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THE REPRESENTATION OF ANIMAL AND “NON-
HUMAN” CHARACTERS IN INDRA SINHA’S *ANIMAL’S
PEOPLE*



An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in English
Department of English
FACULTY OF ARTS
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2021
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การนำเสนอภาพของแอนิเมลและตัวละคร “ที่ไม่ใช่มนุษย์” ในนวนิยายเรื่อง *Animal's People* ของ อินทระ สิงห์



สารนิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ภาควิชาภาษาอังกฤษ
คณะอักษรศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
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Independent Study Title	THE REPRESENTATION OF ANIMAL AND “NON-HUMAN” CHARACTERS IN INDRA SINHA’S <i>ANIMAL’S PEOPLE</i>
By	Mr. Sirawit Sriphuthorn
Field of Study	English
Thesis Advisor	Associate Professor DARIN PRADITTATSANEE, Ph.D.

Accepted by the FACULTY OF ARTS, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master of Arts

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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

ศิริวิทย์ ศรีภูธร : การนำเสนอภาพของแอนิเมลและตัวละคร “ที่ไม่ใช่มนุษย์” ในนวนิยายเรื่อง *Animal's People* ของ อินทระ สิงห์. (THE REPRESENTATION OF ANIMAL AND “NON-HUMAN” CHARACTERS IN INDRA SINHA’S *ANIMAL’S PEOPLE*) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : รศ. ดร.ดารินทร์ ประดิษฐ์ทัศนีย์

สารนิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มุ่งศึกษาการนำเสนอภาพของตัวละครเอก แอนิเมล และตัวละคร “ที่ไม่ใช่มนุษย์” ในนวนิยายเรื่อง *Animal's People* ของอินทระ สิงห์ (ค.ศ. 2007) งานวิจัยอภิปรายถึงแง่มุมอันหลากหลายที่ดัวบทตั้งคำถามกับกรอบความคิดที่สังคมประกอบสร้างขึ้นเกี่ยวกับ “ความเป็นมนุษย์” และ “ความเป็นสัตว์” และนำกรอบความคิดนี้ไปใช้อย่างแยบยลในการสร้างภาพตัวละครดังกล่าว สารนิพนธ์เสนอว่าสิ่งท้าทายที่จะรื้อการคิดแบบชั่วคราวข้าม ซึ่งการคิดเช่นนั้นนอกจากจะก่อให้เกิดการสร้างการแบ่งแยกระหว่างมนุษย์และสัตว์แล้ว ยังสนับสนุนการครอบครองโลกตะวันออกของชาวตะวันตกอีกด้วย สารนิพนธ์เสนอว่าแอนิเมลผู้ซึ่งมีร่างกายผิดปกติร่างอันเนื่องมาจากการสัมผัสกับก๊าซพิษ ต้องทุกข์ทรมานกับความรู้สึกแปลกแยกทั้งจากตนเองและสังคมมนุษย์ โดยสาเหตุหลักมาจากการมองโลกแบบชั่วคราวข้ามของเขา สารนิพนธ์อภิปรายว่าปฏิสัมพันธ์ของแอนิเมลกับมนุษย์และตัวละคร “ที่ไม่ใช่มนุษย์” ช่วยให้เขาสร้างอัตลักษณ์ขึ้นมาใหม่ได้อย่างไร นอกจากนี้ สารนิพนธ์นี้เสนอว่าสิ่งท้าทายในการนำเสนอภาพแอนิเมลและตัวละคร “ที่ไม่ใช่มนุษย์” ในการชี้ให้เห็นถึงปัญหาความอยุติธรรมทางกฎหมายและทางสิ่งแวดล้อมในประเทศอินเดียยุคหลังอาณานิคมได้อย่างไร ที่ท้ายที่สุด สารนิพนธ์เสนอความคิดที่ว่าแอนิเมลใช้ตัวตนใหม่ของเขาเป็นสะพานเชื่อมโยงสรรพชีวิตเข้าด้วยกันโดยไม่คำนึงถึงสายพันธุ์ สิ่งนี้เสนอสังคมแบบใหม่ที่ทุกชีวิตดำรงอยู่อย่างเท่าเทียมผ่านการนำเสนอภาพที่สอดคล้องกันของแอนิเมลกับตัวละครที่เป็นมนุษย์และ “ที่ไม่ใช่มนุษย์”

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สาขาวิชา ภาษาอังกฤษ
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Sirawit Sripithorn : THE REPRESENTATION OF ANIMAL AND
“NON-HUMAN” CHARACTERS IN INDRA SINHA’S *ANIMAL’S
PEOPLE*. Advisor: Assoc. Prof. DARIN PRADITTATSANEE, Ph.D.

This paper aims at examining the representation of Animal, the protagonist, and “non-human” characters in Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* (2007). It discusses various ways in which the socially constructed concepts of “humanity” and “animality” are called into question and strategically deployed in the portrayal of these characters. It argues that Sinha attempts to dismantle binary thinking which not only constitutes the distinction between the human and the animal but also underpins the West’s domination of the East. More specifically, the paper argues that Animal whose deformity is caused by exposure to the toxic gas suffers from alienation—both from himself and from human society—mainly because of his binary view. It also discusses how Animal’s interactions with humans and “non-humans” help him reconstruct his identity. Furthermore, this paper displays how Sinha uses the representations of Animal and “non-human” characters to point out the problems of legal and environmental injustice in postcolonial India. Finally, it argues that Animal uses his new self as a bridge to connect all entities regardless of species. Through the portrayal of the intertwined lives of Animal and human as well as “non-human” characters, Sinha suggests a new kind of society in which all lives are equal.



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I am responsible for any errors in this research paper.

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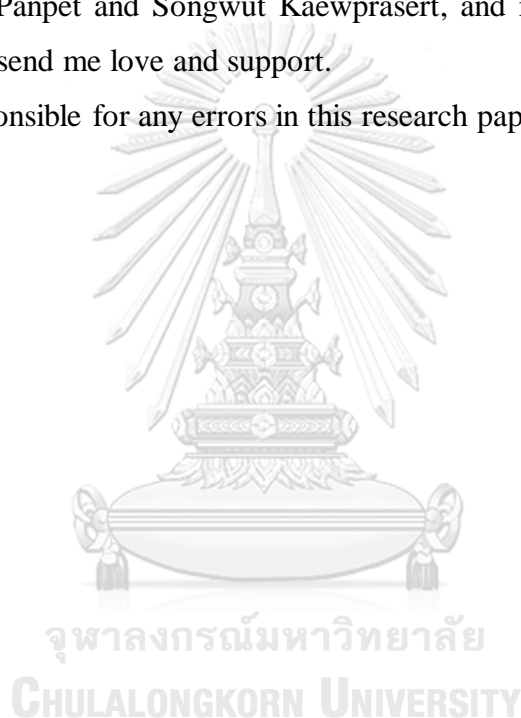


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The Representation of Animal and “Non-human” Characters in Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People*

Introduction

Indra Sinha¹’s *Animal’s People* (2007) is a fictional reworking of the Bhopal disaster. The novel illustrates the aftermath of the industrial accident which took place in the city of Bhopal, India, on the night of December 3, 1984. On that night, a pesticide plant owned by the Indian subsidiary of the American firm, Union Carbide, exploded. The factory leaked a large number of dangerous gases, mainly composed of methyl isocyanate (MIC), which spread over the slums around the factory. Since the location of the factory was so close to the community of the poor Bhopalis, the toxic gases affected an estimated two hundred thousand people. In the article “‘Tomorrow There Will Be More of Us’: Toxic Postcoloniality in *Animal’s People*” (2011), Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, a professor and critic on contemporary Indian novels written in English, sums up that “between five and ten thousand people were killed immediately, with a further sixty thousand sustaining injuries and a significant number succumbing to these over the next days, months, and years” (216). Because of its aftermath, the Bhopal tragedy is considered one of the world’s most notorious industrial disasters. In addition to a number of the victims, its infamy is the injustice that the American company has inflicted upon the Bhopalis. After the explosion, Union Carbide has remained irresponsible for the accident.

¹ Indra Sinha (1950-) is a British writer of Indian and English descent. He is a former copywriter who is deeply interested in the Bhopal tragedy. He has been a passionate campaigner for justice for the victims of the incident. He fund-raised to help build a clinic providing free medical care for those affected by the disaster. In addition to *Animal’s People*, he also wrote a number of articles regarding this incident and its effects upon the Bhopal citizens.

In his article “Bhopal: 25 Years of Poison” (2009), not only does Sinha reveal the horrifying description of “that night” but he also emphasizes the irresponsibility of Union Carbide and its owner, the Dow Chemical Company. Sinha discloses the fact that Union Carbide refused to release the information of the leaked gases. Therefore, the hospitals were filled with deaths because doctors did not know how to treat the victims. Although, since 2001, Union Carbide has been requested to publicize the study of the effects of MIC, Sinha says, still “Union Carbide would not release the information, claiming it was a ‘trade secret’.” Moreover, even “today in Bhopal, more than 100,000 people remain chronically ill,” Sinha reports. The victims have received neither medical help nor compensation. Sinha also emphasizes that what the company paid by no means matched what the Bhopal victims deserved: “the compensation paid by Union Carbide, meant to last the rest of their lives, averaged some £300 a head: taken over 25 years that works out at around 7p a day, enough perhaps for a cup of tea” .

The Bhopal disaster exemplifies a new kind of the West’s oppression of Indian people. Although India has gained its independence from the United Kingdom since 1947, India, in the postcolonial era, has still been exploited by Western colonial power. Colonization does not disappear after independence; Indian people now still encounter a new kind of colonial struggles that are more complex than before. In his book *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (2010), Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee proposes that the prefix “post” in “postcolonial” does not suggest the end of colonialism, but it is “an end of a particular mode of colonialism which then shifts its gears and evolves to another stage” (6). The new stage which Mukherjee refers to is neo-colonization, the new

colonization that is embodied in socio-economic power. In other words, in postcolonial India, the colonization has not disappeared, but it manifests itself as a discourse of development which is grounded upon the binary opposition of the rich/the poor and developed/undeveloped countries. He illustrates how neo-colonialism works by referring to the case of the Bhopal tragedy:

When an Indian pesticide factory leaks lethal gas that kills and maims thousands, its victims find out that it is owned by an American concern who are not answerable to an Indian court and whose pitiful compensation offer is deemed adequate by Indian politicians and judges (later discovered to be ‘friendly’ to the company) who are themselves unaffected by the accident --- such is a portrait in miniature (each passing day yields a million different ones) of neo-colonialism. (6)

It is worth noting that a group of people severely oppressed by neo-colonization are the poor. In this case, on the one hand, the impoverished Bhopalis have suffered so long from the aftermath of the accidents without adequate help. On the other hand, they also are oppressed by their government. The politicians and the courts prove to be corrupt because they also get benefits from facilitating this exploitation. Thereby, the poor have to fight by themselves—yet to no avail since they have no power. This endless and desperate fight for environmental justice is highlighted in Sinha’s renowned novel, *Animal’s People*.

Told from the point of view of a nineteen-year-old narrator, Animal, *Animal’s People* is Sinha’s fictionalization of the Bhopal disaster. The novel is set twenty years after the gas explosion at the plant of the Kampani located in the fictional city of Khaufpur. Animal is one of the accident’s victims. He has been left an orphan, and at

the age of six, his spine is twisted as a result of the gas leak to the point where he has to walk on all fours. Animal is approached by an Australian journalist, who comes to Khaufpur to collect stories for his new book about the story of “that night,” to recount and record his story on audio tapes. The journalist wants to publicize Animal’s story, for he says to Chunaram, a local dealer, that “he has never found such honesty as in that filth of [Animal’s]” (7). Although Animal is suspicious of the journalist’s ulterior motive, he agrees to record his story under the condition that “apart from translating [from Hindi] to English, nothing has been changed” (the Editor’s Note). Animal’s stories focus on his relationship with various groups of the Khaufpuris: the poor, activists, government officials, and foreigners. In the beginning, Animal introduces himself, on the ground of his appearance, as an “animal,” and separates himself from human society. However, he gradually develops relationships with Nisha, her father Somraj, and his friend Zafar. Because of Nisha’s suggestion, Animal works as part of Zafar’s activist group to fight for the Khaufpuris against the Kampani. Therefore, the story mainly captures the Khaufpuris’ fight for justice to bring the boss of the Kampani to stand trial in the Indian court. Moreover, not only does Animal’s life revolve around the Khaufpuris but it is also intertwined with Elli, an American doctor who comes to Khaufpur with a benevolent intention to build a free clinic. She wants to help the impoverished Khaufpuris who have been long affected by the explosion by providing them with medical treatment.

In revealing the victimization of the Khaufpuris and their resistance to legal and environmental injustice, *Animal’s People* focuses on the portrayal of the victims, especially Animal, who are severely affected by the toxic chemical leak. Several critics tend to examine the politics of the representation of Animal’s body. They

consider Sinha's portrayal of Animal's body as conveying symbolic meaning. For example, Adele Holoch's "Profanity and the Grotesque in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*" (2016) discusses the use of profanity and the grotesque as a tool to blur the boundaries which separate the subaltern figures from international readers. Holoch contends that Sinha uses profanity and the grotesque to invoke readers' horror and laughter through Animal's self-abjection. Another article that focuses on the portrayal of Animal's body is Justin Omar Johnston's "A Nother World" in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*" (2016). Johnston examines Sinha's use of the industrial language of material design to describe parts of Animal's body that can be interpreted as a new kind of factory life. He interprets Animal's body as "a thinly fictionalized account of a very real and ongoing thirty-year-old industrial catastrophe in Bhopal, India" (118). In a similar vein, Délice Williams's "Spectacular Subjects: Abjection, Agency, and Embodiment in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*" (2018) argues that Sinha mobilizes the abject by depicting bodies of disaster victims and their allies as an opposite mode which offers "a possible ground of resistance to neo-colonial configurations of power" (586). He points out that the bodies of the victims are used as a "crucial rhetorical element" to present marginalized people's fight against the power of authorities that oppose and oppress them.

Apart from the articles on Animal's symbolic body, various existing criticisms discuss the issue of legal and environmental injustice in postcolonial India. Critics have paid attention to the misfortune and struggle of the poor Khaufpuris who are continually deprived of justice in the postcolonial world. One article by Andrew Mahlstedt also discusses how the poor Indians' deprivation of legal and environmental justice is closely connected with the Westerners' misperception of the

poor Indians' lives. In his article, "Animal's Eyes: Spectacular Invisibility and the Terms of Recognition in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*" (2013), Mahlstedt proposes that Animal and his people are considered as "the spectacular invisibility" (60). Although the pesticide plant explosion and its aftermath were so spectacular to readers, the impoverished victims are "remarkably invisible to those who might hold the power to effect justice, restitution, and redress" (60). He argues that the poor are marginalized since the readers' recognitions are shaped by "unselfconsciously received narratives of destitute and hopeless or, alternately, romantic and idealized poverty" (60). Another article that also focuses on the lives of the poor in Khaufpur is Susie O'Brien's "'We Thought the World Was Makeable': Scenario Planning and Postcolonial Fiction" (2016). Interestingly, O'Brien employs *Animal's People* as a critical lens to analyze the discourse of scenario planning, a strategic method of speculation about a possible future. By arguing that scenario planning omits the history of colonialism and capitalism, this article discusses how the location of Kampani near the poor community plays an important role in predetermining future winners and losers. The Kampani's location only benefits the first world's capitalists while it leaves the marginalized Indians' risk invisible. Postcolonial fiction, As O'Brien states, postcolonial fiction may function to help reveal "some friction, to raise questions of who is planning, for what, and for whom" (331).

While the articles above profoundly examine the use of Animal's body to expose environmental injustice in postcolonial India, Rob Nixon's "Slow Violence, Neoliberalism, and the Environmental Picaresque," the first chapter in his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) deals with toxicity and its long-term hazard upon humans and the environment. Nixon defines the notion of

“slow violence” as invisible violence that occurs gradually: “a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (2). Using Sinha’s novel as an example, he points out how the novel represents the environmental effects of the toxic chemical explosion at different times. He also focuses on how Sinha represents Animal as a “picaro” (55), a social outcast who is the protagonist in a picaresque novel. He links Animal’s quest for physical erectness to that for moral integrity. Being a picaro, the character of Animal also poses “a profound question on the limits and value of the human” (57). Furthermore, Nixon points out that Animal’s character consists of special and complex qualities. He ends his chapter on *Animal’s People* by posing interesting questions which inspire me to pursue my research in this paper:

Through Animal’s immersed voice, Sinha is able to return to questions that have powered the picaresque from its beginnings. What does it mean to be reduced to living in subhuman, bestial conditions? What chasms divide and what ties bind the wealthy and the destitute, the human and the animal? What does it mean, in the fused imperial language of temporal and spatial dismissal, to be written off as “backward”? (66-7)

This quotation particularly draws my attention to the ways in which the concept of “the human” and “the animal” are called into question and strategically employed in the portrayal of Animal. Moreover, while the existing criticisms focus on the representation of Animal to expose the environmental injustice in postcolonial India solely, my paper will examine both Animal and non-human characters which have been left unexamined. It aims to analyze how Sinha presents Animal and non-human

characters in order to question the constructed concepts of “humanity” and “animality.” Seeing Animal as the victim of the toxic leak who has an identity problem, this paper will investigate how Animal’s interactions not only with humans but also non-humans help him in his quest for identity. It will also illustrate how Sinha uses the intertwined representations of Animal and non-human characters to point out the problem of legal and environmental injustice in postcolonial India. Finally, it argues that Sinha, through the portrayal of the intertwined lives of Animal and human as well as non-human characters suggests a new kind of society in which all lives are equal.

“My name is Animal”: Animal and People

This section examines how Indra Sinha characterizes Animal, the protagonist, in *Animal’s People*. It will trace Animal’s transformation from an afflicted character whose self has been shattered because of physical deformation caused by “that night” into an agent of resistance against injustice. At first, Animal is presented as a victim of postcolonial affliction. But after a series of interactions with human and non-human characters, Animal can acquire a new sense of self, which he later uses to connect with all the victims regardless of species. The character of Animal can be considered as a center that connects all creatures victimized by the explosion of the chemical factory. Moreover, Sinha strategically deploys his characterization of Animal as a critique of binarism which underpins colonial ideology. He distinctively characterizes Animal as a critique on the binary logic of imperialism, for Animal’s character possesses “special” qualities challenging the process of categorization.

Sinha raises a question on a dualistic worldview at the very beginning of the novel. When Animal first addresses readers, he introduces himself, saying that “I used to be human once. So I am told” (Sinha 1). These opening sentences prompt readers to question what kind of being Animal is, and what makes him consider himself that way. Readers will later find out that due to the effect of chemical leak Animal’s body is distorted to the point that he has to walk like a quadruped. The fact that Animal refuses to be a human while he is ostensibly a human being emphasizes Sinha’s attempt to criticize the binary mode of categorization. Biologically speaking, an ability to walk upright distinguishes human beings from other species. It has been used as a mark of separation between humans and animals. Sinha seems to point out that attempting to categorize sentient beings regarding physical appearance causes a problem. Physical deformation causes Animal to face an identity crisis. As one of the victims of the explosion of the Kampani, Animal’s life is tremendously changed physically and psychologically. Walking on all fours, Animal cannot identify himself as a human. He also develops his self-disgust to the point that he calls himself an “animal”—literally referring to a real animal. Consequently, he alienates himself from human society to live his life like a stray dog. Being unable to categorize Animal’s character, readers who are accustomed to the binary perception of reality are confused and disturbed. Their frustration with the inability to categorize Animal underscores how binarism is embedded in humans’ fundamental understanding of the world.

Binarism plays an important role in the human perception of reality. In *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2013), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin define the term “binarism” by referring to Ferdinand de Saussure’s idea of signifier and signified. Saussure suggests that the meaning of the signs does not

directly refer to the real object, but the meaning derives from their differences from other signs in the same linguistic system. It can be considered that binary opposition is “the most extreme form of difference possible” (25). All meanings are set when humans differentiate one thing from another. Examples are evident in basic things in our human world: white/black, day/night, hot/cold, and so on. In the case of Animal, he understands that what constitutes the “human” is opposed to what the “animal” is. Animal cannot consider himself as a human because of his crippled body. The binary opposition of human/animal influences Animal’s understanding that the world of human beings must not include one who uses four limbs for walking like him. The gas leak, for Animal, distorts his physical appearance; moreover, it dispossesses his human identity. The character of Animal, therefore, serves as an example of the problem of binarism. Sinha thus unsettles binarism at the very beginning of the novel by introducing Animal in this way.

Moreover, binarism plays an important role in the colonial era. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, colonization operates under the dualistic view: “the binary logic of imperialism is a development of that tendency of Western thought, in general, to see the world in terms of binary oppositions that establish a relation of dominance” (26). The Western colonizers rely on a set of binary oppositions, such as colonizer/colonized, white/black, civilized/primitive, human/bestial, center/margin, to justify their domination. While the West considers itself as white, civilized, and human, and existing in the center, the undesirable traits are attributed to the East. This binarism perpetuates imperial power and violent hierarchy in the relationship between the West and the East. As a result, the set of binary oppositions validates the superior position of the colonizers, and their impulses to exploit (26).

In the postcolonial period, binarism continues to play a significant role in West-East power politics. The binary opposition of civilized/uncivilized still exists, but it disguises itself in the concept of development—developed/undeveloped—and economic wealth—rich/poor. Western capitalists employ this novel binary opposition to benefit from developing countries. Most western investors find their opportunities to make money out of underdeveloped countries. For example, America and other developed countries try to intervene in India's economy on behalf of economic growth. Although India gained independence from England in 1947, the Indians still are oppressed by Western capitalists. America, which becomes the new economic power, replaces England in colonizing India in the postcolonial era. American development projects, such as the Green Revolution, in India result in dramatic and everlasting exploitation since the capitalists only aim for their benefit, not for the development of India. It can be considered that American capitalists do not truly want to improve India's economy. India must be a continuously developing country because if India becomes developed, there is no pretext for the Americans to take advantage of it. Therefore, the binary opposition of developed/undeveloped has been sustained forever.

Animal People is an example of how Indians are exploited by the American development project. Sinha writes this novel as a contemporary critique of the inequality that is caused by binarism. The novel is set in the context of the Bhopal disaster. The tragic event occurred when American's insecticide factory exploded in December 1984. Since the factory was located near the impoverished community, the explosion caused countless death and loss. Thousands of Indians were also injured physically and mentally. The nightmare of Bhopal can be traced to its root in the

Green Revolution in the 1960s. Agriculture plays a vital role in India's economy. The Green Revolution was initiated by American capitalists to increase agricultural products to serve millions of Indian people. India had suffered from poverty and malnutrition, so the Green Revolution was expected to bring about a solution. Therefore, the use of pesticides was encouraged among Indian farmers to increase the production of crops. The Union Carbide's plant was built to supply insecticides in Indian agriculture. In the article "Bhopal: 25 Years of Poison" (2009), Sinha reveals the selfishness and irresponsibility of Union Carbide owners. Sinha points out that methyl isocyanate (MIC), "a substance 500 times deadlier than hydrogen cyanide," was kept in "a huge tank" in Bhopal. Bhopalis' lives had been at risk because not only the substance could "react explosively with itself," but it was also stored in a plant where security was loose because of Union Carbide's "cost-cutting spree." Sinha sums up the poor situation of the factory: "the huge, highly dangerous plant was being operated by men who had next to no training, who spoke no English, but were expected to use English manuals. Morale was low but safety fears were ignored by management." As a result, Bhopalis had to face insecurity in their lives, and even after the tragic night there was no fair compensation for them. Khaufpur, the setting of the novel, represents the city of Bhopal. The suffering of the victims which Sinha portrays in the novel can be seen as having the root cause in the West's postcolonial notion of development.

By portraying the lives of the victims in the novel, Sinha accentuates how colonialist binarism operates and tries to dismantle this ideology. Sinha's attempt to challenge imperial binarism in *Animal's People* corresponds with Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's observation of postcolonial literature. They

suggest in *The Empire Writes Back* (2002) that postcolonial literature tends to destabilize “the imperial process of domination and continuing hegemony” by “an acceptance of difference on equal terms” (35). Since the imperial ideology is formulated by the binary oppositions of self/other, it is indispensable to ensure the “purity” of each entity that differentiates “self” from its threatening opposite “other.” Therefore, most of the postcolonial literature tends to create a situation in which “self” is challenged by “other.” The line that separates the boundary between “self” and “other” has been transgressed by an encountering between West/East, civilized/uncivilized and human/animal. This attempt to transgress self/other boundaries is evident in Sinha’s characterization of his protagonist, Animal. Animal is in the position between “human” and “animal.” Walking on fours like an animal, he cannot totally identify himself with the human because his body is deformed by the toxic leak in the explosion of the Kampani. However, Animal suggests a different angle to look at the world, which is accessible to neither humans nor animals. Animal can also provide a new framework for considering colonial hegemony and the discourse of domination. He is one of the strategies Sinha deploys to defy imperial binarism.

Several critics, such as Adele Holoch, Justin Omar Johnston, and Andrew Mahlstedt, offer different interpretations of Sinha’s characterization of Animal as a tactical move against hierarchical binarism. Rob Nixon draws a connection between the representation of Animal and the inequality the Indians encounter due to the division of developed and undeveloped countries. In his book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), he analyzes how Animal is a transgressing character who both crosses and connects the boundaries set by colonial and neoliberal

power. Nixon suggests that Animal can be seen as a “picaro” in a picaresque novel. The picaro is a social outcast containing unruly qualities which are stigmatized in the privileged class. Although Animal is wounded by the explosion of the Kampani at first, he can transform his unpleasant and afflicted qualities into a weapon of rebellion. Because he is not fixed in any categories, Animal learns to assimilate and sympathize with his Indian fellows. As Nixon argues, Animal can dissolve the boundaries of binary opposition: human/non-human and the national/the foreign (55). Therefore, he can connect all entities who are the victims of ‘that night’ and create a sense of solidarity under differences to fight oppression and inequality endorsed by the West.

While Nixon’s reading of Animal as a transgressor who can empower himself to fight injustice, the process of his transformation is left unexamined. Complementing Nixon’s reading, this paper attempts to analyze the development of Animal’s self-perception in order to further examine Sinha’s strategy in dismantling the binary opposition of humanity/animality. Nixon states that Animal “serves as a synecdoche for the spectrum of mutations to which Khaufpuris have been subjected over time, ranging from the celebrated singer with now-ravaged lungs to the chatty Kha-in-a-jar” (57). Animal can be considered as a representative of both the poor Khaufpuris and non-human characters, who suffer from social and environmental injustice. Furthermore, throughout the novel, Animal interacts not only with various people from different backgrounds and social statuses but also with non-humans characters. I would argue that Animal can transform his self-perception thanks to these characters. His view of “humanity” and “animality” has changed due to the perspectives given by the different characters he has interacted with.

At the beginning of the novel, Animal perceives himself as a victim of “that night.” Infant Animal was intoxicated by the gases emitted during the factory’s explosion. The toxic chemicals affect him physically, later leading to his psychological problems. In physical terms, his body has been deformed since he was six. As he says, “[his] back began to twist. (...) The highest part of [him] was [his] arse” (15). He then begins walking by using his hand. Moreover, the tragedy of chemical leak deprives Animal of masculinity. Animal’s physical anomaly compels him to suppress his sexual desires, so he always talks about his wildest daydreams, masturbation, and sexual fantasies. This physical deformity results in his voyeuristic behavior. He describes the scene in which he spies on Elli through her bedroom window and finds her naked:

[Elli’s] legs aren’t blue but as pale as milk. She reaches down and nothing is hidden from me. Next she’s soaping herself all over. Every part. I’m sure you don’t need me to tell you how a woman’s body is made, it’s the first time I’ve ever seen one naked.

Yes, it’s the first time, except in sleep. Often I’d dream of making love with I won’t say her name. I never told anyone because if people got to know, what would they do, laugh at me, pity me? “Animal, don’t have those kind of hopes.” I’d see the warnings in the faces of old women who caught me looking at her. Animal mating with human female, it’s unnatural, but I’ve no choice but to be unnatural. Many times I would dream that she and I were in love, sometimes we were married and naked together like in the movies having sex. In such dreams was my back straight? Did I stand upright? No and

no. I was exactly as I am now and it did not matter. Such dreams! I woke from them shaking with hope. This frightened me, I despise hope. (78)

This passage demonstrates how Animal is afflicted by his appearance. His fantasies and his dreams manifest his desire to have sex life that humans can have. It is worth noting that seeing Elli's "normal" body not only stimulates Animal's sex drive but also reminds him of his abnormality. Animal yearns for a normal human life, but his hope will never be fulfilled. He feels desperate, and he dares not to tell his dreams to anyone because he will be mortified. He always remembers that he is "unnatural," and his unnaturalness which robs him of his human traits is the destiny imposed upon him.

In addition to physical anomaly and deprivation of masculinity, Animal's deformation affects his mentality. The physical distortion shatters Animal's self to the point that he rejects being a human. Here, the binary mode is dominant in Animal's process of self-perception. He recognizes his physical difference as a verification of his animal identity. He considered that it is his destiny that is imposed upon him. Therefore, he refuses to associate with humans. "That night" has wounded his psyche in various ways. He feels alienated from the human community. The alienation results in his self-hatred and loneliness. The first time when Animal reveals his dissatisfaction with his body is at the very beginning of the novel. Animal expresses that he "no longer want[s] to be human" (1). His physical appearance has an impact on Animal's attitude toward himself. He finds his body ugly: "when I caught sight of myself --- mirrors I avoid but there's such a thing as casting a shadow --- I'd feel raw disgust. In my mad times when the voices were shouting inside my head I'd be filled with rage against all things that go or even stand on two legs. The list of my jealousy

was endless” (1-2). His reflection in the mirror keeps reminding him that he is not a human, but an animal. Consequently, he develops his self-disgust to the point that he stops identifying himself as a “human.” Moreover, his self-hatred transforms into his abhorrence of “all things that go or even stand on two legs” (2). It can be interpreted that his refusal to be human is a defense mechanism he uses to respond to his sense of lack—his lack of human qualities. Simultaneously, it reveals his binary logic of identification. In his dualistic point of view, walking on two legs signifies the quality of the “human” whereas what goes on four legs is considered the opposite of the human.

Furthermore, Animal’s unsettled psyche is connected with his wild and aggressive behavior which accompanies his refusal to be a human. When other orphans verbally attack his deformity, Animal fights back with his bestial act of biting: “I was so angry I bit him. I fastened my teeth in his leg and bit till I could taste blood. How he yelled, he was howling with pain, he was pleading, I wouldn’t stop. I bit harder” (15). This incident exemplifies his violent behavior which can be considered as one of his self-defense mechanisms. Animal shows his savage and animalistic nature in many ways, accentuating his identity as an animal. This is the first time he uses his animal identity to fight humans who hurt him. However, his aggressive behavior reveals his sense of insecurity. He considers himself as an animal because Animal as a boy still thinks in binary terms. Hierarchical binarism privileges humans over animals, so identifying himself as an animal bespeaks Animal’s sense of inferiority to other kids who can stand upright.

Since he does not perceive himself as a human, Animal does not feel that he belongs to the human society and he tends to live in isolation. He seeks the company of a dog, Jara. He feels connected to Jara rather than to humans because it has neither “traceable parents” just like him, nor “fixed abode (...) because [it] belongs nowhere and everywhere is [its] kingdom” (18). During the day, Animal goes hunting for food accompanied by Jara. However, he views Jara not only as his friend but also as his foe because sometimes they have to fight for food. At night he spends time alone in the factory which is left undisturbed by the Khaufpuris. He considers this place not as his home but as his “lair” (29). He says the ruin is full of cobras and rabid dogs. It is this place where Animal feels comfortable to live. The factory is “a shunned place, where better for an animal” (29). That Animal chooses to live in this isolated place emphasizes both his sense of alienation and his sheer awareness of how he has been dehumanized. In his view, he does not even deserve a home as humans do.

Analyzing Animal’s self-perception at the beginning of the novel, one can see that Sinha employs this character to dismantle the colonial power of categorization. Animal cannot liberate himself from the human/animal opposition because it underpins the human perception of reality. However, as the story develops, Animal’s binary perception has been challenged through his interactions with various human characters who represent different socio-economic backgrounds, such as Nisha, Zafar, Australian journalist and Doctor Elli. Sinha characterizes two Indians, Nisha and Zafar, as the embodiment of loving-kindness. In contrast, the Australian journalist and Doctor Elli are presented as “civilized” Westerners who somewhat lack a true sense of humanity. These characters emphasize the invalidity of the human/animal binary opposition. By encountering these characters, Animal has a chance to broaden his

self-understanding and comes to question what qualities constitute the “human” or humanity.

Sinha presents Nisha and Zafar as Indians who are full of humanity. These two characters show that the local Indians have a high level of morality and compassion toward others. Their humanitarian spirit is demonstrated through their attitude toward Animal. Nisha plays an important role in Animal’s life because she, like Ma Franci, is the person who does not associate his existence with his deformity. He gives a remark on Nisha’s treatment of him: “when she called me Jaanvar, Animal, it was a name, nothing more. She never seemed to notice that I was crippled, nor pretend I wasn’t. She was the only person I knew who treated me as completely normal” (22). It can be seen that the human/animal opposition does not function in Nisha’s thought. Since she takes Animal for who he is, she can inspire Animal to retrieve his self-esteem and to see his self-worth. Nisha brings Animal back to the human community. She teaches Animal to read and write and introduces him to work for Zafar. Thanks to Nisha, Animal feels that he is accepted among other people and has his place in the human community.

In addition to Nisha, Zafar, the humanist activist, is another character who changes Animal’s self-perception. He is an educated Indian who leads the movement to call for justice from the American owner of the Kampani. He volunteers to help and speak for the victims of the Kampani explosion. Being an activist, Zafar advocates the dignity and equality of all humans. Consequently, Zafar does not agree with Animal when Animal identifies himself as an “animal.” Zafar argues: “You are a human being, entitled to dignity and respect. If you haven’t a name then this is a great

opportunity for you. You can choose your own. Jatta for example or Jamil, go ahead pick one, whatever you like, we'll call you that henceforth." (23). He also explains that Animal is a human who is "especially abled" since Animal has "skills and talents that [other people do not] have" (23). He points out that whatever Animal wants to call himself, Animal has "dignity and respect" as a human. The fact that Zafar respects Animal for who he is bespeaks his humanitarian view.

In contrast to Nisha and Zafar, Sinha characterizes the two Westerners—the unnamed Australian journalist and Elli Barber, an American doctor—as claiming to possess the humanitarian spirit and yet lacking in respect and sympathy for the Khaufpuris. Although these Westerners believe that they stand on in the moral high ground, what they display is moral backwardness. The journalist and Elli reaffirm Animal's understanding of his position as the subject of colonization and make Animal see the construction of the imperial binarism more clearly. As for the Australian journalist, he comes to Khaufpur because he wants to write a book about "that night." The journalist deems Animal as a "unique case" (7), so Animal is asked to tell his story. Animal questions the journalist's attempt to present his story to Western readers: "[h]ow can foreigners at the world's other end, who've never set foot in Khaufpur, decide what's to be said about this place?" (9). Animal's question displays his awareness of the representation of the East through the eyes of the West. Animal distrusts what the journalist will present to other Westerners because the West tends to romanticize his people's destiny. Moreover, Animal also emphasizes that in the West's point of view, he and other Khaufpuris are not considered as "human." He points out, "[f]or [the West] we are not people. We don't have names. We flit in crowds at the corner of his eye. Extras we're, in his movie" (9). This can be seen that

the binary opposition is still prevalent. The West has never changed its association of the East with the animal. The sufferings of Animal and the Khaufpuris are insignificant to the Westerners and unfortunately serve as their entertainment. Animal understands that this Australian journalist is “like all the [other journalists]” who “come to suck [the Khaufpuris’] stories” (5). This is an example of Sinha’s criticism of how the West continually exploit the East by representing them as poor, afflicted, and helpless. What the journalist wants to do is to sell the story of the poor Khaufpuris. He does not want to help improve the situation or to call for justice for the Khaufpuris.

In addition to the journalist, Elli Barber is another Westerner who Sinha uses as a critique of the colonialist ideology of development. Elli is an American doctor. She comes to Khaufpur with her willingness to help the victims of “that night.” Her project is to found a free clinic for the poor. Although Elli seems benevolent, Sinha characterizes her as an embodiment of the notion of “the white man’s burden.” Elli has a good intention, but she does not know that she is trapped in colonial binarism. Although Elli shows what she believes to be her “humanity” in her willingness to help the victims of “that night,” she fails to see the locals as “human.” Elli shows her colonialist attitude when Animal introduces her to the Nutcracker, the place where the poor live. Elli reveals her thought about the poor living condition of the Khaufpuris:

This is the strangest thing of all about Khaufpur that people put up with so much. Take a look. It’s not just blacked out streets and killer traffic, people in this city tolerate open sewers, garbage everywhere, poisoned wells, poisoned babies, doctors who don’t do their jobs, corrupt politicians, thousands of sick

that no one seems to care about. But wait, let someone come along with an open-hearted offer of help, these same citizens can't tolerate it, in fact find it so intolerable they must mount a boycott. People in this city must be either blind or mad. I don't get the way Khaufpuris think." (151)

This quotation illustrates Elli's attitude toward the Khaufpuris. She considers the poor as uncivilized because they can live in an unsanitary environment. She thinks that the Nutcracker is not a place fit for "humans" to live. She does not understand why the local people endure unhealthy living without any attempt to fight for their lives, and, from her point of view, they are irrational in rejecting her benevolent offer to help. Sinha reveals that this view of this well-intentioned doctor is grounded on the colonial ideology of which she is not aware. Elli does not understand that the situation of Khaufpur is more complicated than what she sees. The poor Khaufpuris are too powerless to fight for the amelioration of their living condition, let alone justice. Her opinion encapsulates the West's imagination of the East. In the West's view, the poor Khaufpuris are forever backward and too inert to struggle for improvement. As a result, people like Elli who consider themselves "educated" have to intervene and educate the East in order to make them "civilized." Moreover, his interaction with Elli also leads Animal to see another angle of the definition of the human and animal. Animal begins to realize that he is not the only one on whom animality is imposed. Other Khaufpuris are also considered the "animal" from the West's point of view.

In its analysis of Animal, this paper also illustrates how Animal gradually changes his self-perception through his interactions with Nisha and Zafar as well as recognizes the pitfall of binarism in the characters of the journalist and Elli.

Simultaneously, it can be considered that Sinha uses *Animal* to critique colonial power and its ideologies which are still intact in the postcolonial era. Sinha tries to show how the binary opposition is used as a tool to construct Western colonial power. Edward Said points out in his book *Orientalism* (1978), the “the East” as represented in Western cultural texts—literary works, journalistic texts, or travelogues— is essentially the imagination of the West. In such texts, savagery, primitiveness, immorality, or animalistic qualities are associated with the East which contrasts with the “civilized” West. The representation of the Orient functions effectively in hierarchized binarism in which the former is superior to the latter: self/other, colonizer/colonized, civilized/uncivilized, and human/animal. This representation justifies Western domination because the more civilized West has a “burden” to civilize the East. Moreover, Said suggests that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3). Therefore, the binary opposition in colonial discourse benefits the West’s self-construction just as it does to the East. In other words, while the West projects all inferiority to the East, it simultaneously strengthens the West’s superior self.

In its attempt to deconstruct the orientalist discourse, *Animal’s People* can be read as pointing to Sinha’s aim to dismantle the West’s (post)colonial power. On the one hand, the novel satirizes the Westerners’ claim that they represent humanity and civilization. It reveals the West’s moral backwardness, demonstrating that they are only “civilized” because of material prosperity, but they are savage as they treat Indian people inhumanely. The Kampani owners are selfish and irresponsible since they built the factory which contained dangerous chemical substances near the

community of the poor, but did not pay attention to the safety of the factory's operating system. It can be considered that the cause of the explosion is the owners' neglect of safety and security. After the tragic incident took place, the American owners have refused to stand in the Indian court for a trial. Not only are they unresponsive to the explosion but they also neglect their responsibility to provide compensation for the victims. In the American owners' minds, the lives of the poor Indians are of no value. In other words, these Khaufpuris are not human beings.

Moreover, the Westerners' moral blindness and self-delusion are also accentuated in such characters as the journalist and Elli. The journalist is morally blind since he only seeks benefits from Animal's story without helping the poor Khaufpuris to gain justice. He approaches the poor only for the story to sell and publishes their accounts only for commercial purposes. He is, according to Animal, a "sultan among slaves" (9) who "listens with what lofty pity, pretends to give a fuck but the truth is he'll go away and forget them, every last one" (9). The West's self-delusion is also manifested in Elli. She thinks that she can help to improve the situation thanks to her medical knowledge. Positioning herself as a more civilized and educated professional, she comments on the sub-standard living condition of the Paradise Alley, the road that leads to the Nutcracker, the slum of the poor:

Hardly surprising they are ill," Elli is saying quietly, I guess so the Nutcracker folk don't hear. "Look at this filth, litter and plastic all over, open drains stinking right outside the houses. Flies. Every bit of waste ground is used as a latrine, I've seen people defecating on the railway lines.

"Madam, it's these people, they don't know any better."

“But you do,” says Elli. “So teach them. Organise people into teams to pick up the litter. Bring in pipes, water taps, build proper latrines...” (105)

Elli's comments indicate her misperception. Representing Westerners who believe in the power of science and modern technology, Elli believes that she can easily teach the poor Khaufpuris about proper sanitation and ameliorate their standard of living. She is, however, ignorant of the complexity of problems in postcolonial India. Not taking into consideration the social, economic, and environmental injustice by which the marginalized such as the Khaufpuris have long been inflicted, she simplistically assumes that the imposition of American modernity serves as a key to the solution of their problems. She is not aware that her knowledge cannot improve their situation. Her ignorance can be interpreted as Sinha's attempt to satirize the West's self-aggrandizement and overconfidence in their ability to civilize others.

On the other hand, the novel plays with the constructed concepts of humanity and animality. Sinha presents how the American Kampani uses its knowledge or its so-called “civilization” to dehumanize the locals. After the explosion, the chemical substances remain at the site. However, the American owners turn a blind eye to the dire situation and provide no proper management of the lethal chemicals in the Kampani plant. Animal tells us:

Inside the warehouses I never went, they were full of rotting sacks that poured out white and pink powders. Too long near them, you'd soon be breathless, with pains in the chest. Sometimes moving through the jungle I'd get dizzy and feel a sharp metallic taste on my tongue, those were regions to avoid. (31)

This emphasizes not only the American Kampani's irresponsibility but also its inhumanity.

Moreover, the Kampani shows its inhumanity in its attempt to stop the cure. There was a medicine called "thighs-of-fate" which can help to relieve the pain of those affected by the chemicals. However, after the news of this cure circulated, the injections suddenly stopped. Animal recalls that there is "some bigwig let slip that the Kampani bosses from Amrika had rung up their best friend the Chief Minister and told him to stop the thighs-of-fate. ... The police came, wrecked the shack, beat up the doctors" (112). The Kampani bosses have to stop the injection of the thighs-of-fate because, according to Zafar, this medicine could later be deployed as evidence to prove that "illnesses could pass to future generations" (112). This is an example of how the American Kampani uses its knowledge not only to exploit the locals but also to deprive them of their well-being and their lives.

In addition, the Kampani also has its legal privilege due to its economic power. The American owners can disclaim their responsibility by claiming that the Indian court "has no jurisdiction over them" (52). They delay the legal proceedings by not showing up at the court. No one can bring them to stand in the Indian court because even the Indian government also takes side with the Kampani. The Indian politicians are corrupted and betray their people because of bribes they receive from the American owners. The American owners use their money to bribe the local politicians. Zafar reveals that the Kampani also "has many offshoots and subsidiaries trading in India" (53). There is a report from Zafar's group that when the Kampani lawyers arrive in Khaufpur, they go to meet "senior persons" at the Collector's office

(260). Therefore, the justice of the locals is postponed and denied. These incidents highlight the maltreatment that the Khaufpuris receive and glaringly reveal the Kampani owners' lack of humanity and morality. Thus, the novel shows that in dehumanizing the Indians and imposing “animality” upon them, these Westerners also dehumanize and rob themselves of their “humanity.”

“Two of me there’s, two also of you”: Animal and the “Non-human” Characters

The preceding section discusses how Sinha criticizes imperial binarism through the characterization of Animal. I have argued that Animal’s character is Sinha’s strategy of challenging the colonizers’ view of categorization which has persisted even in postcolonial India. The binary opposition has been a framework colonizers deployed to justify their domination. Animal first appears as an afflicted character who constantly repeats his denial of being human since he is trapped in binary thinking. However, through his interactions with human characters, Animal broadens his self-perception and comes to question what constitutes “humanity.” He gradually realizes that physical appearance has nothing to do with “humanity.” Animal’s encounters with Nisha and Zafar help him to see different ways to define the human and to act as one regardless of his distorted body. Moreover, Western characters, such as the journalist and Elli, demonstrate that Westerners who always monopolize the ideal model of humans are proved savage. They are morally backward due to their maltreatment of the Indians. This is how Sinha dismantles imperial binarism to point out the West’s oppression of the Indians in the postcolonial era.

Apart from presenting human characters of different backgrounds, *Animal's People* is full of non-humans whose existence intertwines with Animal's life. This section examines Sinha's characterization of non-human characters and how Animal's interactions with these non-humans affect his self-perception. Moreover, this section will discuss how Sinha uses his portrayal of the non-humans to further dismantle imperial binarism. It reveals how Sinha's non-human characters challenge the West's binary opposition and expose the West's prolonged exploitation of the local Indians. Finally, it will display how Sinha uses his characterization of the non-humans and their encounters with Animal to suggest a new kind of society in which all humans and non-humans co-exist on equal grounds.

Among various non-human characters, Khã-in-the-Jar is the most unique. Preserved in a jar as a specimen for medical study, he represents a mutated fetus. In an attempt to deconstruct binary thinking, Sinha strategically characterizes this character in a unique way. Although Khã-in-the-Jar is apparently a human's fetus and he is referred to in the novel with the pronoun "he," he possesses ambiguous qualities which make it impossible to categorize him as a human. Therefore, this paper considers Khã-in-the-Jar as a "non-human" character. Khã-in-the-Jar's character can be interpreted as challenging binary opposition since he contains two different qualities in one body. His existential status is in a state of ambiguity since he is neither dead nor alive. He cannot die because of his stagnate situation. Being a fetus stuck in the jar, he is unable to develop his part of the body and cannot move. Therefore, he asks Animal to help break the jar in order to set him free from this situation. Moreover, Khã-in-the-Jar is not alive. He is the unborn who, according to his remark, never gets a "shot at life" (237). He is portrayed as "waiting to be born"

(58). Khã-in-the-Jar is poisoned since he has been in his mother's womb. The chemical leak at "that night" poisons his mother and simultaneously affects the fetus's developing process. As a consequence, assumingly the toxins cause his mother's death and leave him undelivered. Although Khã-in-the-Jar is not alive, he can communicate with Animal, like other human beings. Therefore, it is difficult to define his existential status.

Moreover, Khã-in-the-Jar's ambiguity is manifested in his two-headed figure. Not only is he deprived of life but his body is also distorted as a result of the chemical leak. His mother's prenatal exposure to chemicals causes the abnormality of his body, especially the brain. His body mutates into partial twins called a "parapagus" (59), so Khã-in-the-Jar's two brains share the same body. He explains his physical appearance:

"See this second head, Animal miyañ? It's the clever one with the ideas. Such stuff it thinks, thoughts you could spin a world on. The one in front is dumb, sits swallowing liquid like a fish listening to all the shit these doctors talk. Number two knows what's what. It's stuffed with secrets they'd love to get their hands on, secrets of plants, minerals, lead to gold, mermaids, sun, moon, laughter, immortal life, all this class of thing's there, locked up in the other head, this info must never fall into their hands. You must free me." (59)

This description points out Khã-in-the-Jar's sense of alienation from his body. Having two heads in one body, Khã-in-the-Jar feels detached from them. It can be considered that this sense of alienation originates from the combination of two disparate qualities in his body. In one body, Khã-in-the-Jar has two brains that represent two opposite

qualities: stupid and smart. This abnormal combination is caused by the explosion of the Kampani which represents the Western exploitation of the locals. However, this self-description illustrates how this character challenges the binary mode of view. The toxins harm the developing fetus in the womb, but it concurrently brings about Khã-in-the-Jar's special ability. While one head is dumb as a fish, the other head contains secrets and supernatural knowledge which is beyond human intellect.

Khã-in-the-Jar's ambiguous nature prompts Animal to see things beyond appearance. He urges Animal to think outside the binary opposition. Animal's interactions with Khã-in-the-Jar lessen his sense of loneliness, and also amplify his ability to see the invisible. Firstly, Khã-in-the-Jar plays an important role in Animal's self-understanding. By giving Khã-in-the-Jar the ability to speak, Sinha gives voice to those who were deprived of their lives due to the chemical leak. Through this character, Sinha illustrates how environmental injustice affects innumerable unborn babies. As Khã-in-the-Jar remarks that "everyone on this earth has in their body a share of the Kampani's poisons" (236), it can be considered that Sinha draws a connection between Khã-in-the-Jar and the Khaufpuris. His tormenting experience in his mother's womb mirrors the suffocation of victims of the Kampani's gas leak. Khã-in-the-Jar shares the story of his suffering with Animal: "I drift down into a place where it is all dark, you open your mouth but there is no air just the black stink of it filling your mouth and eyes and nose, burns too, this fucking stuff they've got me in" (58). Therefore, Khã-in-the-Jar considers himself as "a child of the poison" (59). At this point, the connection between Animal and Khã-in-the-Jar is built since Animal is another poisoned child. Animal now realizes that he is not the only one whose body has been distorted by the toxins, so his sense of loneliness is alleviated.

Alleviation of Animal's loneliness is emphasized during his second encounter with Khã-in-the-Jar. Khã-in-the-Jar points out that he and Animal have a strong connection to each other. There are some similarities in their characters. Not only do Animal and Khã-in-the-Jar share the poison of the Kampani inside but they also have a second self in one body. Inside Animal's abnormal body, as Khã-in-the-Jar points out, there is another normal body. Khã-in-the-Jar says:

"Brother Animal," says he, "you and I are not so different. Doublers both, we're. Two of me there's, two also of you."

"What do you mean?" I ask, not best pleased by this comparison.

"My two heads rise from one neck. From your hips, at the point where your back bends, rises a second you who's straight, stands upright and tall. This second you's there all the time, has been there all along, thinks, speaks and acts, but it's invisible—." (139)

Khã-in-the-Jar's remark clarifies that Animal is not alone. He and Khã-in-the-Jar are considered as "doublers." Khã-in-the-Jar explains that along with his distorted body, there exists a second one, although invisible, that is "straight" and "tall." This explanation echoes Nisha and Zafar's point that physical appearance, words, or constructed concepts cannot be used to define Animal's identity. Khã-in-the-Jar encourages Animal to see his invisible self, making him realize that he is, in reality, not different from other people. His distorted body which is visible is not important. The real important thing is the invisible, and that is what essentially defines who he is.

In the third encounter, in which Khã-in-the-Jar tells him about his founding of "the Board of Directors of the poisonwallah shares" (237) in order to seek justice

from the Kampani, Animal looks inside the jars. He sees that they “grow tall and change into shining beings of such terrifying beauty” and he believes that “surely they must be angels” (237). The ability to transform from ugly and bestial figures into illuminating angels highlights these fetuses’ miraculous power and the fact that they embody opposite qualities within themselves. Moreover, it also points to the ambiguous status of their existence, which resists any categorization. Animal’s ability to see the fetuses’ transformation symbolically indicates his liberation from the binary view.

While Animal’s encounters with Khã-in-the-Jar broaden his self-understanding to a great extent, Animal still cannot truly discover his “self.” In addition to Khã-in-the-Jar, other important non-human characters that influence Animal’s self-discovery are talking animals in the forest that is located near the factory. After the factory is on fire, Animal, who experiences something similar to a nervous breakdown after seeing Ma’s leaving to help people in the haze, runs into the forest to save his life. Partly because of his unstable mental condition and of the toxic gases, Animal has a sort of a hallucination. As a result, while he is wandering in the forest, Animals finds that trees and animals in the forest can converse with him.

It is important to take into consideration Sinha’s characterization of talking animals in the forest. Like Khã-in-the-Jar, the talking animals have an ambiguous nature: they are both real and unreal; humans and non-humans. The animals in the forest are real animals, but they are unreal because of their ability to speak human language. Given Animal’s unstable mental condition, since the novel is narrated through his point of view, it seems impossible to confirm the existence of talking

animals. Moreover, these characters challenge the boundary between humans and non-humans. Although the talking animals' appearance is similar to that of animals in general, Sinha gives them the ability to speak. Their in-between position displays resistance to attempts at categorizing. It can be interpreted that Sinha negates the binary opposition of humans and non-humans. Sinha exemplifies how each entity is unique, so one cannot use socially constructed binarism to impose on anyone or anything.

Animal's encounter with talking animals influences his self-understanding. After the Kampani is on fire, Animal witnesses an unpleasant scene in which people are suffering in pain. Animal feels repugnant to human society. Then, he decides to go to live in the forest which he considers a place for animals. In the forest, Animal seeks companionship with animals. However, he has not been included in the community of animals. They do not appear, so Animal finds "nothing's there but stirring of leaves" (343). His conversation with a talking lizard shows that animals deny his attempt to identify himself as an animal. The lizard says, "[his] nature [of being human] can never change," and, "you are human, if you were an animal you would have eaten me" (346). The lizard points out that Animal will never be able to dismiss his human nature because he will not hunt the lizard for food. Although he almost starves to death, he will neither hunt nor devour living animals. The lizard's explanation makes Animal realize that his understanding that his identity is that of the animal is invalid. Walking on fours does not make him an animal.

Thanks to his interaction with various characters—both human and non-human—Animal has come to a better understanding of himself toward the end of the

novel. He finally proclaims in the forest that he is “THE ANIMAL” (345). He liberates himself from being a postcolonial subject who is used to being oppressed under imperial binarism. He discovers his distinctiveness which is not subjected to any definition. He also emphasizes his uniqueness:

If this self of mine doesn't belong in this world, I'll be my own world, I'll be a world complete in myself. My back shall be ice-capped mountains, my arse mount Meru, my eyes shall be the sun and moon, the gusts of my bowels the four winds, my body shall be the earth, like its living things, but why stop there? I'll be my own Milky Way, comets shall whizz from my nose, when I shake myself pearls of sweat shall fly off and become galaxies, what am I but a complete miniature universe stumbling around inside this larger one, little does this tree realise that the small thing bumbling at its roots, scraping at its bark, clawing a way into its branches, is a fully fledged cosmos (350).

This quotation demonstrates that Animal is confident with his new self. He says he will build his world out of his own. He finally comes to value his deformed body. Appreciating parts of his body, with which he once feels disgusted, he compares them to the significant elements of the universe. For example, his “arse” which marks his distortion becomes sacred since he compares it with “mount Meru” (350) which the Indians believe is the center of the universe. This scene thus marks the moment when Animal is truly able to embrace himself and accept his identity.

Moreover, Animal's acceptance of his new sense of self is presented when he decides not to have an operation to fix his lame body. He considers that although the operation is successful, he will “need the help of sticks” or has to “have a wheelchair”

(366). Imagining his body after the operation, he thinks that it will obstruct him from being free and unique: “If I’m an upright human, I would be one of millions, not even a healthy one at that” (366). Instead, Animal decides to spend his money that he keeps for the operation to buy Anjali’s freedom. His decision not only reflects his empathy but also renders him an agent of true humanity that he has, in fact, manifested in his loving-kindness toward the afflicted Khaufpuris since the beginning of the novel.

Presenting Animal’s transformation influenced by non-human characters, Sinha seems to suggest that each individual is unique. Therefore, no categorization can be used to define these characters. Sinha’s non-human characters are different from the definition of non-humans in general. Non-human, normally, refers to animals, trees, rocks, and so on. They are entities that stand on the opposite side to humans. However, Sinha’s “non-humans,” such as Khā-in-the-Jar and animals in the forest, can talk. Not to mention the ghosts, the trees, or the Moon, this novel is full of non-humans who can communicate with Animal. Sinha’s “non-human” characters are in the position of the in-between, almost vague, indeterminate, and unable to be clearly defined. Although the term “non-human” is applied in this paper, it can be considered that this term cannot describe these “non-human” characters. The ambiguity of these “non-human” characters illustrates Sinha’s challenge to the binary opposition. Therefore, Sinha’s portrayal of Animal and other “non-human” characters resist any socially constructed concept that the West tries to impose upon them.

Not only does Animal’s encounter with talking animals in the forest help Animal discover his identity but it also symbolically suggests the beginning of the sense of solidarity on equal grounds. It is worth noting that after Animal discovers his

new self and decides to go back to human society, all animals appear. Animal and animals walk out of the woods together “with the dog jumping round all, [they] move slowly down through the forest where [he had] done [his] dying” (357). Animal says, “in company of friends it seems harmless. The animals that were absent before now choose to show themselves” (357). It can be recognized that Animal’s new self is accepted by all species. The appearance of animals suggests a sense of companionship. Animal can finally build up a web of relationships between humans and animals. This sense of solidarity can be interpreted as a glimpse of hope for the possibility of a new kind of society in which all lives are equal.

“Bird that I am sees all”: Solidarity across Differences

Sinha’s suggestion of a society where all lives of various species and kinds coexist on equal grounds is pointed out by Pablo Mukherjee. In his book *Postcolonial Environments* (2010), Mukherjee suggests that it is important for humans to reconceptualize the environment. Humans must recognize their connection with non-humans and the environment. In order to build up a “mutually sustaining network” (147), humans must consider that every entity is equal and depends on each other. The web of relationships, he writes, will operate by “[imagining] a principle of equality based on difference, rather than normative homogeneity or similarity” (146). The equality that Mukherjee is discussing does not come from similarity, but it is rooted in differences. Therefore, the acceptance of differences has to be encouraged.

After the epiphany about his new sense of self and its interrelatedness with other beings, Animal is presented as a bridge that connects humans and non-humans.

Both Rob Nixon and Pablo Mukherjee agree on the same point. They point out that Sinha attributes supernatural power to Animal in order to enable him to fight against (post)colonial oppression. Nixon deems Animal's body as a "biorobot" which "exemplified the dissolution of the boundaries" since his body consists of "slow, corrosive violence of environmental catastrophe" (54). Similarly, Mukherjee draws the connection between Animal's deformed body and his special ability to connect all entities. He proposes that the distorted body that forces Animal to walk on fours, in many ways, brings Animal's "new identity as a non-human being" (149). Animal can perceive the world from a different point of view from other humans. Mukherjee substantiates his point by referring to a scene in the novel in which Animal displays his ability "to adopt a 'transpersonality'" (152) by imagining himself as a bird:

I see a bird circling above, wonder what it's seeing below. Up high and early, my eye dreams the starting of this Khaufpuri day. I see the world and me in it. (...) Bird that I am sees all, white palace of gone rulers on hill, lake looks pale green from up here, eye slides along a road lined with dirty buildings, snarling away in dust and truck smoke, till it reaches a place where the city's turned to jungle, railway tracks come running up and vanish, beyond is terrain harder to interpret, mottling of brown, a pimpliness which on looking closer resolves to the innumerable roofs of the very poor. (133)

In this passage, Animal can see the world which is unseen by normal people. In this particular scene, Mukherjee interprets that Animal shows his "exaggerated qualities of both human and non-human personhood" (152).

However, I would like to add that Animal's bird's eye view suggests Sinha's attempt to emphasize how imagination can be used to dismantle binarism. Animal's character illustrates that the world in humans' eyes is binary because our perception originates in the linguistic system. Although Animal has perceived the world differently from others since the beginning of the novel, his perspective changes dramatically after his interactions with different humans and non-humans. At the beginning of the novel, Animal says:

The world of humans is meant to be viewed from eye level. Your eyes. Lift my head I'm staring into someone's crotch. Whole nother world it's, below the waist. Believe me, I know which one hasn't washed his balls, I can smell pissy gussets and shitty backsides whose faint stench don't carry to your nose, farts smell extra bad. In my mad times I'd shout at people in the street, "Listen, however fucking miserable you are, and no one's as happy as they've a right to be, at least you stand on two feet!" (2)

It can be considered that at the beginning Animal only sees the unpleasant and filthy side of humans. Humans from Animal's point of view are disgusting. There is nothing in humans that he considers admirable, except the ability to walk straight. As a result, his point of view at the beginning enhances his denial of human identity and confirms his identity as an animal who can see the world below humans' eyes. It, moreover, displays his prejudice against the human species.

After he achieves his self-understanding, Animal's point of view is less binary. Instead of differentiating the world of humans from that of non-humans, he connects all entities together. In the scene of his bird's eye view which happens after

he learnt the different meanings of being a “human” from Nisha and Zafar, the narrative voice describes Animal’s perception of the world differently:

Far below, an animal is moving slowly along a lane. What kind of creature is this, arse canted steeply into the air? dromedary? centaur? Short way behind a smaller, also non-human being strolls, stopping now and again to stretch sleepy jaws. These two pass slowly through the Nutcracker, past the jungle inside the factory walls, they are heading for a far bazaar where a lane splits in three. The middle way is a stony alley where cows with ribs like harpstrings pick at old paper bags, here’s Bhoora Khan curled asleep in his auto-rickshaw, nearby is a building shaded by a mango tree, above its door a sign says CLINIC, an empty tent stands outside, last night’s flowers have been thrown into the street, they are lying in a heap, a goat’s picking roses off the garlands. On the roof of the building a small figure stands. She looks up, sees the bird circling. Not yet within her view, a boy is coming up the road, followed by a dog.

A little while later, in the alley recline two lolling figures, a boy who goes à quatre pattes, beside him a yellow dog. (133-4)

This passage illustrates Animal’s change of perception toward the world. What he sees here is not the filthy world of humans, but it is a panoramic vision of the world that is teeming with lives. The Nutcracker that he envisions now is different from what as he once agrees with Elli, “was flung up by an earthquake” (105). The rustic life of the people, the cow, and the landscape suggest a pastoral scene. Animal as a bird sees both humans and non-humans coexist in harmony. The sense of harmony is

accentuated by the companionship between the boy and the yellow dog referring to Animal and Jara respectively. Moreover, it can be recognized that the world Animal now sees includes him. He feels no sense of alienation as he now sees himself as one of the beings in the whole community.

When Animal considers himself as part of the community, his new self that can connect all entities enables him to make a web of relationships between humans and non-humans who have similarly been oppressed by the Kampani. Although the novel ends without the resolution of the case, it somehow presents a sense of collectiveness. Sinha suggests that all entities in this web of interrelatedness are equal and have their role to contribute to the fight against the oppression by Western (post)colonial ideology and practice. Animal ends his account by saying that “tomorrow there will be more of us” (366). His statement accentuates the solidarity among all the victims. It gives the sense that this collectiveness will someday bring triumph to the marginalized humans and non-humans in Khaufpur. It is worth underscoring that Sinha does not aim to portray Animal as the only hero of the novel. Animal’s character functions as a node in the web of relationships who helps connect all of the characters.

Animal and his friends help all oppressed and exploited lives in order to create the “power of nothing” (264). This power, Zafar claims, “[is] invincible” (264). With help from both humans and non-humans, the Khaufpuris can partly take revenge on the Americans and corrupt politicians. With his ability to connect, Animal can make a mutual understanding between Elli and the Khaufpuris. He takes Elli to the Nutcracker in order to show her the real situation of the poor, and discusses with her

the problem of the Khaufpuris, so Elli gradually realizes that she is ignorant that the root of their problems is, in fact, socio-economic inequality. Moreover, Animal is also a mediator who renders possible the reconciliation between the Khaufpuris and Elli. Elli's better understanding of the Khaufpuris enables her to take part in the fight for justice. Toward the end of the novel, the Americans and corrupt politicians are gassed while they have a meeting. Some people believe that an unknown woman in the burqa gases them. Although Sinha does not reveal precisely that the woman is Elli, it can be assumed that the unknown woman in the burqa is Elli since she once wears "a burqa to disguise herself" (319). The description of the unknown woman also is identical to Elli's appearance: "[the woman] was tall plus carried herself like one who knew what she was about" (361).

In addition to connecting Elli with the Khaufpuris, Animal plays a role as a node in the network of the Khaufpuris who have long struggled for justice. Animal does not play an important role as the group's leader. Instead he uses his ability to connect to help other humans and non-humans to reclaim justice. In fact, the novel presents several characters as heroes although they have nothing to fight. For example, as the leader of the activists calling for the Khaufpuris' justice, Zafar risks his life when he is on a hunger strike. In addition, Ma Franci and Huriya Bi are praised for their courage since they sacrifice their lives to help evacuate people in the basti. Apart from the human characters, Khā-in-the-Jar with unintended help from Animal, maybe the one who is responsible for the mysterious burning of the remains of the factory which are considered as a legacy of Western exploitation. Presumably, there may be an association between Khā-in-the-Jar and Animal's zippo. Toward the novel's end, the jar slips out of Animal's hand inside the Kampani, and after the fire is

out, Animal's zippo is found inside the factory. Khã-in-the-Jar may use Animal's zippo to burn the factory. These are pieces of evidence that point out how Animal and all the companions help one another to seek justice from inhumane American owners.

Conclusion

Throughout the novel, Sinha illustrates how imperial binarism plays an important role as one of the roots of the West's exploitation of the East. The representation of Animal dismantles the binary opposition. Moreover, Animal's interactions with other humans from different socio-economic backgrounds and non-humans characters influence him, helping him discover his new self. His transformation eventually liberates him from the binary thinking. His new self enables him to transform from an afflicted character into a character with agency to fight back. He plays his role as a bridge that connects human and non-human victims. Thanks to his new self, Animal can help create a sense of solidarity among different species and kinds, and he, together with the members of his web of relationships, joins hands in their struggle for justice which has been long delayed.

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