that blurring the human-animal divide allows emotional connection with nature and highlighted the intrinsic value of all life forms.
Basumatary, et.al., (2019)	Analyzed human rights abuses in conflict zones in India, focusing on the 1984 Union Carbide Corporation industrial disaster in Bhopal.	Highlighted the lack of human rights for marginalized individuals, especially evident in the exploitation portrayed in Indra Sinha's <i>Animal's People</i> , emphasizing the violations against

		disempowered individuals.
Kosar, et.al., (2021)	Described environmental crime as a major concern in ecocriticism, examining its impact on nature and residents affected by scientific experiments.	Explored the fight for eco-justice by indigenous people against environmental crimes, discussing the ecological brutality depicted in India and the pursuit of environmental justice.
Donig, et.al., (2018)	Explored the challenges of documenting collective suffering in a globalized world using Indra Sinha's novel <i>Animal's People</i> as a case work.	Examined how the Bhopal Gas Disaster is represented in a globalized context, navigating between universal and particular aspects to make a local atrocity understandable on a global scale.

3. Ecosomatic Perspectives in Indra Sinha's "Animal's People"

Ecosomatics, which Thomas Hanna, an existential philosopher, founded in the 1970s, has been an emerging field of work since that time. It investigates the dynamic relationship between human existence and the larger field of living organisms and systems. Humans and the environment are inextricably linked due to their constant interaction, which encompasses both biotic and abiotic components of the natural world, collectively referred to as the physical environment. A widely held belief exists that the human-nature relationship was harmonious before the advent of modern technology. Numerous human communities successfully preserved their environments due to the comparatively small size of the human population. The communities' utilization of natural resources was not overly excessive; consequently, nature was preserved without substantial degradation. The advent of devices and technologies has been accompanied by an observed inclination among human beings to exploit natural resources. The environment is in a constant state of both desirable and undesirable transformation due to these shifting human paradigms. The term "environmental disaster" means: an event or series of events that threaten and disrupt the lives and livelihoods of people caused by both natural factors and/or non-natural factors and human factors resulting in the emergence of human casualties, environmental damage, property loss, and psychological impact. [17]

There are three primary categories of disasters: natural, man-made, and social. Social and non-natural catastrophes are typically ascribed to anthropogenic factors and human activities. Furthermore, there is a general consensus that, in the interest of the collective well-being, that is incumbent upon human beings to maintain environmental health. In the discourse surrounding anthropogenic catastrophes such as technological and modernization setbacks, disease outbreaks, and epidemics, that is widely acknowledged that the degradation of the biosphere can be attributed to the ubiquitous emission of pollutants caused by human endeavors. Man-made catastrophes, ranging from chemical explosions to nuclear meltdowns, have characterized and continue to plague human history. In his book, McNab enumerates the worst historical catastrophes in the world, including the subsequent [18]: 144 individuals perished in the 1966 Aberfan Colliery Slip, a catastrophic man-made event that was of significant magnitude. An additional occurrence of a man-made catastrophe, the Seveso catastrophe (1976) at a chemical plant north of Milan claimed the lives of thousands of animals and caused cardiovascular and respiratory diseases among residents. The following disasters have occurred in recent years: the Jilin Chemical Plant Explosion (2005), the Sidoarjo Mud Volcano (2006), the North Pacific Garbage Patch (1997), the Chernobyl Meltdown (1986), and the Montana Asbestos Clouds (1999). Humanity performed crucial roles in these notorious occurrences. The lamentable occurrences described above transpired as a result of human actions that caused environmental devastation and loss of life. The catastrophe that transpired in Bhopal continues to have enduring consequences for children, including the development of diverse disabilities. Although they are challenging to forecast, anthropogenic catastrophes are preventable. Mishaps caused by human error, including but not limited to gas escapes, oil spills, nuclear meltdowns, and industrial fires, occur with severe repercussions. Gas escapes are frequently among the most perilous catastrophes because they appear harmless until that is already too late. Gas can contaminate both people and the environment, both directly and indirectly, due to its rapid spread, invisibility, combustibility, and flammability. In 1984, the most catastrophic gas release occurred in Bhopal, India. Depictions of the Bhopal catastrophe have been discovered in disaster literature, drawing from historical records and personal testimonies. According to Mannur, During the early morning hours of that night the deadly chemical gas swept through the city, destroying flora, fauna, and human life that came in its path. (384) [19]

Direct concentrated inhalation of the gas caused the formation of a lethal cloud that incited severe bodily irritation, wheezing, lung edema, bleeding, and even fatalities; thus, it had a twofold effect on both humanity and the environment. Various observations have been made regarding the causes of the catastrophe, and Mannur, to be precise, has identified "industrial greed and environmental negligence" (382) as the primary contributors to the gas calamity. The tragedy and its repercussions transcend a singular spatiotemporal instant and have a profound and enduring impact referred to as "the long dyings" – in reference to the lingering toxic effects that the incident had on humanity and nature in the present and on the occasion when it occurred in the past [20]. This work presents an interdisciplinary reading of *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha, employing disability studies and ecocritical analysis to examine the rift between humanity and nature and the catastrophic consequences of the 1984 gas breaches at Union Carbide Corporation in Bhopal, India. Disability among humans and in nature demonstrates the necessity of reorienting the relationship between humans and nature towards their coexistence by eliminating the dichotomy of humans versus nature. The subsequent sections comprise an overview of Disability Studies, an organization that originated from the Disability Civil Rights Movement, examining the significance of several definitions within the Indian context, Environmental Justice, a movement dedicated to preserving a sanitary and healthy environment, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, A Thematic Interpretation of *Animal's People*, which incorporates a critical reading of the novel, and the outcomes of the Present Investigation.

3.1 Disability

The disability civil rights movement that emerged in the late 20th century after World War II, during which wounded soldiers demanded healthcare and compensation for their injuries, gave rise to disability studies [21]. In addition, the extensive examination of sexuality, gender, and race in the 1970s has provided additional impetus to the civil rights paradigm regarding disability rights. *Stigma: The Experience of Disability* by Paul Hunt established the paradigm for disability rights movements throughout the 1960s and 1970s. According to Paul Hunt, the edited collection argues that the cause of a person's disability is their social environment rather than the individual (146). Distinguishing the medical model of disability from the social model is the discipline. The term 'disability' is defined as follows by the emerging discipline of disability studies:

... the product of social injustice, one that requires not the cure or elimination of the defective person but significant changes in the social and built environment. [22]

The emergence of disability studies as an academic discipline can be attributed to social transformations and activist movements. Increasing the participation of individuals with physical impairments in mainstream social activities has been the movement's central objective [23]. Disability is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a physical or mental impairment. The United Nations-adopted Preamble to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines disability as the inability to do the following:

results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Disabilities are defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as limitations on activities, participation, and impairments that necessitate interventions to eliminate social and environmental barriers. Conversely, the medical paradigm of disability considers disabled individuals to be those who have physical or mental impairments (Diseases and Management). Scholars specializing in disability history have conducted investigations into religious occurrences and rituals, historical plagues and other epidemics, institutionalization traditions such as lazar houses and asylums, medical diagnoses and treatments for blindness and deafness, and more [24]. Hall (19) asserts that disability studies started to receive growing recognition as an independent academic discipline starting in the 1980s. As a field of investigation, disability studies have utilized theoretical frameworks and detailed textual examinations of literary works from various periods and settings. Identifying the writings of disabled authors and directing cultural disability studies toward the bounty of works by disabled intellectuals and authors constituted the academic field's primary objective. John Milton, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Alexander Pope, Harriet Martineau, John Keats, George Gordon Byron, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf were among the identified authors. A thorough examination of disabled authors has been undertaken to position disabled individuals on an equal footing in terms of politics and society.

The ideology of ability stands ready to attack any desire to know and to accept the disabled body in its current state.

Individuals with disabilities encounter a multitude of obstacles, including structural, environmental, and attitudinal barriers, which necessitate a shift in perspective regarding these individuals rather than medical intervention, according to the social model of disability. French and Swain define structural barriers as the norms and ideologies that underpin institutions and are predominately established based on normative

assessments. Physical obstacles in the environment, such as gaps in the pavement or a dearth of resources for the disabled, are referred to as environmental barriers. It also pertains to operational procedures that might marginalize individuals with disabilities. An attitude barrier is defined as the negative attitudes and conduct exhibited by individuals towards those with disabilities (183-205). The character "Animal" is portrayed as the one who confronts the aforementioned obstacles in the chosen novel, and extensively examines the theme of disability as a social barrier.

3.2 Identity Crisis

In the prevailing traditional perspective, identity is frequently established based on characteristics that are shared by members of a society; however, not all people willingly conform to this framework. An identity crisis denotes a significant phase of introspection and investigation, during which an individual endeavors to differentiate one's self [25]. The notion, first articulated by the psychologist Erik Erikson, emphasizes the critical significance that identity formation holds in the life of an individual. The process of identity formation transcends the adolescent years and is perpetually changing. This narrative explores the character's state of transition as they confront an identity crisis, as illustrated by the character Animal. Animal, in defiance of societal norms and expectations, embraces his physical variations and derives comfort from his singularity. Postcolonial literature frequently delves into the question of identity, acknowledging its critical importance in the process of individual growth and self-confidence. This theme is meticulously explored in "Animal's People" by Indra Sinha via the protagonist's desperate quest for self-identity in the wake of a tragic event. The deformed physique of the Animal, which is an outcome of the calamity, poses a challenge to established conceptions of humanity and compels him to reevaluate his identity. Animal, notwithstanding hazy memories of his former existence as a bipedal creature, finds it difficult to reconcile his current form with that of his past self. Animal experiences profound introspection and yearns for a return to his former existence as he confronts his altered reality and yearns for a return to normalcy. The individual's expedition highlights the dynamic quality of identity and the significant influence that external factors have on one's perception of oneself. Animal perpetually contends with contradictory emotions as a result of his contorted physique, a trait that exposes him to derision and contempt from others. Constant harassment undermines his self-assurance, rendering him susceptible. However, his affections for Nisha continue to develop, which further complicates his emotional state. The fundamental cause of his identity crisis is the persistent ridicule and prejudice he endures at the hands of others, which deprives him of the fundamental dignity that every human being is entitled to. Tobin Siebers, an advocate for acknowledging the influence of physical appearance on societal perceptions, examines in his 2005 book "Disability Aesthetics" the complexities of human reactions and society's propensity to remedy perceived defects. The notion put forth by Siebers that aesthetics unveils the complex interaction of emotions when diverse bodies are present is apparent in the responses he received towards Animal and his subsequent thoughts [26]. Due to this mistreatment, Animal develops animalistic tendencies, which earn him derogatory monikers and compel him to forage for food on the streets. The man's deeds exemplify the significant impact that societal perspectives have on the preservation of dignity when confronted with dehumanizing treatment. Conversely, Animal experiences an enduring state of ambiguity concerning religion, pondering his affiliation, if any. The individual unequivocally denounces the concept of religious affiliation, contending that religious observances are of no importance to him in his capacity as an animal. He asserts categorically, "I do not identify as a Muslim." I do not follow the Hindu faith. Not being a Christian. I identify as an animal. "It would be untrue to say that religion had no significance for me" (Animal's People 14). The notion of reincarnation contributes in part to his antipathy toward religion; he finds it abhorrent to contemplate having to endure yet another existence filled with anguish. He states, "According to everyone I speak with, the primary purpose of religion appears to be to avoid death and resurrect, either here or in heaven." "Thank you, but I have no desire for another life, especially if that is anything like this one" (Animal's People 207). He must adapt and learn new methods to navigate life as his body undergoes mutation and transformation, including the ability to walk on all fours like an animal. He progressively adopts this animalistic persona, which is reinforced by the villagers' categorization of him as such. A violent confrontation in which he assaults a young child serves to emphasize this metamorphosis, drawing parallels to the predatory conduct of a wild animal. Notwithstanding his endeavors to manifest his human nature, individuals in his vicinity persistently label him an animal, thereby reinforcing his animalistic persona. However, Animal was not universally regarded as a pariah or treated with contempt. Nisha was the initial individual to demonstrate authentic concern for him. She regarded him as a fellow human being and addressed him by name straightforwardly and sincerely, devoid of any semblance of ridicule. Zafar was another individual who demonstrated benevolence towards animals. Animal was not perceived by Zafar or Nisha as an animal, but rather as an individual confronting physical obstacles [27]. Animal was consoled by Zafar's reaffirmation of his humanity, which read, "You are a human being deserving of dignity and respect"

(Animal's People 23). Zafar provided Animal with employment assistance to aid in his recovery from adversity and facilitate his future development. Animal was exhorted by another character to abandon the label of "animal" and adopt his human nature. Zafar advocated for Animal's autonomy in determining his name, thereby granting him the capacity to establish his sense of self. Asserting the importance of a name in human identity, Zafar's action signifies the initial phase in Animal's assimilation into the human race.

Nisha undertakes the task of imparting literacy skills to Animal as part of her efforts to foster in him a consciousness and sense of human identity. Following an initial mastery of his own name's orthography, Animal progressively advanced to the task of deciphering signage. "I mastered the spelling of my given name, jaanvar, which means animal" (Animal's People 35). Although Animal was reluctant to accept any moniker besides "jaanvar" or "animal," Nisha contributed a viewpoint that inspired a sense of pride. She elaborated that the term "jaanvar" signifies an individual who possesses vitality, as "jaan" literally translates to "life." "Life? I have never met an individual with as much jaan as you; you are brimming with it." (Animal's People 35). As his humanity was progressively acknowledged, feelings of emotion and affection surfaced, specifically towards Nisha. Animal reached a critical juncture with this revelation, as he came to the understanding that animals cannot undergo such emotions. "I consciously rejected the notion that I was developing emotions towards Nisha" (Animal's People 39). In contrast to Nisha's viewpoint, Farouq contends that Animal's self-identification as an animal function as a strategy to circumvent the obligations of existence and endure a life of leisure, notwithstanding the profound destitution and subsequent complaints that accompany it. Nevertheless, Animal vigorously challenges this concept, contending that his conduct originates from an inability to acknowledge the physical abnormalities he perceives. "If I agree to be a human being, I must also concede that I am malformed and abnormal," he contends. However, allow me to be a quatre pattes animal, which is merely an animal species distinct from, say, a camel or a cow" (Animal's People 208). This paragraph exemplifies the anguish and psychological turmoil that Animal endures as a result of his own perception and physical presentation. Due to the lack of an erect posture that he associates with humans and his resemblance to animals, he considers himself more closely related to an animal than a human. Within the context of this postcolonial narrative, Animal's sense of self is perpetually uncertain, oscillating between his animalistic appearance and his intense yearning for human compassion, especially from Nisha [28]. Although he desires to transcend poverty and complete his love for Nisha by becoming human, he harbours a sense of honour in his animalic form. Despite this, he struggles with contradictory desires and is compelled by society to adhere to conventional human values. Notwithstanding his internal conflicts, he encounters considerable difficulty in relinquishing his animalistic sense of self. The aforementioned internal struggle is underscored in his inquiry to Zafar regarding his ideal on-screen persona—be it that of a sorrowful child or a wretched animal. Animal's predicament unites him with a profound sense of suffering and anguish that permeates his being. These emotions originate from the romanticized conception of the human form that he harbours in his thoughts. Animal considers the human form to be inherently erect, propelled by two legs rather than all fours, as he stands. As a result, his stronger identification with animals stems from their physical resemblance. The motif of transition is a defining characteristic of postcolonial literature. In Animal's People (47), the protagonist's identity consistently shifts between human and animal personas, as demonstrated in his dialogue with Nisha: "I am not a man." Although he dislikes being classified as human, he desperately desires human emotions and affection, which is motivated primarily by his deep devotion to Nisha. Identity, in its universally acknowledged form, confers upon individuals a perception of authority, influence, and value. However, Animal's perverted form deprives him of these attributes, inciting him to yearn to be human—specifically to wed Nisha and live a traditional existence devoid of foraging for sustenance. However, he additionally exhibits a sense of self-satisfaction by composing a song that commemorates his peculiar appearance, which resembles that of an animal: "I am crooked, a nightmare child, fed on hunger and lacking affection and cuddles" (Animal's People 172). Animal, notwithstanding his internal turmoil, grapples with the challenge of relinquishing the self-imposed label of an animal and recognizes the arduousness of reclaiming his human identity: "I ought to cease conceptualizing myself as an animal and revert to my human form" (Animal's People 207). This conflict is exemplified when he inquires of Zafar whether, according to the footage captured by surveillance cameras, he would be perceived as a "miserable animal or a miserable boy" (Animal's People 115).

4. Contextualizing the Ecological Disaster in 'Animal's People'

The ecological disaster is situated in the aftermath of the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984 in "Animal's People" by Indra Sinha. The novel explores the catastrophic environmental damage in-depth, depicting the hazardous consequences that not only cause physical separation but also severe individuals' ties to their surroundings, resulting in a deep-seated sense of loss and displacement [29]. Sinha's narrative delves into the extensive

ramifications of the industrial catastrophe, emphasizing its profound influence on the lives and identities of the story's characters. Moreover, the novel illuminates the socio-political and environmental determinants that contribute to the characters' identity crisis and displacement following the ecological catastrophe. How Sinha depicts the Bhopal catastrophe enables the reader to comprehend the intricate relationship between ecological emergencies, human identities, and societal frameworks. Through skillful interweaving of the characters' struggles and the overarching ramifications of the catastrophe, Sinha encourages readers to contemplate the profound consequences that ecological disasters impose on both individuals and communities. This underscores the critical nature of environmental justice and accountability as we confront such atrocities.

4.1. Analyze The Bhopal Gas Tragedy

Animal, the narrator of *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha, reflects on his youth, stating that he was six years old at the onset of the physical discomforts: "[a] burning in my neck and across my shoulders" [30]. As if "a devil... with red-hot tongs" were shaping his spinal column into a permanent bow, the "pain grasped my neck and forced it down," he recalls: "Further, I was bent; when the smelting in my spine ceased, the bones had twisted like hairpins; the highest part of me was my arse" (15). The industrial terminology of material design—"smelting heat" and "red hot tongs"—is applied to the "neck," "shoulders," "spine," and "arse" in this context. The ingress of industrial heat into living organisms, specifically a metallurgical fever that internally recasts and relaxes the structure of the vertebrae, causes significant damage to the body of an animal. This posture symbolizes an alternative "factory life" in which a "burning in the muscles" is not the result of long hours of repetitive labor, but rather of the factory worker residing as a chemical prosthetic who traverses the animal, touching and igniting his concealed interior, neurological, and genetic selves. The metaphorical nature of the chemical heat discharge from factories to bodies is not the case with the transformation described in *Animal's People* [31]. In essence, Sinha's novel is a barely fictionalized retelling of an industrial calamity that occurred in Bhopal, India, thirty years ago and is still ongoing. Untold tonnes of toxic chemicals have leaked from a pesticide factory owned by Union Carbide and Dow Chemical (two US-based multinational petrochemical and biotechnology corporations) into that city since December 1984. The initial airborne exposure to methyl isocyanate (MIC) resulted in the asphyxiation of approximately 4,000 to 8,000 individuals. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Bhopal persistently endure a disproportionately high incidence of various malignancies, including "birth defects," cleft palates, tumorous growths, severe eye pain, respiratory complications, and neurological disorders. Despite an abundance of evidence, Union Carbide, the Indian government, and Dow Chemical have all refused to acknowledge the presence or health effects of MIC in Bhopal's water supply. The industrial facility, the chemical compounds, and the inhabitants of Bhopal, which were once integral components of an economically beneficial venture, have been neglected by their corporate backers, the national government, and the legal systems of both India and the United States.

4.2 The Interplay of Socio-Political and Environmental Forces

The characters' encounters with displacement and identity crisis in "*Animal's People*" by Indra Sinha are intricately linked with socio-political and environmental circumstances. The novel explores the consequences of the Bhopal catastrophe, shedding light on the profound effects that industrial negligence can have on the lives and identities of individuals [32]. The imposition of Western governance structures and socio-political factors, including the repercussions of colonialism, contribute to the characters' sense of displacement and loss of identity. These various factors influence how individuals perceive themselves in the context of society and undermine cultural continuity. Furthermore, ambient factors exert a substantial influence on the formation of the characters' experiences. The novel effectively depicts the ecological devastation resulting from the Bhopal catastrophe, thereby demonstrating the direct consequences of ecological destruction—displacement and a deep-seated sense of alienation and absence of belonging. In addition to displacing individuals physically, the hazardous consequences of the catastrophe disrupt their connection to their surroundings, which exacerbates their sense of detachment and lack of identity. In "*Animal's People*," the characters' journeys of isolation and personal transformation are profoundly intertwined with the ecological consequences of industrial catastrophes such as Bhopal, the societal and political ramifications of colonialism, and the overarching concerns of cultural turmoil and environmental deterioration.

5. The Transformative Journey of Animal

The narrative of "*Animal's People*" intricately weaves Animal's journey around the Bhopal gas catastrophe, an event that profoundly influences his identity and sense of belonging in the world. Animal, having been adversely affected by the industrial incident, experiences a profound metamorphosis which results in his

renunciation of his human persona and acceptance of a bond with animals—a blurring of the distinctions between human and non-human entities [33]. Animal experiences both physical and emotional debilitation as a result of the catastrophe; he develops a deep-seated estrangement from human society and a yearning to survive as an untamed creature in the forest, untainted by the detrimental impacts of industrialization [34]. Animal's personal growth and a reevaluation of his identity are significantly propelled by the detrimental consequences of the Bhopal catastrophe. The individual's aversion to fellow beings and fondness for animals can be interpreted as reactions to the environmental injustice and psychological distress caused by the industrial accident. Animal, in search of solace and companionship, establishes a habitat in the forest and forms relationships with animals, both of which provide him with a greater sense of acceptance and comprehension than his current society. Furthermore, Animal's perception of the universe and his position within it are altered by the catastrophe. This experience cultivates within him a profound sense of unity with all sentient beings, underscoring the interdependence of life types and the critical nature of impartiality and reciprocal regard transcending species barriers. Animal's expedition not only prompts him to confront his identity but also to question established societal conventions and principles, thereby promoting the cause of a more harmonious shared existence between fauna and man. Fundamentally, "Animal's People" delves into Animal's arduous journey through the repercussions of the Bhopal catastrophe on him. Beyond the physical and emotional torment, the disaster instigates a profound metamorphosis in his perception of self, identity, and belonging in a world ravaged by human exploitation and environmental destruction.

5.1 Character Reactions in the Aftermath: Animal's People

The aftermath of the Bhopal gas tragedy profoundly shapes the characters' complex reactions to the catastrophe and their quest for a sense of inclusion amidst disorder in "Animal's People" by Indra Sinha. An individual of significance is Somraj Pandit, a neighbourhood music instructor whose capacity to perform is profoundly affected by the catastrophe, which consequently transforms his sense of self and mission. The broader theme of loss and the struggle for normalcy in the face of environmental devastation is reflected in his experience. Moreover, Nisha, the progeny of Somraj, personifies qualities of fortitude and adjustment in the aftermath of the catastrophe. Through her interactions with Animal and her adeptness at navigating the disorder of Khaufpur, she exhibits a yearning for companionship and a sense of belonging in the industrial incident's tumult. Expounding on the complexities of reestablishing community and discovering one's position in a disrupted environment [35], Nisha's presence emphasizes the significance of human connections and solidarity during times of crisis. In addition, Animal's persona exemplifies a distinctive reaction to the catastrophe through his repudiation of human identity and acceptance of a bond with animals. The individual's process of coming to terms with his disability and embracing it as an intrinsic aspect of himself exemplifies an alternative perspective on belonging that transcends conventional social norms and embraces a more comprehensive notion of community and identity. Animal's quest for a sense of belonging in disorder is distinguished by his defiance of societal norms and his efforts to establish relationships with the natural world; this exemplifies the profound impact that fortitude and self-acceptance can have when confronted with hardship [36]. The characters in "Animal's People" confront a range of reactions to the catastrophe, as they individually navigate challenges related to their sense of self, inclusion, and significance within a society afflicted by ecological inequity and profound social change. Their respective expeditions illuminate the intricacies of the human condition following calamity, revealing the fortitude, flexibility, and interdependence that manifest in the face of disorder and unpredictability.

6. Narrative Strategies

Themes of identity and affinity are conveyed through Indra Sinha's "Animal's People" through the use of multifaceted narrative techniques. A noteworthy literary device is the protagonist Animal's utilization of a first-person monologue. This device grants readers an intimate understanding of his thoughts, emotions, and experiences, thereby cultivating a profound sense of empathy and establishing a connection with his persona. Through the use of Animal's point of view as the story's narrator, Sinha effectively engrosses the audience in the protagonist's distinct worldview, thereby emphasizing his challenges about identity and his quest for a sense of belonging during the Bhopal catastrophe [37]. By establishing a direct channel for Animal's voice, this technique not only enriches the narrative but also emphasizes the significance of being a witness to his experiences, thereby highlighting the themes of identity and belonging within the framework of a marginalized community coping with the consequences of a catastrophic event.

6.2 Narrative Voice and Perspective: Immersion in Animal's World

Voice and Perspective: The novel employs a narrative voice that is predominantly expressed by the protagonist Animal, providing readers with a distinctive vantage point from which to observe the experiences of the characters. Animal's journey of self-realization and identity transformation after the traumatic events of the catastrophe is illuminated through a profound examination of his innermost thoughts, emotions, and struggles, made possible by the first-person point of view. Through the utilization of Animal's voice, Sinha effectively engrosses the audience in the world of the protagonist, facilitating a deeper comprehension of his seclusion from human identity and his profound affinity for animals as a reaction to the environmental injustice that has been perpetrated against him [38]. Beyond imbuing Animal with humanity, this narrative technique illuminates the intricacies of constructing one's identity in the aftermath of a catastrophe and the quest for a sense of belonging in disorder.

Language: In conveying the experiences of the characters and the themes of identity and belonging, the novel's language is an extremely potent instrument. Animal's rejection of societal conventions and acceptance of a non-human persona is reflected in Sinha's linguistic selection, specifically in Animal's dialogue and interior monologues [39]. Animal's choice to abandon human linguistic conventions in favor of an animalistic, primordial mode of communication serves as a representation of his estrangement from traditional human society and his pursuit of a more profound rapport with the natural world. In addition, the characters' lives and identities were profoundly affected by the Bhopal gas tragedy, as evidenced by the sense of urgency, trauma, and loss elicited by the language used to characterize the environmental devastation. In general, "Animal's People" effectively employs voice, perspective, and language to develop a nuanced understanding of the characters' experiences and the intricate process of constructing one's identity following a catastrophic incident.

6.4 Identity Formation in the Aftermath of Trauma

Characters' perceptions of self, relationships, and belonging are profoundly influenced by the narrative complexities of identity formation in "Animal's People," which Indra Sinha skillfully interweaves with the themes of trauma and loss. The novel's characters, including Animal, Nisha, and others, confront the consequences of the Bhopal gas catastrophe, an eerie incident that permanently marries their sense of self [40]. Animal, the protagonist, experiences a significant metamorphosis as a result of the catastrophe. By choosing to forgo traditional medical procedures in favor of accepting his disability, he confronts societal conventions and exhibits defiance against the pressure to adhere to established expectations. Animal's embrace of an animalistic persona serves as a symbolic representation of his coping strategy following a traumatic incident, shedding light on the intricate process of reconstructing one's identity in the wake of such a catastrophe. His transformation from estrangement and mistrust to fortitude and interpersonal connection exemplifies the complex process of identity development in the face of adversity and bereavement. Following the catastrophe, Nisha, Zafar, and several other characters also transform their sense of self. Their capacity to endure and adjust to the disorder in Khaufpur exemplifies their yearning for companionship and inclusion within a community afflicted by hardship. The significance of communal support in shaping individual identities and assisting with the complexities of life after a calamity is reflected in the bonds that form between individuals. In the face of adversity, the transformative power of human connections and solidarity is highlighted by the characters' reactions to trauma and loss. In "Animal's People," the examination of identity development within the framework of bereavement and trauma reveals the complex interaction between individual hardships, communal obligations, and the quest for significance and companionship in a world afflicted by tragedy. The novel effectively depicts the characters' capacity for perseverance, susceptibility, and progressive development of identity as they navigate the arduous process of reconstructing their lives following a catastrophic catastrophe.

7. Discussion

The novel "Animal's People" by Indra Sinha delves into the impact of the Bhopal gas disaster on personal identities, particularly for characters like Animal, Nisha, and Maa Francis. Traumatic experiences intersect with disability, blurring the lines between physical and psychological identity. Academic analysis expands the notion of disability to include trauma and memory, emphasizing their role in identity formation. The characters, especially Animal, undergo a reconfiguration of identity post-disaster, merging 'self' and 'other'. The narrative explores the dichotomy between animality and humanity, challenging anthropocentric perspectives. Ultimately, it promotes a holistic understanding of identity that recognizes interdependence among species and environments. "Animal's People" offers insight into trauma, identity, and inclusion in the aftermath of ecological catastrophe. The narrative skillfully blurs the lines between non-human things, disabled people, and humans, challenging identity. The protagonist's unclear sense of place challenges animal and human stereotypes through spatial linkages and environmental factors. The complex identity politics of industrial disasters are explored in

"Animal's People". Finally, disability and identity discourse in the context of ecological catastrophe provides a complex understanding of trauma, identity development, and meaning in adversity.

8. Conclusion

In summary, "Animal's People" by Indra Sinha presents a thought-provoking examination of the complex interplay between disability and identity during an ecological catastrophe. Sinha sheds light on the difficulties encountered by individuals with disabilities in a critically degraded environment using the depiction of characters contending with the consequences of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. The narrative not only explores the individual challenges faced by characters such as Animal but also emphasizes the wider social and environmental consequences that disability can have. Through the integration of disability studies, ecological criticism, and identity theory, this scholarly investigation has furnished a comprehensive and intricate evaluation of Sinha's portrayal of disability and identity in the novel. By conducting meticulous textual examination and thematic investigation, this inquiry has revealed the intricate nature of disability representation and identity negotiation within the framework of ecological crisis. As a consequence, a more profound comprehension of the intricate relationship between personal identity, societal dynamics, and environmental challenges has been attained. The overarching objective of this inquiry is to foster dialogue and increase consciousness regarding the intricate relationship between identity, disability, ecological crisis, and modern literature and society.

9. Reference:

1. Akshata, Pai. "The Anthropocene as Impasse: Optimism, cynicism, and the desire for justice in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, null (2023). doi: 10.59045/nalans.2023.22
2. Kári, Driscoll. "Editors' Introduction." *Feminist media histories*, 8 (2022):1-15. doi: 10.1525/fmh.2022.8.1.1
3. Kylie, Crane. "Displacements: Framing (and) Ruins in John Berger's *King* and Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Volume!*, 7 (2021). doi: 10.16995/OLH.633
4. Alex, Girona, Salmerón. "Human or Animal - Duality and Identity in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Indialogs: Spanish Journal of India Studies*, 5 (2018):117-120. doi: 10.5565/REV/INDIALOGS.105
5. Oriol, Jiménez, Batalla. "Human vs. Non-Human: An analysis of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* and the limits of the notion of Human.." *Indialogs: Spanish Journal of India Studies*, 5 (2018):121-126. doi: 10.5565/REV/INDIALOGS.102
6. Krishna, Anchitha. "Damaged Environment and Diseased Bodies in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*: A Material Ecocritical Reading." *IUP Journal of English Studies* 17.4 (2022): 102-112.
7. Singh, Julietta. "Post-Humanitarian Fictions." *symplokē* 23.1-2 (2015): 137-152.
8. Kim, Jina B. "People of the Apokalis': Spatial Disability and the Bhopal Disaster." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 34.3 (2014).
9. Alam, Muhammad Manzur. *Eco-material Rifts in South Asian Anglophone Fiction*. West Virginia University, 2022.
10. Misra, Maitrayee. "Paired with the impaired: disability, disaster and the role of the nation in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Postcolonial Studies* (2024): 1-16.
11. Shoba, K. N. "An Ecosomatic Investigation of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*: Reading Disability through Environmental Justice Studies." *Teresian Journal of English Studies* 15.3 (2023): 6-20.
12. Sarkar, Barnali. "Animals in the Locality: Environmental Disaster, Disability and Human–Animal Spatial Identity Politics in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* (2007)." *Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences* 5.2 (2022): 9-17.
13. Sharma, Kamal. "Blurring the Human-Animal Dichotomy: A Deep Ecological Reading of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *The Outlook: Journal of English Studies* (2022): 75-88.
14. Basumatary, Deepak. "The Violated Body: Human Rights in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 11.1 (2019).
15. Kosar, Tasneem, Hira Yaqoob, and Ghulam Mohiuddin. "REPRESENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME AND STRUGGLE FOR ECO-JUSTICE IN ANIMAL'S PEOPLE BY SINHA: AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS." *Inception-Journal of Languages and Literature* 1.2 (2021): 55-66.
16. Donig, Deb. "Seeing double in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*: Local toxins, global toxicity and the universal Bhopal." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54.4 (2018): 528-541.

17. Rahman, F. "Save the world versus man-made disaster: A cultural perspective." IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science, 2019, 235, 012071. DOI: 10.1088/1755-1315/235/1/012071.
18. McNab, Chris. *World's Worst Historical Disasters: Natural and Man-made Catastrophes from the Ancient World to the Present day*. Amber Books, 2020.
19. Mannur, Anita. "'That Night': Seeing Bhopal through the lens of Disability and Environmental Justice Studies." *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an EcoCrip Theory*, Sarah Jaquette Ray and Jay Sibara (Eds). University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London, 2017.
20. Nixon, R. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011. doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674061194.
21. Hall, Alice. *Literature and Disability*. Routledge, 2016.
22. Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Theory*. The University of Michigan Press, 2008.
23. Barnes, Colin, and G. Mercer. *Disability*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2003.
24. Anand, Shilpaa. "Historicising Disability in India: Questions of Subject and Method." *Disability Studies in India*, Mehrotra, N (ed). Springer, 2020, pp. 35-60
25. Sirsi, Chinmayi. *Between Agency and Exhaustion: Indian Anglophone Literature and the Neoliberal Subject*. Diss. University of Southern California, 2017.
26. Yorke, Stephanie. *Disability, normalcy, and the failures of the nation: A reading of selected fiction by Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Indra Sinha, and Firdaus Kanga*. Diss. University of Oxford, 2015.
27. Balkan, Stacey. "A Memento Mori Tale: Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* and the Politics of Global Toxicity." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 25.1 (2018): 115-133.
28. Shelton, Allison Elizabeth Nowak. *Reading Environmental Relations In Contemporary Indian Fiction In English*. Diss. University of Colorado, 2019.
29. Oh, Rebecca Sohee. "States of Complaint: Dissatisfied Citizenship, Environmental Harm, and the Demand for Welfare in Global South Literature, 1956-2017." (2018).
30. Sinha, Indra. 2007. *Animal's People*. London: Simon and Schuster. Sinha, Indra. 2007. *Animal's People*. London: Simon and Schuster.
31. Vincent, Suhasini. "A solastalgic reading of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Postcolonial Cultures Studies and Essays* 2 (2023): 104-118.
32. Banzhaf, H. Spencer, Lala Ma, and Christopher Timmins. "Environmental justice: Establishing causal relationships." *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 11 (2019): 377-398.
33. Pruszinski, Emily S. "Producing Solidarities: Theological Reflections on Humanity and Ecology in *Animal's People*." *Religions* 12.8 (2021): 664
34. Sriphuthorn, Sirawit. "The representation of Animal and "non-human" characters in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." (2021).
35. Johnston, Justin Omar, and Justin Omar Johnston. "Toxic Bodies: Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Posthuman Capital and Biotechnology in Contemporary Novels* (2019): 103-131.
36. Baker, Hannah C. "Bodies Unbroken: Disability in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* and Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love*." (2016).
37. Khan, Md Rakibul Hasan. *Hope in the Anthropocene: Eco-collectivism and twenty-first century South Asian novels in English*. Diss. University of Otago, 2023.
38. Jnawali, Parbin. *Critique of Normalcy in Indra Sinha's Animal's People*. Diss. Department of English, 2014.
39. Hivale, Gajanan T. *Animals in Indian English poetry*. Lulu. com, 2019.
40. Chowdhury, Kanishka, and Kanishka Chowdhury. "'Tomorrow There Will Be More of Us': Rights Discourse, the State, and Toxic Capitalism in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Human Rights Discourse in the Post-9/11 Age* (2019): 149-185.