

Hailing the Wild Being of the World: Indra Sinha's "Animal's People":An Ecocritical Reading

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Abstract

Literary interest in ecology has been registered throughout literary history in different trends. The recent environmental crisis has revived that interest. Old trends paved the road to "ecocriticism" which addresses a global issue that poses a serious threat to the entire world. As ecologists agree, it has become crucial "to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community and with it the human community" (Glotfelty and From, 72). The new world economy, especially with the emergence of the World Trade Organization, "is creating an economic system that straddles...borders" (421) through Transnational Corporations which are "particularly troubling" because they "no longer have any interests in or allegiances to a particular territory... and [are] irresponsible ecologically" (Masao744).

Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xx). The aim of this paper is to address the issue of people's behavior towards the environment by conducting an ecological study of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* (2007). Selected concepts of ecocriticism (e.g. wild Being, affectedness, answerability, nation state, etc.) are discussed to reveal how Sinha's novel grounds the reader in ethically, politically and philosophically referential situations by the fictionalizing of a real environmental disaster, the Bhopal accident. The paper concludes that the green/transnational state could be the remedy for the present environmental crisis. New definitions, however, must be attached to basic concepts that will still be indispensable in the new allonational formations such as affectedness and answerability.

Keywords: ecocriticism, environment, transnational, affectedness, answerability

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الحفاوه بالحياه البريه: دراسه نقدينيه لروايه "حيوان وقومه" لأندرا سينها

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ملخص

الحفاوه بالحياه البريه: دراسه نقدينيه لروايه "حيوان وقومه" لأندرا سينها يعرف شيريل جلوتفيلتي النقد البيئي بأنه "دراسه العلاقه بين الادب والبيئه الطبيعيه". ان الاهتمام بالبيئه الطبيعيه وما يحيط بها من قضايا تتعلق بكافه جوانب الحياه قد صار امرا حريا بالإنسان الا يتغاضى عنه خاصه فى ظل الأزمه البيئيه التى يواجهها العالم بأسره، وانشغال الأدب بهذا الموضوع ليس بالأمر الجديد وهو ما يتضح جليا لمن يتتبع تاريخ النقد الأدبى على تنوع اتجاهاته والتى مهد القديم منها الطريق للحديث. وكما يحذر المهتمون بالبيئه، فقد بات لزاما ان يجد الإنسان الاساليب والوسائل التى يحول بها بين رغبته فى تطوير حياته و التعجيل بفنائه حين يصل هذا التطوير الى حد تدمير بيئته الطبيعيه. ان الأقتصاد العالمى الجديد، ولاسيما بعد ظهور مؤسسه التجاره العالميه، قد استحدث عالما جديدا لا يعترف بالحدود السياسيه كما يتجلى بوضوح فى تاسيس الشركات المتعدده الجنسيات وهى كيانات تثير القلق ويحيط بها العديد من التساؤلات، فعلى الرغم من عدم اكترائها بالانتماء لبلد بعينه غير ان الواقع يشير الى انها دائما تصب ماديا فى صالح الدول الكبرى بينما تنفث دائما التلوث الذى تخلفه فى دول العالم الثالث او المناطق الفقيره التى لا يكثر بها العالم بما فى ذلك حكوماتها.

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسه سلوك الإنسان تجاه البيئه الطبيعيه وذلك من خلال تطبيق منهج النقد البيئي على روايه "حيوان وقومه" للكاتب الهندى اندرا سنه، وذلك من خلال تناول بعض المفاهيم الرئيسيه لهذا المنهج وذلك لتوضيح كيف تضع الروايه الكاتب وجها لوجه امام العديد من المسائل السياسيه والاخلاقيه والفلسفيه حيث تتمحور الروايه حول حادثه حقيقيه وهى الكارثه البيئيه التى وقعت فى مدينه بوبال الهنديه. ويخلص البحث الى اهميه الاستفاده من بعض مفاهيم هذا المنهج بما لا يضر بسياده الدول وسيطرتها على حدودها وذلك من خلال وجود كيانات عبر الحدود يكون اهتمامها الاول بالبيئه الطبيعيه فى كافه ربوع العالم فتدافع عنها وتروج للحفاظ عليها حتى يوقن كل فرد بأن البيئه الطبيعيه هي كيان متصل وروح واحده تسرى فى هذا الكون فتلوث المناخ والامراض الوبائيه والأحتباس الحرارى هي مشاكل بيئيه لا تعترف بالحدود السياسيه وسرعان ماتخطاها دون الحاجه الى اوراق ثبوتيه وفى سبيل ذلك يتعين اولا على الدول الكبرى ان تتخلص من انانيتها وتتنظر بعين الاعتبار للبيئه الطبيعيه داخل وخارج حدودها فالبيئه هي كائن حى عاقل يجب ان ينزله سائر الأحياء منزله الصديق الجدير بالأحترام.

Educated people should make nature their friend" (Commoner, 3).

Bringing ecology and literature together is a new, old tradition that registers an interest in depicting and analyzing the diverse stances and attitudes that people have adopted towards nature throughout different phases of history. The relationship between the world of the human and that of the nonhuman has been in and out of focus by various degrees throughout the history of critical theorization. In his *Beginning Theory* (2002), Peter Barry traces this interest back to the 1790s British Romanticism and the 19th century American Transcendentalism, movements that "celebrate... nature, the life force and the wilderness" (Barry , 161). These trends paved the road to "ecocriticism" or the "green studies," which, even though "still distinctly on the academic margins (161), addresses a global issue that poses a serious threat to the entire world. As most ecologists now agree, it has become crucial "to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community and with it the human community" (Glottfelty and Fromm, 1996, 72). Air pollution, global warming and the pictures of sea animals and birds showing up in sad oil coats in place of lovely, bright scales or feathers, is a condemnation of none other than man, Mother Earth's most controversial guest. The aim of this paper is to address the issue of man's destructive behavior towards the environment by conducting an ecological study of Indra Sinha's nature-oriented text, *Animal's people* (2007). Selected concepts of ecocriticism are discussed to reveal how Sinha's novel grounds the reader in ethically, politically and philosophically referential situations by the fictionalizing of a real life environmental disaster, namely, the Bhopal accident, one of the worst industrial disasters in history. Bhopal witnessed "the 1984 gas leak from a Union Carbide chemical plant that caused the deaths of thousands of people and sickened hundreds of thousands more" (39). Events, characters, and elements of the landscape are employed to explore the effect of culture on nature in relation to the views of critics and modern philosophers whose contributions highly enriched and enlightened the field, and paved the way for critical theorists like Francois Leyotard and

Jacques Derrida whose emphasis on the posthuman is a cornerstone pillar of ecocriticism. The present debate cannot be separated from "nation state," the most fundamental concept of realism, especially that numerous thinkers and philosophers now believe that "We need to think ourselves beyond the nation" (Appadurai, 1996, 158) and claim that in today's identity politics, there is "an effort to generate nationalism based on non-territorial principles of solidarity" (158). These efforts are expected to "generate a stateless or multi-state nationalism" (Gersdorf and Mayer, 2006, 420). The new world economy, especially with the emergence of the World Trade Organization [WTO], "is creating an economic system that straddles...borders" (Gersdorf and Mayer, 2006, 421). The economic projects of some countries are taking place across borders especially in third world territories through Transnational Corporations [TNCs]. Masao Miyoshi describes these TNCs as "particularly troubling" because they "no longer have any interests in or allegiances to a particular territory on the planet, national or otherwise, and thus are wholly irresponsible ecologically" (744). Finally, this paper highlights a subject that, according to Axel Goodbody, only occupies "a peripheral position in Anglo-American debate," namely, "the ecological role of creative writing in environmental discourse" (ix).

Upon its publication, *Animal's People* was acclaimed as "a stunningly humane work of storytelling that takes us right to the heart of contemporary India" [back cover]. The novel's value as a seminal work that takes the reader to the heart of the global environmental crisis, however, has not hitherto been given due attention. In agreement with the principles of racial ecocriticism, the novel exposes the injustice of the super powers that choose to exhale the poisonous gases of their industries in the air of third world anonymous cities through TNCs. So, this novel adopts a new approach in depicting environmental crises unlike most nature-oriented texts that tackle the issues of indigenous cultures suffering at the hands of the newcomers.

Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xx). Richard Kerridge agrees and explains that it is "a project that seeks

to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis" (Kerridge and Sammells, 2). Lawrence Coupe enhances the definition adding that ecocriticism is "a new kind of pragmatics" (4), while Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer view it "not as a concept that reinforces but one that challenges established cultural, political and ethical normativities" (10). Donelle N. Dreese states that ecocriticism "has several related disciplines, such as deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, and environmental justice"(5). These definitions emphasize the nature of ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary project that brings "literary critics together with environmental philosophers" and allows for an overlap with "the ideological analysis of texts" (Goodbody, x-ix). There have also been efforts "to ground literary criticism in neurophysiology, evolutionary biology, and scientific ecology" (Goodbody, 13).

One of the major concerns of ecocriticism is to emphasize the posthuman against the humanist allegations of man's superiority over other forms of life. Louise Westling sees that this approach to the posthuman "helps to define the human place within the ecosystem by interrogating or erasing the boundary that has been assumed to set our species apart from the rest of the living community" (Gersdorf and Mayer, p. 30). John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are two modern philosophers whose views are of particular importance for ecocritics, since they embrace "the implications of evolutionary biology and quantum physics, to turn towards genuinely ecological perspectives upon the human place in the world" (p. 25). Their work helps posthumanist theorists deflect people from the idea of "anthropocentrism" or "human-centered elitism" (p. 25). The humanist approach defines people as "superior beings whose language and self-reflective consciousness place them above and at an abyssal remove from all other animals and the natural world" (p. 28), but since "Darwin and Einstein", reflects Westling,

philosophers and critical theorists have been working to dismantle the Renaissance and Enlightenment humanist presumptions about homo sapiens that have led to our conceptual estrangement from the matrix of earth's life.(26)

Most posthumanists regard evolution as the history of the human kind and see the chain that moves from animal to human. In his "The Animal that therefore I Am" (2002), Derrida insists that "it is ridiculous to even speak of 'the animal' as if there were any such monolithic presence. Instead there are millions of other beings whom we must begin to take seriously" (p. 382). Merleau-Ponty calls for an "organic history." He argues that "all the particular analyses concerning Nature, life, the human body and language will make us progressively enter into the *Lebenswelt* ... the 'wild being' of the natural world" (167). "Organic history" is a scientific work that "would disclose such a thoroughly integrated dynamism of living things that the human/animal intertwining and the many kinds of sentience of non-human beings seem undeniable conclusions" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 34).

In *Animal's People*, there is an obvious glorification of nature, not as a romantic presence or a backlash against the human drama, but as an equally living entity that shares life in all its complexity and fullness. Elements of the landscape are presented as main actors in the drama of life. Sinha chooses to tell his story from the perspective of a four-footed boy called Animal who proudly cherishes his position as a member of the animal kingdom, "The name... stuck, some things have a logic that can't be denied" (Shrader-Frechette, 16), and rejects attempts to push him higher in the chain of evolution. Animal himself represents a missing ring in the Darwinian chain of evolution, being a four-footed human being, "free of ties and, where necessary, cruel and devoid of guilt" (Goodbody, 187). "Was I Hindu or Muslim", he reflects, "what difference did it make? I am an animal. I'd be lying if I said religion meant a damn thing to me" (Sinha, 14). Sinha seems intent on confirming the agency of different members of the nonhuman world in forming opinions, expressing attitudes and taking action to act on what they believe. They issue their verdict on events that affect their wellbeing as much as that of the humans and proceed into action to execute their will. Scorpions share Animal's initial attitude against a European journalist who wants the disaster's story recorded on tapes. Later, Animal changes his attitude, but scorpions do not. When he fetches the tapes, he discovers that they "no longer work..., rain got

at [them]... [and] scorpions shit" (p. 3). Ma Franci believes that, eventually, nonhumans will become the hand of justice and even the balance against those who humiliated the earth. "When the time comes," she tells Animal, "these little beasts [the scorpions],... will ... grow huge... have faces like people... gnash [their teeth] in the most horrifying way...wear golden crowns... go around stabbing people, the ones who've done evil to others" (p. 62). Ma Franci's prediction is an embodiment of Stephen Rose's insistence that "it is in the nature of living systems to be radically indeterminate to continually construct their-our- own futures, albeit in circumstances not of our choosing" (Rose, 7).

Sinha's respect of the wild Being shows in Animal's reverence of the nonhuman. He lives as part of Merleau-Ponty's "*Lebenswelt*" sleeping in trees, befriending animals and accepting "the apparently evil role they sometimes play" (Chavkin, 20). He taps the ground several times to warn snakes lest he should tread on them and lives in peace with scorpions inhabiting the wall of his abode. Never does Animal consider killing any of these dangerous beings. On the contrary, he endows them with feelings and understanding. Talking about the scorpions with Ma Franci, they refer to them as "our friends... that live in our wall" (Sinha, 62). One day he enters his abode to find Ma Franci "with a pissed-off looking scorpion couched on the palm of her hand. Seems to be giving it instructions" (p. 298). Animal just "freeze[s] so's not to alarm the creature" (298).

Jara, a dog, is Animal's companion and girlfriend: "in this world my best people have always been women, such as Jara, Ma Franci, Nisha" (p. 79). Jara is a prominent member of a Khaufpuri team of environmental activists. She is also his accomplice in tricking people off their money. Animal treats Jara as his equal, neither condescendingly nor humbly. "Jara is my friend" he states, "She was not always. We used to be enemies" (17).

On several occasions Sinha presents man's encounter with the wild which is "crystalized in the experience of being fixed in the animal's gaze" (Goodbody, 2007, p. 187). By returning the human gaze, animals "make us aware they are active subjects and not

merely passive objects" (p. 187). Animal and Jara used to fight over food. "I rushed at her... growling louder than she... She ... [gave] me a reproachful look" (Sinha, 17). This assertion of autonomy on the part of animals, momentarily "decenters our anthropocentric world view" (Goodbody, 187). On various occasions Jara expresses consent, rejection, amazement, etc. She is always articulate enough to voice out her stance giving credit to Wetling's statement that "Animals have languages, not like ours, but still recognizable ways to communicate by sound and gesture" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 37).

Sinha describes Animal's uninhibited way of life "in terms reminiscent of Nietzsche, as a stripping away of the layers of effete civilization, and, as a regaining of our lost animality" (Goodbody, 184). As Peter G. Beidler maintains, human beings "must, if they are to survive, learn to know what to accept ... They must accept a role that permits them to live as close to the way animals live as possible... they must not forget their own natural origins" (Chavkin, 22). *Animal's People* adopts the principles of deep ecology defying the "objectification of the natural environment" which, according to Dreese, "separate[s] humans from nature, ...and serves as the justification for the continued exploitation and degradation that lies at the core of the global environmental crisis" (5).

The idea of a sentient, indeterminate nonhuman world extends far beyond animals. According to the principles of deep ecology "all life on Earth from humans to ecosystems to soil microbes possess equal intrinsic values, values which exist independent of human needs and desires" (pp. 5- 6). But in his world of sentient beings, Sinha includes things and objects as well as animals and plants and emphasizes the overwhelming agency of Mother Earth. In agreement with Gary Snyder, he explains that the wild requires people to "be available to communication with birds, animals or rocks" (p. 122). Elli, one of his environmental activists, declares, "But that's people. The world's also rock and water and trees" (Sinha, 2007, p. 200). Her views agree with Dewey's claim that nature, not only shares man's indeterminacy and agency, but also adheres to moral and aesthetic values, which testifies to "something that belongs to nature as truly as does the mechanical structure attributed to it in physical science" (2). Elli explains that, like people,

"Rocks keep their promises. They behave like rocks ... the sea and the moon ... keep their own kind of promises. To have the world work for you, you've got to make your own promises right back" (Sinha, 200). This view agrees with Glotfelty's assurance that "A rock has being or spirit... They emerge in various forms, but at some time before, they were smaller particles or great boulders... A rock shares this fate with us and with animals and plants as well (Glotfelty and Fromm, 265).

In the 1970s, James Lovelock introduced the Gaia theory which recognizes earth "as a living conscious organism" (6). The Gaia theory can be traced back to the indigenous convictions of American Indians, and has an immense impact on ecocriticism. According to that theory "earth is alive in the same sense that human beings are alive" (p. 70). Earth actively protests to the environmental injustice when it was obvious that the trespassers were going to escape punishment. The morning of the mock trial, Animal wakes up to find: "[the] earth... shivering. It's vibrating ... you can hear it ... a kind of growling ... shivering not with fear but with fiery" (Sinha, 278).

Parallel to the human team pursuing a long-running law war to bring the company to court, is the team led by Mother Earth who is trying in all possible ways to launch a counter attack to reverse the destructive effect of civilization. Inside the death factory, now deserted because extremely poisonous, Animal detects another form of resistance. "Look throughout this place", he calls upon the reader, "a silent war is being waged. Mother Nature is trying to take back the land. Wild sandalwood trees have arrived, who knows how, must be their seeds were shit by overflying birds." (31). Wind cooperates, and so do creepers that try to bring down the remains of the death factory. "Gusts of beautiful ajwain push away poisonous gases. Creepers, brown and thick as my wrist, have climbed all the way to the top, tightly they've wrapped wooden knuckles round pipes and ladders, like they want to rip down everything the kampani made" (31). Presenting plants as capable beings with hands [wrest and knuckles] is a proof of Sinha's departure from the Humanist dualisms of human/nature and mind/body. For Heidegger, "Not only are we

the only creatures with language, but even the human body is set apart from the animal realm" (p. 16). He finds it appalling to think of humans sharing bodily kinship with animals, let alone plants that come even lower in Darwin's chain, and lays particular emphasis upon the "hand" which he cites as the epitome of difference between humans and other creatures; "The hand is infinitely different from all grasping organs- paws, claws, or fangs, different by an abyss of essence" (16). He goes even further in his *What Is Called Thinking?* to insist that "Only a being who can speak, that is think, can have hands" (16). Presenting plants as having hands, according to humanist standards, expresses Sinha's belief that they can, not only think and take decisions, but also act upon what they believe. His novel is a response to Christa Grewe-Volpp's invitation to "give adequate expression to nature as a cultural construction as well as an autonomous active entity, i.e. a constructor in its own right" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 75).

Twentieth-century findings of physics and biology give evidence to Merleau-Ponty's view that all life forms and energies are inextricably intertwined in such an ecological vision that makes traditional humanism almost unthinkable. Quantum mechanics and relativity theories "demolished the idea of nature as a comprehensible machine" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 35). Bohr, Einstein and Heisenberg demonstrated "the relativism and situatedness of knowledge, the dynamism, reciprocity, and indeterminism of physical entities and forces" (35). To express the idea that nature is trying to stand its grounds against the destructive inventions that man introduces, Sinha describes a battle where both electricity and moonlight wrestle to encompass wider batches of earth. "There's a battle going on between earth and sky, war is being waged between the light of human beings and the light of the moon" (Sinha, 273). The iron and concrete that form the death factory are also in a battle:

My arms are round the pipe, now cold, up which the poisons flew to kill a city. The pipe is moaning. A hundred feet above my head wind is blowing across its mouth, the death pipe is wailing like a giant flute. I put my ear to its rough surface and listen. Inside are voices and it's like they are screaming ... this howling makes the hairs of my neck stand on end. (274)

Equally objectionable to posthumanist philosophers are the allegations that language is exclusive to humans. Accepting evolution as the true history of humanity, they maintain that "human language co-evolved with us and all the other life forms who remain our literal kindred" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 38). Merleau-Ponty asserts that "language is born of our carnal participation in a world that already speaks to us at the most immediate level of sensory experience [thus] language does not belong to human kind but to the sensible world of which we are but a part" (p. 95). He calls upon human beings to restore awareness of the "wild Being" by reviving their sensitivity to "the voices that we have forgotten to hear, voices that arise in what we may have formerly assumed to be silences" (126). Merleau-Ponty asserts that "language lives only from silence; everything we cast to the others has germinated in this great mute land which we never leave" (p. 126). Ecologists replace the idea of a "mute land" with the conviction of a wild being that is full of voices. Sinha gives voice to the overwhelming silence of nature, which is as powerful as the spoken language, and also to the members of the nonhuman world either by rendering their messages in human language, reproducing their exact sounds, or by presenting them as participants in the wordless world language of music. He reproduces Jara's "rrrr," (p. 17) the birds' "clap, clap," (12) the rain's "plink PLONK plank" (49), the frog's "crikkk" (p. 48), etc.

When Animal tries to explain his love for Nisha, she places her finger on his lips and says: "Hush. Silence also speaks" (47). People mock Sinha's protagonist, calling him a crazy boy that "hears voices that aren't there" (11). The boy defiantly answers that "I do hear," and that "to deny what you do [hear] and believe in things you don't, that you can call crazy " (11-12). What really happens is that Animal's immersion in the wild Being enables him to hear the voices of silence, and receive the messages that are delivered through the sensible world of the nonhuman. Sinha's characters ridicule Heidegger's statement about language being exclusively human by crossing the boundaries of traditional languages. Ma Franci shares Animal's gift of getting a message, no matter in what language it has been delivered. Animal "could hear people's thoughts even when

their lips were shut, plus [he]'d get en passant comments from all types of things, animals, birds, trees, rocks giving the time of day" (8). He is engaged in an on going dialogue with his surroundings. While everyone could only see a locust spreading its wings, Animal hears it crooning "I'm so gorgeous," to which he answers, "Yeah, till a bird sees you" (6). *Animal's People* is a wakeup call for the readers to sharpen their sensitivity to the "multi-voiced reality of the nonhuman world" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 41). The language that Sinha introduces is not confined to words or sounds "since it is the voice of no one, since it is the very voice of things, the waves, and the forests" (Merleau-Ponty, 155). It is a sort of deep understanding that ensues as a result of listening to the voices of the silence. Animal displays a gift for understanding the essence of voices and sounds without the confinements of any particular language: "I know most of the... words, those I don't know spit their meanings into my ear" (Sinha, 8). He suggests this language as a means of communication among people of conflicting interests, and finds it more conducive of meanings and concepts. Addressing the European journalist, Animal explains:

Jarnalis, there is a lot to tell, it wants to come out. Like rejoicing, the world's unspoken languages are rushing into my head. Unusual meanings are making themselves known to me. Secrets are shouting themselves into my ear, seems there is nothing I cannot know. Sss psss, haaa rrr, khekhe kha, mmms, this is how the voices are. (11)

Sinha relates man's artistic activity to his ability to perceive the language of the wild Being of the world. He shows that there are levels of communication between man and that world. Animal, his protagonist, is able to comprehend the language of earth, plants and animals, but a true artist like Somraj moves beyond that primary level of understanding. He ascends to the higher levels of reciprocating them in a harmony that elevates him to unprecedented summits of union with the wild Being. According to Dewey, "Art is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication"

(22). Somraj and the wild Being participated in a wordless conversation that takes them all beyond restrictions, feuds and crude meaningless classifications of and prejudices against different forms of life. On the other hand, polluting the environment kills Somraj's artistic ability. In Sinha, it is only the artist [messenger between the two worlds] who can be launched in this process of being united with the world in its entirety, human and nonhuman and his art is evident in his ability to transform these mutual messages into forms that are comprehensible to humans such as poetry, paintings, literature, music, etc. Goodbody explains that "nature constitutes a silent language, whose sounds convey the essence of things, and that these may be interpreted intuitively by the [artist] (p. 136).

According to Westling, human beings "are intertwined with this flesh of the world – the dynamic community of things and beings around us- in an embrace from which human language emerges and which it shares with many other voices or languages" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 38). Somraj calls upon Animal to restore awareness of "the apparent silences which sustain the singing of this multi-vocal ecological community" (p.41). It is through Somraj, the artist of the novel, that Sinha demonstrates his belief in the connection between man's artistic activity and his awareness of the rich and varied life force that penetrates the nonhuman world. Animal acknowledges the intelligence and agency of the wild Being, but Somraj opens his ears to its spiritual and aesthetic aspects. He reveals to him "the interrelation of human language and art with the voices of other creatures" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 33). Somraj approaches Animal while the latter is experiencing a state of connection with the wild Being, "admiring the large frangipani tree ... full of flowers, rain ... dripping through its leaves" (Sinha, 48). Somraj calls upon him to open his ears to the voice of silence:

-Are you hearing it too?

-Hearing what sir?

-In Inglis, there is a word SILENT... it has the exact same letters as the word LISTEN. So open your ears and tell me, what can you hear? (48)

Animal answers that all he could hear was "just a frog" calling,

"crikkk-crikkk, and all he could get was the surface meaning of the frog's message, i.e. "happily looking for another frog" (48). Somraj, perceiving the music in the message, retorts, "*just* a frog? ... That frog contains more music than most pandits. This song of his is said to inspire the note of dha, which is the sixth note of our scale" (48). He then explains that "music does not all have to be made with strings and bows and pipes, it can also be made by drops of rain or wind cut by a leaf" (48). The silence enveloping Animal is soon revealed to host multifarious voices that have to harmonize together in order to create the sweet orchestra of the world. This orchestrated landscape is the source of inspiration for Somraj, the "Aawaaz-e-Khaufpur" (33). [B]etween you and me and the frog we have a tune, we can even say it's like raga Deshkar" (49).

All the elements that Merleau-Ponty refers to as the wild Being participate in creating the music that keeps the world balanced. Humans can figure out these messages if they attune themselves to them. Sinha extends the concept to include "things" in addition to animals and plants. "If you know how to listen," Somraj proceeds, "you can hear music in everything...the creaking of bicycle wheels and bhutt-bhutt pigs because all things make their own kind of music" (49). Sinha emphasizes the view that man is but a voice among many others that all have to collaborate to form a coherent harmonious whole. This mutual understanding embodies the concept of "anotherness" as opposed to "otherness." Animal addresses nonhumans as equals and partners: "Brother dog or bitch sister... I am just like you are" (p. 273). Anotherness is "based on the another not the Alien and not the Stranger, but the brother, the cousin, the sister and not just the human ones, but all the creatures with whom we share the planet" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 419).

According to W.D. Howells (1968), "the moral progress of the race found its microcosm in the development of man from the savagery of boyhood to the ethical consciousness of civilized adulthood" (306). "There is no break from the rest of the living community, as the very development of the modern individual from embryo to adult makes clear, especially in the earliest stages of the fetus" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 35). In an obvious reference to his belief in the continuum from animal to man, Sinha introduces man in

different stages of development. Several fetuses (e.g. the kha-in-the Ja) that are kept in fluids and trapped in jars feature as major characters in the novel and give rise to the question of whether man is experiencing an evolution process in reverse, especially that the protagonist himself moves a step back in the march of evolution by walking on four and also by being so focused on sensual pleasures. The chain that Sinha introduces from the kha-in-the Jar [fetus] across the four-footed Animal to Zafar and Ma Franci who are spiritually refined is a demonstration of Pico della Mirandola's 1487's manifesto, *On the Dignity of Man*. In his manifesto, Mirandola refers to mankind's "radical self-shaping ability to either descend into... brutish material states, or ascend into a disembodied spiritual real higher than that of the angels" (7). On the other hand, the environmental exploitation, so connected with social corruption, gives rise to the queries that Jean Francois Lyotard poses in *The Inhuman*, "what if human beings, in humanism's sense, were in the process of, constrained into, becoming inhuman [that's the first part]? And [the second part], what if what is 'proper' to humankind were to be inhabited by the inhuman?" (2). Moving a step back in the Darwinian chain supports Glen Love's statement that there is "an animalistic throwback in the long evolutionary march" (137) or at least suggests "the possibility of an arrestment of that metamorphosis from savagery to civilization" (137). The strain of civilization on Animal as he moves from living absolutely like wild animals fetching food with the stray dogs meal by meal to an educated person who works and gets paid is symbolized by the conflict he undergoes to suppress and hide his sexual desire. This phase is also characterized by animal's rising consciousness of the codes of human life which is a modern interpretation of the Darwinian principle, "survival of the fittest." Animal becomes aware of concepts like "environmental racism" and "environmental justice" and is embedded in the core struggle of the novel to fight the first and attain the second. He is enrolled in the human system of life when he is hired by environmental activists to work for money, therefore start paying for the things he used to get for free. "I", laments Animal, "who'd newly discovered the pleasure of spending a little of my earnings on a

samosa here, pau bhaji there" (28). As he gets enmeshed in the world of human civilization, Animal experiences feelings of guilt: "I've hardly slept. All night I have been fighting with my newly discovered conscience" (298). In this phase of life Animal represents the question that Merleau-Ponty poses: "Where [in evolutionary terms]," does the human with consciousness truly appear? We do not see him any more than we see the moment when consciousness appears in ontogenesis" (267).

By the end of the novel, however, Animal experiences a regression which is symbolized by a complete reunion with the wild Being and giving up the shorts and zippo given to him by a European journalist in return for his story as a victim of an environmental disaster. That bargain marks Animal's initiation into the world of "exchange value" and "the process of commodification" when he is introduced to "ephemeral, disposable goods produced by market capitalism" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 164). The absurdity of Animal's holding on to commodities that he does not really need gives evidence to Ludwig Maurice's claim that these commodities are manufactured "in order to prop up an exploitative system" (164). It is significant that that lighter, a symbol of the super power's environmental racism, was implicated as the possible main cause of the recurrence of the disaster. Subjecting Animal to the hard choice between primitive and civilized ways of life puts into question Allan Chavkin's opinion that people "must not accept... the power of... evil..., the destroyers who substitute for the living things of nature the things of lifelessness: the juke boxes, the bulldozers... the fences, the pavements" (22).

According to Goodbody,

Hunting is a prime subject for exploring our relationship with the wild and shifting conceptions of the nature/culture divide, for the hunter is a liminal figure, with one foot in the camp of humanity, pursuing his prey, but with the other paradoxically situated in the world of the animal, who he knows more intimately than other men, and with whom he is linked by empathy and identification. (168)

Hunting also reflects human worry about the resources of nature becoming so scarce as to cause a shortage in basic needs. After

Animal gets immersed in the comforts of modern life, things escalate again to bring him back to the horrors of pollution which, Sinha confirms, will bring about the apocalypse. He flees the intricacies of civilization and throws himself back into the bosom of the wild to find it much less welcoming than it had been before. Now, as a representative of civilization. Animal is reprimanded by nature for the misuse of natural resources: "We are in need of water," complain the trees, "and so are you O Animal. Find water if you want to live...We are no friends of yours" (Sinha,344). Sinha negates Heidegger's concept of man's superiority to the nonhuman world. Addressing the wild, Animal desperately tries to establish his superiority, screaming: "have some ... respect [I'm] ... not just any animal I'm THE ANIMAL ... You don't scare me," upon which the forest answers: "Plus you don't scare us" (p. 345). This exchange stands in line with Lawrence Buell's concept of "biotic egalitarianism" (303) according to which all beings have an intrinsic value. Accordingly, a creature so low in the chain of evolution like the lizard, "has just as much right as you and I do to be taken as the center of the universe around which everything else shall revolve" (107).

As Matt Cartmill states, the hunter is a basically ambiguous figure, "who can be seen either as a fight against wildness or as a half-animal participant in it" (31). From a historical point of view, hunters have always regarded themselves as nature lovers and also as friends of the nonhuman world with its animal inhabitants whom they shoot and eat. In primitive societies, "animals are commonly asked for forgiveness when being killed" (Gersdorf and Meyer,169). Traditionally, hunting is employed in literature as the vehicle "of our closest encounter with the wild animal, a site of immersion in nature and rediscovery of what is felt to be our true human nature" (Goodbody, p.168). Sinha employs a hunting scene to reveal human nature and show how man's relationship with the world of the nonhuman has deteriorated. He ridicules Animal's loss of the hunter's instinct and cites it as evidence of man's failure to be nature's true friend. From the beginning Animal is ridiculed as a hunter who seeks his prey in garbage. For the first time instigated by extreme hunger,

he hunts for a living prey in the forest,

I have spotted food, a lizard ...just bite its head off bloody,
you were not made for roots, think like a tiger, let red lust
close
your eyes, unhinge your jaws prepare to kill. Sorry, I am too
hungry to spare your life ... I am sorry I hurt you. (Sinha,346)

Still the lizard smartly outwits Animal and manages to save his own life. "A broken rib may mend," the lizard breaches, "but your nature you can never change. You are human, if you were an animal, you would have eaten me" (p. 346). Sinha uses this encounter with the wild to reveal another aspect of hunting as "a natural vehicle for genetically programmed, aggressive and destructive human instincts" (Goodbody, 169).

Sinha's respect for nature is also evident in his revival of the value of instinctive or intrinsic knowledge that man derives from nature. Zafar's team relies mainly on basic intrinsic knowledge common between human being and animals. When Zafar insists on recruiting Jara, Animal protests that they are animals and "can't do much." Zafar argues on behalf of Jara:

- How does it see?
- Using its eyes.
- How does it find its food?
- Smells it out.
- We need a good sniffer. Your dog(26)

The team adheres to basic tools of perception that man shares with the wild Being, highlighting the status of Mother Earth as man's first guide and teacher. Zafar never wears a watch. Instead, he depends on the sun to know the time. "He shades his eyes to glance and tells Nisha... it's nearly four o'clock" (26). There is also multi reference to nature as a witness and preserver of man's history that she records in its very special way: "I'm studying that morning's history in the dirt, which is a thing I do...every crack in the road, every stone..." (135). "A little way off", remarks Animal, "...is a falling down tower of stone with grass growing out of its walls. Some bigwig built it hundreds of years ago, in those days the factory lands were orchards" (42). This reading of history connects man's previous environmental

behavior to the status quo concerning the effect of this behavior on the nonhuman: "Cows with ribs like harpstrings pick at old paper bags" (134). This behavior of the team asserts that Sinha laments "our recourse to increasingly sophisticated weapons and the gradual displacement of strength by cunning, of the body by intellect" (Goodbody,184). Replacing technology with the senses is a rejection of "the dilution of the life force in the process of civilization" (184). Although Sinha highlights the essential type of knowledge inherent in the regular fixed system of the elements, he does not overlook the agency and sentience of the earth revealed in its ability to outlive man's destructive behavior.

Zafar and his multi-species, multinational team are engaged in an uphill battle which symbolizes the struggle to move from nation state to other allnational formations in which "allegiance to, and betrayal of, habitat, place, and environment take center stage" (Gersdorf and Meyer,417). Ma Franci, a French nun who spends her life in Khaufpur, refuses to leave to her home country and finally dies defending the poor and afflicted declaring that "My home is right here" (Sinha,143). American Elli, too,confesses " I detest [Kampani] as much as you do...I'll gladly join you in those protests" (159). Elli's ex-husband, as well as lawyers who come to defend the company and protect its people against the law consider themselves primarily answerable to the government of the United States whose best interests lie with a certain economic system: "They sit in Amrika claiming this court has no jurisdiction over them" (52). Elli, Ma Franci and all environmental activists hold themselves answerable on behalf of the environment even when that puts them in opposition to their local governments. For them answerability requires them to act against such practices that result in "environmental contamination" and also "practices [that] degrade the inhabitability of... environments" (Gersdorf and Meyer,419). Together with human multinational activists, *Animal's People*, swarms with eloquent nonhumans that present allnational citizenship. Adopting the cause of an environmentally afflicted spot from diverse nations, with diverse political interests those environmental activists erase the boundaries and transcend the

allegiances of nation state to form the nucleus of a green state thus defying the degradation of nature.

Zafar's team embodies Robyn Eckersley's concept of the green state based on the belief that "a new kind of patriotism is needed in which there is a sense of shared membership (182). Establishing the new state requires a reconsideration of major concepts that deceive citizens of the nation states into believing that they have no alternatives. Ecological philosophers, however, suggest that shared objectives and interests, especially when they are concerned with saving life on the planet, are stronger bonds than ethnicities or common passports. The process of globalization so undermines a nation's authority within its borders that a nation state in the true sense becomes a fallacy. TNCs raise the issues of answerability and affectedness. Khaufpur is an everysmalltown that is targeted to be the site of risky industrial businesses by influential countries that wish to shift the danger elsewhere. The economic or military pressure of The U.S. turns local governments into tyrants that stand against their citizens. "The world of humans is meant to be viewed from eye level," Animal explains (Sinha,2). He also condemns the double standards that govern the way the world addresses an issue, always taking into consideration how militarily and economically powerful a country is. "You'll talk of *right, law, justice,*" Animal tells the European journalist, "Those words sound the same in my mouth as in yours but they don't mean the same (p.3). In a transnational/green state agenda, super powers and countries whose economic projects straddle borders should act as "ecological steward[s] and facilitator[s] of transboundary democracy rather than a selfish actor jealously protecting its territory and ignoring or discounting the needs of foreign lands" (Eckersley,3). This, however, stands as a challenge since it destabilizes the long established reality of the nation state and its pillars of sovereignty which rests upon asserting, not eradicating, borders. Nations are actually "imaginary communities based on abstract rather than embodied social bonds," hence, argues Eckersley,

there seems to be no good reason for denying the significance of other kinds of imaginary communities that come into being in response to common problems that transcend national

boundaries or simply in response to human suffering or ecological degradation wherever it may occur in the world.(185)

For Eckersley, the green state does not completely annihilate the principles of homeland or belongingness, although it undermines territorial allegiances. Basic concepts, however, are redefined and enhanced to denote new references and acquire extra significance. The Bakhtinian-based principles, "answerability" and "affectedness", are two such concepts. In the green state, answerability shifts a citizen's ethical responsibility from traditional governments to the environment wherever it is damaged or humiliated. Instead of being answerable to parliaments and congresses attached to traditional governments, citizens of a green state will have to answer to the inhabitants of any region where environmental crimes are committed. The principle of affectedness requires that "all... entities, human and nonhuman, affected by political and economic decisions made by human communities need to be taken into account before policies are implemented and actions are taken" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 420-421). The traditional parliament will have to be replaced by a hyper parliament, one that has members from different parts of the world since the problems discussed relate to their wellbeing or since they are united by common objectives or allegiances. To implement this policy, the green state has to be a transnational democratic state, since the new world order finds exporting environmental problems perhaps easier and faster than the export of products. Global warming and air borne diseases, unlike human beings, cannot possibly be confined to a native territory and are not obliged to show their passports before they cross borders. The hyper parliament needs also to be hyper democratic. All the creatures affected by human decisions should have their interests considered. In the 1970s, Snyder suggested that "there ought to be mechanisms for a whale to make a speech before the U.S. Congress" (Gersdorf and Meyer,431), but more recently, in 1992, he proposed "village councils" (33) of all beings. Confirming the ideas of Australians Joanna Macy and John Seed, he proceeds to call for a council that includes "trees and birds... sheep, goats, cows, and yaks, and the wild animals of the high pastures" (Gersdorf and Meyer, 431).

Although these philosophers acknowledge the impossibility of such creatures to stand on their own, they suggest that the new parliament would give them voice by "proceeding as *if* they were" and by having deploys who have their best interests at heart and that should be honestly done "in ways that go beyond their service to humans" (Eckersley, 112-13).

Whether called "pastoral", "nature writing" or "green studies", ecocriticism continues to be of vital relevance, not to a region and not to a species, but to the survival of the planet. Though primarily concerned with environmental issues, it is basically a reminder for man to make a halt, look back and consider how far he has gone and in which direction. Was it a wise decision for man to part from the animal in him, therefore lose the prudence that inspired him to revere nature as his one and only guide and sanctuary? Has he been in an evolution process, or is he now in need of one in the opposite direction? Whatever the answer, man needs to find new interpretations for long established concepts. Darwin's "fittest" should shift from strongest to the "most fit, best suited to change" (Glotfelty and Fromm, 5). A lot of boundaries have to be erased, and not all of them are made of barbed wires. Abstract boundaries could have fatally tangible effects. Concepts that have been embedded in people's thoughts for generations show up in political and social scenes disguised as facts that are almost too sacred to question. That a patriot's duty is restricted within the borders of a certain region called "homeland", is one such fallacy disguised as a fact. All people are citizens of the earth, and the revival of interest in the green studies is a wakeup call for man to give a nudge to the dormant values of justice and altruism that should now be his tools for survival and his chance to prove that he is in fact "the shepherd of Being" (Heidegger, 220). Finding alternatives has become vital. It is ridiculous that when a human being and a virus desire to cross borders, it certainly is the virus, by far the more destructive that is allowed first. More ridiculous still, is man's hoping against hope that he would reach a different destination every time he takes the same road.

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