Intersecting Disability and Trauma: a Study of Identity Metamorphosis in Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People

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Abstract:
The motive of this paper is to examine identity as a metaphor of change in the interface of trauma and disability study. The creation of identity and meaning in disability study, especially caused by disasters like chemical leakage, is reformulated by the effect of traumatic situations in the socio-political-psychological existence. Identity gets divided into post-human combination of ‘self’ and ‘other’. It is also refraamed by the memory of past in contrast with present, and by the allegorical existence of dream and reality. Such is in the case of Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People (2007), which represents the tragedy caused by Bhopal Gas disaster. It reflects on the modification of identity, especially in the character of Animal (a disabled victim), springing from normal to paranormal entity due to the memory of traumatic night. There are other characters such as Somraji and Maa Francis, who collectively suffer from identity crisis due to the memory of ‘that night’. Thus, the formation of identity varies over the experience of traumatic events of ‘that night’.

Keywords: Identity, Trauma, Memory, Disaster, Disability Study

Introduction:
It is a scholarly progression that the idea of ‘disability’ is no more a biological impairment only. But, it includes the interdisciplinary studies of biology, sociology, and psychology. Thereby, it explores its horizon in the emerging field of trauma and memory. Therefore, this present study is an attempt to highlight that interconnection of trauma and identity in the context of disability study. The creation of identity and meaning in disability study, especially caused by disasters like flood, cyclone, and chemical leakage, is reformulated by the effect of traumatic situations in the socio-political-psychological existence. Identity gets divided into post-human combination of ‘self’ and ‘other’, and is reshaped by the loss and empathy. It is also refraamed by the memory of past in contrast with present, and by the allegorical existence of dream and reality. Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People (2007) is a vivid representation of tragedy caused by Bhopal Gas disaster.

Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People (2007) is the exuberant example of the tragedy caused by Bhopal disaster. Though it records the post-apocalyptic situation of the tragedy, it traces back to revisiting ‘that night'. It is thus a product interfusing what happened in past (around twenty years ago, as mentioned) and what is the present condition of the affect. This interfusion happens to be seen on an individual and collective level. On an individual level, there are certain characters such as Animal (one who carries out the hybrid identity of human and non-human) and Somraji (a singer who has lost his musical voice), Ma
Francy (a nun, who dedicated her whole life to the victims, has forgotten all ‘knowledge of Hindi’ and died in hunger strike) who themselves become the offspring of ‘that night’. They are the subject of the catastrophe getting affected by the gap between the actual identity of the past and the lost identity of the present, which occurred as a result of ‘that night’. On the Collective level, there are some the eye-witnesses such as Zafar, Nisha, and Farouq, who are not physically handicapped by the traumatic event, but have first-hand experience of ‘that night’. They are the characters raising their collective voice against the company (the ‘British Kompany’, as mentioned, the real cause of the gas leak resulting in tragedy) for the justice of the memory of ‘that traumatic night’ of ‘Kaufpur’ (the imagined society where the story is set). They generate suspicion against those outsiders (thinking of an incarnation of the company) such as Elli, who has landed there sacrificing everything behind to help the victims of ‘that night’ and to settle a ‘free clinic’ (as mentioned) for them. Thinking of her as representative of ‘British Kompany’, their fight against her establishment of a ‘free clinic’ is somehow remolded by the fearful re-calling of ‘that night (for which they 'suffer'). Thus, they get victimized by the possessive memory of that traumatic night."To be traumatized is to be possessed by an image" (Caruth 4-5).

Background of the Study:
Before going to an in-depth analysis of the particular text, it requires light upon its background of it. And the background here is of two types; one is Socio-cultural-political Ground (the ground which refers to the actual occurrence of the story), and another is Research Background (the ground which gives me a clear idea of what has already been explored to shape my study and to revisit the events in different outlook).

Socio-cultural-political Ground:
The study is set in the socio-cultural-political context of the Bhopal Gas tragedy. It is one of the most violent industrial disasters, which has brought decay and death. The incsidence was caused by the leakage of poisonous gas named Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) from a Union Carbide Company on the night of 3rd December, in 1984. The reasons that are assumed behind the leakage were many: First of all, the authority looked for a market economy in the production of Seyon; secondly, there was insufficient knowledge of company workers; Thirdly, unskilled laborers were employed for saving money; Fourthly, the infrastructure was old; fifthly, it was the dangerous reaction of water and MIC; sixthly, it was due to the overpressure (above 60%) in the tank/ barren of MIC Last, though informed of the matter before, there was the carelessness of the authority take action on time. It showed the moral decline of the company. But out of their immorality, a dangerous outbreak took place. The terrible outbreak of the poisonous gas not only brought the memory of death and demolition but also spoiled the normal way of life. Thousands had lost their lives and others had lost their hope to live. It was a challenging task to serve on the land where everything was contaminated – food is mal-nurtured to eat, water is arsenic to drink, and the air is contaminated to breathe. They suffered from coughing. Thus their very existence was under question. Everywhere the sign of despair reigned. The condition was much more catastrophic as they got no reply from the company, against whom they petitioned a compensation case. But no trial was held as the company people got delayed and unintended to come. It had been many days, months and years passed, but there was no mark of justice. They became hopeless. However, the trauma of insecurity and passivity seized their pathetic self. Ultimately, after Bhupal Gas Act on 77 Th, Dec 1984, they were convinced that they were going to repay 480$ as moral subjectivities.
cultural-political ground, my study is rooted in unlocking the connection between the paranoia of the victims and the materialistic attitude of the perpetrators.

**Research Background:**
The literary text that I choose for my study has already been experimented with by many scholars over the world in many ways. They are as follows:

In the article "Disabled and vulnerable bodies in Indra Sinha's Animal's People: transcending the human and non-human world," S. Cao points out the anthropocentric view and human vulnerability to a toxic environment and reimagines the human and non-human relation. Roman Bartosch’s paper “The Postcolonial Picaro in Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People — Becoming Post-human through Animal’s Eyes” focuses on the post-human study presented through the blurring of the boundaries of human and non-human in the character of Animal. Andrew Mahlstedt’s paper "Animal’s Eyes: Spectacular Invisibility and the Terms of Recognition in Indra Sinha”s Animal's People" focuses the post-human study presented through the blurring of the boundaries of human and non-human in the character of Animal. Andrew Mahlstedt’s paper "Animal’s Eyes: Spectacular Invisibility and the Terms of Recognition in Indra Sinha’s Animal's People", Jesse Oak Taylor describes the power of being nothing. Jina B. Kim's paper "People of the Apokalis": Spatial Disability and the Bhopal Disaster” experiments the disability and postcolonialism. In a thesis “Postcolonial Ecocriticism: A Study of Helon Habila’s Oil on Water, Indra Sinha’s Animal’s People, Robert Barclay’s Melal: A Novel of the Pacific and Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide", Animesh Roy discusses the relationship between nature and culture in Bhupal gas tragedy. Another paper "Toxic Consciousness in Indra Sinha's Animal's People" highlights the people and their rehabilitation suffered from the effect of the toxic gas tragedy. In another paper "The Violated Body: Human Rights in Indra Sinha's Animal's People", Deepak Basumatary observes the novel through the violation of the right of marginalized people. In a paper called "A Nother World in Indra Sinha's Animal's People", Justin Omar Johnston illustrates Animal as a product of Rob Nixon's Slow Violence. This study is an attempt to examine “Animal's People” as a site of intersecting trauma, memory and identity in disability study, caused by Bhopal disaster.

**Theoretical Background:**
To navigate my study, it is necessary to look first in a few words into the juxtaposition where the fields of trauma, identity, and disability are met each other. The first and foremost point is that the vulnerability and reformation of identity and meaning transcend from biological damages to socio-psychological imposition. This is what the social disability theorists like Carol Thomas discuss how in Britain, the early disabled activists, especially Paul Hunt and Vic Finkelstein, explore the disability studies as a relation between the individual's impairment and socio-psychological imposed disability. Erickson views Collective trauma as "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that have achieved some degree of cohesion" (Erickson 2). Even Stevens’s remarks that both 'Disability' and 'trauma' are socially embedded systems. Morrison and Casper focused on the body as a link between the categories of "disability" and "trauma", on wounding, on the larger social forces that produce "trauma", that damage bodies, and that continue to shape what the traumatized body read as "disabled" can be and do. The second important factor is that the disabled subject is itself an objectified self of trauma as in both cases the subjects uphold the marks, wounds, and shocks of the events. As Sievers quotes,"[A] merger between disability studies and trauma studies will allow us to conceive of wounds as disability representations on a par with those typically considered in disability.
studies…" (103). He also studies 'Trauma' and 'Disability' as kith and kin of 'morbidity' and mortality. As Stevens states, "beginning with 'marks' like bloodied bodies, ruptured minds, incomplete narratives, or riddled archives, Trauma Studies provides explanatory narratives that, by offering one telling of how the subject achieved its ruination, support fantasies of an originary time before the fall; a time of whole, coherent, innocent selfhood and uncorrupted, clean and proper subjectivity” (171). The third dimension to intersect the disciplines lies in the chronic impact and the matter of silence. Welch writes that they ‘have criticized this body/society divide as impractical and inadequate for describing their lived experiences with chronic illness, impairment, and disability” (123). The disability studies scholars like Lennard J. Davis and Monica J. Casper herself in collaboration with Heather Laine Talley found the commonality in disability and trauma- ‘theorized disruptions, breaks, shocks, and ruptures that mark deviation from situations perceived as normal or mundane.’ Freud used the theory of ‘repression’as "a defense of the mind under normal and abnormal conditions to neutralize or put out of action unwelcome and unpleasant thoughts" (306). Daniel Morrison and Monica Casper focused on the silence around the traumatic origins of many disabilities. The third is that the subjects themselves inhabit the interplay, of forgetting and remembrance, of dream and reality. As Jane Goodall and Christopher Lee reexamined in "Trauma and Public Memory" the clinical studies of psychological trauma experimenting on the victims of WW1 and the Vietnam War, Suffered from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Traumatic Remembering is a ‘pathogenic reminiscence’ (Bruener and Freud 40). Freud also states- “trauma is not an actual event but the reproduction of that in dreams” (19). Caruth also adds – "Trauma is a shock that appears to work much like a bodily threat but is, in fact, a break in the mind's experience of time" (61). As Dominic LaCapra points out that our past reshapes the present. Miller and Gwynne, the social disability critic, elaborate the condition of the disabled people as the lable of Paul Hunt’s "Parasite people". According to it, the disabled people are the subject of chronic illness. Robert Lifton terms ‘Frozen Memories’ as long-term silence leads to trauma. Eyerman highlights trauma as an 'astounding force' that leaves wound on memory that cannot be erased and has a future effect. Alison Landsberg's 'Prosthetic Memory' talks about how media allow us to people experience or memories like an 'artificial limb' (20). In her work, “Screening the Body”(1995), Lisa Cartwright reechoed Foucault’s idea of the ‘Clinical Gaze’ that addresses- the doctors never view the victim not as a whole but as a disease, disability or the product of their trauma.

**Identity Metamorphosis and Traumatic Memory in Animal’s People**:

Indra Singh’s *Animal’s People* is a kaleidoscopic view of the traumatic Bhopal gas tragedy. It is such attribution to 'that night, as mentioned in the story when the actual events occurred. It unfolds the paranoia in the people of 'Kaufpur', an imagined place where the story takes place. And the people who experienced 'that night' never forget the events that caused their lives to change in many ways. It is also unforgettable that they share the same kind of 'human suffering’, followed by the ‘Apokalis’. It reminds them in the collective voice of Animal (the protagonist) – we are the people of the Apokalis (Sinha 75). The whole story is told from the perspective of Animal, an orphan who is about 19 years old. He is also the representative of the whole humanity of ‘kaufpur’. Even the story is written in a form of monologue as he is urged by a 'jarnalis' to record the events on a tape. As Chunaram, an assistant of that 'jarnalis', says- Animal, Speaks no Hindi, there’s fifty rupees for you, and just keep talking till the tape stops (Sinha 12). He also adds- “Jarnalis is writing a book about Khaufpur…I told him that you are an orphan of that night, you grew up in a crazy franci situation, you used to live on the streets like a dog, and you
are a unique case… He will write what you say in his book…He says thousands of other people are looking through his eyes. Think of that.” (Sinha 15). Thus it is the formation of the memory on which he relies upon, and by which he recollects and recounts the terrible events before the reader, addressed as 'Eyes'. Therefore, Animal, who is the ‘disabled’ product of all 'that night', is the beholder of the traumatic memory.

Animal, who is now predicament of life and shreds of evidence, commences his story with the memory of the past. He admits to another voice saying-

“I used to be human once. So I’m told. I don’t remember it myself, but people who knew me when I was small say I walked on two feet just like a human being…So sweet you were, a naughty little angel. You’d stand up on tiptoe, Animal my son, and hunt in the cupboard for food…Such a beautiful little boy you were, when you were three, four, years. Huge eyes you had, black like the Upper Lake at midnight plus a whopping head of curls. How you used to grin. Tu étais un vrai bourreau des coeurs, your smile would break a mother’s heart” (Sinha 9).

On the one hand, he seems to support their speech telling-"Most people round here don't know their age, I do, because I was born a few days before that night, which no one in Khaufpur wants to remember, but nobody can forget” (Sinha 9). On the other hand, he states a self-contradictory statement - I no longer want to be human (Sinha 9). He also expresses his disgust towards the human species- Listen, however fucking miserable you are, and no one's as happy as they've a right to be, at least you stand on two feet!(Sinha 10). He also confesses that his words are changed so far after 'that night'- On that night it was poison, now it's words that are choking us (Sinha11).

The memory of trauma on which he argues the most is the memory of his post-human identity, that is, a post-human self of human and non-human, caused by the effect of 'that night'. What Erickson calls 'Identity Diffusion', the identity that is confused of it? Consequently, the attitude Animal has towards life is reformulated by others. He is shown as a cognitive bias. For instance, He is called 'Jaanavar', which is interpreted in two ways- one is 'Jaan or life of human' and ‘animal or beast’. Again, he calls himself a ‘hard bastard’ as he ‘hides the feeling’ (Sinha 19) of his true self, that is, human inside. This is what Freud warns about even the 'suppression' leads to trauma. Evidently, he recalls his conversation with Farouq (a neighbor)-” People see the outside, but it’s inside where the real things happen, no one looks in there, maybe they don’t dare…Look at my soul, tell me what does it look like” (Sinha 19). In a reply, Farouq amuses-Your soul, my dear, is a tomb, even god can’t see inside (Sinha 19). The evidence he has given while there is a conversation of him with Zafar (a social worker and head of the campaign). When Zafar asks to clarify-Animal’s a nickname, na? I mean you’re born name (Sinha 31), Animal rectifies- “From the time before nothing do I remember. True, I had a human name, it was given to me by the orphanage, I asked a nun (Ma Francy) once what it was, she told me, but I have forgotten what she said”(Sinha 31). He also emphasizes-My name is Animal. I’m not a fucking human being; I’ve no wish to be one (Sinha 32). Another instance that occurs in the conversation with Nisha (Animal's crush) designates his dual identity. Despite her rejection of Animal's love When Nisha hails him as human- It's not what's outside that matters, inside you, is a beautiful man (Sinha 56), he disagrees- I'm not a man (Sinha 56). Even the doctor is helpless- There is absolutely no hope, this boy will never walk or stand up straight again (Sinha 67).

The spatial and temporal version of memory here forms the liminal and subliminal form of identity. It is that form of identity that is made between the gaps between the times before and time after. Memory serves as an interface to connect them. Consequently, it is hard to remember-"My story has to start with
that night. I don't remember anything about it, though I was there, nevertheless, it's where my story has to start. When something big like that night happens, time divides into before and after, the before time breaks up into dreams, the dreams dissolve to darkness” (Sinha 22). As Caruth states, Trauma is a 'disruption of a witness of the events, 'located not always in the past but ever in the present. It is also evident in a reformation of identity out of 'fragment memory of fire—“Nothing else do I remember from that time, my first memory is that fire. 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…On my hands I learned to walk, my legs grew feeble” (Sinha 23). Thereby, the orphanage child shouts at him-Jaanavar, jungli Jaanvar- Animal, wild Animal (Sinha 24).

More, as he gets away from the matter of love and sexuality, the world he prefers to take refuge in is the world of dreams. Even that world threatens him to be hopeful—“Many times I would dream that she (Elli) and I were in love, sometimes we were married and naked together like in the movies having sex. In such dreams was my back straight? Did I stand upright? No and no. I was exactly as I am now and it did not matter. Such dreams! I woke from them shaking with hope. This frightened me, I despise hope” (Sinha 90). In addition to this, he gets influenced by the nightmares and hallucinations followed by the tainted feeling for Zafar and Nisha—“Last night I dreamed of Zafar. He was heading up Paradise Alley into the heart of the Nutcracker. Nearly double he was bent, his long nose pointing sorrowfully at the ground…Nisha was in the dream too, tagging along behind Zafar, begging him to let her share his heavy burden of the world’s pain, but I don’t think he could hear”(Sinha 95). He also questions his past nudity to peep into women's private places, fueled up by sexual impulses- If I galloped past those cameras, what would they show, a miser able animal or a miserable boy? (Sinha 131). He also betrays the love of Anjali, who scolds- You are a very weird person, Animal. Give me a little money. You are a hard-hearted bastard (Sinha 276).

To continue with the memory of the trauma night, that re-forms the identity of Animals, helps to restructure the identity of other citizens. It is mainly the memory of loss that combines them in one row. Somraji, a famous singer of 'Kaufpur', faced the loss of his magical tune after 'that night'. It is the loss that is unforgettable. Because, one is the status that comes down from the popular state, and second, there is no option to listen to his music. This forgetfulness suppresses him into a shocking state that he does not intend to reveal before Nisha (his loving daughter), thus alarming Animal- "Please don't mention this conversation to anyone else, especially to Nisha, I know you are close to her if I talk to her of such things she becomes afraid that I am losing my wits” (59). But Nisha ultimately understands- my father has gone mad (Sinha 225), and He has such nightmares. Speak always the same thing. He will not talk about them, but I think they must be very horrible (Sinha 284). As Freud once notes, trauma is a shock that leaves an 'indelible' mark on consciousness. He also adds that trauma is ‘incomprehensible’. Also, Ma Francy, a nun from France who served humanity there for over forty years and was multilingual, knows no language after 'that night. Thus, the madness due to the loss harbors on her, resulting in trauma self—"This poor woman, Ma Franci, lost all knowledge of Hindi…she forgot all languages except her childhood speech of France…there was a further twist to Ma Franci's madness, when she heard people talking in Hindi or Inglis, or come to that in Urdu, Tamil, Oriya, or any other tongue used in Khaufpur, she could no longer recognize that what they were speaking was a language, she thought they were just making stupid grunts and sounds" (Sinha 46). She emphasizes the loss of identity as such-I know many languages. These people are just drivel ing. Why do they do it? Why won't they treat me like a human being? (Sinha 49).
The memory of "that night" gives a parallel impact on the collective level. It is this level where everyone gets united in one voice. The horrible impact of that night that shapes the identity is also seen through an episode of love and loss of a couple Pyaré Bai and Aftaab (the workers of the factory) - "All were nevertheless damaged by the poisons, Aftaab the worst, because he’d taken less care over himself, he was coughing foam tinged with blood, his eyes were nearly shut... Aftaab would not allow Pyaré and the children into the house. He cleaned everything, washed every corner before he let them in" (Sinha 96). Even Ma Francy warns Elli saying- Our wells are full of poison. It’s in the soil, water, in our blood, it’s in our milk. Everything here is poisoned (Sinha 122). The thing that makes them feel upset the most is the delayed petition, a petition they charged a time ago gets no concern. Thus they are scared of their memory not being assigned out of date-"we have lost count of how many times over the years this petition has been put by Mr. Zafar to your lordship’s learned predecessor in this case, before that to his learned predecessor, going further back, to his predecessor and his too, and so on beyond memory” (Sinha 63). Animal himself interrogates- Is poison presumed harmless until it kills? ...We have to act together, so if you can’t support, at least don’t oppose (Sinha 142). Gradually, there also evokes self-doubt in every individual. They now start doubting the organization ‘free clinic’ organized by Elli (a doctor from Britain), thinking of it as an agent of the Company. Now for them, the most important concern is not health but justice. Therefore, they get lost in doubts and disillusionment. As Zafar exposes- “Abba, we have failed to find any trace of this woman’s history. This alone is suspicious; she's almost certainly operating under a false name. We have tried all the usual channels. Nisha has searched on the internet, nothing”(Sinha 143). Another unknown one shares- It is a Kompany clinic. That's why people won't go there, even though it's free (Sinha 167). Even Somraji shares to Elli- When we heard there was a clinic to be opened by an Amrikan, an Amrikan person about whom nothing was known, people here became fearful (Sinha 179). Thereby, the sense of alienation and terror comes as a thought of disability. In Nisha’s opinion-“ My father’s precious justice is of no use, our governments of no use, courts are of no use, appeals to humanity are no use, because these people are not human, they’re animals”(Sinha 370).

What is the most traumatic throughout the story is the shifting of Animal’s identity from human to animal. He force shakes the human forms and accepts that he is better in this animal form-"I am an animal fierce and free in all! the world is none like me/ crooked I'm, a nightmare child /fed on hunger, running wild /no love and cuddles for this boy/ live without hope, laugh without joy /but if you dare to pity me/I'll shit in your shoe and piss in your tea"(Sinha 196). He argues with Francy that we are not equal and also talks to Elli that he is an animal, 'come' and 'go'. Nisha says- Animal, you are a free human being, you are free to make your own decisions. Nobody will stop you or say you shouldn't (Sinha 221). “And I’m an animal, why? “Animal reports -“By my choice or because others named me Animal and treated me like one?”After the complete dissociation from humanity, as being over embarrassed by the ignorance of Nisha's Love, he goes into the forest to live like an actual inhabitant of an animal group. They also desert him when a lizard says- You are human, if you were an animal you would have eaten me (Sinha 385). Returning to reality, he exhibits utter depression- Now I am truly alone (Sinha 389).

What he feels is the safest place to be free from all kinds of trauma is the place of the afterlife, where he celebrates his immortal self as he hopes that all of the previous memories get blurred- “I am immortal. There is nothing of me that will die. The memories of what happened to me in the forest when I was still alive are like pale forms glimmering in darkness and it comes to me what I thought was life was nothing
but darkness” (Sinha 391). Also adds- “Now Animal, you are safe, you and all the people of the Apokalis, because he will shelter them, no more shall they suffer hunger or thirst, nor have to do heavy work, never again will they be tormented by the sun nor by burning winds, for he will care for them and lead them to the sources of living water, he will heal their sores and their coughs and fevers and he will wipe the tears from their eyes” (Sinha 391-392). This terminal point reflects on his beginning when he disclosed his wish to be a paranormal figure. He wanted to take recourse in the world of the ghost, as Anne Whitehead points out that the appearance and reappearance of the ghost make one traumatic - "You should hear the ghosts, the factory is full of them when a big wind blows, and their souls fly shrieking up and down the empty pipes. Some nights, there’d be nothing here, just the ghosts and me, a four-foot creature climbing in the trees and pipes" (Sinha 41).

Conclusion:
In short, the modification of identity in Disability is also phenomenological as things appear in consciousness. Therefore, it is no more a stereotypical form of disability. Rather, it is obvious that identity gets metamorphosized by the memory of traumatic events. Thus, the story culminates with the decomposed memory of Animal- “Eyes, I’m done. Khuda Hafez. Go well. Remember me. All things pass, but the poor remain. We are the people of the Apokalis. Tomorrow there will be more of us” (Sinha 406).

Work Cited:

