

Abstract

Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* (2007), as a strong example of transnational environmental writings, offers an imaginary re-working of the Bhopal disaster that occurred in 1984 in India. It depicts the aftermath of the chemical disaster in Khaufpur/Bhopal through fictitious tape recordings by the protagonist Animal. Set in a considerably destructed postcolonial environment, the novel enables merging postcolonial and ecocritical approaches in order to examine ecological consequences of environmental disasters on human and non-human beings. On the human level, this study scrutinizes the ecological alienation of the Khaufpuris by their transformation into toxic bodies due to the high level of chemical leakage in Khaufpur. On the non-human level, the study particularly analyses the irreparable impacts of the chemical disasters upon the environment by taking into account the harm to the non-human beings such as air, water, soil, flora and fauna that struggle to survive in a poisoned environment. Postcolonial ecocriticism, which has been a hybrid discourse since the 2000s, argues that this multi-level destruction considerably results from the human/nonhuman divide that underpins discriminatory approaches towards disadvantaged groups and their environments. The main objective of this study is to reveal ecological otherness of the human and non-human beings in a postcolonial environment through a postcolonial ecocritical analysis of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*.

Keywords: Indra Sinha, *Animal's People*, Human, Nonhuman, Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Özet

Indra Sinha'nın uluslararası çevre metinlerine güçlü bir örnek teşkil eden *Animal's People* (2007) adlı romanı, 1984'te Hindistan'da meydana gelen Bhopal felaketini kurgu yoluyla yeniden işlemektedir. Bu roman, imgesel olarak ana karakter Animal tarafından kaydedilen kasetler aracılığıyla Khaufpur/Bhopal'daki kimyasal felaketin sonuçlarını tasvir etmektedir. Büyük ölçüde tahrip edilmiş postkolonyal bir çevreyi konu alan bu roman, çevresel felaketlerin insan ve insandıışı varlıklar üzerindeki ekolojik sonuçlarını irdelemek amacıyla postkolonyal ve ekoeleştiril yaklaşımların bir araya getirilmesine olanak sağlamaktadır. İnsan düzeyindeki sonuçlar ile ilgili olarak bu çalışma, Khaufpur'da oluşan yüksek miktarda kimyasal sızıntı sonucu toksik bedenlere dönüşen Khaufpur halkının ekolojik anlamda yabancılaşmasını incelemektedir. İnsandıışı varlıklar düzeyinde ise, zehirlenmiş bir çevrede yaşam mücadelesi veren hava, su, toprak, flora ve

¹ This article is a revised and expanded version of the paper titled "A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*", presented at the 2nd International Symposium on Social Sciences at Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University on May 18-20, 2017.

² This article has been produced from the master's thesis titled "A Postcolonial Ecocritical Approach to *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha", completed by Yeşim İPEKÇİ on June 22, 2017 in consultation with Assist. Prof. Dr. Seda ARIKAN. Firat University, Office of Scientific Research Project (Project No: ISBF. 17. 02).

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fauna gibi insandışı varlıklara yönelik zararları göz önünde bulundurarak kimyasal felaketlerin çevre üzerindeki telafisi olanaksız etkilerini ele almaktadır. 2000'li yıllardan beri hibrid bir söylem olarak var olan postkolonyal ekoeleştirici, bu çok boyutlu tahribatın büyük ölçüde dezavantajlı gruplara ve onların çevrelerine yönelik ayrımcı yaklaşımlara dayanak oluşturan insan/insandışı ayrımından kaynaklandığını savunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Indra Sinha'nın *Animal's People* adlı romanını postkolonyal ekoeleştirici açıdan inceleyerek postkolonyal bir çevrede varolan insan ve insandışı varlıkların ekolojik ötekiliğini ortaya koymaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Indra Sinha, *Animal's People*, İnsan, İnsandışı, Postkolonyal Ekoeleştirici

Introduction

The son of an English writer and an Indian naval officer, Indra Sinha was born in 1950 in Bombay, India. Receiving his bachelor's degree in English Literature at Pembroke College, Sinha started his career as an outstanding copywriter/adman and has been voted one of the top ten British copywriters of all time. He, an advertisement writer for Amnesty International, was involved in advertising for charities and international campaigns (O'Loughlin, 2014, p. 103). He used advertising to make global sufferings such as the Bhopal disaster and Halabja chemical attack more visible to the entire world. In 1995, Sinha, with the intention of going beyond advertising, resigned from the agency to write fiction. About this transition, Sinha noted: "I felt as though I'd climbed to the top of the advertising mountain, but when I got to the top I saw a different peak higher and further away. That's the damn thing I should have tried to climb from the beginning, and of course you have to go down and start at the bottom again" (Moss, 2007, para. 3). After many years of experience in nonfictional representation of the sufferings in different parts of the world, Sinha starts to engage in the literary representation of these sufferings and of the endeavours claiming for justice. *Animal's People* (2007) is a production of this very motivation and managed to be shortlisted for the 2007 Man Booker Prize and to win the 2008 Commonwealth Writers' Prize: Best Book from Europe & South Asia.

The novel offers a fictional re-working of the aftermath of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy that passed into the history as "Hiroshima of the chemical industry" by Cohen (2003, para. 1). It occurred in the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant in Bhopal, India. Around 40 tons of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from the plant on the night of 3 December, 1984. While the number of deaths and the injured considerably differs in various sources, Kim Fortun provides a range between 1,754 and 10,000 for the dead and 200,000 and 300,000 for the injured (2001, p. 15). This chemical disaster brought death even to the unborn fetuses and left many people disabled. Witnessing these sufferings, Sinha has dedicated himself to the cause of Bhopal disaster in the realm of both fiction and nonfiction. Apart from the ads and campaigns, he raised money to found a free clinic in Bhopal to medically help the victims and found another facility for education and treatment of the child victims. In 2007, Sinha published *Animal's People*, enabling "transnational visibility and audibility" of social and environmental damages in Bhopal/Khaufpur (Nixon, 2011, p. 37). The novel provides a detailed account of the efforts to demand justice for the victims and their poisoned environment, which establishes his position, within postcolonial ecocritical framework, as a writer-activist like Arundhati Roy, J. M. Coetzee and Barbara Gowdy.

Animal's People is presented in a series of tape recordings in which Animal, upon the request of the Australian journalist who visited Khaufpur, recorded his and other Khaufpuris' experiences during the aftermath of the disaster (Sinha, 2007, p. 3)⁴. The spoken language becomes a powerful way for Animal to represent the subaltern voice of

⁴ Indra Sinha. 2007. *Animal's People* (London: Simon & Schuster). Subsequent references to *Animal's People* will be to this edition and will be indicated in the text by page numbers.

the victims against the American company and the corrupted Indian officials. Regarding his choice of Khaufpur as Bhopal's fictional counterpart in the novel, Sinha noted: "I knew Bhopal too well. To write freely, I had to imagine another city. In this fictional place, which I called Khaufpur ('khauf' is an Urdu word that means 'terror') the characters could come to life" (Thwaite, 2009, para. 3). On the other hand, *Animal's* distinctive oral tale engages in paratexts such as the website of Khaufpur and of Indra Sinha, suggesting that the novel plays with fact and fiction. Sinha combines the sentimental stories of the victims with empirical knowledge related to the fatal consequences of the gas-leak to reinforce the rhetorical power of the text. The fact that the disaster in Khaufpur was an eco-catastrophe on both human and nonhuman level in a postcolonial environment bridges the theoretical frameworks of postcolonialism and ecocriticism while analysing Sinha's literary representation of this multi-level damage in *Animal's People*.

Postcolonial ecocriticism expands the boundaries of ecocriticism which is defined as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical World" (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xviii) by incorporating international and transnational debates on social and environmental issues. This postcolonial turn in ecocriticism has been one of the main components of third wave ecocriticism that has been developing after 2000. Fostering a transcultural perspective to ecocritical studies, the transition from local to the global gives rise to "an intellectual climate in which questions of empire, globalization, and transnational structures of power and resistance are moving front and centre" (Nixon, 2011, p. 261). However, it has initially been challenging to merge the two fields, because ecocriticism is generally accepted as a "Western literary approach not fully engaged with multicultural concerns" (Wright, 2010, p. 12-13), and in return the environmental issues are fundamentally regarded as "irrelevant and elitist" (Nixon, 2011, p. 236). This divide has been bridged based on the parallel between historical exploitation of the colonized people and subjugation of nature. Crosby (1986) states that in the colonial history the Europeans moved humans, animals, and plants to the colonies to replace the wilderness over these lands (p. 89). Inevitably, such practices have changed the landscapes to be fertile for farming and thus permanently damaged indigenous ecologies. He "considers these unbalanced environmental 'exchanges' within the context of British imperial power and colonial rule" (Tiffin, 2007, p. xvi-xvii). The Western control over nature for interests of a specific group of human species has been reinforced with colonialism. Postcolonial ecocriticism proposes that today's ecology still suffers from this very ideology since the neocolonial practices of the last few decades follow the colonial tradition and provoke environmental degradation. Eventually, such developments entail "crosspollinations of environmental criticism and imperial discourse studies" (Buell, Heise & Thornber, 2011, p. 426).

Recent neocolonial practices including the shipping of the northern garbage to the postcolonial environments and ill-practices of transnational companies over these lands necessitate postcolonial lenses to the environment. Roos and Hunt (2010) bring forward the idea that 'justice' is a vital term in foregrounding the theoretical framework of postcolonial ecocriticism. Arguing that "environmental justice has moved ecocriticism to consider how disenfranchised or impoverished populations over the world face particular environmental problems", they highlight the extent of environmental degradation particularly in the global south and assume that this type of degradation stems from the broken relationship between human beings and the environment or the animate and inanimate (Roos & Hunt, 2010, p. 1). The dominance of the white, reasonable and able human beings over dehumanized groups and nonhuman environment is represented as the underlying reason behind the ecological disasters in postcolonial lands which end up with fatal consequences both for human and nonhuman beings living in these areas.

This study analyses the consequences of the disaster in Khaufpur in two parts entitled the ecological alienation of the human and ecological degradation of the nonhuman. In the first part, it focuses on the complex relationship between the body and the environment by presenting a broad analysis of the characters Animal, Ma Franci, Somraj and Kha-in-the-Jar, and it tries to further complicate this relationship through Sarah Ray's conceptualisation of 'ecological other' and Stacy Alaimo's concept of 'transcorporeality'. In the second part, this study identifies the environment in the novel as the nonhuman victim of the ecological crisis. The penetration of toxic gases into the air, water and soil in Khaufpur jeopardizes the existence of flora, fauna and many other life forms in the area. The study brings up Aldo Leopold's land ethic into discussion to underline the vitality of ecocentric perspective and ecological conscience for sustainable coexistence of human and nonhuman beings in postcolonial environments.

Ecological Alienation of the Human

Sinha's *Animal's People* offers a critical insight into the human-nonhuman divide by reflecting upon the distorted connection between the Khaufpuris and Khaufpur after the explosion at the pesticide factory. This study applies the concept of 'ecological other', conceptualised by Sarah Jaquette Ray to describe the disabled bodies, who are socially and environmentally excluded, as ecological others (2013). As Serpil Oppermann does in her article 'Toxic Bodies and Alien Agencies: Ecocritical Perspectives on Ecological Others' (2016), this study evaluates the toxic bodies as ecological others, but also includes a broad analysis of the disabilities that these toxic bodies experience after the penetration of chemicals into their bodies. The main objective is to discuss ecological alienation of the toxic and disabled bodies of the Khaufpuris based upon the unnatural relationship between these bodies and their environment.

In relation to Bhopal disaster, it has been reported that Union Carbide, a few months before the disaster, stopped investing money on safety procedures and decreased the number of permanent employees from 850 to 642 (Johnston, 2012, p. 131). In the novel, the 'Amrikan Kampani' (Union Carbide) is also accused of not implementing the necessary precautions, which ends up with a large-scale eco-crime and risks survival of present and future generations as well as the sustainability of nature and environment in Khaufpur. Furthermore, the novel frequently emphasizes that the Kampani neither appears in the courts nor offers any financial or medical solution to the victims of the disaster. These representations position *Animal's People* as a harsh critique of the high level of environmental injustices led by transnational corporations in the global south. Scrutinizing the nature of these injustices based on body and environment, this study aims to analyse how the novel responds to the question of "how do bodies of ecological others, as well as the landscapes they inhabit, serve as the very material upon which dominant forces are built?" (Ray, 2013, p. 82).

Among many other Khaufpuris, Animal, Ma Franci, Somraj and Kha-in-the-Jar experience the disaster corporeally and thus bring Stacy Alaimo's concept of transcorporeality up for discussion based on the idea that "the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from the environment" (Alaimo, 2010, p. 2). There is a constant interaction between the toxic bodies of the Khaufpuris and their poisoned environment. Turning into toxic and disabled bodies, the Khaufpuris were left deprived of any economic, social or political power to fight against the social and environmental injustices in their own lands. To lose a healthy connection with their environment and to be incapable of contributing to its wellbeing doubly victimize the local people and foster the stigmatization of them as ecological others, who are defined opposite to the able-bodied, productive and non-toxic subjects.

To start particularly with ecological otherness of Animal, he, as a toxic and disabled body, embodies the environmental crisis that Khaufpur has been through since the gas-leak in 1984. Animal's body presents "the medium through which injustice is experienced, understood, and combated" (Ray, 2013, p. 103-104). Animal, a nineteen year old boy, was born a few days before the disaster as an able human being. However, when he turned six, his spine started to twist and he lost his capability to walk bipedally. Since then, he has walked on all fours and started to be called Animal, 'Jaanvar' in Hindi, stripping off his humanity once and for all. Describing the moment when the chemicals invaded his body, "where the cellular drama of mutation and adaptation rage on" (Johnston, 2012, p. 124), Animal says:

It was so bad I could not lift my head. I just couldn't lift it. The pain gripped my neck and forced it down. I had to stare at my feet while a devil rode my back and chafed me with red hot tongs. [...] Further, further forward I was bent. When the smelting in my spine stopped the bones had twisted like a hairpin, the highest part of me was my arse. (15)

Animal's body mirrors the human and environmental degradation. In reference to the dynamic interplay between the two, Nixon (2011) says, "the symbolic economy of Animal's body affords Sinha an implicit yet unforgettable image of a body politic literally bent double beneath the weight of the poisoned city's foreign load" (p. 57). With a similar perspective, Johnston (2012) argues that Animal's deformed posture is a symbol for the "invisible chemicals" that smelt all the Khaufpuris together and thus exposes the "often ignored toxicity" in these people's bodies (p. 124). Animal and his people live with these chemicals just like the factory that was abandoned with the dangerous chemicals inside.

Animal's physical deformity develops a deformed psychology. He says, "mirrors I avoid but there's such a thing as casting a shadow" (1) which suggests that his disability as "a disfiguration of the natural form of a human" makes it difficult for him to adapt to "ordinary human life" (Parry, 2016, p. 22-23). He deliberately fails to distinguish himself from the animal species, inducing a trauma that becomes the main force shaping his identity around the lacks in his life. Animal's body is turned into an object to be seen by the visitors and journalists, as it is a concrete embodiment of the disaster. When he is introduced to the foreign visitors, mostly the Western, the Khaufpuris use this description, "[t]here he is! Look! It's Animal. Goes on four feet, that one. See, that's him, bent double by his own bitterness" (11). This approach to his body presents him as an exotic object to be displayed before the Western visitors, similar to the case of Saartjie Baartman (Hottentot Venus) from South Africa who, in the nineteenth century, was forced to exhibit her body in freak shows around Europe due to the different size of her back and genitals. Animal addresses to these visitors: "[y]our eyes full of eyes. Thousands staring at me through the holes in your head. Their curiosity feels like acid on my skin" (7). His description of the troubling gaze over his disfigurement symbolizes the continuation of toxic penetration into his body. The chemicals ripped him of his humanity on that night, but the curiosity of the *eyes* over his body since then has continued to jeopardize his humanity every day by making him feel like he is not a normal being. Just as the non-western races were identified as animal and animalistic in the colonial period, giving rise to the concept of otherness in postcolonial theory, the identification of Animal as an animal due to his toxic and disabled body presents him as an ecological other in the neocolonial period within postcolonial ecocritical framework.

Animal's turning into a *four-foot animal* breaks the balance and interaction between his body and soul. His reflection upon his disfigurement shapes his mental and physical actions with the belief that his body belongs to the animal species, but his mind belongs to the human. Therefore, his animal body cannot realize his capabilities as a human

being, and he cannot act upon his ideas, thoughts and feelings. Specifically, Animal's disability stops him to place himself among healthy and productive males. He calls his possible sexual activities with a female as unnatural (78). He does not believe in the existence of a proper mate for himself and cannot make sure whether his partner should be an animal or a human being. On the one hand, this causes him to suffer from a psychological disorder called voyeurism, "the practice of gaining sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity" (*Oxford Dictionaries*, def. 1). Animal is frequently involved in voyeuristic activities while spying on Elli Barber (78), the American Doctor who came to Khaufpur to open a free clinic, and on Nisha, the woman activist with whom Animal is in love (117). On the other hand, his positioning himself within such an unnatural relationship (although he is a human partner) introduces him as an ecological other who is incapable of distinguishing himself as a member of human species and thus stops his reproductive function. Consequently, the disaster reduces Animal to a toxic body with a physical disability, developing into a variety of psychological disorders. The novel portrays that an unhealthy environment gives rise to an unhealthy body which supports Alaimo's claim that the well-being of human beings cannot be considered independent of the rest of the planet (2010, p. 18). Overall, the corporeal otherness of Animal signifies the tragic fate that postcolonial environments and their inhabitants share.

Animal's adoptive mother Ma Franci is another toxic body suffering from a disability. She begins to suffer from a kind of aphasia after the gas leak at the factory. Aphasia is defined as the impairment of the ability to comprehend and speak a language because of the damage to a particular part in the brain.

On that night all sorts of people lost all kinds of things, lives for sure, families, friends, health, jobs, in some cases their wits. This poor woman, Ma Franci, lost all knowledge of Hindi. She'd gone to sleep knowing it as well as any Khaufpuri, but was woken in the middle of the night by a wind full of poison and prophesying angels. (37)

The chemicals might have penetrated into a specific region in her brain or this specific part might have experienced a stroke during the explosion, which initially damaged her multi-lingual functions. Wallace (2016) argues, "[t]his aphasia leaves her [Ma Franci] not only monolingual (or at least so she believes; in fact there is some Hindi and English mixed in) but also in capable of recognizing other language as language; instead she hears 'stupid grunts and sounds'" (p. 90). Except her native language French, Ma Franci forgets all the languages she knew including Hindi and English. Furthermore, she is deprived of ability to recognize what those around her are speaking is also a language. When Ma Franci says "the Apokalis took away their speech", Animal starts "wondering how anyone can get it totally wrong" (100). This communication disorder limits her capacity to help the Khaufpuris who desperately need her support and cooperation to struggle against the ongoing fatal effects of the gas leak. During and after the disaster, Ma Franci has been a great help to the sufferings of the victims thanks to her experiences. Her loss of Hindi is very tragic and ironic in this sense. These people have been driven into despair on all fronts.

The study of Trivedi, Purohit and Soju (2014) reveals that the industrial disasters continue to happen in India such as Jaipur Oil Depot Fire in 2009 and Mayapuri Radiological Incident in 2010 (p. 1) and many others around the world. Besides, we are, on daily basis, exposed to radiation, toxic substances and the fear of "nuclear holocaust" (Nixon, 2011, p. 62). By often using the metaphor *apokalis* (apocalypse) (63), Ma Franci might prophesy that the earth and its habitants come closer to an eco-apocalypse everyday with their anti-ecological and environmentally racist practices. Based on the

notion of environmental racism (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 5), postcolonial ecocriticism argues that those living in the global south such as the Khaufpuris are more vulnerable to exploitation as they are (or left) poor and weak. These people are forced to be ecologically alienated from their environment due to neocolonial practices that threaten sustainability in the global south. On the other hand, the use of apocalypse might be interpreted as a concept that applies to all people who share the same earth and implies the possibility of every being on earth to be an ecological other at some point, because human/nonhuman bodies, chemical agents, ecological systems and many other actors all intermingle with each other and enter into a perpetual transformation that eventually affect each life form within the concept of trans-corporeality.

Another victim of the eco-crime in Khaufpur, Somraj loses his singing breath because of "the Kampani's gases" (130). He is not only affected by the poisons of that night, but also the wells around his house that include a dangerous amount of chemicals (147). Somraj has plenty of awards and honours that let him called "Aawaaz-e-Khaufpur, the Voice of Khaufpur" (33). Inhaling toxic air on that night and consuming toxic water everyday deprive Somraj of his life energy. While the Kampani blames the local people for the disaster and claims that "the damage to people's health has been exaggerated" (159), Somraj's losing his capability to sing, which was a crucial element for his life and career, points out that the disaster is responsible for not only physical and psychological problems but also cultural and ecological damages that upside down the Khaufpuris. Somraj used to sing Indian classical music and employ raga as a melodic structure. Mukherjee states that "in the classical tradition, the ragas are also understood as forms that express not merely human moods, but their relationship with the land and environment of their habitation" (2010, p. 159).

Somraj's ecological alienation might be explained with the argument that "[t]he physical diminution of the body metonymically conveys experiences of loss of agency, loss of direction, disconnection from the land, and dispossession wrought by colonialism" (Ray, 2013, p. 83). His disability indirectly leads to the impairment of his communication with his land and environment. Thus, his ability or assumption to hear music in frogs, birds and many other beings can be interpreted as an attempt to re-establish his connection with nature from which he has been atrociously alienated (48). Mukherjee argues that in *Animal's People*, Somraj and his music symbolize the "principle of unity through dualities in aesthetic, social, political and environmental dimensions" (2010, p. 159). This suggests that his disability has personal, cultural and ecological consequences, and introduces his toxic body as the transit between culture and nature.

Kha-in-the-Jar, the unborn two-headed foetus, is one of the youngest victims of the Kampani. As a body "tell[s] stories: stories of social choices and political decisions, of natural dynamics and cultural practices, and of environmental risks and health issues" (Oppermann, 2016, p. 416), Kha-in-the-Jar, an undeveloped body confined in a jar and waiting to be properly born, tells stories about repercussions of wrong and unjust decisions and practices in Khaufpur. Alaimo argues that toxic bodies bring up trans-corporeal ethics focusing on "practices that have far-reaching and often unforeseen consequences for multiple peoples, species, and ecologies" (2010, p. 22). In *Animal's People*, the decisions to build the factory in Khaufpur/Bhopal, to decrease the safety precautions at the plant due to their costs and not to remove the plant from the land even after the disaster all result in the emergence of disabled generations and environments that endangers global sustainability at the human and nonhuman level. This reveals that present generations potentially have control over the lives of future generations when they take decisions with irremediable impacts on them (Barry, 1977, p. 243-44). Within this context, Kha-in-the Jar, along with other fetuses, embodies the lack of intergenerational justice for future generations in postcolonial lands.

In a nutshell, the lethal consequences of the disaster upon human beings in the novel indicate the corrupted transits between the body and the environment in a postcolonial land. Postcolonial ecocritical discourse argues that postcolonial environments along with their habitants, throughout history, have been exploitable. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries witness an increasing level of ecological degradation and exploitation due to discrimination of the socially and economically disadvantaged subjects and their lands. Ecological alienation of the toxic and disabled bodies in Khaufpur stems from the practices limiting their potential to benefit from a healthy environment and to contribute to the ecological system in which they live. Overexploitation of human and nonhuman beings in Khaufpur violates both present and future generations' right to quality living, which poses a great risk for the sustainability of the ecology.

Ecological Degradation of the Nonhuman

Plumwood (2003) says, "the concept of colonization can be applied to nonhuman nature itself, and [...] the relationship between humans, or certain groups of them, and the more-than-human world might be aptly characterized as one of colonization" (p. 52). It suggests that "domination over nature and its non-human world is defined as an inevitable act in the history of civilization" (Arkan, 2017a, p. 38). This argument implies the correspondence between anthropocentrism and Western centrism that leads to discriminatory approaches towards not only dehumanized beings but also nonhuman nature. Ecocritical engagement with postcolonial discourse suggests that this correspondence goes beyond the concerns of racism and evolves into environmental racism that threatens the sustainability of the planet earth through malpractices particularly in the global south. Curtin's claim that "a self-perceived 'center' of power and civilization exploited 'distant' places and peoples for its economic benefit" (2005, p. 19) points out the parallel between the oppression of races and environments.

In *Animal's People*, the environmental tragedy in Khaufpur/Bhopal encourages questioning "the spatial politics of environmental toxicity" (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 216). Similar to the shipping of the northern garbage to the poor countries in the south, these politics refer to movement of toxicity from the global north to the global south. The fact that an American multinational company is the owner of the pesticide plant in Khaufpur and responsible for the eco-crime on this land is an example of "foreign risk relocation" (Parry, 2016, p. 35). Fortun argues that Union Carbide chose Bhopal because "the region was seen as 'backward' and thus targeted for development by the Indian government" (2001, p. xiv). This refers to the flexibility that India, a formerly colonized land, offers for foreign investment with the anticipation of emerging into a developed country. Within this context, Curtin (2005) highlights that we own a culture guided by the ideology of 'progress':

Just like the American evacuated people from their longstanding places in nature with the idea of nature preservation while having progress, similarly it applied its idea of economic progress in which developing and underdeveloped countries have to exploit their own sources to catch up the developed countries. (p. 9)

This very ideology appears as the primary reason behind holding the economic interests prior to the environmental issues. The novel portrays Khaufpur as a place where overurbanization, insufficient infrastructure, and malnutrition are highly problematic issues that eventuate as the anti-developmental consequences of industrialization process. It implies that Khaufpur/Bhopal has already been a site in which nature was crumbling to maintain its existence. The chemical disaster in Khaufpur thus stands as an example of the devastating environmental calamities underpinned by the Western colonialism. Carrigan claims that the discriminatory results of these calamities leave

postcolonial communities more vulnerable to the forthcoming social and natural disasters (2010, p. 255).

In Khaufpur, the pesticide plant built by the Kampani in order to increase the number and quality of agricultural products deviates from the aim and turns into a biocidal attack, exemplifying Nixon's term 'slow violence'. By slow violence, Nixon mentions a type of violence "that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space" (2011, p. 2). The air, water and soil pollution due to the dissemination of various toxic pollutants has been a violent factor slowly exterminating the well-being of human beings, as elaborately discussed in the previous part, and nonhuman beings including plants, animals, organisms as well as biogeochemical processes. The deadly impacts of the gases on creatures of air, earth, and sea reveal the dangers that biodiversity faces because of the disaster. Carson (2002) puts it:

The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. (p. 6)

The chain of evil in Khaufpur shows itself when "the initial airborne terror morphs into a waterborne terror" (Nixon, 2011, p. 61), referring to the polluted water resources. While these resources have already been scarce and insufficient in quality, they, after the explosion, turn into the fountains of poison. Animal depicts lakes as "clay pits behind the Kampani's factory where bulldozers would dump all different coloured sludges" (16), picturing the local extent of water pollution. The life giving nature of water transforms into a life-taking agency. The children's swimming in these lakes (16), as mentioned by Animal, suggests the loss of a healthy relationship between human and nature and underlines that any harm to nature finds its way into both the animate and inanimate beings.

The novel specifically brings forward negative impacts of the multi-level pollution on trees and plants. It has been reported that after the Bhopal disaster the vegetation in the surrounding areas had been adversely affected, and the local survivors were advised not to consume locally grown vegetables since genetic damages and pollutants were detected in plants (Bhargava, 1986, p. 6). Offering a fictional re-working of such facts, *Animal's People* illustrates the decrease in growing and nutritional capacities of the plants by presenting them as unnatural and harmful elements transformed in the poisoned environment of Khaufpur. Animal, living in the dead factory, depicts the rise of an unnatural forest within the factory: "a forest is growing, tall grasses, bushes, trees, creepers that shoot sprays of flowers like fireworks" (29). Use of 'fireworks' as a simile for flowers symbolizes the transformation of plants from natural to artificial, given that the fireworks are industrial products that involve combustion or explosion to create a visual show. Moreover, regarding the dangerous nature of these unnatural plants, Zafar, the leading activist struggling for justice in the novel, warns the Khaufpuris that "if the dry grasses inside the factory ever caught light, if fire reached these brown lumps, poison gases would gush out, it'd be that night all over again" (230). It implies that the plants in Khaufpur barely carry out their life-giving function of releasing oxygen into the air. Instead, they pose a risk for the natural environment in Khaufpur with the possibility of inflaming the poisonous gases. The symbolic references to the unnatural fabric of these plants and trees disclose the harm to the ecosystems that depends on natural plants.

Animals are among the nonhuman beings vehemently suffering from the fatal consequences of the disaster. In relation to animal casualties during the Bhopal disaster,

Fortun reports that “[w]ithin hours, the streets of Bhopal were littered with human corpses and the carcasses of buffaloes, cows, dogs and birds” (2001, p. 259). It reveals that the fauna in the area, during and after the explosion, shared the same fate with the human beings. While the chemicals disseminated on that night almost immediately killed and disabled thousands of animals, the air, water and soil pollution has continued to destroy them for many years after the disaster, which sets an example for the concept of *slow violence*. Animal mentions the “peacocks, goats and even the grey herons which sometimes [they] find dead beside the Kampani’s lakes” (49), implying that by not removing the factory and cleaning its lethal chemicals, the Kampani continues to jeopardize the habitat. This situation is a frank portrait of “the involuntary incorporation of Animal and all other animals (human or otherwise) into global systems of exploitation and oppression” (Parry, 2016, p. 56).

Such devastation of natural life in Khaufpur has been figuratively depicted by a Khaufpuri’s, who supports Zafar’s hunger strike for the sake of justice, sentence “[w]hat is Khaufpur but a desert?” (292). Use of desert as a metaphor for Khaufpur suggests how the land was transformed into an empty land, “severing webs of accumulated cultural meaning and treating the landscape as if it were uninhabited by the living, the unborn, and the animate deceased” (Nixon, 2011, p. 17). The land in Khaufpur “as disputed object of discursive management and material control” (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 21) becomes the nonhuman victim of the Kampani, rendering it an unhealthy and polluted landscape. As stated above, this transnational American company abandons the plant with the chemicals inside and insists on not removing it even more than three decades after the disaster. This situation necessitates rethinking of “the international framework of law, justice, and rights” (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 216). The unjust treatment of the poor Khaufpuris and their environment indicates the gap between the environmentalisms of the poor and the rich (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 1997, p. xxi). The environment in the global south is evaluated as more expandable than the one in the global north. In a way to challenge this discriminatory mentality towards certain human and nonhuman beings, this study emphasizes the significance of Aldo Leopold’s ‘land ethic’ that extends the boundaries of a community to include soils, plants and animals. Leopold (1949) says, “land ethic changes the role of Homo Sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it” (p. 204). Thus, he “puts a moral responsibility on the shoulders of all world citizens to think and behave in terms of land ethic” (Arikan, 2017b, p. 459). While land is not just soil but “a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals” (Leopold, 1949, p. 216), in the case of Khaufpur, the land turns into a site of degradation full of hazardous wastes that pass through the food chain to the human and nonhuman bodies. In this context, *Animal’s People* portrays what happens to an environment in the absence of land ethic that calls for the perception of “land as a harmonious being with its all members that require respect and attention” (Arikan, 2017b, p. 463).

Towards the end of the novel, Animal involves in recovering his relationship with nature by embracing the ecocentric perspective that assumes both human and nonhuman beings as intrinsically valuable. When he gets lost in the forest after running away from the fire in the factory, he starts a hallucinatory conversation with the natural elements around him and enjoys the protective, nourishing and recuperative qualities of nature (353). Comparing the forest to paradise, Animal believes that there will be no suffer, fear, hunger or thirst anymore. He tells his friends, who come to the forest to take him back to Khaufpur, “Khaufpur’s gone. No more of that misery, here we are all free in paradise” (352). Identifying the forest with paradise and his hometown with hell, Animal depicts a contrasting image of Khaufpur before and after the foreign intervention. His interaction with the nonhuman world in the forest represents an imaginary return to nature. This

imaginary return implies a direct criticism towards the practices that jeopardize the cooperation between the human and nonhuman world. Animal criticizes the separation of human from nature and longs for the pre-industrial period:

[T]his place [the forest] will be my everlasting home, I have found it at last, this is the deep time when there was no difference between anything when separation did not exist when all things were together, one and whole before humans set themselves apart and became clever and made cities and kampanis and factories. (352)

Animal's appreciation of the nonhuman world points out that "environment must be seen as a mutually sustaining network in which humans and non-humans are always already linked with each other, and on whose collective action and prosperity the functioning of the network depends" (Mukherjee, 2010, p. 147). Thus, the interplay between the human and nonhuman world as reflected through *Animal* in the novel emphasizes the vitality of ecological literacy, a term coined by David W. Orr and Fritjof Capra, that entails taking into account the cultural and natural history in postcolonial lands while making policies and decisions. The postcolonial ecocritical reading of the novel brings forward the idea that the environmental problems should not be ignored no matter how geographically distant they are, because "[t]he world is intricately connected in the ways that often escape our notice" (Curtin, 2005, p. 17).

Conclusion

Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* contributes to the transnational visibility of the consequences of an ecological tragedy in a postcolonial land. Postcolonial ecocritical approach, as a relatively new theoretical framework, points out that postcolonial communities face the ecological risks at a high level, as they are more vulnerable to neocolonial and capitalist practices. The discriminatory perspectives towards the impoverished subjects and their environments appear as the basis of ecological crises on these lands. By offering a postcolonial ecocritical reading of the novel, this study has attempted to indicate how a literary work portrays victimization of human and nonhuman beings in a formerly colonized land. The multidimensional exploitation inaugurated by a chemical disaster in Khaufpur leads to various physical and mental disabilities in human beings. Animal, Ma Franci, Somraj and the unborn foetus Kha-in-the-Jar turn into ecological others due to their toxic and disabled bodies. On the other hand, the novel depicts an environment left disabled due to the discriminatory economic policies that fail to take into account the vulnerability of postcolonial environments in terms of physical and social conditions, but rather focus on their expendability. The polluted landscape due to the penetration of toxic gases into the air, water and soil reflects the present and future risks for a healthy environment in Khaufpur. Overall, the representation of such multi-level damages to various life forms presents a critique of the neo-colonial and capitalist practices that ecologically isolate both postcolonial subjects and their environments. Animal's recordings of the human and nonhuman sufferings in Khaufpur make a literary call for the holders of power and policy makers across the world to be ecologically conscious and environmentally literate in order to foster the sustainability of the earth.

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