

NARRATING TRAUMA FOR NATIONALISM IN SOUTH ASIAN  
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

A Dissertation

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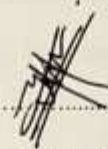
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## LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

### LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We certify that this dissertation entitled "NARRATING TRAUMA FOR NATIONALISM IN SOUTH ASIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS" was prepared by Yog Raj Lamichhane under our guidance. We, hereby, recommend this dissertation for the final examination by the research committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

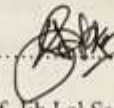
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## APPROVAL LETTER



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**APPROVAL LETTER**



This dissertation entitled "**Narrating Trauma for Nationalism in South Asian Autobiographical Writings**" was submitted by **Mr. Yog Raj Lamichhane** of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English**. I hereby, certify that the Research Committee of the Faculty has found this dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality. Therefore, it has been accepted for the degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dubi Nanda Dhakal'.

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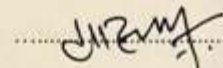
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## DECLARATION

### DECLARATION

I, hereby, declare that this PhD dissertation entitled "NARRATING TRAUMA FOR NATIONALISM IN SOUTH ASIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS" submitted to the Office of Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is my original research, prepared under the supervision of my supervisors. I have made due acknowledgements of all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The findings and results of this dissertation have not been submitted or presented anywhere else for the award of any degree. I shall be responsible for any other evidence found against my declaration.



Yog Raj Lamichhane

Date: October, 2025

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Yog Raj Lamichhane  
Tribhuvan University

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## ABSTRACT

Political leaders from Nepal, India, and the regions that later became Pakistan and Bangladesh collectively resisted British colonialism in the struggle for Indian independence. Notably, Nepal supported this cause despite never being colonized. During this movement, the South Asian leaders endured significant suffering. While the pursuit of political freedom united them, their cohesive relationship disintegrated in the post-independence period. Based on this background, this study has analyzed the autobiographies *Atmabrittanta* by Bishweshwar P. Koirala and *An Autobiography* by Jawaharlal Nehru and the memoirs *If I Am Assassinated* by Zulfikar A. Bhutto and *The Unfinished Memoirs* by Sheikh M. Rahman to explore the connection between trauma and nationalism in the region. Generally, an autobiography is considered a chronological account of a person's life, whereas a memoir is a collection of specific experiences. However, all four selected texts are autobiographical and communicate similar themes like trauma, resistance, independence, nationalism, and imprisonment. Specifically, this study has examined how the authors' collective resistance to British colonialism fractures into disunity in the postcolonial period, how their personal and political grief is transformed into collective cultural trauma, and why this grief is narrated through the social process of cultural trauma, employing a qualitative research design and textual analysis method. The study has primarily drawn on the theoretical concepts from Jeffrey C. Alexander's *Trauma: A Social Theory*, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's *Reading Autobiography* to frame the analysis of trauma and nationalism. Finally, analysis has revealed a complex interplay of themes: unification for independence and division over nationalism, the projection of "my suffering was for all of us," and the narration of pain as a means of forging a nation and nationalism, respectively, related to the

objectives of the study. However, further research is needed to examine the relationship between autobiographical writing and intergenerational trauma, particularly in terms of political legacy, as this study primarily focuses on the narration of trauma within the context of nationhood politics. Keywords: Life-writing, autobiography, memoir, trauma, cultural trauma, nationalism

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO NARRATION OF TRAUMA IN SOUTH ASIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

This study decodes the politics of autobiographical writings of prominent South Asian leaders, Nehru, Bhutto, Koirala, and Rahman, by analyzing their shared resistance to British colonialism, the subsequent breakdown of political unity in the postcolonial era, and the narration of personal and political grief as the grief transforms into collective trauma, thereby exposing the politics of autobiographical writings within trauma studies and national consciousness.

This study analyzes and interprets four key South Asian autobiographical works: *Atmabrittanta: Late Life Recollections*<sup>1</sup> (1998) by Koirala (1914-1982) of Nepal, *An Autobiography* (1936) by Nehru (1889-1964) of India, *If I Am Assassinated* (1979) by Bhutto (1928-1979) of Pakistan, and *The Unfinished Memoirs*<sup>2</sup> (2012) by Rahman (1920-1975) of Bangladesh to examine the such politics. The political leaders from Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh resisted British colonial rule during the struggle for Indian independence. Nepal supported the cause despite avoiding colonization. The leaders endured significant suffering. Though united in their fight for freedom, their relationships fractured after independence. The study primarily uncovers the motivation of the leaders in fighting against British colonialism. Simultaneously, it also unfolds the fractures that emerged in the postcolonial period, decoding the politics embedded in these autobiographical

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<sup>1</sup> The original Nepali title, in its Romanized form, has been retained in the English translation. The translator Kanak M. Dixit is from the source culture, which signifies the transfer of meaning through “domestication” according to Lawrence Venuti. However, this still faces “untranslatability”, a term coined by Werner Winter, referring to elements of a text that cannot be fully conveyed in another language due to the emotional meaning.

<sup>2</sup> The memoir was translated into English by Fakrul Alam, who is from the source culture.

writings and exploring the complex relationship between trauma, memory, and nationalism in South Asia. The applicable response to the issues sufficiently supports understanding the politics of these autobiographical writings.

Particularly for understanding the politics of narrating trauma by utilizing fundamental theoretical perspectives from Jeffrey C. Alexander's trauma studies, Benedict Anderson's nation and nationalism, and Sidonie Smith's and Julia Watson's life-writing research, this work entails an examination of textual data to create meanings through analysis and interpretation. As mentioned by Rahel Den Elzen and Adrienne Munro, "Therapeutic and life writing includes a long history of writing as a means of resisting violence and oppression, bearing witness to and exposing human rights violations, seeking justice, and processing and making meaning of trauma and suffering" (163). Life writing is a powerful tool for processing trauma, enabling individuals to resist oppression, witness suffering, and seek justice by transforming personal pain into collective memory and testimony. Thus, the study of political leaders' autobiographies reveals how their life writing serves as a tool for resisting oppression, bearing witness to national traumas, and constructing narratives that seek to process suffering while reinforcing their roles in pursuing justice and forming national identity.

More specifically, the documentation of trauma in autobiographical literature frequently assumes a pivotal position in nationhood politics, as it illustrates the intricate connection between individual anguish and the formation of national identity. This phenomenon not only influences the shared recollection of knowledge but also establishes the basis for relationships among families and political groups. In South Asia, the personal tragedies of leaders expose profound links between individual

suffering and the struggle for national identity, providing a valuable understanding of the process of collective identity development.

The autobiographical accounts in the study illustrate that conveying experiences of trauma is not just a mirror of individual adversity but also an essential element in forming political and national identities. As David Lloyd argues, “the relation to the past is strictly not a relation to one’s past but to a social history and its material and institutional effects and is in no simple way a matter of internal psychic dynamics” (212). The relation to the past, particularly in the context of history and trauma, is less about individual memory and more about how collective historical events and their material and institutional legacies shape our present experiences and identities beyond personal psychic processes. Similarly, this study will contend that the expression of personal pain in these memoirs functions as a strategic instrument in the politics of national identity, fundamentally shaping extended space for family politics. These are identical to Rahul Gairola and Sharanya Jayawickrama’s observation that the untold suffering from colonialism, military regimes, and dictatorships in contemporary Asia is often met with “conspicuous silence in the field of trauma studies” (Introduction 5) directly legitimizes the examination of South Asian autobiographical narratives by statesmen. The selected seminal works, penned by leaders who personally endured imprisonment, political upheaval, and nation-defining conflicts, offer invaluable primary insights into the intricate politics of South Asian autobiographical narratives relating to trauma and nationalism.

In this context, trauma becomes a conduit through which personal suffering is transformed into a collective narrative, enabling the construction and reinforcement of national identity. Thus, the introduction chapter is structured to provide a comprehensive foundation for the research. This study begins with critical summaries

of the primary texts to provide a foundational understanding of the works under analysis. It then offers operational definitions of the key terminologies to clarify the conceptual framework guiding the research. Following this, the statement of the problem outlines the central issues the study seeks to address. The research questions are then posed to direct the inquiry, leading to clearly defined research objectives. The research methodology details the approach and tools employed to conduct the analysis. The delimitations of the study specify the scope and boundaries within which the research is confined. The significance of the study highlights its relevance and contribution to the field. Finally, the section on chapter divisions and summaries presents an overview of the structure of the study, offering a roadmap for the reader.

### **1.1 Description of the Primary Texts**

Autobiographical writings of Koirala, Nehru, Bhutto, and Rahman illuminate their nations' turbulent past. Each leader's account recounts their trauma and tribulations as their countries struggled toward freedom and democracy. Nehru's reflections on India's freedom movement, Koirala's on Nepal's political evolution, Bhutto's on Pakistan's fall from power, and Rahman's on Bangladesh's fight for cultural identity illuminate personal and national identity in South Asia's conflict and change.

Koirala's autobiography, *Atmabrittanta*, provides a profound examination of memory, as he chronicles his political challenges endured throughout Nepal's shift from monarchy to democracy. This memoir explores the profound impact of political persecution and incarceration, contemplating the arduous struggle for democratic changes. Koirala's account highlights his contribution to the formation of Nepalese patriotic identity, demonstrating the convergence of individual fortitude and

communal ambition for a democratic and cohesive country in the face of persistent obstacles.

In *An Autobiography*, Nehru intertwines recollection with individual and communal hardship, contemplating the afflictions of colonial governance and his incarceration. The narrative he presents effectively portrays the pursuit of India's independence, interweaving his political development with the nation's struggle for freedom. The contemplations of Nehru demonstrate a fundamental correlation between individual identity and the concept of nationhood, depicting the unwavering quest for an independent and united India in the face of significant challenges.

*If I Am Assassinated* delves into the intense memories and struggles of Bhutto against the backdrop of anguish from court fights and political persecution. The memoir examines the death penalty imposed on Bhutto by a military administration, reflecting on the impact of white papers and the larger struggle for democracy. Bhutto's perspective highlights the clash between personal fate and national goals, emphasizing the struggle between authoritarianism and the desire for democratic nationhood.

Rahman describes the deep memory and struggle of East Pakistan's battle for independence in *The Unfinished Memoirs*. His memoirs touch on the anguish of social and political changes, the campaign for Bengali language rights, and the growing hostility with West Pakistan. Rahman's perspective highlights the importance of language and cultural pride in influencing the new path of the nation toward sovereignty and nationhood, emphasizing both the fight for democracy and the fight for national identity.

Thus, the autobiographical narratives offer critical insights into the political turbulence that has shaped modern South Asia. Each account of a leader covers their

struggles and national issues throughout important eras in their nation's history. The autobiographies of Nehru and Koirala underline the interdependence of personal and national identity in the quest for freedom and democratic modernity. Bhutto's story contrasts authoritarian oppression with democratic goals, whereas Rahman's focuses on cultural and political recognition in a divided society. These memoirs illuminate the personal and social challenges of freedom, democracy, and national identity in South Asia.

## **1.2 Operational Definitions of the Keywords**

The following terminologies can be defined differently in various contexts. However, they are operationally defined as mentioned below for the study.

**Life Writing:** Life writing comprises a broad category of texts that encompasses autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, and other forms of personal narratives through which individuals document their lives; this research employs life writings to examine how political figures narrate their personal experiences about their political careers and the historical events they have witnessed or shaped, with particular reference to the theoretical framework provided by Smith and Watson.

**Autobiographical Writings:** Autobiographical writings hold the literary works in which individuals recount their own life experiences, with particular emphasis on their personal and political journeys; this category includes both autobiographies and memoirs.

**Autobiography:** An autobiography presents a comprehensive, first-person narrative account of an individual's entire life, written by the individual. It focuses on significant events, experiences, and reflections across their lifespan, offering insight into their personal development, intellectual growth, and identity within their broader

historical and social context. However, the autobiography of Nehru is not a late-life recollection.

**Memoir:** Memoir embraces focused autobiographical writings centered on specific, significant events, relationships, or periods in the author's life, emphasizing the emotional and reflective impact of these experiences. Unlike a comprehensive autobiography, which covers an entire life chronologically, a memoir offers a thematic slice, prioritizing subjective insights over a complete factual record. Bhutto and Rahman's writings are memoirs as they focus on defining political or personal episodes, not their whole lives.

**Trauma Studies:** Trauma Studies signifies an interdisciplinary academic field that investigates how overwhelming events are processed and represented across individual, social-collective, and cultural dimensions. It examines the psychological impact on single persons (individual trauma); the shared emotional and social disruption experienced by groups (social/collective trauma); and the socially constructed process where a collectivity redefines its identity after a fundamental assault (cultural trauma). This field critiques memory, narrative, and witnessing to understand trauma's complex, multifaceted nature.

**Cultural Trauma:** Cultural trauma embodies a collectively constructed process where a group interprets a horrendous event as a fundamental assault on their shared identity and moral order, leading to a permanent re-narration of their past and future. It differs from individual trauma by being a social meaning-making process rather than solely a personal psychological blow. The study uses both collective trauma and cultural trauma interchangeably.

**Nationalism:** Nationalism personifies an imagined community that is inherently limited (having finite, albeit elastic, boundaries), sovereign (possessing and

aspiring to independent authority), and characterized by a profound, if abstract, sense of deep horizontal comradeship among its members. This comradeship exists despite most members never knowing or even meeting each other, unified through shared cultural constructs and collective identities.

Statesman: A statesman stance a political leader demonstrating exceptional long-term vision, strategic acumen, and a profound commitment to their nation's fundamental well-being, often transcending immediate partisan interests. They are characterized by their ability to shape national identity, navigate complex challenges, and leave a lasting legacy. This applies to figures like Koirala, Nehru, Bhutto, and Rahman for their foundational nation-building and ideological contributions, pivotal crisis leadership, and enduring influence on their countries.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The autobiographical writings of South Asian statesmen often center on suffering alongside themes of independence, democracy, and nationalism. However, there is a critical gap in scholarship linking the narration of trauma to the politics of nationalism. Existing studies overlook how personal and collective grief are used to construct national identity and political legitimacy. This study addresses that gap by exploring the politics of narrating trauma in the service of postcolonial nation-building.

Moreover, even though Nepal was never colonized, its leaders, along with those of Pakistan and Bangladesh, fought British colonialism for India's freedom. Leaders of both nations desired independence despite hardship. According to Mallika Shakya, "What politically connected Nepal with India at the time was a shared context of (crypto)-colonialism" (57). Because of that, Nepal was also a part of the anti-colonial movement. However, the countries lost coherence after independence.

The partitions of India and Pakistan, respectively in 1947 and 1971, escalated tensions between India and Pakistan and Pakistan and Bangladesh. Leadership stories of struggle and suffering for independence, democracy, and nationhood have been widely studied by scholars. However, the writings of leaders with similar political experiences in South Asian contexts have not been explored yet..

These nations collaborated to end colonial rule in South Asia, but academics have neglected their postcolonial political cohesiveness. In an autobiographical account study, Andreas Hamburger et al. say, “Constructions of individual and social life history are the mixture of subjective interpretation of the objective facts and events” (“Introduction” vii). Rereading political leaders’ memoirs is historical literature. In autobiographical writings, pain fosters nationalism. Interpreting grief and nationalism in texts gives South Asian autobiographical memory politics. Therefore, analyzing nationalism through political leaders’ traumatic recollections is unusual.

The available studies on the autobiographical writing of South Asian statesmen primarily focus on political struggles and suffering, often analyzing single texts through a singular theoretical lens. However, they give little concern to the broader political function of narrating trauma concerning nationhood. This study addresses this gap by employing an interdisciplinary framework, drawing on life writing, trauma studies, and theories of nation and nationalism, to analyze four autobiographical writings and uncover the politics of representing trauma in the context of South Asian nation-building.

This study examines how South Asian politicians reinterpret their trauma experiences in their autobiographical narratives to address the lack of thorough research on their politics. It emphasizes their use of personal pain to promote nationalist goals. Based on the research problem and objective, this study examines

how South Asian statesmen who participated in the Indian Independence Movement collectively and individually articulate trauma to support nationalism in their autobiographies.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Particularly, based on the research problem, the following research questions have been developed:

- i. What are the ways the authors of the selected autobiographical writings resist British colonialism, and what factors break down their political unity in the postcolonial period?
- ii. How do the statesmen as authors of the texts from different South Asian countries develop their personal and political grief as collective/cultural trauma?
- iii. Why do the authors narrate the grief through the social process of cultural trauma?

The analytical and interpretative responses to the designed research questions contribute to decoding the politics of autobiographical writings in South Asia.

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

Based on the above research questions, the study analyzes and interprets the autobiographical writings by Nehru from India, Bhutto from Pakistan, Koirala from Nepal, and Rahman from Bangladesh:

- i. To identify how the authors resist British colonialism and assess the factors that break down their political unity in the postcolonial period.
- ii. To examine how the authors develop their personal and political grief into collective/cultural trauma.
- iii. To analyze the reasons for narrating the grief through the social

process of cultural trauma.

The study thus exposes the politics of autobiographical writings about trauma studies, which enhance our understanding of nationhood. It also explains the possibility of decoding traumatic memory for interpreting nationalism. Finally, it recognizes cultural trauma expanding the carrier group in the form of collective identity, which later gets shaped into nationalism as a secular ideology in South Asia.

### **1.6 Research Methodology**

In this study, the theoretical framework draws on ideas from life writing, trauma studies, and nationalism. These perspectives guide the reading of South Asian politicians' autobiographies, helping to show how personal stories are shaped by, and also contribute to, wider histories of memory, identity, and nation-building. The research design of this study employs a qualitative textual analysis approach, focusing primarily on exploring the representation of trauma in South Asian autobiographical writing. The process includes discussing these themes, identifying patterns, and interpreting how each author's socio-political context shapes their narrative. Thus, the approach allows for an understanding of how personal and collective traumas are articulated and negotiated for nationhood within the autobiographical writings, contributing to broader discussions in the literature on memory, identity, and postcolonial studies.

The study analyzes and interprets the autobiographical writings *Atmabrittanta: Late Life Recollections* of Koirala from Nepal, *An Autobiography* of Nehru from India, *If I am Assassinated* of Bhutto from Pakistan, and *The Unfinished Memoirs* of Rahman from Bangladesh. The political leaders as authors from the concerned countries have significantly contributed to democracy and nationhood. They have also gained experience in suffering for the country. These texts provide a rich, comparative

landscape for analyzing how trauma influences narrative structure, language, and thematic expression in autobiographical literature. All these are purposefully selected as primary data by developing criteria to examine the politics of the writings. The study involves an analysis of the textual evidence for constructing meanings through interpretation based on a theoretical foundation, as explained in the theoretical review section. Moreover, Dominick LaCapra's critique of radical constructivism holds significant weight for understanding such memoirs, particularly by statesmen dealing with national trauma. He argues that if a narrative prioritizes a neatly coherent, often nationalistic, vision, it risks reducing complex historical experiences to a mere narrative construction (LaCapra 7). This approach, rooted in radical constructivism's emphasis on subjective interpretation over objective reality. The interdisciplinary approach in this study supports overcoming such radical constructivism to reduce intricate historical experiences to mere narrative construction by embracing diverse perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding.

The data collection process involves a close reading of these texts, with particular attention to recurring themes of trauma, nation, and nationalism. Grounded in the foundational theoretical framework of trauma studies as articulated in Jeffrey C. Alexander's *Trauma: A Social Theory*, alongside the nuanced understanding of nation and nationalism drawn from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and informed by the critical insights into life-writing as developed in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, this study employs these interdisciplinary perspectives as analytical tools. These frameworks facilitate a rigorous interpretation of textual evidence, enabling the construction of meanings also with the support of other theoretical concepts and studies related to these three major theories. All these jointly rationalize the process of

responding to the research questions related to the politics of autobiographical writings of South Asian political leaders.

Mainly the methodology part is divided into two key sections. The first criterion for the selection of authors and texts explains the rationale behind choosing specific autobiographies that reflect significant political contexts and personal experiences, ensuring a diverse and representative sample. The second section, philosophical and analytical assumptions of textual analysis, discusses the theoretical frameworks and interpretive strategies guiding the analysis, focusing on how textual meaning is constructed and understood within a political and autobiographical framework.

### ***1.6.1 Criteria for Choosing Authors and the Primary Texts***

In this study, the authors of the texts are not only supra-subaltern statesmen but also creative and critical thinkers of the post/colonial period. The works of Rahman and Bhutto are primarily memoirs, and the writings of Koirala and Nehru are autobiographies. It is important to distinguish between the two genres: autobiographies encompass the entirety of the author's life up to the point of writing, whereas memoirs focus on specific periods or aspects of the author's life. However, the terms autobiographical writings and autobiographical memories generally hold the same meaning in this study. In a post-colonial context, Elleke Boehmer argues:

Post-colonial autobiography represents a burgeoning area of intellectual activity-placed as it is at the meeting point of two influential intellectual fields, auto/biography studies and post-colonialism, and implicating as it does the politics and the aesthetics of the self-narrative, and of remembering lives.

(756)

The intersection of post-colonial autobiography, auto/biography studies, and post-

colonial theory invites a critical examination of how personal narratives challenge dominant historical accounts and renegotiate individual and collective identities.

Although Nehru's autobiography was written during the colonial period, it shares key features with post-colonial autobiographical writing, such as resisting imperial narratives, asserting a national identity, and intertwining personal experience with broader political struggles.

In the experience of the four autobiographical writings selected for the study, Nehru and Rahman wrote their autobiographies at a young age in prison. Whereas, Bhutto narrated it as a legal cum political document in the last minute of his life in prison before the execution of the death penalty. In this context, "Prison soon became the birthplace for many narratives" (Venkitachalam 314). Differently, Koirala narrated his autobiographical memory as late-life recollections outside prison, just some months before his death. However, the contents that he has discussed in his text are pervasively the experience of his long-term prison life. All of them were social democrats in their ideology.

Regarding the motives of writing, autobiography mainly aims, as claimed by Jeffrey Tatum, at "influencing contemporaries at least as much as posterity" (184). On top of that, political autobiography naturally attempts to influence people of the present and the future, and the autobiographical writings of politicians do have a political of writing. In this context, Koirala and Rahman could not influence their contemporaries through these writings as they were published posthumously. Nehru, differently, could influence and realize the impact of his writing, but Bhutto could not realize the impact of his writing as he was assassinated just three months after the publication of his memoir. Anyway, according to Womack, all of them hope to reinforce their unique existence among others through their writings (10). Ultimately,

despite differing circumstances, all these political figures used autobiographical writing as a means to assert their distinct identities and shape their legacy, whether or not they lived to witness its impact.

Moreover, the process of analysis and interpretation surpasses the projected meaning of the authors. It explores the unintended and even unexpected meaning of the texts that are believed to be rich and deep in qualitative and literary study.

The autobiographical accounts are chosen for this study because they can better represent individual memories, in the expression of Camellia Hancheva, with “more clarity and details” (193) rather than other forms of life writing. They are unstructured. So, the particular pieces of the text from the selected book are extracted for interpretation. It needs to read the whole text while identifying the specific extraction appropriate to the theme of the study. The published initial years of the primary texts are mentioned here, but other editions are used while analyzing.

As a literary study, textual analysis is not only structural analysis. It divides a text into smaller parts and examines the different codes, voices, and intertextual links within it, which helps in gaining a deeper understanding and drawing logical conclusions (Barthes 133). Even the theories that are related to nation and nationalism, trauma studies, and life writing are relevant to the nature of the texts and authors. As expressed by Nigel Fabb and Alan Durant, the textual analysis serves, as the assessment criteria that “make[s] clear, what markers mean by a ‘good’ answer is typically one which is focused on the question or topic; one which is supported with textual evidence or other relevant illustration; and one which is coherently argued and written” (30). Hence, the analysis process ultimately leads to the development of an argument.

All four authors of the autobiographical writings have a long political career in

their respective nations and parties, and were known for fighting for independence and democracy. Enduring suffering in political imprisonment for many years and leading the socialist party are also common features among the authors. Their remarkable socio-political contributions were their commitment to freedom and fighting for nationality on the one hand, and enduring suffering and giving agency to voiceless groups even in the hostile political situation created by autocracy and colonization. In this mission, they successfully won the people's verdict and served as democratically elected Prime Ministers in their countries.

Differently, Bhutto and Rahman faced assassination, whereas Nehru and Koirala faced natural death. Within it, Koirala had pre-realized the hurriedly approaching death as he was fighting the last stage of cancer. Among the four authors, Nehru was politically senior, but as an author, he was the youngest one who had penned his autobiography at the age of 47. Different from Koirala, all three other authors were British Indians. Rahman and Bhutto became Pakistani after the partition of India, and Rahman became Bangladeshi after the partition of Pakistan and the formation of Bangladesh. All four authors got a quality education at the time, and they were commonly political science students. As a reflection of the global context and foreign education, they proposed specific models of democracy for their nations. Among these authors, Nehru, Koirala, and Rahman gave active leadership in the Indian Independence Movement. At the same time, Rahman was also active in the Pakistani Movement.

Bhutto has only referred to these two movements rather than explaining much in his text. All four authors have experienced post/colonial South Asia and discussed much regarding politics. As documented by Mary D. Chene, among them, Koirala was from the never-colonized country Nepal, but her political anthropology could

hardly escape from the burden of postcolonial conditions due to geopolitical situations (210). Although Koirala was from Nepal, a country never formally colonized, her political experience was still shaped by postcolonial conditions, largely due to Nepal's complex geopolitical realities. While this study focuses on leaders who meet specific criteria, such as leading a party and government, experiencing significant imprisonment, and writing autobiographical accounts centred on South Asia's colonial and postcolonial contexts, it acknowledges the absence of a woman leader whose autobiographical work fits these parameters. To address concerns about the generalizability of findings from a focus on elite male political leaders, this study specifically analyzes how Koirala, Nehru, Bhutto, and Rahman, through their narratives, extensively engaged with and represented the experiences, aspirations, and challenges of diverse social classes and groups within their respective societies, thereby broadening the scope of the analysis beyond mere elite perspectives.

There are connections between writing and the politics of the authors in this study. The publication of the autobiography of Nehru has also directly supported his political career as he achieved inter/national visibility. The writing established him as a visionary leader. The texts of Koirala and Rahman were published posthumously. However, the publication helped to shape them as immortal political personalities and also perform as political heir for dynasty politics. Koirala and Bhutto documented their political experience in the sunset years of their lives, particularly on the eve of their death. They commonly shared fewer personal issues and more public and political subjects, as the authors were politicians, and even the personal records became historical.

In this way, finally, Koirala's *Atmabrittanta*, Nehru's *An Autobiography*, Bhutto's *If I Am Assassinated*, and Rahman's *The Unfinished Memoirs* were selected

for their authors' roles as pivotal first-generation of democratic leaders of Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Their narratives offer primary insights into shared anti-colonial motivations and trauma, while explicitly confronting distinct post-independence fractures (Partition, execution, secession, instability). Autobiographical writing by its very nature, offers direct access to subjective experience, providing a primary, unfiltered narrative of personal and collective suffering. In this context, Prem Thapa's critique of Manjushree Thapa's fictional work *Forget Kathmandu*, asserting its "neglect[ing] to address the suffering of the victims during the conflict" (158), logically positions autobiographical writing as an ideal form for trauma study. Furthermore, each text demonstrates a unique political function: nation-building, defiant testament, foundational narrative, or democratic critique, revealing how self-narration was weaponized to shape history, legitimize power, and navigate trauma, memory, and nationalism. This geographically and culturally representative corpus provides a potent comparative study of autobiographical politics in South Asia's formative decades.

### ***1.6.2 Philosophical and Analytical Assumptions for the Close Reading***

This study is based on a qualitative textual analysis, grounded in the philosophical assumption that meaning is best understood through careful, close reading of texts. It focuses on autobiographies as the main source. The research follows an unstructured and flexible approach, aiming to explore unique, individual themes that emerge from each text rather than applying a fixed framework.

Qualitative textual analysis demands a high level of researcher involvement, relying on careful interpretation, reflection, and judgment to derive meaningful insights. As pointed out by William L. Neuman, "Qualitative data are more difficult to deal with than data in the form of numbers" (441). Beyond the fixed formula, the

qualitative interpretation depends more on the researcher's institution. Therefore, it "requires more efforts by an individual researcher to read and re-read data notes, reflect on what is read, and make comparisons based on logic and judgment" (Neuman 441). The reading and re-reading of the autobiographical memories of the political leaders leads the study to a rational examination for valid inferencing.

Broadly, in terms of the ontological assumption, the study wants to know the nature of reality as the politics of the autobiographical writings of the South Asian statesmen. As a qualitative study, there can be plural realities that can be examined through analysis and interpretation. It depends on a close analysis of the texts, where the researcher becomes an insider. As explained by John W. Creswell, "Conducting a qualitative study means researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants 'texts being studied'" (20). In the case of this study on literature, the researcher has to involve themselves in a close reading of the four selected autobiographical writings. As explained by Alan Bryman, the textual evidence becomes data for the study, which is considered rich and deep (79). Approaching such richness and depth is the identification of the politics of the texts.

Concerning epistemological assumptions, the study follows the interpretive paradigm that uses inductive logic in creating reality by discussing and interacting with the selected texts. In this sense, the conclusion is derived from the ground rather than dripping down from the top. This paradigm believes in individual differences in things and objects. Regarding the analysis and interpretation of political memories, social constructivism as a theoretical assumption focuses on analyzing and interpreting the textual evidence for meaning making, where "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell 24). In such an inquiry, texts are regularly connected to contexts, emphasizing subjective meanings.

As put by Creswell, subjective meanings are “negotiated socially and historically” (25). Therefore, the historical and cultural setting of the writings is discussed. Thus, this study mostly depends on the interpretation of such evidence.

The values of the researcher affect the study. It is common in qualitative research that there can be a certain level of bias in such value-laden studies. While interpreting the textual evidence in the study, the value of researcher can knowingly or unknowingly be present. It starts with selecting a topic and texts. The selection of the theory also leads the study in certain directions. The values also support this study to posit somewhere, as suggested by the concept of axiological assumption in the study, being ethical while empathically dealing with crucial issues like trauma and nationalism.

Regarding the method, this study depends on the textual analysis of the selected texts. It involves mainly describing, interpreting, and understanding the construction, content, and purpose of the text. To Jason A. Smith, “Textual analysis that is qualitative utilizes a variety of theoretical traditions that fall under an interpretive umbrella” (3). The chosen theoretical framework prevents the study from diverting the researcher to a meaningless discussion. The analysis method connects the texts to extended social and political contexts to reveal the literal meanings, latent values, and dominant assumptions. In literary studies, the analysis method is the most popular one. More specifically, for Jason A. Smith:

The qualitative textual analysis takes into account the social context that readers of texts bring to the table. It attempts to link how ways of knowing inform and make sense of what texts offer to various audiences. Although this form of textual analysis moves the research to look beyond the content of the text itself, it offers a bridge for researchers to cross when understanding how

texts impact the lives of individuals, groups, and communities in a society. (3) Such analysis of the texts is believed to communicate the intended meanings of the authors, and the analysis reveals the untold meanings of the texts in the interpretation process.

The textual analysis process leads the researcher to the latent meaning of the text, closely reading the political discourses. As suggested by Neuman, “There are many things we cannot directly observe in the social world” (441). Through a romantic analogy, he explains that one can see the kissing scene but not the deep love (441). Thus, the textual analysis can support in getting the deep meaning in the case of observing the politics of autobiographical writings in South Asia, which is assumed to be available in a latent form.

In this context, the study aims to offer insights into the identified political phenomena by using qualitative interpretation to explore the “unseen beneath the surface” (Neuman 441), through an examination of themes and motifs within their historical and cultural contexts. The textual analysis method explicitly “allows the researcher to discern latent meaning, but also implicit patterns, assumptions, and omissions of a text” (Fursich 241). The texts’ specific language and style support the identification of the themes. Thus, the analysis of the texts’ intended and unintended messages makes the analysis process complete. The revelation of the similarities and differences between plural texts is also identified through the analysis. They support examining the relationship among the concepts. Similar themes and concepts are chunked together to generate meaning. The study dominantly uses the insights from the trauma study. Particularly, Roger Luckhurst emphasizes to be aware that “A trauma study is inseparable from a sense that literary and cultural criticism is worthwhile only if it can position itself as ethically responsible” (36). It emphasizes

that trauma studies, especially within literary and cultural criticism, must be grounded in ethical responsibility, reminding the researcher to approach texts with sensitivity and a commitment to respectful, meaningful interpretation.

The organization of the data is guided by existing theoretical frameworks, which focus on the relationships between key concepts. The interpretations are critically examined through reflective questioning to ensure analytical rigor. As observed by Neuman, it is necessary to consider disparaging evidence in qualitative research that is not available in the text (441). Such untold stories can also transmit strong messages, and qualitative researchers must perceive them. While talking about the illustrative method of the study, the study applies “theory to a concrete historical situation or social setting, or organizes data based on prior theory” (Neuman 427). The final analysis is not done based on a single situation. Rather, the study presents different situations juxtaposing various cases. The method of agreement and disagreement proposed by John Stuart Mill supports logically comparing and contrasting the situation (Neuman 427). Thus, Mill’s method not only reflects the surficial assumptions but also the latent norms that can never be observed with the naked eye. For Neuman, “preexisting theory provides the empty boxes. The researcher sees whether evidence can be gathered to fill them” (427). The textual evidence related to the issues discussed in this study is selected to fill the empty theoretical boxes. The understanding of the evidence generally supports the interpretation of the world. The level of adjustment of the evidence in the boxes conforms to or rejects the existing theoretical framework.

The researcher’s subjectivity cannot be eliminated from qualitative textual analysis and interpretation. It makes the process of achieving validity and reliability difficult. It also leads the study to inconsistencies. However, the logical reasoning and

theoretical backing support making this study systematic. In terms of validity, the theoretical concepts that are chosen in this study primarily support measuring both political autobiographies and the politics of autobiographies.

Finally, applying the toolkits for reading life writing further strengthens the argumentation in the study. Remarkably, the possibility of multiple interpretations of any literary text limits the scope of the reliability of qualitative textual analysis. At the same time, the identical nature of the selected texts and their authors, and the use of the same theories for the analysis and interpretation of the texts contribute to the reliability of the study.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The culture of writing political autobiography has its legacy in ancient Rome, and the culture has been globally adopted. South Asia is not an exception. The region can also be identified with influential political autobiographical writings, particularly in colonial and post-colonial periods. While going through them, it is natural to ask about the politicians' politics of autobiographical writings. However, it has not been explored in relation to trauma and nationhood as aimed by this study.

Sharing something in the form of first-person narration is simple and offers clear visibility of the subject matter. The socio-political experiences that are narrated by autobiographical writings are comprehensive. In this sense, autobiographical writings hold the highest form of self-expression as an epistemic tool. In the life of political figures, the self-expression of the enlightening form can be interpreted for decoding politics.

This study is significant because it addresses the intertwined themes of trauma and nationalism in the autobiographical writings of South Asian political leaders, an area that has not been comprehensively explored through a collective lens involving

multiple nations and diverse theoretical perspectives. Unlike existing studies that often focus on individual nations or specific theoretical concepts, this research brings together autobiographical writings from Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, offering a comparative analysis of how these leaders, who fought for freedom and democracy, narrate their personal and national struggles. These autobiographical writings reflect the deep connections between personal trauma and the broader political landscape, particularly the impact of the Indian Independence Movement on South Asian politics. The interpretation of these texts reveals how the authors' experiences and emotions are intertwined with their visions of national trauma, providing valuable insights into how personal narratives contribute to the construction of national identity and memory in South Asia.

The study's theoretical insights on communal trauma, nationalism, and reading autobiographical memory are suitable for analyzing textual evidence to deduce the unique South Asian nationhood model. This combination of theoretical ideas in understanding autobiographical narratives from different nations adds to the politics of memory in literature, political science, and international relations. Politicians' autobiographical writings are better for discussing independence, nationalism, and trauma than other literary and life writings. Because of that, the study's theoretical framework effectively addresses national and worldwide political challenges. It defies the tradition of concluding South Asia from only Indian sources by including the autobiographical writings of four statesmen from four nations. All the authors of the autobiographical writing selected for the study were either the first or second democratically elected prime ministers of their nations. They were also the predecessors or successors of the dynastic politics of the concerned countries. Besides, they all had their historicity about getting a quality education, advocating

freedom, living in imprisonment, and enduring suffering for independence and democracy. This supports deriving the logical inference through interpretation.

In this way, it has supported potential researchers, academicians, and audiences as reference materials to decode the area in literature, sociology, politics, and international relations. Mainly by exposing literature's political role in shaping trauma narratives and critiquing identity politics, this study empowers marginalized voices while offering conflict-resolution lessons for divided societies

### **1.8 Delimitations of the Study**

This study is delimited to the analysis of four purposively selected autobiographical writings authored by prominent South Asian statesmen, Koirala (Nepal), Nehru (India), Bhutto (Pakistan), and Rahman (Bangladesh), who played central roles in the anti-colonial struggle and postcolonial nation-building. These figures were chosen based on specific criteria: each received a formal education, led a socialist-oriented political party, experienced imprisonment and/or political exile, and ultimately served as a democratically elected Prime Minister in their respective countries. The scope of the study is confined to their autobiographical narratives that reflect both personal and political experiences during the late-colonial and postcolonial periods. There can be a question of the generalizability of the findings to the broader South Asian context, saying that it focuses on elite male political leaders. The selected texts are also considered representative of the political culture and historical consciousness that shaped the region's struggle for independence and democratic governance.

This study specifically aims to identify and interpret patterns of political trauma and nationhood in the autobiographical writings of four South Asian statesmen from countries that share a historical connection to the Indian Independence Struggle.

These autobiographical writings are examined not merely as personal narratives but as political texts that engage with the construction of national identity through the lens of suffering, resistance, and memory. The focus is primarily theoretical and conceptual, grounded in interdisciplinary frameworks that explore the intersections of life writing, trauma, and nationalism.

Due to the inclusion criteria, requiring political leadership, democratic election, imprisonment or exile, and direct involvement in the struggle for independence and democracy, no female stateswoman was represented in the selected corpus. As such, this study does not incorporate women's autobiographical writings, a limitation that future research addresses. Nonetheless, the selected texts offer valuable insights into South Asia's cultural and political diversity. The inclusion of leaders from Hindu-majority India and Nepal, and Muslim-majority Pakistan and Bangladesh, allows the study to reflect upon how cultural and religious contexts inform the politics of constitutional and practical nationhood. Importantly, the study focuses on secular nationalism rather than religious identity.

Among the vast array of literary genres, autobiographical writings are chosen for their unique capacity to merge personal memory with national history. Similarly, trauma studies and theories of nationalism are employed for their conceptual relevance to the political experiences of these leaders. Within these fields, the study draws specifically on Alexander's theory of cultural trauma, Anderson's concept of imagined communities, and the life writing frameworks developed by Smith and Watson. These theorists are selected for their influential contributions, which collectively provide a robust foundation for analyzing how personal narratives articulate broader national and historical concerns in the South Asian context.

## 1.9 Division of the Chapters

The dissertation has five chapters. Beginning with the first introduction chapter, this section primarily describes the contextual background, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, delimitation, significance, methodology, and even the organization of the study. The second chapter, the literature review, describes political autobiographical writings. After that, it synthesizes empirical studies on the four key texts and examines relevant theoretical frameworks. This rigorous synthesis identifies established information and gaps in the subject, allowing the study to fill the research gap. The third and fourth chapters analyze and interpret the textual evidence related to research questions and objectives using the theoretical framework. I have divided the two textual analysis chapters on the basis of the two genres of life narrative: autobiography and memoir, respectively, by Koirala and Nehru and Bhutto and Rahman. Generally, an autobiography is considered a chronological account of a person's life, whereas a memoir is a collection of specific experiences; on this basis, the chapter division is rational. In the fifth chapter, the study concludes by synthesizing the textual analysis and interpretation. It seeks to respond to the research questions to fulfil the objectives and finally proposes prospects for South Asian autobiographical studies.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW ON TRAUMA, NATIONALISM, AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS**

This chapter analyzes the culture of autobiographical writing, principles of trauma theory, nuances of nationalism, and empirical studies on the primary texts selected for this study. In doing so, first, I have explored key research on autobiographical writings, from ancient times to the present, focusing on autobiographical writings as both personal and political expressions, with an emphasis on the writings of selected figures in South Asian politics. Next, I have examined the theoretical perspectives on autobiographical writing, trauma studies, and nation and nationalism. Finally, I have consolidated empirical studies on the four primary texts of the study, organizing the discussion into four distinct subheadings.

#### **2.1 Reviews of Conceptual Foundations to Autobiographical Discourse**

The review of the basic concepts begins by examining autobiographical writings from antiquity to the present, charting the evolution of self-narratives and their role in shaping individual and collective identities. The review then shifts to the tension between private and public discourses in autobiographical writings, analyzing how personal experiences of trauma are often framed within broader national and political contexts. Lastly, it concentrates on South Asian politics, investigating how the autobiographical writings of politicians contribute to nationalist discourses, particularly in the way they mobilize personal and collective traumas to forge a sense of national unity and identity.

##### ***2.1.1 Autobiographical Writings from Antiquity***

Autobiographical writing entails the introspective exploration of one's life through prose intended for present-day and future readership, focusing primarily on

personal experiences and reflections.

Etymologically, autobiography is the combination of the three Greek words “autos”, “bios”, and “graphe” respectively. These denote self, life, and writing in English. They jointly signify “self-life writing” and the nomenclatures as a memoir, the life, the book of my life, confessions and essays of myself were in writing practice to designate the text concerning the self, related to history, politics, religion, science, and culture (Smith and Watson 1-2). However, James Olney believes that such culture was already there in practice under the names of confessions and memoirs (6). The culture focuses on enlightened personalities from diverse sectors of society who have potent experiences to share.

The culture of autobiographical writing has a long history. Smith and Watson trace its legacy by pointing out that the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, which was written in 397 C.E., is generally regarded as the earliest book-length autobiographical narrative in the West and Augustine’s “I” is back on his early life from the perspective of his adaptation of Christianity (85). Similarly, Georges Gusdorf also traces the legacy of autobiographical writing to the period of St. Augustine and Rousseau and explains that many notable men and even some not so notable among them heads of state, ministers of the state, generals, explorers, and merchants have devoted their free time in their old age to editing memoirs (28). However, Augustine and Rousseau did not use the word autobiography in their memoirs, as the term autobiography entered common usage in 1797. In Bonnie J. Gunzenhauser’s understanding, Augustine, classical writers like Pindar and Sappho, as well as historians like Herodotus, had written some of their own firsthand experiences, but the autobiographical writings that became popular, especially in Enlightenment Europe, differ significantly (75). The rationality of the Enlightenment Age has brought such a shift in the writing culture.

For instance, Betty A. Bergland believes in Rousseau's intellectual autobiography, *Confessions*, which narrates mind and thought, and serves as a model for later historians, giving a paradigm of contemporary autobiography writing culture (432). The paradigm shift in confessing has reflected people's way of thinking over time. However, it also replicates that confession, as the major motive of autobiographical writing remains intact.

Religion was also one of the principal issues in ancient Rome regarding confessing past deeds to God in the form of an autobiography. For instance, Hartmut Leppin presents Augustine's eminent autobiographical text *Confessions*, where Augustine offered a critical self-examination (417). He attempts to establish God as the primary audience and shares his experience in autobiographical writing. The *Confessions*, as an eminent text, is also sufficient to draw the attention of the modern audience, though religion was more dominant in the writing. In the case of modern autobiographical writings, the writings are often confessional as authors can hardly surpass their time and space. Just the targets are changed. In the Roman period, the confession was to God, but now that has shifted to party workers and people as political communication. However, the modern form of confessing becomes defending the political stances of the authors themselves.

In postcolonial autobiographical writing, such introspective exploration functions as a strategic narrative tool, enabling leaders to transform personal histories into foundational accounts of a shared past, thereby shaping collective identity formation and legitimizing decolonizing imperatives. As noted by Esther Pujolràs-Noguer and Felicity Hand, "Postcolonial literary criticism has recently focused its scrutiny on life writing, that is, the memoirs and experiences of citizens from former colonized countries" (1). These authors mostly present colonialism as trauma. In

doing so, political leaders utilise this genre to encode not only their journeys but also to articulate their perspectives on local, national, and international politics.

The tradition of writing political autobiographies has a long history that continues to be practised in modern times. Regarding the origin of political autobiographies in the first century BC in Rome, Jose M. Candau claims that the political “struggles over power, reached their highest point. The apologetic character, the effort of its authors to justify their public deeds, was a key element in the emergence of the autobiographical genre” (124). The writings of the Roman period were not entitled to autobiographies. However, the contents of the writing of that period were sufficient to be considered as autobiographies. English poet Ann Yearsley coined the term autobiography in the late eighteenth century (Smith and Watson 2). Although it was not yet institutionalized as a formal literary genre, the sharing of personal and social experiences exhibited characteristics comparable to autobiographical writing. The philosophical reflections of these authors were grounded in their lived experiences and observations, forming the basis for their narrative expression.

The distinction between autobiographies and memoirs reveals underlying hierarchies in how personal narratives are categorized and valued, particularly about political authority and scholarly legitimacy. Rose Jacqueline considers that Edward W. Said has leveled autobiographical accounts by prominent political figures as autobiographies and others as memories (78). Following Jacqueline, Said differentiates between autobiographical accounts by prominent political figures, which he labels as autobiographies, and those by others, which he refers to as memories. In a genealogical study, Diane L. Wolf used his own story as “a strategy and methodology to create new knowledge and to practice a more compassionate

sociology” (13). In this sense, the authors have also examined their own lives to establish a distinction between autobiography and memoir. This distinction often implies a hierarchical valuation, where the narratives of political elites are granted greater formal and authoritative recognition. In contrast, the recollections of ordinary individuals are viewed as less formal and more subjective. However, in this study, the selected primary texts are regarded primarily as autobiographical writings, even though one of them is titled as a memoir.

In autobiographical writings by politicians, the descriptions of political propaganda, confession, and struggle are the typical components. In the case of such autobiographical writings from ancient Rome, Candau explains:

The same components can be attributed with certainty to the autobiographical works of Scipio Nasica, Aemilius Scaurus, and Rutilius Rufus, and with all probability to Scipio Africanus’ *Letter to Philip*. Roman political autobiography arose during a time of social transformation. Its authors were public figures in conflict with the existing constitutional system or who played an important role in the political arena. (154-55)

The above statement suggests that Roman political autobiography emerged as a response to social upheaval, authored by influential figures either challenging the status quo or actively shaping political discourse, emphasizing the intersection of personal narrative with broader historical and political contexts. In the post-colonial world, the culture of writing “autobiography emerges as a resisting genre which embraces the life stories of people that were regarded as inherently inferior and of little interest and hence has strategically moved them from the colonial margin to the post-colonial center” (Pujolràs-Noguer and Hand 1). The authors and the text referred to above try to expose the political suffering, confession, and propaganda that had

endured, expressed, and created while performing in society for social transformation. The similarity among the leading political texts cannot be just interpreted as coincidental; that was the culture of the age, which is the evidence of what philosophers or social reformers had endured for knowledge, freedom, and the nation.

In the context of South Asia, the pre-colonial autobiographical writings were pervasively religious rather than political. In examining the role of autobiography as a form of spiritual expression in South Asia, Chloe A. Martinez contends that autobiographical works from this region exhibit notable spontaneity and inventiveness in form, given the absence of an established literary genre. Martinez suggests that South Asian autobiographical traditions both predate and differ significantly from their contemporary European counterparts. Moreover, he argues that autobiographical speech in South Asia serves as a powerful instrument for engaging in racial discourse (“Gathering the Threads” 250). The autobiographical writings were not established as a separate genre at that time. The “religious autobiography in pre-colonial South Asia is absent as a distinct literary genre, but it appears within texts of other genres, cropping up everywhere from dramas to philosophical treatises, from royal chronicles to devotional poetry” (Martinez, “Gathering” 251). The observation highlights the nuanced nature of spiritual autobiography in pre-colonial South Asia, indicating its absence as a standalone genre while highlighting its pervasive presence across diverse literary forms, suggesting a complex interplay between religious expression and broader literary traditions in the region. As far as one is concerned, Ajay Ramakrishnan Venkitachalam also believes that one significant shift in narrative style was the transition from verse to prose. In earlier periods, narratives were predominantly composed in poetic forms. However, over time, this tradition evolved, and prose became the more common medium for storytelling. This change marked a

departure from the rhythmic and structured nature of poetry to a more straightforward and expansive prose form (311). In this sense, the autobiographical content can be infused with different genres. Moreover, autobiographies and memoirs in prose are considered autobiographical writings while selecting texts for analysis and interpretation.

Self-affirmation is another common element among autobiographical writings. When politicians become authors, how can they avoid affirming themselves in their writings? Specifically, political life and battle as “one’s own self-affirmation constitutes a factor of primary importance, and was a promising field for the development of ancient autobiography. The political battles that mark the crisis of the Roman Republic especially stimulated the appearance of autobiographical writings” (Candau 123). The battle highlights the intertwining of political life and personal affirmation as pivotal in the development of ancient autobiography. In this way, self-affirmation, political battles, and national crises were the appropriate components for autobiographical writing initially. Besides, the narrators of the national crisis customarily project themselves as victims and nationalists.

Autobiographical writings often serve as representations of resistance and political upheaval, a dynamic evident in their modes of publication. As George Egerton observes, the 19th century witnessed a rise in the production and consumption of political memoirs, although the depth characteristic of 18th-century writings diminished significantly due to the pressures of revolutionary unrest and increased governmental censorship (229). Such censorship can render memoirs and autobiographies seemingly less historical in nature. However, from another perspective, even these censored narratives reflect the historical realities of their time, as reality itself is never absolute. In this sense, censored accounts still carry historical

value, capturing the constraints and tensions that shaped their production.

Similarly, in contemporary contexts such as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, autobiographical and artistic expressions continue to serve both therapeutic and political functions. Referring to this, Olga Ovcharuk and Ananda Breed examine strategies for addressing cultural trauma, highlighting the importance of humanitarian approaches that involve public authorities, the therapeutic use of art, and insights from international cultural initiatives (33). Just as censored autobiographical writings in earlier centuries reflected the socio-political realities of their time, autobiographical writings in this study also act as a means of processing trauma. However, they simultaneously politicize that trauma by framing it within a collective and cultural narrative, thereby serving broader national or ideological purposes.

The global politics of the 20th century dominate the autobiographical writings of the 20th and 21st centuries. As reported by Smith and Watson, the “issues of positionality and the geographics of identity are especially complex in narratives of de/colonization, immigration, displacement, and exile, areas of autobiography studies” (145). Such autobiographical text does not appear in emptiness. Again, Smith and Watson state that a prison cell is one of the popular institutional sites for narrating autobiographical writings. In the background of state pressure, autobiographical writing can be developed as a spot of empowering “self-reconstruction” and “self-determination” (57). In this way, the prison narrative as a form of political autobiography becomes one of the long-range weapons that can be operated from a distance for resistance and for establishing perpetual connectivity with people. In this process, it uses first-person narration to address the audience directly.

In line with this perspective, the present study explores the politics embedded in autobiographical writings, which necessitates a careful analysis of both content and

context through relevant theoretical frameworks. According to Egerton, such political autobiographies often “portray the relationships experienced in the course of political activity while assessing the qualities of cohorts, and perhaps offer some precepts or wisdom to assist political successors” (222). The four political figures examined in this study similarly center their narratives on their political lives and experiences, often addressing future generations of leaders. Gabriele Marasco further suggests that these writings frequently emerge toward the end of a political career or in retirement, serving as a medium to articulate struggles, passions, actions, and even political propaganda aimed at defending one’s ideological stance before both contemporaries and posterity (viii). However, while these characteristics are evident in the selected texts, they do not apply uniformly across all four, underscoring the need for a nuanced, context-specific interpretation.

Various politicians from South Asia have codified their political experience in autobiographical writings. Primarily, they were written during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Because of that, they also became the document of resistance against colonialism and the consequences of colonialism. For instance, Bhagat Singh’s *Why I am an Atheist* (1931), Mahatma Gandhi’s *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927) Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar’s *Waiting for a Visa* (1935), Nehru’s *An Autobiography* (1936), Rajendra Prasad’s *Atmakatha* (1946), Mohammad Ayub Khan’s *Friends Not Masters: A Political Autobiography* (1967), Benazir Bhutto’s *The Daughter of the East* (1988), Koirala’s *Atmabrittanta* (1998), Bhutto’s *If I am Assassinated* (1979), Krishna Prasad Bhattarai’s *Mero Ma* (2011), and Rahman’s *The Unfinished Memoirs* (2012). All these parallel their journey and the political journey of South Asian countries.

Out of these autobiographical writings, for examining the narration of trauma

for the nationhood of South Asian statesmen, the study analyzes and interprets four autobiographical writings: *An Autobiography* of Nehru, *Atmabrittanta* of Koirala, *If I am Assassinated* of Bhutto, and *The Unfinished Memoirs* of Rahman. In this study, the political autobiographical writings of Koirala and Bhutto influenced posterity more as they had the realization that death was approaching them soon, and the writings by Nehru and Rahman affected contemporaries so much that their autobiographical writings were not late-life recollections. However, one can justify that they had only intended to influence contemporaries, as any writing has its life more than the author does when it is published.

Mostly, in the case of the writings of the statesmen, the audience considers them as the history of the nation and the history of the concerned political party. Because of that, those writings also become roadmaps for coming generations.

### ***2.1.2 Private and Public Selves in Autobiographical Writing***

Autobiographical writings function as both private reflections and public discourses, blending personal self-representation with broader cultural, historical, and social narratives. Such autobiographical practices have expanded their horizons constantly because of the emergence of multiple forms of self-representation. Smith and Watson have listed fifty-two genres within autobiographical writing (183). However, among them, there are more commonalities than differences.

Generally, the terms “autobiography” and “memoir” are interchangeable. However, Lee Quinby has differentiated them by claiming that memoirs promote an “I” that is explicitly instituted in the intelligence of the utterances and actions of others, whereas autobiography promotes the “I” that shares with confessional speech an assumed interiority and an ethical responsibility to explore that interiority (299). The question regarding “I” in this differentiation concentrates on the mode of

subjectivity that is more dialogic in memories in comparison to autobiography. The theoretical variation is neither pedagogically applied nor observed in practice. For this synthesis, autobiographies, autobiographical writings, and memoirs are all to be understood as autobiographical writing. Therefore, whether labeled as autobiography, memoir, or autobiographical text, such writings reveal a deeply personal interiority while simultaneously engaging with the social world, making them complex forms of both private self-exploration and public discourse.

A significant variation can be observed between autobiographical writings from autobiographical acts in autobiographical writing. Concerning this, Arnaud Schmitt notably points out that the former only exists, as opposed to the latter, employing a “structure of communication: an author, an audience, and a publicized rhetorical system” (469). In this triangular structure of communication, the ultimate aesthetic object created by rhetoric mainly converts autobiographical acts into autobiographical writings. The triangular structure of communication is oriented to technique. Still, Gusdorf believes that writing an autobiography is possible only on metaphysical preconditions and opines, “History then would be the memory of [a] humanity heading toward unforeseeable goals, struggling against the breakdown of forms and beings. Each man matters to the world, each life, and each death; the witnessing of each about himself enriches the common cultural heritage” (30-31). The idea is a new-historical which questions mainstream history, considering each text as history. Thus, while autobiographical acts become texts through rhetorical and communicative structures, their significance lies not only in technical execution but also in their metaphysical and historical value, affirming autobiography as a deeply personal testimony that simultaneously contributes to the collective cultural and historical discourse.

Focusing on the representation of self in autobiography, William L. Howarth defines an autobiography as a self-portrait which embodies the self's awareness of its solitary and social existence, merging illusion and reality through the mutual exchange between painter and model (364). However, the issues regarding the completeness of the portrait are questionable. In the political autobiography, the writing imparts private emotions comprehensively connecting to public discourses. Writers have various motives behind unfolding trauma. For instance, Jo Winning examines *Patient: The True Story of a Rare Illness* of the musician Ben Watt and finds that the "memoir is in many ways an archetypal pathography that demonstrates the complexities of putting the pain and trauma of serious illness into narrative form" (266). The authors of the primary texts also have political illnesses related to home and exile. Primarily, in the case of discussing the issues, autobiographical writing supports building a spiritual home even in exile. In the case of the life of political figures, such writing serves to express and explain the socio-political commitment to people along with the individual self. In this way, autobiographical writing brings private emotions and public discourses together.

Because of the general perception of autobiographical writing as the representation of the self, historians mistrust such writing as personal documentation. However, Jaume Aurell and Rocio G. Davis argue:

In recent decades, experimentation and theorizing on forms of life writing from the field of history have grown substantially, as historians discuss how autobiographical narrative may contribute to understanding both the past and the processes of accessing it. (503)

The past is history, and reading an autobiography could be a form of retrieving it. As an alternative history, such autobiographical writing can effectively represent past

events by incorporating creative and critical skills. The reciprocity between history and text is effectively applied in the case of autobiographical writing, as John Brannigan does not consider such writing to be the refusal of historical trends (6). Especially, in the case of autobiographical writing, the political leaders certainly deserve such quality.

In this sense, every writing, including life writing, becomes a historical document, and in the expression of Min B. Pun, “autobiographical genre is a key to self-realization” (19). It has been drawing academic attention in the research field. How texts that combine history and life writing enable us to consider our access to personal and societal pasts merits scholarly investigation (Aurell and Davis 504). Thus, a person’s personal and public past also becomes the subject of study in academic research. In this category, autobiographical writing certainly comes at the top. Moreover, autobiographic writing tells history and serves as literature by blending the significant nuances of both.

At the beginning of the culture of writing autobiographical narrative, the Western literary world hesitated to consider autobiographical writing as a literary genre and even monopolized it as a Western cultural form of writing. However, Martinez argues against such marginalization and monopolization and identifies the writing with a wider variety of geography, language, religion, and history (*The Searching Self* ix). Now, there are no such issues that autobiography is an established genre of life writing and publishing in multiple parts of the globe. Hence, autobiographical writings have evolved into a globally recognized literary genre that transcends cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries.

In contemporary contexts, exile represents not only a physical separation from one’s homeland but also a significant emotional and psychological ordeal. Andreas

Hackl has rightly pointed out that to be in exile is a present-day form of confinement and limitation as well as past patterns of displacement (65). Thus, being in exile is not just the consequence of the displacement but also the outcome of the perpetual barricading. Even in such restriction and confinement, writing could be a trustworthy companion. After that, one lives in or leave exile; however, its consequences remain in the person's life as a stigma on emotion, and autobiographic writing could be an instrument to release it. When own home becomes provisional, certainly there appears the reflection of the temporality in the life and writing of the concerned people. John D. Barbour finds the life of Said provisional, transient, unstable, and vulnerable due to his exile, observing him as an autobiographer and expatriate (300). In the beginning, Said considered home as a provisional subject while reflecting and writing on/from exile, but expanding the claim, Barbour has labeled life in exile as a provisional subject. Furthermore, an autobiography could be an effective means to communicate the subject.

Similarly, Gunzenhauser appropriates William C. Spengemann's concept of poetic autobiography, where authors put poetic self-expression and poetic self-invention, the two critical elements of 20<sup>th</sup>-century autobiography, before questions of fact (77). It raises an ethical and pedagogical question regarding the similarities and differences between novelists and autobiographers. Furthermore, such analysis may create injustice to poetics if it is just perceived as an instrument to hide reality. Can we not observe from the point that poetics reflect reality?

In the experiences of autobiographers, the narrations of their personal life indeed advocate the authors' identity and ideology. Therefore, Mary Evans believes that many autobiography writers are driven by the need for self-justification, an emotion that can manifest in various degrees of simplicity (35). The simplicity of the

writing depends upon the level of the authors' language skills and the language efficiency of the targeted audience. More than self-justification, sometimes an autobiographical writings are written critically analyzing one's own past deeds.

In the fiction and non-fiction categories of literature, autobiographical writing comes under non-fiction, where the authors produce their own stories. Gunzenhauser asserts that, at its core, an autobiography is a non-fictional narrative created by the authors, detailing their own life story (75). It is limited in defining autobiography. Thus, it also tells the tales of others, including family members in the local and national contexts, elaborating on the political sense. In such autobiographic writing, Dagmar Reichardt trusts, "The empathic effect is emphasized by choosing the point of view of a first-person narrator, which facilitates the reader's identification with the fictional character by using an internal focus" (117). It becomes more intensified in the cases of well-known autobiographers, who have suffered for the nation.

Considering political autobiography as a subset of autobiography, Margo V. Perkins defines it by proposing a list of its six fundamental expectations:

- (1) that the autobiographer [political autobiographer] will emphasize the story of the struggle over her ordeals;
- (2) that she will use her own story both to document a history of the struggle and to further its political agenda;
- (3) that she will provide a voice for the voiceless;
- (4) that she will honor strategic silences to protect the integrity of the struggle as well as the welfare of other activists;
- (5) that she will expose oppressive conditions and the repressive tactics of the state; and
- (6) that she will use the autobiography as a form of political intervention, to educate as broad an audience as possible to the situation and the issues at stake. (7)

Perkins focuses on activism, agency, and resistance as the basic components of a

political autobiography. The culture of writing an autobiography as a late-life recollection does not strongly support political intervention in comparison to publishing an autobiography while being active in politics.

A major concern is that young individuals lack sufficient life experience or a complete perspective to compose an autobiography. Only personal expressions and inventions do not make an autobiography balanced. Concerning these, Gunzenhauser advises the author to be aware of its psychological and philosophical components while balancing the public self with private thoughts, aware of the audience when engaging them, aware of formal norms while adhering to the fundamentals, and aware that it has a didactic goal (75). Such goals can be achieved by advocating various crucial topics in society poetically in autobiographical writing. That can only balance private and public selves, including the issues related to considering it as fact or fiction.

The line separating fiction from autobiography is not an either/or polarity but rather a grey area. Positioning autobiographical writing in a grey area far beyond the so-called either/or polarity of fiction and autobiography, Paul de Man argues that “Autobiography, then, is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts” (921). It signals that its contents become common ingredients in all forms of writing and that no hard and fast categorizations are possible in the case of autobiography. In the line of de Man, Tobias Döring also asserts:

Autobiography is a threshold genre. It traces and crosses boundaries between fact and fiction, memory and history, selves and others, images and sometimes drawing these distinctions, but more often blurring them. It is therefore significant to see how Said himself sums up his endeavors. Towards the end of

Out of Place, he speaks of it as a new kind of challenge and calls it a project about as far from my professional and political life as I could go. (72)

The phrases “figure of reading” and “a new challenge” used by de Man and Said, respectively, define autobiography, which posits autobiography as a unique form of secular writing. In the understanding of David Huddart, Said resists the use of the word autobiography and prefers to call it a memoir, saying that he was not a public figure and he has done something to detect the past (45). Nevertheless, in practice, it does not bring any change just by calling it an autobiography or memoir.

It is expected to question the authors of memoirs or autobiographies, where they mainly present themselves as protagonists. However, Barrett J. Mandel goes further than Said to avoid the debate of the nomenclature. He further enters into the discussion of the truth and falsity of autobiographical writing, claiming that an autobiography “transforms content into the truth of life is the context that contains the content. . . . It is the reader’s willingness to experience and co-create this context that allows autobiography to speak the truth” (27). Previously, Gunzenhauser broached the dichotomy between fact and fiction inherent in autobiographical writing, whereas Mandel engages in a deconstruction of this binary by emphasizing the significance of context and audience in shaping the perceived truth or falsity of the narrative.

Again, expanding the role of readers or audience, Döring takes autobiographies as doing where “they are not just descriptive, but productive; in other words, they do things with words” (71). In this way, such writings go beyond describing reality; instead, they are used to change reality, as saying also becomes doing. Critics evaluate autobiography as personal writing with multiple prejudices, as Laura Marcus claims it is one well-known medium for addressing questions of subjectivity and identity (41). Anyway, it becomes a powerful tool for political

activists to establish themselves in leadership positions, and to shape the psychology of people using their ideology.

Among various forms of autobiographical “I”, all the autobiographies of politicians have a dominant historical “I”. As quoted by Smith and Watson, this type of “authorial ‘I’ is assumed from the signature on the title page of the person producing the autobiographical ‘I’, whose life is far more diverse and dispersed than the story that is being told of it” (59). Neither is it possible to incorporate all the diversities of the life of the historical person in a single writing. Meanwhile, other publicly dispersed information can be used to verify the claim made through historical autobiographies. Due to the existence of evidence in a variety of records that is found in government archives, churches, family albums, and the recollections of other people, it is possible to verify the existence of this historical individual (Smith and Watson 59). They emphasize the reliability or the possibility of cross-checking the narration by observing the “historical I.” All these finally contribute to the trustworthiness of the writings.

Discerning the author’s political stance necessitates identifying the ideological “I” within the narrative. This ideological self is pervasive yet elusive in autobiographical expressions, as the concept of personhood and the accompanying identity ideologies are profoundly ingrained and often perceived as inherent and universally applicable traits of individuals (Smith and Watson 62). The interconnection of these historical and ideological “I” ultimately signals the politics of the autobiography. The credibility of the author in the autobiographical text being factual becomes doubtful for some reasons. Among them, Janet L. Womack points out “the literary features of many autobiographies challenge the ontology which deems autobiographies factual, historical accounts” (7). Again, Womack refers to the

argument of Friedrich W. Nietzsche and questions categorizing autobiographic writings as de Man and Döring, where both narrator and protagonist refer singular “I” (180). It counters the fundamental ontology of autobiography, which generally considers it a factual narration in the conventional categorization of fact and fiction. However, in the debate of considering autobiographical writing as fact or fiction, de Man perceives it not as fiction as Gunzenhauser claims:

Autobiography seems to depend on actual and potentially verifiable events in a less ambivalent way than fiction does. It seems to belong to a simpler mode of referentiality, representation, and diegesis. It may contain lots of phantasms and dreams, but these deviations from reality remain rooted in a single subject whose identity is defined by the uncontested readability of his proper name. (920)

Political autobiography, comparing the narrative with other sources for verification, potentially enhances its historical accuracy and factual reliability. Moreover, the inclusion of the historical and narrated “I” often presented as a signature on the cover page reinforces the connection to non-fictional discourse, bolstering the credibility of the autobiographical account.

Autobiographical writings are also known for bringing out social contingencies. As explained by Melissa C. Aquino on the communal “I” in the American autobiographies of three authors, the “I” is used in the autobiographies to reveal suppressed knowledge about ancestry, tradition, and communal identity in addition to the marginalization that each group endures in the United States (199). It establishes why autobiographical writing can best represent the issues concerning identity, culture, and subordination in society. Nevertheless, the change in time and space offer a different role for “I” in autobiographical writing.

The literariness of an autobiographical writings has created doubts regarding the trustworthiness of the author, as discussed earlier, by Womack, earlier becomes its property and invites academic debate. As observed by Janet Harbord, “The emergence of autobiography in academic work marks a different way of thinking through the relationship of writers to audiences, of negotiating public forms of rhetoric, and of making interventions into the debate about the role of intellectuals” (7). The probability of confirmation and the possibility of diverse interpretations of the public discourse shared through autobiographical writing encourage the debate, dragging the intellectuals to the forefront of society.

Authors in autobiographical writing answer multiple unasked questions, as they are self-motivated to share. However, it also “introduces the question, ‘who am I?’ We cannot assume that one answer satisfies that question” (Womack 6). Regarding the question, the author asks the final question after talking extensively about the “narrating ‘I’” throughout the text. Such “narrating ‘I’” in autobiographical writing is perceived as private discourse. However, Harbord argues:

To dismiss it as an intrinsically private activity, signaling a retreat from either public communication or narratives of broader social application is to miss the point, and to reinstate the tired polarities of public and private, abstract versus embodied knowledge, the political subject versus the narcissist: the ineluctability of othering each other. (33)

In this regard, autobiographical writings become an amalgamation of both private and public ventures at the same time, where othering one from another deteriorates the quality of the writing. Similarly, controversies are common in the life of politicians, and writing can be a tool to defend past decisions. In this way, both public and private discourses described by Harbord work together to interpret autobiographical writing

as the threshold genre.

More specifically, among diverse modes of autobiographical writing, Egerton finds that “history and politics are narrated in the personalized form” (221) in political memoirs. The pathos of the language and ethos of the author mainly contribute to “make-believe” there. The setting of the memoir also contributes to its appeal. Because of the different socio-political functioning of the memoir showing the features of diverse literary genres, a political memoir is also considered a polygenre. Political leaders are habitual in sharing their experiences in political memoirs. Regarding this, Egerton further observes:

In the modern period the most common usage of the term ‘political memoir’ denotes the endeavor by a retired politician to recount the important political engagements of his or her career, to explain and interpret the choices made and forces encountered, to portray the relationships experienced in the course of political activity while assessing the qualities of cohorts, and perhaps to offer some precepts or wisdom to assist political successor. (222)

Because of these, politicians commonly write memoirs, and their successors have utilized the writings to develop political dynasties. One fact associated with that the memoirs written in the youthful days of politicians are also published in their old age or posthumously. Anyway, in the case of the memoir of iconic leadership, that becomes the guiding principle for party workers in their political life.

Political memoirs often transcend personal reflection, becoming ideological guides that influence party values and direction. Successors frequently draw on these narratives to legitimize their leadership and reinforce party identity. In contrast to Said, Donna Loftus believes that autobiographies are typically thought to be written at home, primarily after retirement, as a way of continuing social life (71-72).

Nevertheless, in the case of exile and imprisonment, people have produced autobiographical writings during the prime time of their lives, not after their retirement. Regarding subject matters, autobiography is all-inclusive in incorporating the features of a diverse genre of literature. As Döring has considered autobiography the threshold genre earlier in the case of fact and fiction, Gunzenhauser believes it a multiple genre because:

Autobiography draws from and appears in multiple genres; a single autobiographical text may employ formal strategies from drama, poetry, essay, and fiction. As a field for humanist inquiry, autobiography affords a richness unparalleled by any other single form of writing. (75)

It means one should not be confused that autobiographical narratives use all the devices of the different forms of literature. Still, it represents their major techniques. For instance, characterization and narrative techniques can be similar between fiction and autobiography. Furthermore, it prevails in each form of writing in different texts.

Such a form of autobiography performs and perpetuates the common human struggle to live an inspected and significant life, while simultaneously raising applied and theoretical issues as memory, truth, and identity (Gunzenhauser 75). On the one hand, an autobiography perpetually responds to questions related to truth, memory, and identity. On the other hand, at the same time, multiple questions are automatically generated by it. One particular literate class performs in writing an autobiography. Tridip Suhrud ponders that professionals as retired government administrators, magistrates, politicians, and even ageing film stars, are increasingly tilted toward this mode (464). For such types of authors, usually, the issues related to the nation and politics become the significant content in writing.

Writing skills support and strengthen a person in hard times. It can be a

companion for a person in any enforced isolation. In the days of political imprisonment, as claimed by Margaret Homberger, political prisoners utilize autobiographical writing as a form of empowerment (729). It also becomes a means to establish perpetual relationships with people from imprisonment or a foreign land. Prison writing opens the window of opportunities for a prisoner to participate in protest from a distance, as Smith and Watson identified its role in resistance.

Similarly, Homberger believes that “prisoners and those who have survived imprisonment return repeatedly in their writings to oppressive conditions and emotional deprivation and hardship, and forcefully exhibit the mental strength needed for endurance” (730). Thus, autobiographical writings offer the experience of endurance and resistance together. Even within the different forms of autobiographical writings, there lie fundamental differences between a diary and an autobiography, as Martin Hewitt mainly emphasizes:

The compositional structure of the diary, rooted in its dailiness, and the complex strategies of self-representation available to the autobiography; between the diary as ‘natural’ and the autobiography as ‘artful’; between the diary as open and plotless and the autobiography as predicated on employment and a search for closure; between the diary as introspection and the autobiography as projection; between the diary as a private mode and the autobiography as a public mode. (21)

In the case of a politician as author, naturally, writing covers public issues. If it is written to be published in the days to come, there would be variations in structures, but not in the subject.

Autobiographical writing transcends the factuality-fictionalization dichotomy by serving as a platform for private reflection and public discourse. Through direct

engagement with the audience, narrators infuse personal and historical subjects with authenticity, particularly in political autobiography, where it becomes a powerful tool for challenging authority, conveying endurance, and justifying past decisions. This recognition of the political dimension inherent in autobiographical works prompts a paradigm shift in life writing analysis, facilitating the identification of underlying political currents. Specifically, Leena Kurvet-Käosaar considers life-writing as “an important space of interrogation of a range of questions about the possibilities and limits of mediating traumatic experience” (305). Generally, political leaders’ life tales mirror communal tragedies as wars, colonial battles, and internal conflicts that molded nations. Politicians typically use their autobiographical writings to explain and justify their personal and national traumas to promote their political legacy.

Therefore, in this framework, autobiographical writings emerge as intermediaries in the intersection of trauma and nationhood, creating a literary domain where narratives of suffering intersect with narratives of nation-building. The confluence of trauma and nationhood within autobiographical writings offers insight into the political underpinnings of life writing in South Asia.

## **2.2 Reviews of Theoretical Frameworks to the Research Topic**

This section reviews theoretical issues related to autobiographical writings, trauma, and nationhood to support the analysis of selected autobiographical writings by South Asian statesmen and to guide the discussion toward a conclusion. In this review section, the theoretical concepts related to cultural trauma by Alexander and Ron Eyerman, nation and nationalism by Anderson, and strategies for reading life narratives by Smith and Watson are discussed. However, the concepts of trauma and nationalism will be applied more as theoretical perspectives in interpreting the textual evidence. The insights into these topics from other theorists and critics are also

synthesized in the review.

### ***2.2.1 Autobiographical Mode as Prison Narrative and Political Discourse***

In political narratives, autobiographical writings operate as both a constraint shaped by ideological and cultural contexts and a strategic tool for statesmen to construct and negotiate their identities about historical trauma and nationhood.

In such cases, the subjects' ideological, cultural, and historical contexts are prominently present within the texts. These factors are critically considered when interpreting the motivations and perspectives of the statesmen's self-representation. Within autobiographical writing, Eyerman's emphasis on retrospective historical analysis aligns with the notion that cultural traumas are frequently explored through a backwards-looking perspective. This implies that autobiographical narratives addressing cultural traumas often adopt a reflective and retrospective approach, wherein individuals recount and analyze their personal experiences within the broader societal trauma context ("Cultural Trauma" 40). In essence, autobiographical writing serves as a vehicle for retrospectively assessing and dissecting the repercussions of cultural traumas on individual lives, thereby enriching our comprehension of the collective historical narrative.

Political autobiographical writings of South Asian statesmen serve as collective narratives of resistance and trauma, offering critical insights into national histories and the politics of self-representation. Moreover, all the primary texts selected in this study are virtually *The Prison Notebooks* (1947) of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. The response to such coercion from prisons or outside prisons develops any political leader as a resister. Narrating the activities of imprisonment and suffering experienced there is a popular form of writing among political leaders. In the context of post-colonial writing, Howard B. Franklin alerts that the "most current

autobiographical writing from prison intends to show the readers that the author's individual experience is not unique or even extraordinary" (250). Such contemporary autobiographical writing from prison aims to equate the individual experience with a collective expression of suffering. It also indicates a shared experience of trauma and resisting internal coercion. Because of that, the study of the writings of the statesmen from different South Asian nations supports deriving a logical conclusion related to the politics of their autobiographical writings. In the case of such accounts by prominent politicians, Judith M. Brown hopes, "they also illuminate important intellectual, social, and political issues, adding depth and complexity to our analyses by anchoring these firmly in lived experience" (595). Similarly, the autobiographical writings of the statesmen in the study become the history of the related nations. These are to be decoded by rereading to detect the politics of the political writings.

The experience and self of the author cover significant portions of any autobiographical writing. In the case of political autobiographical texts, the self becomes the collective self. While apprehending such self and experience, autobiography and memoir are considered alike. The anecdotes from jail, struggle in politics, suffering in exile, and the mistreatment of opponents at home and in exile are identical in content. Regarding such suffering, as quoted by Sevan Beukian, "traumatic memories articulate themselves in the constructions of the nation continuously over time" (3). It implies that national identity and collective memory are perpetually shaped and reshaped by enduring and recurring trauma. All these reflect the deep-seated and ongoing impact of past atrocities. Primarily, in autobiographical writing, imprisonment, retirement, and death threats by traumatic memory are shaped into nationhood.

What makes autobiographical writing political? Is it because of the political

nature of the author or the writings on political issues? While distinguishing political autobiography from other autobiographies, Vivien J. Gray strictly defines it by concentrating on the autobiographer's "involvement in political affairs" (2). Only a political author is insufficient to identify any autobiographical writings as political.

Regarding such political discussion in autobiographical writings, Gray further clarifies that "historians could embed their autobiographical experience into histories" (25). It suggests that personal narratives and subjective experiences can be woven into broader historical accounts, enriching the political discourse within autobiographical writings by providing a nuanced and personal perspective on historical events. Then, it is usual to embed history into autobiographical writings when the authors are politicians. The first-person point of view of the political leaders leads the readers to political ground zero. In the points of Marasco, autobiographical writings of the politicians communicate, "the authentic voice of the main characters of history, with their passion, their aims, their points of view; because the political struggle and the vision of the history itself, are, above anything else, a matter of point of view" ("Introduction" x). Individual perspectives fundamentally shape the political struggle and historical vision. Thus, the autobiographical writings are pieces of literature, but at the same time, they are texts reporting political movements or embedding the visions of history.

Inversely, such memories not only incorporate the experience of being marginalized in the South Asian Context, but also be interpreted as "powerful tools for the struggle against imperialism, hegemony, and top-down silencing attempts" (Beukian 4). In this sense, autobiographical writings become a medium through which a subaltern can speak. Though the autobiographical writings in this study are written by statesmen of different nations, they mainly incorporate the anecdotes of sufferings

and the subaltern voice of their respective settings. These become the manifesto of trauma. Over and above that, as reported by Beukian, trauma not only affects the generation of victims and perpetrators; it equally leaves stigma for subsequent generations (13). In this sense, trauma represents not that which is expressed; it is also the matter that is created as the collective attack on a community by outsiders. Therefore, rereading autobiographical writings infused with trauma holds significance at present as both autobiography and trauma intend to influence contemporary as well as coming generations.

A prison can also create an exile at home. However, the activities of reading and writing convert political imprisonment creative and critical compartment. Political prisoners mainly utilize their days in autobiographical writings. Smith and Watson also endorse such prison cells as institutional sites for autobiographical writings (57). They endorse prison cells as institutional sites for autobiographical writings, suggesting that these confined spaces serve as critical environments where individuals reflect on and document their personal experiences, often providing unique and poignant insights into broader social and political issues. The covert or overt writing from the imposed room gains visibility as resistance after the publication of such writing. Notably, in the context of the experience of state coercion, “autobiographical narrative can become a site of enabling self-reconstruction and self-determination in its insistence on imagining forms of resistance to those de-individuating routines” (Smith and Watson 57). All the authors of the primary texts under scrutiny were educated. Still, their writing skills and level of knowledge are sharpened by internal coercion. The question of truthfulness and completeness parallels autobiographical writings. The questions are natural when authors are writing about themselves. There is enough space for verification in the case of

autobiographical writings by political figures. If one becomes tactful and more truthful in sharing about one's life, no author can capture a better reality about life in any other form of writing. In this context, encapsulating the ideas of Samuel Johnson, his biographer, James Boswell reminds us:

Had Dr Johnson written his own life, in conformity with the opinion which he has given, that every man's life may be best written by himself, had he employed in the preservation of his own history, that clearness of narration and elegance of language in which he has embalmed so many eminent persons, the world would probably have had the most perfect example of a biography that was ever exhibited. (1)

If Johnson had written his biography, following his belief that self-authored accounts are the most accurate, and used the same narrative clarity and linguistic elegance he applied to the biographies of others, the result would likely have been the exemplary biography ever created. Here, Boswell endorses the concept of Johnson that autobiography stands first as the best form of biography. While beginning the biography of Johnson, he reminds the idea as a virtual form of invocation in the very first paragraph. In this regard, reading autobiographical writings becomes digging into history. Such expansion of personal space in the form of autobiographical memory certainly has and does its politics. Likewise, the study does not limit its scope to contemporary politics but intends to expand the horizon of exploring the politics of autobiographical writings.

In this way, Johnson has considered autobiographical writings as the best form of life writing. Is autobiographical writing a complete document? In this regard, Marasco takes an autobiography as an unfinished writing, as it can never narrate the death event of its central character (viii). In this way, autobiographical memory misses

a noteworthy event of one's life. Practically, we are all being chased by death. Such a threat to life and liberty, and the realization of death, can also be the motivating and starting point for autobiographical writings. However, some people have the realization that they are being rapidly chased by death. Rahman's memoir openly acknowledges its incompleteness by being titled *The Unfinished Memoir*, aligning with Marasco's critique of autobiographical gaps, particularly the absence of death narratives.

Other standard features of autobiographical writings are pervasively found in the case of South Asian political autobiographical writings, but their lack of a deep analysis and intense interpretation for detecting the politics. As indicated by Alexander, it would be a misreading of trauma if one limits it only to interpreting "Western social life" (*Trauma* 28). It is relevant to explain the South Asian context as the people of the region experienced "terrifying traumatic injuries" (*Trauma* 28) for independence and nationalism in colonial and post-colonial periods. In so doing, Smith and Watson's theoretical framework, which includes twenty strategies, Authorship and the Historical Moment, The History of Reading Publics, The Autobiographical "I", Identity, Narrative Plotting and Modes, Temporality, Audience and Addressee, Coherence and Closure, Memory, Trauma and Scriptotherapy, Evidence, Authority and Authenticity, Voice, Experience, Body and Embodiment, Agency, Relationality, Knowledge and Self-knowledge, Collaborative Autobiography, and Ethics (165-79), for reading life narratives, provides essential tools for analyzing the syntaxes and semantics of autobiographical writings within the selected primary texts.

### ***2.2.2 Individual and Collective Dimensions of Trauma***

Trauma, initially a medico-legal and psychological concept of stressful experiences, is now increasingly being adopted into sociological theory. As remarked by Paolo Palladino, it was a “medico-legal concept” (112). Moreover, Susannah Radstone refers to trauma as stressful and upsetting experiences within the context of physical and psychological injury, before it emerged as trauma in the early 1990s as a popular area of study (9). Because of that, there is a present effort, as observed by Piotr Sztompka, to “borrow the concept of trauma from medicine and psychiatry and to introduce it into sociological theory” (“Cultural Trauma” 449). In this regard, trauma began as a medico-legal concept, focused on the physical and psychological effects of traumatic situations, notably injuries. This knowledge focused on personal tension and distress. Psychology research in the 1990s laid the foundations for the “discourse of trauma” (Sztompka, “The Trauma of Social Change” 16). In this way, trauma became a more interdisciplinary field of research in the early 1990s, incorporating medical, legal, psychological, and sociological viewpoints.

In political-autobiographical writings, trauma is one of the necessary conditions. According to Shannon Speed, the trauma becomes “embodied knowledge” (26) in the narration process. In this sense, trauma narration transforms the experience of trauma into a deeply internalized and personal form of understanding or knowledge that is felt and lived within the body. In a study related to life writing and medicine in South Africa, Dawn Garisch et al. state that life writing has become a “useful non-medical, cost-efficient method to improve resilience to trauma” (162). In the cases of the study, the autobiographical writings have become a therapy. It also serves as a coping mechanism. As supported by the study of Kurvet-Käosaar, “Critical considerations of autobiographical representation of traumatic experience have

predominantly focused on its effects and ways of coping from the perspective of the victim, either within individual or collective or historical frameworks” (305). In this regard, trauma significantly contributes to the process of narrating the life writings of politicians.

Trauma underlines its overwhelming and disruptive nature, emphasizing the delayed and repetitive responses that link trauma intimately to enduring psychological suffering. In the words of Cathy Caruth, “trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (“Unclaimed Experience” 181). This definition of trauma emphasizes its overwhelming nature, linking it to sudden or catastrophic events, and highlights the subsequent responses characterized by delayed and uncontrollable re-experience, which connects trauma closely to suffering as it encapsulates the persistent and intrusive manifestations of distress caused by the initial traumatic event. It typically represents an intense emotional reaction to any catastrophe or suffering. Regarding such experiences, Yog R. Lamichhane explores how the Hollywood film *Partition*, directed by Vic Sarin in 2007, transcends the common narrative of dividing communities into “us” versus “others.” Instead, the film offers a nuanced portrayal of the trauma surrounding the Partition of India, effectively reinterpreting the event’s political implications (“No More ‘Us’ Versus ‘Others’” 213). The film has emphasized sharing experiences of pain, which serves as a healing mechanism for victims, helping them cope with and overcome their trauma. Thus, recounting trauma is also a form of coping with trauma.

Personal trauma is shaped into collective or cultural trauma through a process. Narrating the trauma for dissemination is also an act of this whole process of

developing cultural trauma. Andrew M. Subica and Bruce G. Link identify cultural trauma, particularly differing from collective trauma and focusing on the development and preservation of a shared identity, shaped by past and ongoing “physical and psychological assault or stressor perpetuated by an oppressive dominant group on the culture of a group of people sharing a specific shared identity” (Subica and Link 1). By framing these traumatic experiences as central to the national narrative, leaders and writers can strengthen the sense of belonging and purpose within the nation, reinforcing the cultural foundations upon which nationalism is built.

Trauma moved from being simply connected with individual pathology to being a topic of scientific and social concern. Moreover, it is also noted that trauma is now being integrated into sociological theory, demonstrating its relevance outside medical and psychiatric contexts. This borrowing acknowledges trauma’s complexity and significance for understanding social phenomena, communal experiences, and structural injustices. Thus, while trauma remains stressful and upsetting, its conceptualization has broadened to include societal and transdisciplinary components, indicating ongoing efforts to integrate it into other disciplines of research. Therefore, the field of trauma studies has expanded beyond its initial concentration on individual psychiatric suffering in psychiatry. It now includes a broader range of social and cultural factors, driven by a more significant awareness of historical injustices and institutional brutality. This interdisciplinary area currently investigates the effects of trauma on communities. Cultural trauma fundamentally focuses on how it influences collective memory, identity, and consciousness. It employs many theoretical frameworks and approaches to comprehend the intricate relationship between individual suffering, societal structures, and historical legacies.

Trauma is not only a personal psychological response but also a cultural and

historical phenomenon that continues to shape individual and collective consciousness. Geoffrey H. Hartman believes that trauma reflects, “Our sense that violence is coming even nearer, like a storm, a storm that has already moved into the core of our being” (552). Hartman’s view suggests that trauma is not only a response to past violence but also a lingering sense of its ongoing presence within the self. Shifting the direction of trauma to history and culture, Caruth asserts that the significance of traumas extends beyond personal isolation, encompassing broader historical isolation, which in contemporary times is expressed through cultural narratives (“Trauma and Experience” 11). Writing can also be healing in the case of trauma, where memories about the past guide this thinking about the future. In agreement with Alexander, the liminal space between the actual traumatic events and their representation is understood as the trauma process (*Trauma* 15). In this trauma process, an author contributes as a main member of a career group, proactively making claims.

Drawing on the perspectives of Alexander and Hirschberger, it is explored how trauma is variously understood, as a natural disruption, a rational response to sudden change. In the opinion of “lay theory, traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter an individual or collective actor’s sense of well-being” (Alexander, *Trauma* 7). In this sense, traumas are naturally occurring events, suggesting a simplistic view that overlooks the complex interplay of personal resilience, social support, and coping mechanisms in the aftermath of such events. Again, with simple modification, Alexander highlights, “enlightenment thinking suggests that trauma is a kind of rational response to abrupt change, whether at the individual or social level” (*Trauma* 7). Enlightenment thinking, which emphasizes reason and rationality, views trauma as a logical response to sudden, disruptive changes, whether at the individual

or social level. Gilad Hirschberger considers that identity is frequently linked to a significant traumatic event or series of events that are ingrained in the collective memory of the group (1). The intense emotional and psychological responses associated with trauma are a natural and reasoned consequence of significant upheavals, reflecting an adaptive attempt to make sense of and respond to profound shifts in one's environment.

Generally, lay theories, which frequently interpret certain events as intrinsically traumatic, are erroneous; rather, trauma is understood as an attribution shaped by social mediation (Alexander, *Trauma* 13). In this perspective, trauma is caused by how society interprets and responds to events. This perspective shows that trauma is formed through social and cultural contexts, so what is considered traumatic depends on societal norms, beliefs, and support networks. Mainly, cultural trauma addresses the social wound and aims to dismiss it through collective feeling. Again, in the more specific words of Alexander:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. (*Trauma* 6)

Cultural trauma occurs when a collective perceives itself as having endured a profound event that alters its consciousness and future identity irreversibly. Initially, the trauma starts from an individual event and later takes on a collective shape.

Cultural trauma occurs when a collective experiences a catastrophic event that profoundly affects their shared consciousness, permanently altering their collective memory and identity, much as nationalism often draws on historical traumas to forge a unified national identity and shape the future direction of a new nation and

nationhood.

Explaining the social process of cultural trauma, Alexander clarifies that trauma does not occur because of the collective undergoing distress. This severe suffering permeates the essence of the collective's perception of its own identity, resulting in the observed outcome. Collective actors portray social misery as a fundamental danger to their identity, origins, and aspirations (*Trauma* 15). The integration of intense discomfort into a group's identity as collective actors interpret and represent social pain as a profound threat to their sense of self, history, and future aspirations creates trauma. Agnieszka Tomasz Nawrocki et al. scrutinize the trauma of war existing in the group memory of the people of the village of Bojszowy and reveal "how the trauma of war can pass from one generation to the next so that under certain conditions, a cultural trauma is born, changing the identity of an entire community" (13). The study contributes to the understanding of narrating trauma in autobiographical writings for nationalism in South Asia by illustrating how individual trauma can be transmitted across generations, thereby shaping and transforming the collective identity of a community, which is a key element in constructing national narratives.

For Alexander, cultural trauma, in the form of collective trauma, explains, "How collective agency develops or fails to develop, in response to the experience of social suffering" (*Trauma* 1). Alexander's theory of cultural trauma explicates the communal response to instances of social suffering, resonating with Caruth's framework by underscoring the communal character of trauma response and the emergence or lack thereof of collective agency in addressing and comprehending the communal sufferings. The idea of cultural trauma expands the horizon of earlier individual trauma to societal space, realizing "a dramatic loss of identity" (Eyerman,

“Cultural Trauma: Slavery” 61) and people come together even if being non-interactive. Thus, cultural trauma recognizes that traumatic events can shape cultures’ identities and narratives. When a community endures such turmoil, individuals feel a tremendous sense of loss, both of their identity and their cultural or social group.

This common trauma can unite people who recognize and empathize with each other’s suffering despite limited physical contact. The broader concept of trauma emphasizes the connection between personal and community experiences and the significance of resolving societal wounds alongside individual rehabilitation. Now, new media have emerged as a third platform for the discourse of trauma and the construction of collective identity. Ken Miryam Vivekananda and Tommy Christommy anticipate persisting polarization in the 2024 Indonesian elections and analyze the “narratives of cultural trauma that often circulate in the midst of election momentum as the root of the problem of identity politics” (518). It shows that the narration of such trauma does have certain politics. The politics can be the politics of nationhood.

Making connections between cultural trauma as imagined trauma, and nation as imagined communities, Alexander argues:

This notion of an ‘imagined’ traumatic event seems to suggest the kind of process that Benedict Anderson (1991) describes in *Imagined Communities*. Anderson’s concern, of course, is not with trauma per se, but with the kinds of self-consciously ideological narratives of nationalist history. Yet these collective beliefs often assert the existence of some national trauma. In the course of defining national identity, national histories are constructed around injuries that cry out for revenge. (*Trauma* 13)

Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* shows how ideological narratives create national

identities by invoking shared suffering and a call for redress or revenge, solidifying collective identity and purpose. In addition, in the 20th century, outraged nationalist groups and their intellectual and media spokespeople claimed they were hurt or traumatized by agents of some putatively opposing ethnic and political group, which must subsequently be fought (Alexander, “Cultural Trauma” 8). This is the imaginative process of representation, and it can be described as the development of the social procedure of collective trauma.

Observing Alexander’s emphasis regarding “feelings” and “group consciousness” in collective trauma, Eyerman draws attention to the social process of diction and depiction as feeling necessitates interpretation and collective representation (“Cultural Trauma” 37). Such a feeling applies in the case of a nation and nationalism, where people of a specific geographical location collectively feel injured by the antagonistic force. Eyerman also perceives cultural trauma as “a tear in the social fabric where the foundations of a collective identity are shattered, triggered by a trauma drama, including attempts at the social repair” (“Cultural Trauma” 39). That makes trauma both social and collective. In the social process of cultural trauma, polarization is natural. It is crucial to establish the offender who injures the victim (Alexander, *Trauma* 19) and transmits the pain of the victim to a wider audience. Precisely, cultural trauma reflects how collective suffering is articulated, manifested, and mediated by power (Eyerman, “Cultural Trauma and the Transmission” 679). It indicates that trauma is not objectively traumatic within itself.

However, it is a representation where individual suffering successfully creates community as a consequence of this grave distress, hindering the collective self of a particular group. More specifically, the agenda of cultural trauma provides “the field of social trauma and its concern for damages to the social body and the targeting of

social groups with an extensively applied and rich research paradigm” (Eyerman, “Cultural Trauma” 41). Thus, the agenda of cultural trauma establishes a robust research paradigm focused on understanding how traumatic events damage the social body and target specific social groups, making it a fertile and expansive area for investigating the formation and evolution of collective identities and societal responses to shared suffering.

Publishing a narrative is also a kind of social performance. In the case of trauma studies, “the goal of performative actions is to project the trauma claim to the audience-public persuasively” (Alexander *Trauma* 16). The intensity of the event and the personality of the author contribute to expanding the horizon of traumatic claims to the larger community.

For instance, in a study, after examining the interrelationships between cultural trauma and the constitutions of Italy, Poland, the USA, France, Croatia, and Ukraine, Gad Yair concludes that “those national traumas motivated constitutional authors to make sure that those traumas will never recur. In so doing, they charted particular political destinies and created unique collective identities” (44). Yair shows how trauma is purposefully institutionalized in the supreme political document of the nation. Somehow, differently, the study analyzes how political leaders narrate their trauma in autobiographical writings and interprets the motive of such narrations.

### ***2.2.3 Concepts of Nation and Nationalism***

Nation and nationalism are complex concepts, culturally embedded constructs that resist simplification, emphasizing their deep ties to identity, history, and emotion rather than treating them as rigid ideological systems. In his seminal work on the complexities of nationalism, Anderson contends that comprehending nationalism poses challenges due to a prevalent inclination to treat it as a singular, homogenized

ideology, akin to other doctrinal systems such as liberalism or fascism, a phenomenon he terms “Nationalism-with-a-big-N” (5). He delves into the intricacies of the phenomenon, contextualizing it within a broader discourse on political ideologies and challenging the tendency to oversimplify it as a monolithic doctrine akin to liberalism or fascism. Before exploring the complex nature of nationalism, it is necessary to provide a framework by placing it inside the complicated fabric of human identity. Anderson has highlighted its profound links to culture, history, and emotion, similar to the fundamental connections of familial relationships and religious associations.

While connecting trauma and nationhood in this study, nation fundamentally signifies an imagined community, and nationalism indicates the affiliation of the community members to the community with horizontal comradeship (Anderson 7). Such an understanding of a nation as an imagined political community contends that although most citizens of a country will never meet most of their fellow citizens, they nonetheless have a feeling of fraternity for one another to the point where they are willing to sacrifice their lives for the country. The concept of nation and nationalism suggests that when people collectively endure suffering, it can lead to the creation of imagined communities. In these communities, shared experiences of misery help to develop a feeling of unity and inclusion among individuals.

Anderson perceives nations as recent phenomena. His major contribution is to show how secularization had an impact on how nations were socially created. Anderson himself believes that, different from the nature of other isms, “nationalism has never produced its grand thinkers” (5). Moreover, he is generally quoted wherever discussing nation, nationalism, and nationality in a post-colonial context.

In the process of decoding nationalism in Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, Alexander gets the concept of an imagined traumatic occurrence in the course of

nationhood that “is not with trauma per se, but with the kinds of self-consciously ideological narratives of nationalist history. Yet these collective beliefs often assert the existence of some national trauma” (*Trauma* 13). In this sense, this memory of political suffering shapes nationalism. In autobiographical writing, generally, there lies the politics of remembering, and in the case of political autobiographies, Smith and Watson believe in sharing the past in reshaping the future of other subjects (21). Such reshaping the future of other subjects converts the personal into the public.

In the case of describing traumatic and obsessional suffering, Smith and Watson define autobiographical writings as therapeutic interventions (22). Similarly, the concepts of Dominick LaCapra, autobiographical acts transmit “working through” into “acting out” (82), shifting the unspeakable to speakable that finally converts mourning into meaning-making narratives. Regarding the connections between trauma and history, Caruth attempts to establish the connection, opposing the earlier assumptions related to its impossibility of access:

Reference is indirect, and that consequently we may not have direct access to others, or even our own, histories, seems to imply the impossibility of any access to other cultures, and hence of any means of making political or ethical judgments. To such an argument, I would like to contrast a phenomenon arising not only in the reading of literary or philosophical texts, but emerging most prominently within the wider historical and political realms, that is, the peculiar and paradoxical experience of trauma. (181)

This process of Caruth emphasizes accessing historical and cultural information through trauma. In the case of the study, the process of transforming trauma by performing autobiographical acts expands its political community, influencing public opinion or promoting a specific political agenda. The agenda can be the agenda of

nationhood. Moreover, the politics of nationhood are explored in this study by analyzing how the authors have narrated their trauma for nationhood, as Jenny Edkins observes that nationhood, as a community in modern society, is shaped by and shapes the social practices linked to traumatic memory (11). Thus, nationhood in contemporary society is intertwined with and influenced by the social practices of traumatic memory.

While exploring nationalism, Anderson emphasizes the profound cultural, historical, and emotive underpinnings of nationalism, elucidating its entanglement with individuals' identities and senses of belonging, akin to familial bonds and religious affiliations (5). By recognizing nationalism's embeddedness within these socio-cultural matrices, Anderson contends, scholars can better grasp its manifold expressions and ramifications across diverse societies, thus eschewing the temptation to conceptualize it as a monolithic, uniform ideology.

A nation is a root term for nationalism. It is impossible to discuss nationalism without being transparent about the nation. As defined by Anderson, the nation is an "imagined political community" (6), and Partha Chatterjee reflects that nation-ness can never be disconnected from political consciousness and is primarily expressed in different print languages ("Nationalism as a Problem" 127). The formulation of the nation is for political purposes. Moreover, while engaging with Chatterjee's critique, this study recognizes that while nations are "imagined," nationalisms, as seen in the narratives of Koirala, Nehru, Bhutto, and Rahman, actively asserted unique cultural identities rather than merely adopting Western modular forms in the post-colonial period ("Whose Imagined Community?" 521). In comparison to the idea of the national culture of Frantz Fanon as a prime source of nationhood, Anderson also believes that nation and nationalism are the outcomes of the concerned cultural roots

(7). It is valid in the case of the creation of Pakistan and Bangladesh in the South Asian context that almost all members fought against colonialism together, but were divided into multiple nationalities. Alec Clott perceives nationalism as a “form of political and social identification” (1). The nation is imagined as fundamentally limited and sovereign (Anderson 6). Again, there needs to be further clarification on how a nation is imagined, a community, limited, and sovereign.

Further, Anderson explains why the nation becomes an imagined issue by elucidating that the members of small or big nations do not meet, know, and interact with others. Still, mentally, they enjoy the feeling of intimacy (6). Thus, the members of a nation are geographically scattered and are not directly interacting with all. Even though it is not interactive in most cases, how the feeling of closeness or nation-ness can be established there? That feeling of closeness becomes the starting point of nationalism.

Likewise, another question arises. Why nation is believed as a community? Even among the various inequalities among the members, there prevails “deep” and “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 7). This profound feeling drives the members to the level of do-or-die level for the community. In this way, nationalism in communities stands as a responsible factor for bringing people to this level of accepting even death (Anderson 7) for national solidarity or communal companionship. However, the factors vary in terms of time and space. Indeed, the association contributes to the process of strengthening nationhood.

Likewise, the nation is also imagined as a “limited” subject in the sense that either the borders of small or large nations end at a finite point and one can never practically imagine incorporating all epochs of human civilization to form a single nation (Anderson 7). This imagined definiteness also contributes to enhancing the

association among the non/interactive and geographically scattered members, and supports saving the authority over a specific territory. Correspondingly, Anderson also explains why the concept of nation is imagined as a sovereign subject in the mature phase of human history:

Even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations' dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign country. (7)

Thus, the amalgamation of factors as faith, territory, freedom, and religion fills the sovereign nature of a nation, and the intensity of sovereignty stands directly proportional to the strength of nation-ness or nationhood. These essential concepts regarding nationhood provide a rational framework for understanding a nation and its identity, as nation-ness is considered the most universally accepted value in political life (Anderson 2) at this time. Moreover, the value of nation-ness, which arouses nationhood or nationalism, is busted by the proposed definition of a nation as an imagined, limited, and sovereign political community.

Different countries may or may not incorporate similar elements, considering nationalism. In particular, according to B. C. Upreti, ancient civilization, compound culture, political, religious, territorial, and linguistic entities jointly contribute to forming nationalism in India, whereas religion stands as a single powerful component in Pakistan (539). Only the focus on a single factor among the multiple factors can make the nationalism of a nation weaker and encourage sub-nationalist tendencies. Said perceived it as usually claiming that the separatist notion of nationalism was usually in decolonization, and the independence movement was naturally powered by

the dream of nationalism (97). As mentioned by John McLeod, nationalist discourses “aim to create community out of differences, to convert the ‘many’ into ‘one’” (117). It is logical in the case of Pakistan that the Muslim League was in favor of independence and actively participated in protests against British colonialism.

The Indian leaders educated in Western academia mainly propagated South Asian nationalism. The origin of nationalism has its foundation in the struggle against colonialism. In this sense, it comes as a form of resistance. Therefore, they promote a “secular nationalism whose primary objective was [to] bind the people together irrespective of caste, creed, ethnicity, language and religion” (Upreti 541). The intra and interterritorial distinctions were constructed and nationalized by Westerners. Still, the freedom struggle has brought these groups together. Upreti also notices that the further disintegration of Pakistan and fighting for sub-nationalism in Sri Lanka were encouraged by the linguistic biases in the name of Urdu and Sinhala, respectively, demanding the separate territorial identity of East Pakistan and Tamil state as its result (540). Though religion is believed as a strong builder of nationhood, the same nationhood becomes weaker as the language threatens the nationhood and creates the environment for Bangladesh to break away from Pakistan. Chatterjee defines such a model of nationalism as “linguistic nationalism” (“Nationalism as a Problem” 126). Still, Anderson does not consider linguistic factors as a necessary condition, and for him, a nation can be “imagined without linguistic community” (123). However, linguistic factors make the imagination process effective in creating a political community.

The expression of nationalism in South Asia varies significantly, influenced by the distinct historical trajectories of individual nations. In the case of never-colonized countries like Nepal and Bhutan, nationalism is connected with egotism related to an

undefeated history (Upreti 538). The political writings from Nepal usually include such thoughts. Similarly, Kalya Bhandari argues that Nepali nationhood creates boundaries with outsiders, which are assumed to be India and China, as Nepal shares borders with only these two nations, being a landlocked country (416). Going further than Bhandari, Daniele Conversi observes nationalism as a “process of border maintenance and creation” (77). In the case of Nepal, maintaining boundaries mainly resembles protecting Nepali territory from China and India, and at the same time, creating boundaries essentially represents the preservation of the unique cultural diversities. Thus, this maintaining and creating boundary develops sentiments and identity among the inhabitants of the particular setting.

For general understanding, nationalism can be categorized as civic and ethnic nationalism. Rogers Brubaker notes civic nationalism as “liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive”, whereas ethnic nationalism is “illiberal, ascriptive, particularistic, and exclusive” (133). In the case of South Asian countries such as India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Myanmar, civic nationhood is practiced in a manner that “promotes the idea of identifying with other members of the nation through means not determined by birth, blood, or ancestry” (Clott 7), thereby fostering a mosaic-like national identity. Particularly in the case of colonization and the independence movement in India, Gyan Prakash identifies:

The first significant challenge to this Orientalized India came from nationalism and nationalist historiography, albeit accompanied by a certain contradiction. While agreeing to the notion of an India essentialized about Europe, the nationalists transformed the object of knowledge from passive to active, from inert to sovereign, capable of relating to History and Reason.

(388)

The consciousness related to nationalism has made the resisters accessible, active, and reasonable. However, the characters of the colonizer have not been illuminated by decolonization in India.

Unlike the pride rooted in historical autonomy found in some South Asian nations, other countries in the region define their national identity through the lens of shared ancestry and belief. Differently, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Maldives exercise ethnic nationalism that centers on the thoughts of land, lineage, and birth (Clott 7). Such an attitude emphasizes community bonds based on unilateral racial, cultural, and religious features. Again, nationalism can be further categorized to be soft and hard nationalism. Soft nationalism refers to a modest form of nationalism performed by a nation, and as remarked by Peter Preston, it refers to “the appreciation of difference rather than an insistence upon exclusivist us/them strategies of definition” (721). Such construction of self commonly continues the ‘us and them’ classification, especially, denoting “I identify who I am by who I am not” (Clott 9). On the other hand, hard nationalism opposes soft nationalism and spreads nationalist discourse that sets the classes between them and us (Clott 9). Hence, hard nationalism is rigidly tied to “them” only, promoting “us”. Thus, ethno-nationalism is identical to hard nationalism, and civic nationalism matches soft nationalism.

For instance, the independence of India was possible because of the mosaic feeling of soft nationalism, and concurrently faced partition as she failed to maintain the broad and liberal nature of civic nationalism. Still, as suggested by Arvind Sharma for Hindu nationalists in India, “Hindutva comes first and then Hinduism” (43). Moreover, the partition of India and the formation of Pakistan were fueled by hard nationalism related to religious affiliation. Once more, Pakistan was further divided after two decades of its creation, forming Bangladesh as a result of hard nationalism

demanding ethnolinguistic identity. Thus, nationalism has both positive and negative consequences, which influence both independence and partition in the South Asian context. Here, the study separates religious institutions and beliefs from nationalism, though Anderson, while discussing cultural roots, considers religions one of the most significant components of Nationalism (10). In this sense, nationalism is secular nationalism in this study.

Beyond the major theoretical perspectives discussed in this section, the insights of various other theorists and studies are also incorporated to analyze and interpret the textual evidence and issues, thereby enriching the interpretation process.

#### ***2.2.4 Narration of Political Identity in South Asian Politics***

In South Asia, resistance against British colonialism involves the interplay of impulses that brought leaders together in a shared objective. The public and political elites derived their motivations from causes such as independence, democracy, nation, and nationhood. In autobiographical writings of politicians, “Memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority” (Said 176). The statesmen played crucial roles in such missions as narrated in their autobiographical narratives, which offer deep insights related to colonial and post-colonial periods. Nehru, Koirala, Bhutto, and Rahman have encoded profound emotional and political anguish, intricately woven with the broader socio-political landscapes of their respective eras in their autobiographical writings. They express their encounters with persecution, struggle, and eventual success through their works, profoundly ingrained in their respective countries’ shared awareness. Their narratives go beyond just retelling personal subjects; they incorporate a sense of social construction.

The fragmentation of the once-united political alliance of South Asian leaders

after the end of colonial rule can be associated with several factors, including the division of India, divergent aspirations for their nations, and internal political intricacies. The shift from a cohesive resistance against colonialism to divided nation-states frequently resulted in disputes and diverging trajectories in constructing nations. This change highlights the intricate complexities of postcolonial governance and the process of forming identities in South Asia.

In the case of South Asia, Nepal and India had jointly fought on the anti-colonial battlefield against British imperialism at the time of the Indian Independence Movement, even though Nepal was never a colonized nation. Keshav Bashyal reminds us that “during the ‘Quit India’ movement in the 1940s, many Nepali youths also participated jailed in India” (42). That shows the cohesive contribution of Nepal to the Indian Independence Movement. Moreover, “India has been one of the key spaces for designing Nepali political discourse, which has always been contested and negotiated by Nepalis for many decades” (Bashyal 42). The Nepali activists utilized time and space to advocate for India’s independence and democracy in Nepal at the same time.

The leaders from the nations chanted the same slogans for independence, in the context of colonialism in India. However, that prior cohesive relationship between these nations did not remain intact later, as it was at the time of the freedom struggle. In addition, the partition of India in 1947 and the further partition of Pakistan in 1971 brought different aggressive clashes between India and Pakistan, and Pakistan and Bangladesh. Such associations and aggressions were narrated in diverse autobiographical writings of politicians of South Asia. In this study, South Asia is considered more than just a geographical area or a part of Asia; it includes countries like India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, which are representative of the region’s

different political cultures.

The context demands multiple questions. Among them, the questions related to the causes concerning the loss of prior political cohesion between the nations in the postcolonial period generally come first. However, they had jointly dismantled colonial rule in South Asia, fighting together. Identifying the politics of the political autobiographical writings of South Asian statesmen can be a logical roadmap to respond to the major question. In a sense, these writings were for mental and social well-being. As stated by Den Katrin Elzen and Robert A. Neimeyer, “Writing-for-wellbeing in a therapeutic setting offers a well-received way of supporting people in grief” (135). While discussing trauma, cultural trauma, also known as social and collective trauma, represents the collective emotions and group consciousness felt by oppressed people.

In terms of nationalism, secular nationalism, on the other hand, excludes religious or cultural institutions and beliefs from its definition of associating with the nation, where individuals share profound horizontal comradeship in the theoretical conceptualization of the central concepts. Sushmita Nath perceives that “the word ‘secularism’ is associated with the emergence of the modern nation-state” (32). The association of secularism with the rise of modern nation-states reflects a historical shift towards rationalizing political authority and separating it from religious influence. This trend aims to foster inclusive and pluralistic societies grounded in principles of liberty, equality, and justice.

These South Asian nations share a standard route of suffering for democracy and independence, but they departed to their directions in terms of nationalism at a crossroads. Additionally, the interpretation of the selected texts contributes to arguing that the solidarity jointly shown by the countries on the battlefield of the freedom

struggle, especially in the Indian Freedom Struggle, does not remain intact as they start to fight for nationalism, developing collective trauma. The actual pattern can be inferred by deeply analyzing the interconnectivity between the independence movement, nationalism, and trauma in this study.

For such inference, the study responds to the question: how does trauma operate in creating discourses regarding India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in the texts? How do the writings involve developing trauma? How do the writings display the motivational factors for South Asian political leaders to fight jointly against British colonialism? How does that cohesive political relationship between them fail to function later in the postcolonial period? How do the writings present and strengthen nationalism? In which pattern are the courses of strengthening nationalism influenced by the attempts to develop trauma identities? Finally, what is the role of the Indian Independence Movement in the above-mentioned overall processes?

More specifically, the study responds to how these statesmen narrate trauma for advocating nationalism in their autobiographical accounts. Thus, as explained by Hamburger et al., the “constructions of individual and social life history are the mixture of subjective interpretation of the objective facts and events” (“Introduction” vii) in the course of the studies of autobiographical accounts. Thus, rereading the autobiographical accounts of statesmen also becomes the process of examining both history and literature.

The personal and political situation was codified by the authors from South Asia and outside it in different forms of life narratives. Among them, autobiographical writings of the statesmen from the concerned nations tell the tales of such experiences as Tilmann Habermas and Eleonora Bartoli, to the belief that “telling stories is a central human ability” (202). It also applies in the cases of political leaders. In

addition, telling stories in the form of firsthand memories by the mainstream leaders of the nations of that time can better represent the culture of politics related to the issues of the study. All these authors represent historic, as Chantal Mouffe believes, “I” as they articulate collaborative subjectivity and denote the multiplicity of their social interactions (376). They communicate particular ideologies in the form of collective subjecthood. As claimed by Paul Smith, in autobiographical writings, such ideology or ideological “I” is culturally inscribed personhood (105). In the eyes of Smith and Watson, these “historical and ideological notions of the person provide cultural ways of understanding the material location of subjectivity” (61-62). That means that rereading the autobiographical writings of South Asian political leaders offers new directions concerning the interconnections between trauma and nationalism.

While discussing such autobiographical works, Rohini Shukla considers Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Confession* as an archetype of this category for sharing individual details and societal experiences precisely (443), as suggested by the literal meaning of the text’s title. Besides, Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley identify autobiographical memories as a “response to the end of Empire” (3) in the postcolonial setting. Furthermore, in South Asian life writings, David Arnold and Stuart H. Blackburn offer a concept called “self-in-society” that contributes to the trustworthiness of self-referential autobiographic writings (19). In the case of the autobiographical writings of political figures, as in the study, it pervasively exists and effectively performs make-believe political performances in South Asia.

In terms of writing, Koirala made critical literary contributions to Nepali literature. He published numerous novels and short stories, mainly dealing with the social, political, and cultural issues of Nepali society. Among them, *Doshi Chasma*

(1949), *Hitler ra Yehudi* (1958), *Teen Ghumti* (1968), *Narendra Dai* (1970), *Modiain* (1980), *Shweti Bhairavi* (1983), *Bubu Ama Ra Chora* (1989), etc. As elaborated by V. Sharma, Koirala introduces “psychological realism in his short stories and existentialism in novels, he brought a new awareness to a traditional-minded people” (217). In addition to Nepali literature, Koirala contributed to the world of foreign literature. His notable novel *Sumnima* (1968) was also translated into English and Russian. His political and literary career has been perpetually inspiring the people of Nepal.

As a progressive leader, Koirala promoted justice, nationalism, and freedom. Throughout his life, he worked for “social justice, political freedom, equality, and human dignity, struggling hard for age-old traditions, inhuman social conditions, exploitation, injustice, superstition, communalism, and feudalism prevalent in Nepalese society” (V. Sharma 217). He correspondingly contributed to the Indian Independence Movement. Thus, the study of his life and writing becomes particularly the rereading of the socio-political history of Nepal and generally the history of South Asia.

Moreover, some of the autobiographical writings of Koirala, *Mero Katha* (1983), *Jail Journal* (1997), and *Atmabrittanta* (1998) incorporate multiple personal and political anecdotes. In the eyes of Gray, anecdotes about renowned individuals transform into autobiographical narratives when the narrator portrays himself as a witness to their actions and speeches and actively inserts himself as a participant within the stories he recounts (9). While telling tales, he mainly narrated the experience of imprisonment, exile, and coercion within the nation as significant content in his autobiography. However, his friends and relatives supported the tape-recording of the experience on his deathbed and further transcribed and published it in

book form.

In some of the stories in his writing, he was not a witness. He had heard and narrated these in his autobiography. More than a political autobiography, in the understanding of Rhoderick Chalmers, “*Atmabrittanta* forcefully reminds us that BP was a multidimensional personality. A striking and, to many, magnetic character himself, considerations of psychology and creativity, and the individual, informed his eclectic socialist political outlook” (209). Overall, Koirala was a prominent figure in Nepali politics and literature. His contributions have had a lasting impact on Nepali society and continue to inspire future generations both in the field of politics and literature.

Throughout the political globe, Nehru is largely known for his writings in addition to being an anti-colonial democratic politician. He was one of the central politicians of India in the mid-20th century. He published a lot of writing on topics such as politics, economics, history, culture, and foreign relations. He was an excellent speaker with a remarkable writing style, a wealth of ideas, and clear thought expression. Ultimately, L. S. Rathore explains that “Nehru was idealized by the masses, the peasants, workers, and even intellectuals; and many of the segments of society found something of a charisma in his personality” (452). The thoughtful nature of Nehru made him popular throughout India. Nehru’s primary contributions as an author were his exceptional works on the subjects of politics and history: *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1929), *Glimpses of World History* (1934), *An Autobiography* (1936), and *The Discovery of India* (1946). In the reading of Rathore:

*The Glimpses of World History* remains the best introduction to the story of man and history, *An Autobiography* is acclaimed as not merely the quest of one individual for freedom, but a remarkable insight into the historical

processes of new India and *The Discovery* delves deep into the sources of India's national person. (262)

Particularly, *An Autobiography* was written when Nehru was in jail in the 1930s. He was a good reader there and his receptive skill supported attractive writing.

Western philosophy and activism in anti-colonial politics in India presented Nehru as an in-between character. In this autobiographical memory, Sameer P. Pandya interprets that Nehru “tries to locate himself between the Western intellectual history that is the main source for his ideas about modernity and his anticolonial nationalism” (79). His observation suggests that Nehru's autobiographical memory reflects his attempt to reconcile influences from Western intellectual history, which informed his conception of modernity, with his commitment to anti-colonial nationalism, highlighting the complex interplay between personal identity, philosophical influences, and political ideology in Nehru's self-representation. Western schooling at Harrow, Trinity, and Cambridge affected his thoughts regarding individual freedom, surpassing the religious dominance in India. The partition of India based on religion and his involvement there as an heir of Mahatma Gandhi contradicts his secular philosophical assumption. However, his quest for individual freedom became the nation's quest for many years.

After the independence of India, Nehru, a politician, was instrumental in the country's independence movement and was later appointed as the country's first Prime Minister. His unwavering commitment to democracy, secularism, and socialism in India was important in establishing India as a contemporary nation-state (Rathore 466). Both as a politician and a writer, Nehru established himself as an iconic character in Indian culture and history. So, his accomplishments for the nation are still honored.

Bhutto did not write texts as much as Nehru and Koirala. However, his writings on political theory and experiences also hold strong gravity in the politics of South Asia. Nationhood, democracy, and justice are the major themes of his writings. In his major works, *The Myth of Independence* (1969), *The Great Tragedy* (1971), and *If I Am Assassinated* (1979), Bhutto expresses his views, especially on the idea that political independence can exist without economic freedom. Bhutto also views the further division of Pakistan as a great tragedy.

Similarly, Rahman was not only a statesman, but he was also a writer and an accomplished public speaker. As indicated by Atul K. Thakur, his speeches were enthusiastic and motivating his supporters to battle for their liberation from Pakistan and their rights (408). His well-known speech on March 7, 1971, is a pivotal moment in Bangladeshi history that helped open the door to the nation's freedom.

Rahman, the first President of Bangladesh, continued to pursue his love of literature. He kept writing until his passing in 1975, and many of his works had a significant impact on the governmental and social structures of the nation. Among them, *The Unfinished Memoirs*, *The Prison Diaries*, and *New China 1952* are the popular ones. Thus, Rahman was a multi-talented person who made essential accomplishments as a politician and an author. Generations of Bangladeshis have been motivated to work for freedom, social justice, and independence by his writings and speeches. Yet his legacy remains fiercely contested in contemporary Bangladesh, particularly following the 2024 electoral crisis. Lamichhane blames the existing “disproportionate reservation practice” for the political challenges to his daughter Sheikh Hasina's governance, reflecting deeper tensions over democratic consolidation and dynastic politics.

In conclusion, some of the writings by the statesmen are purely literary.

However, most of them narrate their personal, political, and national identities. It is “equally important to think of how reconciliation, reparations, and recognition are processed and occur in a nation” (Beukian 12). In this way, trauma actively presents and participates in the breaking, constructing, and acknowledging of national identity. All the authors, in common, presented themselves as the political victim. Regarding such victimhood of the authors, Beukian argues that the “traumatic collective past” (1) becomes an “important historic ‘site’” (1) for research as the study aims to revisit the traumatic site and reveal the politics of nationhood in these selected autobiographical writings. They are narrowed down to South Asia, political autobiography, and the post-colonial period in terms of geography, theme, and time, respectively.

### **2.3 Reviews of Empirical Studies on the Primary Texts**

This section reviews the literature on Koirala’s *Atmabrittanta* and Nehru’s *An Autobiography* as distinct autobiographies, alongside Bhutto’s *If I Am Assassinated* and Rahman’s *The Unfinished Memoirs*, which are classified as memoirs, with all four serving as crucial texts about trauma and nationalism. A key distinction lies in their generic scope: while the autobiographies offer a more comprehensive life narrative encompassing national struggles, the memoirs typically provide an intense focus on specific, immediate political traumas and their urgent implications, often remaining incomplete due to their fraught origins. These works are not merely personal narratives but are deeply intertwined with the political landscapes of their respective nations.

Textually, Koirala’s autobiography emerges as a testament to relentless struggle, reflecting the challenges of political leadership in Nepal, presenting a broad sweep of his life within the national context. In contrast, Nehru’s writing, also an

autobiography, is presented as a rite of passage, documenting his evolution alongside India's fight for independence, thereby offering a more personal journey interwoven with the nation's emergence. Shifting to memoirs, Bhutto's account, *If I Am Assassinated*, written on the eve of his elimination, becomes a poignant expression of defiance, its textual urgency and specific focus on an immediate political trauma highlighting the memoir's characteristic intensity and often fraught origin. Similarly, Rahman's memoirs, despite being unfinished, serve as a potent political manifesto that shaped the national identity of Bangladesh, their incompleteness underscoring the genre's tendency to capture urgent, fragmented moments rather than a full life span. Collectively, these texts illustrate how personal and collective traumas are mobilized to construct and sustain nationalist ideologies in South Asia, with their generic differences shaping the nature and scope of their contributions to national narratives.

Koirala's *Atmabrittanta*, initially published in 1998, presents revolutionary reminiscences from his childhood to political leadership. He is aware of the dominant ideologies of the contemporary world and shares how Gandhi and Marx unequally influenced him at the same time, as a juncture of democratic socialism. "Koirala transcends the hard-edged definitions of democratic, national, and social propriety when dealing with the ironies of individual life" (Shakya, "Reading Parajat and B P Koirala" 56-57). He also offers how his personal experience represents Nepali society as collective historical subjects communicating in an expressive tone. The orality sets a precedent of being parallel to official historiography, where he is independent in setting agendas and performing actions.

Particularly, Koirala's autobiography *Atmabrittanta* is considered a recollection of a politician from his enthusiastic childhood to established leadership. Chalmers proposes:

If one is to understand BP as an individual, leader, or writer, one must start by integrating the various aspects of his life and appreciating that they may be more closely intertwined than is often assumed. And for such an understanding *Atmabrittanta* provides an excellent starting point, in particular for a non-Nepali-reading audience. (210)

Koirala relates the autobiography to a global audience and presents it as a window peep, particularly him and generally modern Nepalese politics, as Lamichhane concluded that *Atmabrittanta* “provides a surprising sight to gaze at the history” (“Rewriting History” 83). In this new-historical sense, this life writing also serves as a history of the nation rewritten from marginalized standpoints and perspectives in that context. Because of these, readers get abundant descriptions of the personal accounts in Koirala’s collection, more than it demonstrates how the interplay of human histories shapes political history (Chalmers 212). In this sense, even the personal accounts of an individual become history, and there remains no doubt about the accounts of a politician representing history.

In the autobiography of Koirala, the researcher has vividly reflected on the pivotal moments and figures that shaped his ideological journey. For Surendra Mohan, it “recounts his educational career, the influences on his young mind from the insurrectionary organization *Anusheelan* to Gandhi, Karl Marx, and the democratic socialists” (“A Leader Looks”). It fascinates readers how a leader has been revolutionarily persuaded by a radical group formed at the time of the independence movement in India from British colonialism, attracted by the non-violent society, and drawn by socialist economic theory within a limited period. Similarly, Ramachandra Guha admits that *Atmabrittanta* strikes him as a corresponding journey in the life of Koirala and Jawaharlal Nehru: “Both were democratic socialists who learned much

from Gandhi and little from Marx” (75). The democratic socialism advocated by Koirala emerges from the fusion of the ideologies of Gandhi and Marx of the generation. Likewise, Dibya S. Chhetry examines the transcribed text idealizing Koirala as a dynamic, rebellious political leader who can be compared to the ruling class itself (37). The study establishes him as an enigmatic leader, like the earlier studies. Even by being a subaltern leader, he was at the center with a dignified personality equal [probably more!] to other rulers who could enjoy legal authority and national resources.

These three studies explore Koirala’s belief in different right and left battlefields. His unwavering commitment to democratic socialism earned him the epithet “fighter to the end,” as noted in *The Times of India* editorial published in his obituary on 23 July 1982 (qtd. in Shree K. Jha 375). Koirala fought for the independence of India in his student life, but later fought latently and manifestly against some Indian leaders for nationalism. He never takes any rest in his political life, enduring multiple sufferings at home and in exile.

Disregarding the immediate political prosperity, Koirala adds enemies and admirers. Because of this, Abhi Subedi identifies him as “Sisyphus who had to repeat the same rhythm from square once again, a lonely hero with very few colleagues who would understand him, a politician whose charisma had earned strong enemies both in Nepal and India, as well as friends and admirers” (“BP’s Orality” 294-295). The reading of his disjointed recollection unites everyone’s dedication to his perpetual commitment to democracy, and the spoken thoughts and acts divide the observers. His thoughtful journey for the nation and democracy corresponds to other established leaders from South Asia. Similarly, Lamichhane finds the autobiography as “a manual for resisting such hegemonic forces to empower people and the sovereignty of Nepal

primarily in the form of self-agency” (“Critiquing Hegemony” 14). Most of the time, Koirala speaks from the street and exile, nevertheless, it is heard as authentic in comparison to the rulers of the time who fought without taking rest.

Even the established authors engage in multiple rewriting and editing, but *Atmabrittanta* was spontaneously recorded on a microphone and later transcribed as a text. Despite this fact, several studies adore its literariness. In this context, Chalmers evaluates the text not only as a memoir of a politician; he further considers it as a creative, psychological, and political document by a multipronged persona (209). The creativity of the text comes into sight, blending the heart of a revolutionary politician with his head, who has the mastery to disclose all comprehensively. Thus, historian Guha cogently recommends the autobiography of Koirala, which:

His book should be read for what it tells us about India and Indians. It should be read as a moving testament of one, who was caught, on the right side, in the great (and unfinished) battle of the modern world, between autocracy and democracy. And it should be read for its literary qualities. (73)

In judgment, the narrative explains Nepali and Indian politics and the conflict between aristocracy and egalitarianism in literary language. Similarly, Subedi reads the self-narration as refuting political myths by a “folk hero of those people who have revolutionary zeal and fought for democracy” (“BP’s Orality” 292). He not only talks about himself in the text; rather, he interprets different characters involved in the democratic movement as a narrator in his writing. It focuses that he has a clear ideology to interpret politics rhetorically. Subedi further recommends reading the text repeatedly to comprehend the various facets of historicism (“Introduction” 3). The reading covers the turmoil political environment of Nepal and his efforts in giving a democratic shape. It is similar to the memoirs of Rahman regarding the historicity of

autobiographical writing.

In literal thinking, a memoir could be only a personal experience, which can do nothing for public affairs. In the case of the oral archive, readers object to the process of verification and editing before accepting it as historiography. There could be a debate about official and alternative archives; however, some critics regard *Atmabrittanta* as a form of history. On the frontline, Linguist and historian John Whelpton apprehends that no text or a series of texts can convey the entire history of Nepal, so he recommends the text in the reading list of Nepali history, incorporating the writing of national and international authors with a short description that could better tell the history of Nepal. Whelpton believes that Koirala's memoir submits his early days, his youthful days in India for Indian sovereignty against British colonialism, and predominantly his significant leadership in Nepali politics from 1947 to his life, which truly serves as a strong image of a freedom fighter (14-15). It is expected to be asked about the authenticity of the writing when the protagonist himself is the text's narrator. As Koirala gave active leadership for many years in oppositional politics for nationalism, democracy, and socialism, collecting all of these in the memoir, certainly recollects the history of Nepal. The autobiography of Koirala focuses on nationalism, and that can be detected as one reads it with total empathy. For Bidhusi Adhikari, the recollection shows a "kind of fierce, determined moral character that he was in his struggle for democracy in Nepal and efforts towards nationalism." Koirala, as a trinity of aggression, morality, and struggle, presents himself as a rebel to the end, an active national builder, and a single-minded nationalist.

The beginning of the text opens with personal accounts, mainly related to his father, excluding these; later, readers recognize how all these accounts are noteworthy

to outline his career as a leader, which has brought changes to the political scenario of Nepal. Consequently, most of the words in the recollection code historical nuances, even if some tone echoes personally. The same personal writing holds sociopolitical functions and delivers aesthetics at the same juncture.

The discussed studies on *Atmabrittanta* agree that the memories shared in the tape/ text have sociopolitical implications mainly for Nepali politics, even serving as interesting reading material for international readers. In the review, no single reading overlooks the revolutionary side of Koirala; almost all admire his lifelong dedication to democracy. Presenting the writing as a historical document, some authors have also shed light on the richness of language, which sufficiently captures the readers' empathy. The earlier observations have examined the text as a collection of political anecdotes, which incorporates different revolutions for democracy under the leadership of Koirala, who fought to the end. However, no single writing logically examines the patterns of hegemony and resistance. Therefore, the study explores how the text describes multiple forms of domination as the strategic ascendancy of adjoining countries, the anarchism of Rana dictators, the hegemony of the absolute kings, and the male chauvinism of contemporary Nepal.

Koirala's autobiography, though often late-life recollections, similarly center on his significant prison experiences, but Nehru's *An Autobiography* is a purely prison narrative from his anti-colonial struggle. Nehru was an anticolonial nationalist leader, the first and the longest-serving prime minister of independent India. As remarked by Prakash, in the 1920s and 1930s, specialized Indian historiography arose to challenge British explanations, and the concept of nationalism became a form of mass phenomenon (388). Including these, Nehru was a writer, and his English writing deserves the quality to be called Indian English Literature. Edgar Snow finds Nehru's

Autobiographical writing, *An Autobiography*, so astonishing and recommended it as indispensable reading to the student of Asia, which is counted as one of the assets of English literature (qtd. in Lal 21). Further, Nehru was one of the prominent political leaders in India, and nowhere else, except prison, could be an appropriate place for his contemplative writings, as romantic poets choose wilderness.

While focusing review of *An Autobiography*, Sheela J. Kharti finds the autobiography as a “revelation of himself and a most candid and charming account of the sorrows, sufferings, and heartaches of one of the most sensitive people” (247). In this regard, Nehru employed sense and sensibility in his autobiographical writing to be listed as one of the masterpieces of Indian literature in English. Beyond these, eco-critical concerns, nationalistic thoughts, socialist politics, and modernistic approaches are significant issues in his autobiography. In these studies, Nehru is equivocal about home and exile. This has a profound impact on his understanding of self and nation. Similarly, Koirala from Nepal, as discussed later, also utilizes prison for critical and creative writing as Nehru did. However, Koirala’s autobiography was written outside his imprisonment. Here, Dominick LaCapra’s concept suggests that autobiographical writing, especially in prison, risks turning the therapeutic process of “working through” past traumas into “acting out” (82), a re-performance of unresolved issues. This means prison narratives, while insightful, may inadvertently perpetuate the very struggles they aim to overcome, rather than truly facilitating healing and understanding.

No space is unrewarding if that is appropriately utilized. It applies in the case of Nehru in prison for nationalistic contemplation. Regarding this, Vinay considers that imprisonment provides Nehru with an ideal condition for serious pondering and long-term writing (23). It sounds paradoxical that imprisonments offer ideal

conditions, but in the case of writing, the same prisons symbolize freedom in many cases of political detentions. In the case of Nehru, too, prison becomes a sweet home for him. However, Nehru differs while describing the emotions of the penitentiary and intrusive desires as suggested by Sameer P. Panday, he “narrates a story of the self that is different from his modernization narrative and exists in a space ‘in-between nation’” (220). It could be the consequence of his higher education in the West. Concerning nationalism, the birth of the nationalist movement and the end of imperialism are not limited to the national boundary; the national and international political environment contribute to that. Nehru’s understanding of self is different inside and outside the exile, which even produces an inconsistent definition of nation and nationalism, though “Nehru is [considered] one of the most pedagogical of the nationalist writers of his time” (Pandya 126). This variation is the result of his pluralist belief and international exposure. However, he does not discuss the self extensively in the text without associating it with the nation.

Surpassing the limited definition of autobiographical writings as defined by Gunzenhauser, Michele L. Louro finds that Nehru’s autobiography tells his intentions behind returning from Europe to his homeland India, and places him at home in the world to study Indian colonial and postcolonial history beyond the national contexts (263). In this sense, the setting of the autobiography expands, and one thinks globally about being at home in the world rather than thinking and being at the home of a country. However, simultaneously, where the thinker stands matters much. The base of the home infuses strength. Nehru has realized that and returned to India, to his home, to accumulate such strength for resistance as Melissa A. Flanagan identifies autobiographical writing as a tool for resistance and activism in politics (i). The autobiographic “I” presents the dominance of the author as a protagonist who gives

agency.

Nehru was imprisoned repeatedly, and writing was his primary “occupation and amusement” (Meston 133). That offers him both engagement and enjoyment. Because of that, Nehru wrote multiple texts in prison. Among them, his autobiography was one of the prison narratives. It receives positive feedback inside and outside India. When someone naturally wonders why a man with this much brilliance and polish was thrown in jail so frequently, the answer becomes apparent at once (Meston 133). The same quality is a threat to the authorities, and they want him behind bars. Reciprocally, his personality is reflected in his writing, and his writing enlivens his personality further. In Meston’s evaluation, the only flaw of the autobiography as a psychological study is that it passes over practically all of Nehru’s formative years, landing us right in the middle of the rigorous ultra-Marxism that is now his divine home (133). Because of the influence of Marxism, socialism became the guiding economic policy of the Indian National Congress. It was based on the economic program rather than on making political strategies and the organizational structure of the party. It is as Meston has understood “ultra-Marxism” connecting to communism, but Nehru was not of this class. Probably, he has taken only the socialist portion of Marxism. Finally, it is not only the “ultra-Marxism”; even imprisonment also becomes a “divine home” for Nehru.

As discussed earlier, prison is generally considered a figurative exile, but Nehru converts it into a home, indulging in writing. Even the critics of the writings of Nehru do not miss discussing his dedication to nationalism. Basavaraj S. Naikar, while comparing *An Autobiography* by Nehru and *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* by Indian writer Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri, recalls Nehru for romanticizing India, self-examining himself, and exposing the myth about his father, Gandhi, and

himself in his autobiography (124). Nehru has become more reflective, whereas Chaudhuri has not. Nehru has allocated a limited portion of his autobiography for the discussion of his childhood compared to Chaudhuri. Concerning it, M. K. Naik explains:

Chaudhuri's is unique in that none of its peers deals so extensively with the early years of the subject's life. Nehru's autobiography, for example, devotes only thirty-six pages to the first twenty-five years of the author's life, and even Prakash Tandon's *Punjabi Century*, the whole of which constitutes a description of the first quarter-century of the author's life, runs to slightly more than half the length of *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. (160)

So, the limited pages of Nehru's autobiography are owed to a flashback to the first twenty-five years of his life. Nehru was just 47 years while publishing the text in 1936, and he invested most of the space in his autobiography to explain the experience of the final 22 years of his political life. It is surprising in comparison to the writing of Chaudhuri, who devotes nearly half of the autobiography to discussing the early years of his life. It suggests that Nehru was at his prime time with the necessary experience and knowledge to be a political leader, as he could philosophize on many national and international issues.

Contradiction makes writing provocative as well as attractive. The contrary is found while reading Nehru's autobiography and observing his political career in government. A study of S. Keerthy on Nehru's autobiography finds the contradiction in the image of Nehru that, in the imprisoned days, as he presents himself as a lover of nature, who especially observes insects and birds. Still, he does not prioritize the interdependency and interconnectivity between ecology and humans when he is at the highest policy-making level for a long time in Indian history (379). He was even

criticized in India for constructing more giant dams and displacing ethnic people from rural settings. Concerning ecological issues, Keerthy acknowledges Nehru for respecting animals, birds, and insects in his private life, but also blames him for constructing vast industries, big dams, and motorways, as well as establishing massive mining projects, because this pollution gradually began to appear in India (379). On the one hand, his engagement in megaprojects has established him as a founder of modern India, but on the other hand, he is inconsistently contributing to ecocide. As Rathore explains, Nehru's academic background in the natural sciences, specifically botany and geology, at Cambridge University significantly influenced his intellectual development (463). However, the anthropocentric orientation of modern politics, which Nehru himself embraced in response to the historical and cultural context of his time, has ultimately led him in a different ideological direction.

He was at Harrow and Cambridge for his studies. The phase can be considered as a liminal one in any rites of passage. In this context, Lamichhane also identifies a new form of "contradictions between liminality and *communitas* in this phase of the rites of passage because of diverse economic status, hierarchical political identities, perpetual individual competitions, and different family legacies" ("Incredible Contradictions" 11). That was theoretically wrong, as there must be *communitas* in such a transitional phase.

Nehruvian modernization is strongly associated with his notions of self and nation. Pandya has examined how nationalist autobiographical works like *An Autobiography* by Nehru help us to understand nationalist ideas in the years leading up to Gandhi's political ascension in India and the years following decolonization, which "narrates his life and the life of the Indian nation along the path of modernization" (219-220). The self and the nation are discussed together in the study,

keeping modernization at the center. The extensive exploration of Gandhi's principles of nonviolence and communal harmony, juxtaposed with Motilal Nehru's secular and Westernized outlook, profoundly shapes Nehru's identity and political trajectory as he navigates the construction of modern India. It connects the personal self to the larger self of the father and fatherly figure. Similarly, Rathore argues that Nehru focuses not simply on the "quest of one individual for freedom, but a remarkable insight into the historical processes of new India" (462) in the autobiography. The emotion related to nationalism connects everyone's self to the extended self of the nation. Swapna K. Nayudu also thinks that the fascination of Nehru for writing is guided by reporting history and historical forces connecting to national and international politics (389). In this sense, it becomes new historical writing. Daniel S. Roberts also notices, expressing the private self in the form of public discourse and believes:

Nehru's autobiography, like a good deal of nationalist writing emerging often enough from prison cells in the period between 1919 and 1947, makes a little separation between the political and the personal spheres; indeed, the personal narrative inscribes political message, and descriptions of the bodily deprivations of prisoners languishing in goals are often cited in direct correspondence to the repressive nature the body politic. (645)

Thus, the events narrated in the autobiography of Nehru portray a nationalist body of an Indian that performs the tale of social discourses from the stage of a prison house.

Nehruvian nationalism connects to the anti-imperialism movement outside India. Louro as Roberts observes the activism of Nehru and the anti-imperialism of the world and finally contends that "the making of Indian anti-colonial nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s emerged as a complex set of interactions on the ground in India, but also beyond the colonial borders of the subcontinent" (iii). Intra-national factors

are in the struggle for independence of India, but international debate and struggle have also significantly played a catalytic role in the decolonization of India. Nehru saw a future in which India was a member of a global community of anti-imperialist nations in the late 1920s. Still, India's relations with the world were arbitrated through the collective movement against imperialism (Louro 252). Nehru combats both battles. The "in-betweenness" as Nehru recollected in imprisonment and discussed earlier by Brown and Pandya in their respective studies is inspired by his global connectivity. The participation of Nehru in the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in February 1927 significantly became a turning point in his life as "his concept of nationalism was changed, from a purely political and negative phenomenon into a politico-socio-economic and positive phenomenon" (Rathore 468). The earlier nationalism could be the hatred of imperialism and aimed to abolish that.

Nehru's focus on modernization is the composition of the factors for strengthening the nation. Such a setting was an appropriate forum to communicate the commitment of Indians to freedom and to create global pressure against imperialism.

The progressive thought of Nehru was sown at Cambridge University in Britain. Rathore explained that he had attended lectures by progressive intellectuals like George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, and J.M. Keynes there. As a result, Nehru was fascinated by socialist thought. However, during his teens, what was ambiguous, romantic, and academic became essential elements of his intellectual life later (466). His schooling offers a philosophical stigma and reveals a logical viewpoint on his political career. His origin and study led him to a certain degree of duality, too. The dual legacy of Nehru generally stands between East and West. The state of being everywhere leads to nowhere. In this regard, Laura S. Brown asserts that the autobiography of Nehru discloses the Nehruvian dichotomy where "he felt he

was a curious blend of East and West, and therefore out of place everywhere and at home nowhere” (109). The condition of being everywhere outside the home and being nowhere inside the home mainly occurs in the case of immigrants. Surprisingly, Nehru becomes an in-between at home.

All such contradictions and dualism observed in the autobiography of Nehru by various researchers are the consequence of the contemporary transitional situation of Indian politics. Nehru, as noted by Arnold Van Gennep, was crossing the threshold in his “rite of passage” (192), adopting a secular ideology for uniting diverse India as “a shared ethical ideal” (Nath 178). This social and political transition could be interpreted as the in-betweenness or the liminality of tradition and modernism in India. However, that transition has finally supported him in reintegrating into society as an icon of modern India.

Bhutto’s *If I Am Assassinated* is a prison narrative, as the autobiography of Nehru, written as a memoir on the eve of his execution. During the 1970s, Bhutto held the positions of Prime Minister and President of Pakistan. As the poet Chidiock Tichborne has recorded the ultimate feelings of his death in the poem “On the Eve of His Execution”, the autobiographic memory, *If I Am Assassinated*, by Bhutto was also written in his death cell, incorporating the feelings and consequences of potential death. It was unofficially published shortly before, as the execution of his death sentence had happened on 4 April 1979.

Limited people codify the last emotion related to their death and defend past deeds in the form of autobiographical writings, as done in *If I Am Assassinated*, when he was detained and in danger of being executed soon. In this sense, Lawrence Ziring believes that the writing of Bhutto is one of them, which covers his ultimate will in the form of a testament (*If I Am Assassinated* 812), which is an “emotionally packed

and often passionate defense” (*If I Am Assassinated* 812) of his past political conduct. In doing so, he tries to establish himself as a patriotic leader by condemning internal and external enemies. Bhutto was overthrown in a military coup in 1977 and subsequently executed in 1979. Despite his controversial past, he remains recognized as a populist leader who championed the rights of Pakistan’s oppressed and poor. Similarly, Devendra Chintan finds the autobiographical memoir of Bhutto is compared to Julius Fucik and Antonio Gramsci’s writings, which come from custody, communicating “an aura of romanticism” (1). Most studies on this memoir focus on themes of freedom, nationalism, martyrdom, and nation-funded propaganda directed against him. Bhutto was in favor of a forceful Third World. Farah G. Baqai considers him a pioneer in strengthening nuclear power in Pakistan for strong nationhood in the post-colonial period (51-52). The initiation is generally interpreted as the major cause behind the political conspiracy against him. In this regard, reading the memories, Tahir Kamran observes the culture of Pakistani politics as “coupgemony” as a frequent feature of Pakistani politics (26). The culture represents the violent hegemony of the Pakistani army against the verdict of the people, whereas Bhutto mainly presents himself as a victim of the culture in the text. In particular, Ziring blames the Pakistan National Alliance for receiving money from the United States to create propaganda against him, as regulated by General Zia ul-Haq (*If I Am Assassinated* 812-813). Moreover, Qureshi also considers that “a propaganda campaign of unprecedented magnitude was started against Bhutto in particular. His political party in general by the military regime through the nation-controlled radio, television, and the government-owned National Press Trust papers” (913). Such propaganda was circulated through media and formal/informal channels to weaken the possible sympathy of people related to Bhutto, which was further sensitized by his

autobiographical writing.

Presentation style also matters in communicating emotion. Specifically, stylistics is an issue in the autobiographical writing of Bhutto as he uses deontic modality to express his desires, predictions, and obligations, imbuing the text with a positive tone that reveals his purpose. Regarding it, Ali R. Siddique et al. find:

The frequent use of deontic modality depicts the writer's wants, desires, and undertakings as well as obligations on the event or situation. The autobiography was written when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was imprisoned and about to be hanged. Despite this, the writer has shown his desires and wishes and predicted the situation and event. Thus, the autobiography "If I am Assassinated" has more positive shading for understanding the underlying purpose. (8479)

Deontic modality expresses the writer's intentions and judgments about what is necessary or obligatory. Differently, often, autobiographical writings are retrospective. Still, Bhutto's sensibility in his autobiographical writing is as a perspective when he attempts to predict his death against its very nature.

Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfikar, also narrated her sufferings. She wrote her autobiography entitled *Daughter of the East*, where she projects herself more as a daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (qtd. in Ziring, "Benazir" 179). Because of that, as per Lamichhane, the writing becomes more of a biography of Father Bhutto rather than an autobiography of her (*Daughter of the East* 38). The impact of lineage and the politics of dynasty is natural to reflect traces. It is praiseworthy for feminism that Benazir has expanded the role and rights of the daughter, becoming the inheritor of her father's politics in a world of male chauvinism. It is not only the property. Power is also transferred to or received by successors in dynasty politics.

Furthermore, Kristen Moody and Jerrold M. Post detect the transfer of the ideology of the father to his daughter where “not only was Benazir’s identity shaped by Zulfikar, but Benazir in significant ways became an extension of her father, going on to promote the ideals of democracy” (63). Such dynasty politics is sometimes defined as a dangerous political culture for democracy; however, it is also considered an effective system to complete the unfinished political assignments of the family members in politics.

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The language and rhetorical strategies in Bhutto’s memoirs serve not only to narrate trauma but also to construct a political identity and national narrative. R. G. Hughes and Ryan Shaffer contend that the language used in Bhutto’s memoirs was deliberately used to elevate his reputation as a martyr championing the cause of Pakistan’s independence (927). Correspondingly, Lamichhane examines the use of conceptual metaphors in the text and finds that “the trauma conveyed through conceptual metaphors affects the politics of nationhood” (137). The language and the figure of speech also do the politics of nationhood in the text. Moreover, this is consistent with Baqai’s assertion that both Western nations and internal partners aggressively opposed Bhutto’s objective of enhancing Pakistan’s nuclear capability

(929). Thus, Bhutto's assassination and the narrative surrounding it were perceived as the victimization of a nationalist leader, with his traumatic experiences resonating globally and significantly amplifying the student movement advocating for the restoration of democracy in Nepal.

Rahman's *The Unfinished Memoirs*, though an attempt at autobiography, functions as a memoir due to its incompleteness; this contrasts with Nehru's *An Autobiography*, a more comprehensive life history largely composed during his prison years, while Koirala's *Atmabrittanta* offers a distinct personal chronicle, often a late-life recollection, yet, like Nehru's, significantly details his own substantial prison experiences. It covers only his initial experiences of his political career. Although titled *The Unfinished Memoirs*, it appears as a finished political manifesto. He is the architect of the independence of Bangladesh. He penned it during his time as a prisoner in the seminal years of 1967-1969 and was originally published in 2012. In the context of Bangladesh, Shamika Shabnam argues that fragmented memoirs are "crucial for negotiating the nation's uniform portrayal" (117), allowing for a more nuanced understanding of traumatic pasts. Ayub and Yahya, two succeeding military dictators of Pakistan, significantly contributed to his rapid rise in politics, as Taj Hashmi acknowledges:

Had not Ayub accused him of conspiring to separate East Pakistan from Pakistan in the Agartala Conspiracy Case in the most unconvincing way, and Yahya transferred power to him after he won the 1970 elections, Mujib would have remained just another Bengali politician in united Pakistan. (77)

It indicates that beyond the role of supporters of a leader, there is an immense role of opponents in developing leadership if one consistently keeps oneself active for conviction.

No reader can escape the political ideology and the philosophical position of Rahman in his autobiographical writing. As noted by Ayesha Siddika and Amia S. Khan, Rahman identifies his principle as “‘Mujibvada’ comprising four core principles: democracy, socialism, secularism, and nationalism” (31). Later, it was developed as “Mujibism,” which refers to four fundamental political demands initiated by Rahman while fighting for the independence of Bangladesh and later adopted by the newly formed nation. Unlike Koirala, Bhutto, and Nehru, he struggled for the deferred independence of Bangladesh within the independence and partition of India.

Rahman’s autobiographical writing is simply a personal narration, but it consequently becomes a political manifesto of Bangladesh. Atiqur R. Mujahid investigates Rahman’s memoirs and finds two central pillars in this manifesto, classifying them into ethnic Bengali and universal Muslim nationalism (6). It is contradictory. Significantly, the dominant Muslim population of Bangladesh has created ambiguous “to be or not to be secular” conditions there. Ferhana Hashem portrays Rahman as a liberal and tolerant leader who rejected the monolithic view held by Jinnah, which closely tied “Islam” and “Pakistan” as inseparable concepts (74). Consequently, during the partition, minorities in Pakistan were unable to enjoy the sense of belonging and security that Jinnah had promised, instead facing horrific violence in what was supposed to be their homeland. Philosophically, this situation underscores Rahman’s political doctrine, which advocates for a clear separation between religion and politics, emphasizing an inclusive and secular approach to governance.

Beyond geography, religion, culture, and politics inevitably play a significant role in imagining nationhood. Hashem also claims that Rahman in his memoir

advocates drawing a clear division between religion and politics (67). He has created boundaries between politics and religion, but it is not logical to downsize the existence of religion in political life in the country, which was formed as a Muslim-majority state at the time of the partition of India in 1947. Anyway, the distinction supports inferring that Rahman's political principle concerning secularism has developed in the womb of that distinction. At the same time, J. T. O'Connell finds the religious commitment in Rahman, and he cynically considers his commitment to Islam as a mass deception for achieving political success (68). It indicates his pseudo-faith in Islam for political achievement. Rounaq Jahan observes that Rahman took pride in both his Muslim and Bengali identities, yet consistently rejected communal politics, criticizing its leaders for neglecting the voices of the subalterns (3). While he promoted communal harmony and inclusivity, his decision to retain the term "Muslim" in the name of his political party reflects a strategic dualism. Despite this, his writings and speeches consistently affirmed a commitment to secularism, suggesting a pragmatic engagement with vote-bank politics.

The vote bank politics has probably created such a situation where both religion and politics share the imprints of each other. It is the nature of autobiography to tell a tale of the making of a person. Surpassing the prevailing conventions in both politics and writing, as observed by Thakur, the autobiography of Rahman "qualifies in that category with its less 'conformist' stand - it allows readers to engage with the pages without any epistemological load ... [and] ... tells the history of the making of a nation, not of farce" (409). Distancing from grand theory, it discusses the making and unmaking of the nations. Moreover, Thakur considers that "Mujib's autobiographical text, remotely distant from any soft end, leads to the unusually abnormal past that affected the geography and psyche of South Asia" (408). Thus, it

tells the tale of post-colonial South Asian mentality in a broader sense. In this sense, when one does not get a cultural and political home, the physical home can be the shelter of the body but not of the mind and soul. It applies in the case of the partition of Pakistan.

Similar to the case of Koirala and Nehru, Rahman has also productively utilized the hard times of prison life by writing diaries. These become both political history and creative writing. Shuvendhu Saha and Tithi Debnath consider the text written in prison as “the mix of humanitarian issues of personal life with the flow of political events” (8). In this way, the amalgamation of personal and political matters forms an alternative history of Bangladesh. Including the advocacy of freedom, it submits the political history not only of Bangladesh but also of India and Pakistan as the text recounts the days of British India, independence and partition, and demands and fighting for a separate East Pakistan as Bangladesh. Regarding social trauma, the name itself refers to the fact that “social and individual aspects are inseparably tied together” (Hamburger, “New” 14), and they can be studied together. Thus, the memoir intertwines personal and collective experiences to reconstruct a broader socio-political history, illustrating how individual narratives of trauma can illuminate the intertwined destinies of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

Beyond pure politics, the prison narrative is also studied from the standpoint of sociolinguistics. Saha and Debnath notice that Rahman has used different sociolinguistics like dialects, code-mixing, and register to create a distinct appeal, eliminating the strictness of language (14-15). These uses of code-mixing, dialect, and register indicate his wish for the ending of linguistic extremism and political rigidity, adopting professional, global, and modern democratic principles in independent Bangladesh. The mixing has also expanded the visibility of the text, and this visibility

silently contributes to transmitting a political message to the global audience.

Consequently, memoirs in the form of political manifestos tell the tales of the history of un/making a nation, telling the history of creating a national leader. Despite some contradictions as adopting secular politics and naming a party using a Muslim name for vote-bank politics, Rahman was successful in convincing the worldwide audience through his writing, which became a finished political document of Bangladesh after the partition of Pakistan.

All four autobiographical writings selected for the study were written at the beginning of these leaders' political careers or as late-life recollections. The review has reflected the shaping of the political legacy of the authors and their families. Specifically, the anecdotes from jail in politics, the suffering of exile, and the mistreatment of opponents at home and in exile are identical in their writings. Almost all studies on the texts establish their sufferings for people and nations as the least common denominator of their personal and public lives. These struggles were narrated in the writings to intensify their commitment to democracy and nationalism. Among these four authors, Koirala and Bhutto narrated their memories from a deathbed and a prison cell with full realization of early death. Nehru and Rahman had no such sensation of death at the time of narrating. Goutam Karmakar and Zeenat Khan argue that exploring "unrecognized and unaddressed traumatic narratives from South Asia" (Introduction 9) is crucial because it will refine global trauma theories and illuminate both universal and culturally specific dimensions of psychic suffering, underscoring the vital importance of analyzing South Asian statesmen's autobiographical writings as primary sites for this critical examination.

The studies on the autobiography of Koirala primarily portray him as a fighter to the end, exploring his lifelong struggle for democracy on multiple national and

international battlefields. Similarly, Nehru documents his liminal phase of life, both outside and inside the prison, as a transitional phase of his life. Both of them highlight the political contribution of their family, particularly their fathers. Bhutto's reflective and defiant political testament, written in anticipation of his execution, asserts his innocence and shares his mistrust in the trial process. Similarly, *The Unfinished Memoirs* of Rahman is projected as a finished political document for the independent struggle of Bangladesh by researchers. It also includes a tentative roadmap for independent Bangladesh.

In the studies, these autobiographical writings function as political self-narratives that combine personal memories with national history, offering unique insights into major political changes in South Asia. According to the studies, the authors express strong themes of nationalism and personal sacrifice, portraying themselves as committed leaders devoted to democracy, independence, freedom, and justice. The texts act as a means of their political justification, with the authors carefully shaping their public image and defending their political actions against internal and external marginalization. The texts highlight the tensions between colonial and postcolonial power structures, presenting the leaders as central figures in the fight for national independence. Finally, researchers observe that these autobiographical writings help shape collective memory and national identity by placing personal stories within larger historical and political contexts that still influence political thought in the region today.

#### **2.4 Research Gaps**

The available current scholarship on the autobiographical works of Koirala, Nehru, Bhutto, and Rahman remain largely fragmented. Studies typically examine these texts in isolation, often applying a single theoretical lens. This approach has

unintentionally limited our understanding by neglecting comparative analysis and obscuring shared thematic resonances across these narratives.

Crucially, a significant oversight persists: how these leaders strategically narrate personal trauma not merely as individual suffering, but as a powerful tool to articulate, legitimize, or challenge political ideologies within the complex social fabric of South Asian political culture. Consequently, the profound interplay between deeply personal memories and the shaping of collective political discourse remains underexplored. There is a clear need for research that adopts a more integrated and comparative framework to fully appreciate the socio-political significance embedded within these leaders' life stories.

Even within the existing studies related to trauma, Puspa Damai critiques Eurocentric trauma studies and advocates for decolonizing the field by introducing differentially over mere temporality in the South Asian context (179). It shows that there remains a significant dearth of in-depth research on trauma within South Asia, underscoring the urgent need for more localized and nuanced studies in the region.

Thus, this study applies three major concepts: concepts of life writings, notions of trauma studies, and nuances of nation and nationalism in four South Asian autobiographical writings to scrutinize these politics of narrating trauma based on the research questions and set of objectives.

### CHAPTER III

#### ANALYSIS OF SUFFERING AND FIGHTING FOR SOVEREIGNTY IN KOIRALA AND NEHRU'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

In their autobiographies, Koirala's *Atmabrittanta* and Nehru's *An Autobiography* both depict the mental wounds and anti-hegemonic struggles for national sovereignty that forged individual freedom and national identity in South Asia. While Nehru's account reflects the immediacy of his early political career, Koirala's offers a retrospective synopsis from his deathbed, collectively providing profound insights into trauma and nationalism.

Despite enjoying material prosperity and social prestige under the Rana regime, the Koirala family chose the arduous path of resistance, enduring torture and challenging hegemonic power structures in their unwavering pursuit of individual freedom and national identity, as vividly recounted in Koirala's *Atmabrittanta*.

His autobiographical account, *Atmabrittanta*, recollects the painful tales of tolerating torture while combating, with full nationalistic activism. These national and international hegemonic power blocs were against the rights of Nepal and Nepalis. As noted by Anderson, a nation emerges as a political community in imagination, and that is inherently limited in its boundaries and sovereign in its authority (6). The concept underscores that a nation is a socially constructed entity with defined borders and self-governing authority, united by a collective sense of identity among its members who share an imagined connection. Similarly, Liah Greenfield perceived nationalism as the nature of individuals associating with a people (4). The process of developing individual trauma into cultural trauma is identical to creating collective consciousness about a nation. Koirala has no exception in bracketing him with the nation, portraying the deep notion of nationhood in his writing.

Though Koirala claimed, “I never tried to write about myself” (1) at the beginning of the *Atmabrittanta*, he had already written much fiction and non-fiction, which were autobiographical. As quoted by Caruth, “While the traumatized are called upon to see and to relive the insistent reality of the past, they recover a past that encounters consciousness only through the very denial of active recollection” (*Trauma* 152). Caruth suggests that trauma victims re-experience the past not through deliberate memory, but through involuntary, recurring episodes that reveal the past precisely because it was never fully processed or consciously remembered. Koirala’s denial of active recollection is also a communication of his trauma. However, the text is entitled as an autobiography. Moreover, *Atmabrittanta* is also the final text of Koirala about himself, which was recorded from 1 December 1981 to 22 May 1982 and transcribed in 1983 by Ganesh Raj Sharma. It should not be misunderstood as “as-told-to” (Smith and Watson 178), as a collaborative or ghostly written autobiography, but essentially narrated into a microphone. This time, he attempted to write about himself in the form of an autobiography, composed from his deathbed, which calls for an examination of the politics embedded in such a personal narrative. As Habermas and Bartoli state, “we explain natural events causally by reference to natural laws, we explain human actions by reference to motives and through embedding them in a story” (203), and rereading these stories helps uncover the political motives and meanings within the narrative. His deathbed autobiography invites a political reading, as human actions, unlike natural events, are best understood through the motives and stories behind them.

Koirala was confused about starting his stories while writing the autobiography. He says, “What I have felt, and I feel no different today, is that I have not done anything that needs to be recorded in a history book” (1). Differently,

Koirala was already a popular icon from his youthful days, and he was aware that he had extraordinarily contributed to the modern politics of Nepal in particular and the socialist politics of South Asia in general. However, any autobiographical writing “offers writers the opportunity to promote themselves as representative subjects, that is, as subjects who stand for others” (Gilmore, “The Limits” 4), and directly or indirectly, Koirala has politics of promoting his ideals.

Anyway, indirectly, one thing he accepted was that an autobiography could be counted as a history book. As asserted by Smith and Watson, “Sometimes people read autobiographical narratives as historical documents, a source of evidence for the analysis of historical movements or events or persons” (10). It is appropriately significant in the case of Koirala that his autobiography offers multiple historical documents, as “autobiographical narrating and history writing might seem to be synonymous” (Smith and Watson 10). Koirala thinks he has done nothing historical, but if an inter/nationally popular political leader and a literary figure were inappropriate to write an autobiography incorporating his historical experience, who is appropriate, and who can recollect memories in the form of an autobiography? Again, Koirala said, “I have always felt that there is a lot left for me to do” (1). However, just a limited time was left at that time. He expressed so mindfully being a patient in the fourth stage of cancer. It was the time of separation as his time was running out. However, it means, as an optimist politician, his journey to reestablish democracy and strengthen nationalism has not been accomplished yet. Indeed, “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life” (Anderson 3) of the contemporary time.

Due to political reasons, the Koirala family left prosperity in Nepal and first self-exiled to India in 1917. Some people had the opinion that the movement did not

have any concern for Nepal, but the family was committed to the movement because “My father’s point of view was that this was also our movement because the autocracy of the Ranas was supported by British imperialists” (Koirala 8). It is also realized by Shakya that the shared experience of concealed colonialism politically linked Nepal and India during this period. Koirala became involved in the Indian independence movement at an early age, beginning his activism at just eight years old (“Reading Parijat and B P Koirala” 57). Because of that, for the family and some other relations, fighting for the independence of India was perceived as combating the Ranas. One can perceive it as “the spirit of anticolonial nationalism” (Anderson 153), particularly in the case of India, but Koirala, as a leader from Nepal, interprets it as connecting to his two core values, democracy and nationhood. It was significant to link all these to Nepali nationhood as the Third World was in turmoil at that time. “Koirala considered the South Asia region at threat under pressure from the charged nationalisms brewing in the region, and on this ground, he chose to repatriate and reconcile with King Mahendra” (Shakya, “Reading Parijat and B P Koirala” 57). He returned to Nepal and was again arrested. However, that was misunderstood by Western anthropology as postcoloniality in Nepal (Chene 211). Nepal is in South Asia, but it officially holds no burden of post-colonialism.

In the context of international politics of the contemporary world, political support for a particular nation was a relative concept. Particularly, in the war between Germany and Britain, Koirala morally supported British Imperialism, which was aggressively fighting against the brutality of Hitler (Koirala 25). Still, he was aggressively against British Imperialism in India at the same time. Several similar and significant cases are also in the autobiography, which show the relativity of

relationships in terms of political ideology. The justification of political ideology and action relies heavily on the geo-political milieu.

Economics is one of the major indicators of political ideology. Material prosperity was commonly enjoyed by the Koirala family in Nepal as the family was of the upper-middle class. The family, particularly Koirala's father Krishna Prasad Koirala, a popular businessperson of Nepal, had abandoned prosperity and chosen the deprived exiled life for democracy in Nepal. As expressed by the idea of Vamik D. Volkan, the chosen trauma becomes the chosen glory (20) for the Koirala family. That "tells us how we need to expand the studies of certain massive societal traumas" (Valkan 23). That brought a dramatic shift in the family. "There was no food and one often had to go hungry. I had a brother, Harihar. When he died of Cholera, the family did not even have money to buy a cremation shroud" (16). Again, Koirala repeats the event that the family could manage neither money for health care nor the firewood for his final ritual rite (55). A cremation shroud is considered a fundamental right of each dead body, but it was difficult to manage by the family to manage in a foreign land. What could be more tragic than that for the "prosperous" family? Besides these, the shift and suffering later contributed to the political change in Nepal. From the perspective of nationhood, Eyerman recommends retrospective historical investigations of cultural traumas. He claims that a nation's cultural traumas are often studied retrospectively through the "trauma drama," the communal narrative and experiences tied to key historical events defining the nation's identity and memory ("Cultural Trauma" 39). This retrospective narrative also shows how these experiences have shaped and continue to shape national identity.

The Koirala family was known in Nepal for its material prosperity. However, when the family of Koirala was in exile in Banaras, it was impossible to manage

tuition fees for their children. Koirala said, “Father was unable to pay for my schooling. As it was, our house was in a bad state and ready to collapse due to the floods. When the waters receded, cholera and typhoid would be the order of the day. We were faced with these kinds of difficulties” (12). The family that had enjoyed different forms of prosperity in Nepal was facing such shocking hardships in India. Indicating such miseries of a family and desire for belonging to one’s community, Said argues that “nationalisms are about groups, but in a very acute sense exile is a solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation” (177). The family also had an intention to be like the group in Nepal for nationalism.

The situation was not favorable for fighting in Nepal. Therefore, they formed types of groups in exile. This kind of behavior, in line with Volkan, is referred to as chosen trauma, and such agony is represented in the group memory and transmitted through generations beyond the lives of direct survivors, often by group members temporally and spatially far removed from the actual event (48). In this sense, their exile in India also becomes a chosen trauma. Furthermore, the father of Koirala was a renowned contractor and close to power blocs as he was energetic in business and earned a lot (Koirala 1). Nevertheless, the father had chosen a challenge to live in self-imposed exile in India for the sake of democracy. Koirala recounts:

In Calcutta, I found my father living under difficult circumstances. He was a hawker and walked around with a tray that displayed all kinds of wares. This tray was attached to a strap that went around his neck, and father walked the footpaths shouting “*Do-do paisay!*” At other times, he hung various items from his arms like garlands and sold them along the footpaths and on the Calcutta trams. (48)

Krishna Prasad Koirala in that image of the hawker, is suffocated but not hopeless. The trauma narrative helps the client overcome avoidance of unpleasant memories, detect cognitive distortions, and contextualize their traumatic experience into their life by recounting the tale in a temporal frame. Diana Ridjic notes that these experiences help them recognize they are more than just victims of trauma (87-88). Rather than presenting themselves as trauma victim, they try to project themselves as a nationalist. The strap around the neck and the multiple objects around Koirala's hands symbolize upsetting suffocation. The situation, as the social theory of collective trauma as proposed by Alexander, explains the process of the development of collective agency responding to the understanding of social suffering (*Trauma 1*). Moreover, the comparison of them to garland indicates that hope and shouting become a slogan for resisting the Rana oligarchy.

Correspondingly, Koirala narrates his experience as his father; he sold newspapers for his survival in India. He recounts:

I sold newspapers and often went hungry. However, I was not affected mentally by our circumstances. Thinking back, that period even seems audaciously romantic. I did not experience great tension, but our condition affected *Thuldaju* on his character. (50)

The physical hunger was nothing for him as he was guided to satisfy national and political hunger for independence and democracy. In this sense, personal experiences of mental wounds fuel the collective creation of cultural trauma that extends beyond the individual self of the experiencer (Alexander, *Trauma 2*). In this pathway, Koirala attempts to present himself as a resisting hero who romanticizes and endures suffering. That shows the revolutionary development within him toward political

maturity. However, at the same time accepts that another family member has been living with the stigma of mental suffering.

Koirala was not only fighting for democracy in Nepal. He was generatively engaged in the Quit India movement initiated by Gandhi in India, adopted *Khadi*, and recited a poem in an Indian school. He recalls the lines:

I vow to my country all earthly things above,  
Entire and whole, and perfect, service of my love. (14)

The lines of the poem were patriotic. Moreover, what do the words “my country” mean? The country is a representation of the nation of each freedom fighter who is involved in the independence movement. Societies heal and restore cohesion by recognizing and addressing social trauma. “Repairing a damaged social body often includes naming and punishing those who caused the damage, which opens the field of social trauma to studying the legal, political, and cultural processes involved in this” (Eyeran, “Cultural Trauma” 41). Within the framework of nationalism, the restoration of a harmed social entity necessitates the resolution of past grievances or conflicts through legal, political, and cultural means. This involves recognizing and ensuring that those who are responsible for previous traumas are held responsible, which can aid in the recovery of a shared sense of identity or the mending of social injuries linked to nationalist movements or conflicts.

Once in India, Koirala was arrested. A British clerk approached the prison house for inspection and observed Koirala pinning an Indian flag on his clothes. The clerk threatened Koirala, asking him to remove the flag. However, Koirala counters, “I am willing to suffer, but I will not remove this” (28). Consequently, the clerk turned to the jailer and ordered to limit him to “solitary confinement” (28). The acceptance of the suffering rather than compromising with British Imperialism was motivated by the

idea of sovereignty. However, there was a border to separate Nepal and India as “The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (Anderson 7). Anyway, democratic ideology, especially popular non-violent resistance, was empowering him in the movement. Such identical ideology has developed a “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 7) between the leaderships from India and Nepal in the Indian Independence Movement.

Koirala decided to do politics and be physically proximate to people in Nepal. Koirala returned to Nepal, accepting challenges, and he was arrested and thrown into prison in 1947. Recalling the upsetting days of imprisonment with handcuffs and fetters, Koirala states, “I suffered about as much as a human can suffer. I went with the clothes I had- a coat, a *bhoto*, and a thin *surwal*. I had no shoes and nothing else, and it was the cold of December. ... I did not know that humans were ever kept that way” (79). Similarly, Koirala shares, “I was given neither a quilt nor bedding and it was freezing; it was December” (80). The pain is not the group experiencing pain but touching for the people who were fighting or demanding democracy. Such common characters choose to “represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they come from, and where they want to go” (Alexander, *Trauma* 15). Enduring this inhuman treatment, Koirala became stronger day by day, and he utilized the strength to strengthen democracy and nationhood in Nepal.

Facing danger and enduring torture was routine work for Koirala. He accepted the confinement and endured different insensitive treatments. Koirala describes:

A blacksmith was brought from outside to do the job. He had to hammer vertically in order to fix the fetters, but in order not to hurt my foot in case the hammer slipped, he was striking at a slant. Once, the hammer did slip and

struck the stone on which the fetters rested. At that, the officer who was standing next to me scolded the blacksmith, “Careful! You might break the slab!” The blacksmith replied, “I was aiming at the foot but it slipped and hit the stone.” “If his bone is broken, it will mend, but will you give money for the broken piece of stone?” Such harsh words serve to illustrate the attitude of my jailers. (79)

How the value of life can be precious to the stone? The cruel jailors, as the subordinates of the rulers, eliminate humanity as can be observed in the performance of the blacksmith. An impactful trauma narrative vividly depicts the antagonist’s inhumane actions as a figurative and communal construction. In this context, Alexander argues that as a prime feature of a compelling trauma narrative, the traumatic description of the inhuman activities of the antagonistic forces manifests as figurative and communal construction (*Trauma* 19). To eliminate the chains, handcuffs, and fetters, Koirala insisted on taking a bath before meals, but that did not work as they imposed twice a day immediately after the bath (Koirala 81). The tactic used by Koirala could not work, and the enduring chains had no alternative.

Receiving inhuman behavior was common to Koirala in different jails. Once, when Koirala had asked for utensils in imprisonment, the jailer firstly opposed but later offered “a toilet jug used by the cleaning women in the women’s jail. It was a battered container, with yellow patches all over. He said, “That poor lady, she felt sorry for you. Mind you, she may need it” (Koirala 85). Jailor, as an agent of the ruler class of that time, transmits the psychology of the power blocs. Moreover, it resembles the mental blueprint of an anti-democratic force that practices coldhearted treatment of opponents.

From the same jail, Koirala had written a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru sharing the circumstances. He got that. “Tears came to Jawaharlalji’s eyes when he read that letter” (Koirala 87). As pointed out by Alexander, the victim is embodied in terms of esteemed potentials shared by the greater collective self for the development of cultural trauma in the social fabric (*Trauma* 19). Because of that, it transcends the border, and a foreign audience feels the suffering of a comrade collectively, as Nehru also spent almost nine years in prison against the British in different years. They are divided by nation, but the nature of suffering is the same in their life as Selma Porobić, believes, “collective trauma can thus become the epicenter of group identity and a lens through which group members understand their social environment and act upon perceived existential threats” (255). The initial threat to them was in the form of an autocracy. A critical moment of this statement lies in recognizing how collective trauma, despite national divisions, serves as a core element of group identity and influences how members perceive and respond to existential threats. This highlights the profound impact of shared suffering on the formation and cohesion of national identities.

After the independence of India, Koirala returned to Nepal and was arrested in Kathmandu with his friends Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Kedarman Byathit on 13 December 1948. In different jails, they, particularly Koirala, received so insensitive behavior. As a follower of Gandhi, Koirala started non-violent resistance in jail on 1 May 1949. Koirala recounts his suffering: “I was completely alone, and diarrhea. I had to go ten, fifteen, twenty times a day. I used to pass thin stool, with some blood, and it was not easy” (88). Through this vivid description, he evokes “imaginative identification and emotional catharsis” (Alexander, *Trauma* 20), reflecting his deep commitment to democracy. On the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the fasting, there was a hot and

aggressive discussion between Mohan Shumshere, the then-prime minister, and the mother of Koirala, where the mother bravely said that her son deserves much more respect than the government. Resisting his threats concerning Koirala's potential death, she boldly asserts, "I cremated my husband in this place, and I have come now to cremate my son. You do not have to threaten me" (Koirala 93). The place she refers to is the homeland and what she repeatedly denotes about crimation resembles sacrifice. Dori Laub argues that the disintegrating consequences of a traumatic event can be more comprehensively grasped by hypothesizing the existence of uncontrolled, unassimilated derivatives of the death instinct, which are more potent and profound ("Traumatic Shutdown" 316). The argument asserts that the deep, unresolved effects of trauma, linked to the death instinct, offer a persuasive perspective for comprehending the breakdown of social and national unity. It emphasizes how unaddressed collective trauma can greatly weaken the stability and identity of a nation, such as Nepal.

The transmission of the group's "injured selves" in the form of narrative allows for creating a shared history based on ancestral trauma and in-group and out-group dynamics, eventually establishing the connection between trauma, memory, and ontological safety (Volkan 48). Koirala was released on 28 May 1949, but he believes, "The problem will not be solved merely with my release. My life is saved, to be sure, but our demand is civil rights. What about that?" (94). It reflects his "horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7) with people. As a democratic nationalist, that release is not the solution to the suffering, but the preparation for a final fight. Even in the context of the so-called tripartite Delhi Agreement between King, Congress, and Rana in Delhi on 18 February 1951, Koirala said with a heavy heart, "I do not like doing it in Delhi" (124). The consciousness of place is also realized here, which further

reflects the nationalistic attitude of Koirala. As mentioned by Bhandari, “Nepali national identity was forged in an attempt to create a boundary with ‘outsiders’” (416). Similarly, Anderson defines a nation as small or big but a limited territory (7). The boundary does not keep more people outside it but keeps some people inside it strengthening the imagined community as limited and sovereign. Bhandari’s observation aligns with Anderson’s definition of a nation as a bounded entity, emphasizing that the formation of Nepali national identity was motivated by the desire to establish clear boundaries between insiders and outsiders, underscoring the importance of territorial delineation in defining and solidifying national identity.

After the arrest of Bharat Shumshere, a leader of *Gorkha Dal*, a large group of the party attacked the jail, and the rally entered the office of Koirala. Koirala, the Minister of Home Affairs, pushed them back, pointing a revolver, but again they headed back and Koirala opened fire, killing a guard from the palace of Babar Shumshere (137). It reflects disrespect and a threat to freedom fighters by anti-democratic forces on one hand, and it communicates how fighting for democracy becomes self-defensive energy for such fighters on the other hand. That brought conflict in the Rana-Congress coalition government. As expressed by Koirala, from the event, “I became the most powerful person in Nepal. All I lacked was the military. Therefore, from that day on, India tried to destroy me. To begin with, my relations with India were not very good, and from that day on, India began to help Mohan Shumshere” (143). In this way, Koirala becomes the victim of intra-regional imperialism, though Nepal is never a colonized nation (Chene 209). Along these lines, Koirala relates the attack from various forces inside and outside Nepal against him. The Rana and India relationship attempts to make Nepali nationhood weaker, weakening one of the strong public leaders. Thus, the culture of understanding South

Asian Studies only as post-colonial Studies unduly obstructs the space of Nepal in South Asian Studies.

Conspiracies were common in the life of Koirala. Despite enormous plots from within and outside the country, Koirala always took a stand, never bowed down to collective attacks on them, and never stopped making counterblows, particularly through his strong discourse. For instance, during a student protest in 1951, the police fired and killed a protester named Chiniya Kaji Tuladhar, and the cabinet meeting projected Koirala as the accused (159). All his opponents politicized the event to attack him inside and outside the government. He was alone there to defend his stand not to allow the body for public procession. After that accident, once most surprisingly, Koirala countered the Indian campaign against him, particularly pointing Indian ambassador to Nepal. Koirala said, "I too started a campaign against India at that time. I called press conferences in Banaras. . . . The Indian ambassador, C.P.N. Sinha, wishes that our country is like his district board, and he regards himself as Chairperson" (163). That was the strength of Koirala. He could threaten opponents on their land for the respect of his personal dignity and national identity. Pointing towards such perils, Thomas Soehl and Sakeef M. Karim remark that the experience of geopolitical threat leaves a stigma concerning nationalism (407). Moreover, Koirala did so for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Nepal. He imagined Nepal as a sovereign nation because "the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (Anderson 7), which was reflected from the Indian side. The assertion suggests that the rise of sovereign nations was a response to the decline of divine legitimacy and hierarchical monarchies, raising questions about the role of secular ideologies and power dynamics in shaping modern nation-states.

Koirala endured significant misconduct and threats in his political life, as evidenced by hostile encounters where opponents obstructed his entry into the town.

In his political tour to Palpa, one opponent shouted:

‘Murderer! Go Back!’ obstructing him from entering the town as they had tied bones and skeletons on bamboo poles, and had put up bamboo barriers across the path. They threw stones down at us, tried to hit me from the trailside, and tried to splatter me with black paint. (Koirala 165)

What could be more painful than tolerating the false allegation of murder? Regarding all, he perceived national as well as international opponents were propagating against him to defame him. In the issue described by Koirala, the process of creating aesthetic meaning is facilitated by particular narratives, which encourage imaginative identification and provide an avenue for emotional release (Alexander, *Trauma* 20).

However, he resists the attack with his supporters to maintain democratic values. In Koirala’s narrative, individuals perceive threats from national and international adversaries, prompting the creation of narratives that encourage imaginative identification with the protagonist and offer a means for emotional release. These narratives likely portray the protagonist’s struggles as representative of broader societal issues, fostering collective solidarity and empowerment among individuals facing similar challenges.

There was a love-and-hate relationship with different Kings of Nepal during his political career. Within the crucial conflict between King Mahendra and Koirala, King appreciated his nationalist and democratic values. Once King said to Koirala “No one doubts your nationalist credentials, nor that you are a democrat” (Koirala 178), however, Koirala responded telling “There is also no doubt that Your Majesty is a nationalist and that you are against democracy” (178). Nepali kings have either a

catalytic role or direct participation in the course of the political suffering of Koirala. Still, King Mahendra appreciated his commitment to the nation and people. As described by Tanka B. Subba, King Mahendra was a cultural nationalist and promoted the philosophy of “one nation, one language, one dress, one religion” (129). King Mahendra’s advocacy for a uniform cultural identity based on the principles of one nation, one language, one dress, and one religion reveal a top-down nationalist agenda, which emphasizes cultural uniformity at the expense of acknowledging the diverse identities and sovereignty of the populace. This highlights a discord between his vision of nationhood and democratic ideals, implying a more authoritarian approach to nation-building that neglects the inclusive and participatory elements crucial for fostering genuine national unity.

In the context of discussing the cultural dimensions of nationhood, it is noteworthy that Anderson posits nation-ness and nationalism as cultural artifacts (4). Anyway, for the sake of the existence of Nepal in the post-colonial situation, Koirala tolerates the king because there is reciprocity between nationalism and democracy. Koirala opposes the king for not having such a democratic character as a component of nationhood beyond soil. Moreover, Koirala claims, “The country, the nation, is represented by the people, not the soil” (289). To avoid negative interpretation, he clarifies differently, “The nation is not the accumulation of rivers big and small. It is the people. If the people disappear due to some magic, there will be no Nepal here. A nation is not some geographical entity, it is a place which is loved and liked by the People” (Koirala 289). The statements of Koirala emphasize the primacy of people over land in defining the nation, aligning with Anderson’s notion of an imagined community where shared identity transcends geographical boundaries. Additionally, his remarks underscore the impact of collective trauma on national identity,

highlighting how emotional connections and cultural attachment shape the concept of nationhood, while also revealing the fragility of this identity in the face of societal challenges. Here, soil represents 'limited' and people represent the 'sovereign' in the form of their freedom (Anderson 7). Koirala values multiple factors of nationhood as used by Anderson to define it. Thus, he also highlights horizontality among people.

In such circumstances, one entity's sustenance is heavily reliant on the presence of another, thereby perpetuating a perpetual struggle for both democracy and nationalism concurrently. The notion of horizontal comradeship within a community becomes imperative, as it fosters cohesive relationships among members. Yet, its realization remains contingent upon the establishment of democratic principles, without which such camaraderie proves elusive. Particularly at that time, as elaborated by Alexander, "Political leaders and intellectuals celebrated new levels of independence and self-government throughout the world, East and West, North and South" (*Trauma* 141). How a South Asian nation like Nepal could be an exception? The observation underscores a global trend where leaders and intellectuals from various regions celebrate increased independence and self-governance, indicating a widespread movement towards autonomy and self-determination, reflecting a universal aspiration for sovereignty and empowerment across nations.

Koirala was concentrated on uplifting the economic standard of the common Nepali. While implementing the policies related to it, Koirala had to face humiliation even while being the prime minister of Nepal. Regarding a painful event, he narrates:

Once, the king asked me to explain my aspirations. I told him they were to provide a standard of middle-class living, such as that of my family as a minimum for all the people. "How long will that take?" he asked, and I replied that it would require me to win elections three times and that I would work

towards that. I used to bring all kinds of matters before the king so that he would not nurse a grudge. However, whenever he addressed a public meeting, the king invariably said something hurtful against our council of ministers. I would then have to respond. In public, he would show himself to be in opposition to me, but in person, he would try to make up for the damage. (197)

The King's attempts to defame the council of ministers led by Koirala were hurtful for him. Still, he compromised because he was not in that mentality to conflict with the king for political stability through a perpetually elected government. As per Upreti "Nepal escaped the colonial occupation and therefore the role of traditional symbols has been less complicated in shaping the nationalism" (540) in Nepal than in other South Asian nations like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The argument suggests that Nepal's lack of colonial occupation has resulted in a less complex role for traditional symbols in shaping nationalism compared to neighboring South Asian nations. Without the disruptive influence of colonialism, Nepal has imagined community which is much rooted in indigenous cultural elements and historical experiences, leading to a distinct trajectory of nationalism (Anderson 10). People and their prosperity were at the center by uplifting the standard of common people to the level of the middle class. As clarified by John Breuilly (2001), a modernizing nation offers tools for contextualizing nationhood (51). The concept highlights the significant role of modernization in shaping nationhood, especially in culturally diverse nations like Nepal. While it brings new ideas and technologies, it challenges the preservation of traditional practices. In Nepal, this tension is evident in political and economic reforms juxtaposed with cultural preservation efforts. The adoption of Western norms in urban areas enriches and dilutes traditional identity, exacerbating social inequalities. Balancing progress with cultural preservation remains crucial.

Once in a public meeting organized by the Nepal-India Friendship Association at the Red Fort, Koirala addressed Indian politicians and people. He stated, “There are no contradictions or distance between the patriotic Nepali and the Patriotic Indian. But how many of you here are true nationalists? Can you tell me, with a hand over your heart? . . . I have a problem with those of you who do not have love for your country in your hearts (217). Here, Koirala is clear, as specified by CK Lal, “Nationality cannot be strengthened without putting foreign policy and relations with close neighbors on a sound footing” (qtd. in Bhandari 429). However, he challenges those dual political characters and false nationalists, who try to project themselves as nationalist by attempting to destabilize others on personal and national levels. Clott has rightly pointed out regarding the situation that there is no doubt that “nationalism serves as a strong political force for social attachment; however, it does not necessitate ideas of superiority over other nation-states” (5). As explained by Anderson, rather than creating hatred against others, nationalists develop their sovereign imagined community, which is full of a “we” feeling (6). He indirectly responds to all the anti-national forces who encouraged misunderstanding among the stakeholders in politics at the national and international levels. It can be interpreted as the expression of his agony of being a political victim at different times.

Koirala’s strong sense of national identity and sovereignty is clear in his 1960 disagreement with Mao Tse Tung over Mount Everest. While visiting China in 1960 and discussing the border issue with Chairman Mao Tse Tung, Mao had proposed, “Let Mount Everest remain a common and let us call it a friendship summit” (Koirala 227). He did not agree to that and said, “But this falls within our country. How can we term it common?” (Koirala 227). Mao was aware that “print languages laid the bases for national consciousnesses” (Anderson 44) and said, “You do not even have a name

for it in your language, and you call it ‘Mount Everest’” (Koirala 227). However, Koirala responded that the Nepali summit used to call it *Sagarmatha* in vernacular language and countered the name *Chomolongma* as a Tibetan name, not Chinese. He even enforced that the summit was in Nepali territory (Koirala 227). In this way, Koirala showed how the vernacular mother tongue became the language of nationalism (Anderson 119). That has contributed to strengthening the Nepali imagined community. Koirala’s exchange with Mao Tse Tung over the naming of Mount Everest illustrates the power of language and territorial claims in shaping national consciousness, ultimately reinforcing the imagined community of Nepal as nationalism is both a course of preserving and producing borders (Conversi 77) for Koirala. The strategic use of language and the assertion of territorial claims play a crucial role in fostering national identity, reinforcing Nepal’s imagined community by both preserving and creating borders.

Koirala considers that historical and cultural nuance certainly contributes to the bilateral relationship between neighboring nations, but “what you see of the future, and what kind of future I want to create, and how we jointly create it” (216). Making the future is also creating history. In the definition of Gyanendra Pandey, “‘Nations’- modern political communities, products of history that are forged in struggle” (*Remembering* 17), Koirala has mastery of such struggles. For him, only by strengthening such an attitude, the nationalism of different nations be more robust. He was on the line of promoting each nation’s nationalism without interfering with their fundamental national interests as Anderson believes that all the nations are limited because “even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind” (7). Koirala reminds us of nuances,

particularly in China and India, in different settings. His diplomatic approach, informed by Anderson's concept of limited nations, prioritizes respecting territorial integrity and national identity to navigate sensitive situations with countries like China and India. By emphasizing mutual understanding and cooperation, Koirala aims to mitigate potential sources of trauma, such as territorial disputes, contributing to national cohesion and stability while averting conflicts over sovereignty and boundaries.

Nepal achieved democracy in 1950, but it could not achieve political stability. Koirala was chosen as the first elected prime minister of Nepal in 1958. However, on 15 December 1960, the King took over the executive power, overthrowing the elected government. Koirala describes:

Whatever the case, on that decisive day there was a thick fog hugging the ground till about 10 am. The delegates to the Tarun Dal convention straggled in late, so the meeting started only at about noontime. I had not eaten, thinking that I would have my meal afterward. I inaugurated the meeting, and it went very well, with delegates having come from all over. One must look at the printed speech from that ceremony to understand my thinking and standpoint. I think it read very well. I do not know which speaker followed me, but Shree Bhadra Sharma had the floor when the military arrived and quickly surrounded us. (252)

Koirala was elected with a two-thirds majority but could not execute the government for more than one and a half years. The description of his last day in the government reflects the political environment of that time, which was fuggy. It indicates the suffocating atmosphere of the nation.

Moreover, the suggestion of Koirala to reflect on his printed speech reminds the understanding Anderson of where he considers print culture as the most influential component of nationalism. Anderson believes that print-capitalism significantly accelerated and enriched this search by enabling a rapidly increasing number of people to conceptualize their identities and relate to others in fundamentally new ways (36). Thus, the printing culture has supported Koirala in communicating his suffering and disseminating his standpoints, expanding an imagined community. Reflecting on Koirala's final day in government amidst political turmoil, his emphasis on revisiting his printed speech highlights the role of print culture in shaping national consciousness, aligning with Anderson's concept of print capitalism. Through print media, Koirala disseminated his views, fostering solidarity and understanding among the populace, despite challenging political circumstances. This utilization of print media underscores its significance in expanding an imagined community and reinforcing nationalist sentiments, contributing to national cohesion and resilience.

The King immediately ordered Koirala's arrest and placed him in solitary confinement after the coup in 1960. Regarding the situation, He reports, "I had suggested to my colleagues there was nothing else to do but be prepared for some suffering. We were there to work at a different political level, but now we had to redirect ourselves and learn to cope with difficult times, with suffering" (254). He accepted suffering and encouraged them to bear the suffering for the nation as "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7). Thus, Koirala felt no worries, and he was at peace there. Commonly, it is paradoxical but exceptionally normal in the case of a resisting hero like Koirala. In the face of arrest and solitary confinement following the 1960 coup, Koirala's acceptance of suffering, and encouragement for his colleagues to endure it for the nation reflects his

embodiment of the concept of the nation as a deep, horizontal comradeship, exemplifying the resilience of a heroic figure dedicated to the cause of resistance.

Reading and writing are two common activities of political prisoners in different nations. Koirala spent time reading the letters and writing responses to his friends and family members. Regarding these, Koirala describes:

Indeed, the letters we received used to be of high caliber. Everyone in that jail was a person of some stature, each one having made some sacrifice. I believe that the more suffering that comes from willing sacrifice, the more one is touched by greatness. I was all the more convinced about this during that time when I studied the responses of my family members. Our entire family was scattered. I had written many letters to Shailaja, very valuable in retrospect, but they are lost. I used to write to Rosa as well, but more about family matters, somewhat witty. My letters to Shailaja had more of a philosophical bent. (267)

The writing from the confinement is serving as a kind of release from mental disturbance. Alexander's focus on trauma narratives highlights the significance of storytelling in processing and making sense of trauma in human life (*Trauma* 96). Similarly, Eyerman's exploration of social trauma underscores how shared experiences of suffering and sacrifice contribute to collective identity formation by sharing tears in the social fabric ("Cultural Trauma: Slavery" 63). Similarly, as Caruth articulates, if PTSD is to be comprehended as a pathological symptom, it should be viewed less as a manifestation of the unconscious mind and more as a symptom rooted in historical experience. This perspective emphasizes, that PTSD reflects the profound impact of historical events on an individual's psyche, rather than merely being an internal psychological disorder (*Trauma* 5). Koirala's reflection on the

quality of the letters received and the emotional connections forged through them underscores the role of communication and connection in navigating trauma and finding resilience within a collective context. In this modern period, in the expression of Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, “the study of consciousness and disruptive impact of traumatic experience” (425) has been popular. The overall description of Koirala validates the assumption. The family was also scattered for the better and greater cause of democracy and nationhood. As believed by Jagat P. Parajuli, “Koirala had enhanced his horizon in nationality, democracy and socialism” (60). Similar to the experience of Koirala’s autobiography, “many autobiographies begin with the circumstances of parents and grandparents, for which the autobiographer can have only circumstantial, textual evidence” (Anderson 204) for the imagined community to develop nationhood. Moreover, it is possible that he could surpass the loneliness of confinement dreaming and planning for a democratic and independent Nepal.

The hopeful feelings did not remain intact. Koirala started to think that the authority does not keep them in confinement in undecided situations. He explains, “When coups are carried out, they also kill. Because they had created such an atmosphere of terror, I thought they would kill us” (258). It is not strange that the Rana regime killed Sukra Raj Shastri, Dasharath Chand, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, and Ganga Lal Shrestha in 1941, and there could be a reiteration of that. One day he observed the setting up of scaffolding from the jail. Koirala explains, “I thought that it was meant for our execution by firing squad. That, in a sense, indicates how tense we were. I thought that, given the context, it was not impossible that they might kill us. At that time, the king was acting very blindly” (258). The use of repeated “us” does not include only Koirala and his friends who were in prison. It supports forming a

community. Similarly, as stated by Alexander, “A ‘we’ must be constructed via narrative and coding, and it is this collective identity that experiences and confronts the danger” (*Trauma* 3) through cultural interpretation of social trauma. It collectively incorporates all the freedom fighters who were against the king’s action with sovereign thought.

In the above-mentioned terrifying political and mental situation, Koirala received a set of questions from the royal palace, and he was asked to respond to them in written form the follows:

Are you willing to live in Nepal following the laws of this country?

What do you have to say about the exercise carried out by His Majesty on 1 Poush?

What new kind of system should His Majesty now introduce?

Democracy needs preparation, in your opinion? (Koirala 259)

Even in such terrifying conditions, Koirala had responded to all the crucial questions without compromising his ideology concerning democracy and nationhood. He emphasizes:

I was a citizen of Nepal and did wish to remain here as a citizen. I was willing to fulfill the duties of a citizen, but as a citizen, I should also be able to enjoy some rights. The rights and duties of the citizens went hand in hand. Secondly, His Majesty’s exercise was quite unnecessary and ill-advised. Thirdly, as far as the future system was concerned, the one that was terminated on 1 Poush should be re-instated. Fourthly, democracy needed no ‘preparation’. The only thing required was that the person who had the power to end a democratic exercise must have faith in democracy- that was the only kind of ‘preparation’ necessary. (259-60)

In that politically horrible situation, Koirala fearlessly responded to the historical and critical questions without compromising his ideology. In the background of the turmoil politics under the threat of execution, one must have inner strength to advocate the rights of the people forcefully and love for the nation. The nation-state has established an external boundary that delineates the scope within which disputes over inclusion and exclusion occur domestically. This boundary marks the limits of the nation state's control and influences how conflicts over who is considered a member of the nation versus who is excluded are contested and resolved within its borders (Alexander *Trauma* 138). Koirala's willingness to remain in the nation and advocate for people's rights has strengthened both patriotism and the democracy of Nepal.

In prison, Koirala again started a fast in protest with some demands. "One was that all of us political prisoners should be kept together . . . that we be allowed to meet our relations . . . that court proceedings be begun" (262). It drew national and international attention, and he got great moral support. Alexander links such action to performative speech acts and explains, "The goal of performative actions is to project the trauma claim to the audience-public persuasively" (*Trauma* 16). On the thirteenth day, the fast ended as the administration accepted the demands. He was successful in the social process of cultural trauma. The news was reported by Jawaharlal Nehru in the Indian parliament, and the Indian MPs stood up and welcomed the news" (Koirala 263) with clapping. By nature, "collective traumas have no geographical or cultural limitations" (Alexander, *Trauma* 30). Though there could be multiple disagreements between Nepal and India, there is solidarity in the case of democracy and human rights transcending the border. Including Nehru, most of the leaders from India had the experience of fighting and suffering for the nation. Some of them were friends of

Koirala, as he had fought for the independence of India and was imprisoned and exiled for several years there.

Even after accepting the demands, the security general did not allow his sister-in-law to meet him, referring to the order he received. Koirala aggressively asked, “So suppose an order comes for you to destroy that village [locating a village on the hill] and loot it. Will you, do it? . . . You are ordered to rape the women there. Will you do it?” (268). The camp commandant replied, “We will” (Koirala 268). Koirala became angry and added, “They will ask you to rape your daughter, will you?” That made the camp commandant quiet (268). When constructing a compelling trauma narrative, it is essential to identify the perpetrator, known as the “antagonist,” to comprehend who caused the harm to the victim and inflicted the trauma. As Alexander argues, “In creating a compelling trauma narrative, it is critical to establish the identity of the perpetrator- the ‘antagonist.’ Who actually injured the victim? Who caused the trauma?” (*Trauma* 19). Koirala effectively attributes the responsibility of the perpetrator and advocates nationalism together. Anyway, the commander remained quiet when he heard the word “daughter”. It shows that at a particular point, everyone realizes the limitations.

Moreover, the forms of mothers are the ultimate limitation, which can hardly compromise the point. Indirectly, Koirala is indicating nationhood within the use of the words, woman and daughter on one hand and the superiority of morality on the other. In this sense, even in adverse circumstances, one has to be faithful to the nation.

While discussing Ganesh Man Singh, Koirala took him to be an “extremely disciplined” colleague (271). However, while talking about the security force of the jail, Singh said, “Are these humans? Of course, not, they are animals! Two-legged animals!” (Koirala 269). The perception of Singh as a camp commandant is built

based on his hatred for autocracy. In the case of perceiving Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as a pathological symptom in trauma studies, as clarified by Caruth, “it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history” (*Trauma* 5). Singh’s perception of the camp commandant as inhuman stems from his deep-seated hatred for autocracy and his anger towards the absolute monarchy. At the same time, Caruth’s view of PTSD as a symptom of history underscores the complex interplay between individual experiences and broader socio-political contexts in trauma studies. Furthermore, it represents his anger toward the absolute monarchy that had imprisoned them for several years.

Koirala has reviewed both the strengths and weaknesses of the armed revolution and expresses:

I did give the call for armed revolution, and we suffered grievously from that. I lost shining young people, such as Ram and Laxman, who would today be in the middle run of leadership and providing me much-needed support at this time. Saroj was killed, although it cannot be said that he died during the process of armed struggle. However, their sacrifice has contributed even today, in terms of the public’s receptivity towards our party. (Koirala 275)

Remarkably, the grief of the loss is revealed with the movement’s contribution to establishing political imaginings in the form of sacrifice. Furthermore, Anderson rhetorically questions himself and responds, “What makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history generate such colossal sacrifices? I believe that the beginnings of an answer lie in the cultural roots of nationalism” (7). Koirala even justified his last seven years of exile in India rather than doing politics from the Nepali Jail. Koirala claims, “I was able to show India that I was able to organize yet remain out of its control. Similarly, we were able to make decisions outside of the king’s control”

(291). Finally, he returned to Nepal with a proposal for national reconciliation to make nationalism more assertive. As claimed by Greenberg, it is about how the “Revolutionary historical events and leaders cast new citizens in pioneering roles in the forging of a nation” (qtd. in Alexander, *Trauma*” 142). This statement suggests that revolutionary events and leaders play a crucial role in shaping national identity by positioning citizens as active participants in the nation-building process.

Frequent premature deaths in the Koirala family also did not force the members to stop their journey for a great cause. While managing the return to Nepal, “Girija’s wife Sushma died of burns. Girija did not let the tragedy affect him, and fully engaged in trying to arrange the talk between me and the king” (283). Girija Prasad Koirala played a crucial role at that time as a skilled negotiator. In this sense, personal tragedies were forgotten, particularly in the case of Saroj and Sushma, for the sake of national makeup when sovereignty was at risk. In one discussion between Girija Prasad Koirala and Jayaprakash Narayan of India regarding the terrible condition of BP Koirala in Sundari Jal Jail, Narayan said, “Now BP’s friends and relations must still themselves. He could even die. He is being sacrificed for his country, for his ideals. We must be strong” (Koirala 285). Even the political leader from India appreciated the democratic and nationalistic ideals of Koirala, interpreting the contemporary political scenario of Nepal, where Koirala was ready to accept death, not only trauma but also did not compromise with fundamental political values. Especially while discussing his model of nationalism, Koirala highlights people more than geography and states:

The nation is not the accumulation of rivers, big and small. It is the people. If the people disappear due to some magic, there will be no Nepal here. The

nation is not some geographical entity; it is a place that is loved and liked by the people. (289)

Geography matters as a limited imagined community (Anderson 5), but people are at the center of Koirala's model of nation and nationhood. Similarly, Anthony D. Smith also believes that a nation implies a "cultural and political bond", uniting in a single political body that shares notable values and native land (14-15). More than these, Koirala locates people and their desires at the forefront while discussing nationhood, as Samaddar believes that there could not be unity among the nationalists in the absence of democracy in a nation (95). This statement emphasizes that while geography and cultural-political bonds are important, Koirala prioritizes the will and aspirations of the people, asserting, like Samaddar, that true national unity is impossible without democracy.

In addition to his involvement in the Independence Movement of India, Koirala also made significant contributions to the Independence Movement of East Pakistan. That made him a leader beyond Nepal. As Bangladeshi socialists requested that Jayaprakash Narayan to persuade Koirala to provide weapons, Narayan said to Koirala, "They, Mujib's group, have the money but are finding it difficult to get arms. . . . Please help them get some weapons if you can" (Koirala 301). After that, Bangladeshis also requested. Finally, Koirala agreed, and his friends Sudhir, Sushil, and Chakra handed him a truck of weapons and even backed them with an instructor Colonel Rai because Bangladesh had all the characteristics of a separate independent nation (Koirala 302-304). The sufferings were identical as Alexander believes, "When collectivities are subjected to disruptive forces, they are challenged not only objectively but subjectively, with sharp and persistent questions arising about their constructions of collective identities" (*Trauma* 138) as developed between Koirala

and Sheikh M. Rahman. The weapons were not sufficient, but symbolically significant in fighting for the establishment of a separate Bengali nation. Koirala had left no stone unturned to collect the weapons for the liberation of Nepal from autocracy, but gave them the feeling of empathy that “Bangladeshis seemed bent on suicide” compared to the equipped Pakistan (Koirala 302). The collective mental wound was sufficient to justify armed revolution (Ramanathapillai 1). In this regard, Koirala feels the suffering of the Bangladeshis for supporting the war, and she got independence in 1971, establishing a new nationhood.

Despite significantly supporting the liberation of Bangladesh, Koirala was not happy with the leaders, including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Just sending a message to Jayaprakash, Mujibur said, “I am finding it difficult to do that [inviting him to Bangladesh to show gratitude], my relations to Indira Gandhi will suffer” (Koirala 304) and sent a secret message of thankfulness (Koirala 304). Both are genuine that the wound of the partition of India has pressured Indira to support the independence movement of Bangladesh, and the independence of Bangladesh is not durable in that troubled period without pleasing India rather than openly honoring Koirala. However, these activities of Rahman verified the Indian attitude toward Koirala and Nepal at that time.

Thus, the decision of Koirala to return from India was genuinely guided by nationalistic motives, particularly limitedness. In reading life writing, as stated by Smith and Watson, one has to “consider digressions, omissions, contradictions, gaps, and silences about certain things” (171). While filling such gaps, the annexation of Sikkim posed a significant threat to Nepali nationhood at the time, as it was linked to the existence of Nepal, nationalism, and the narrative of Nepali nationalism (Bhandari 426). Similarly, *Atmabrittanta* narrates the diverse aspects of Nepali nationhood.

Moreover, Koirala was disappointed with Mujibur that both Jayaprakash and Koirala were not visibly credited for their backing. Koirala got neither the replacement of the weapons nor the payment for them. Ultimately, the concept of hijacking a plane came to manage funds for the revolution (Koirala 304) on 10 June 1973. All these reflect Koirala's dissatisfaction with the leadership of the newly formed Bangladesh and indicate that he is not related to Mrs. Gandhi and plans to leave India as soon as possible to manage resources for the revolution in Nepal being in his homeland. The autobiography is not the planned version of narration. It was tape-recorded when he had a realization about early death. Habermas and Bartoli in a clinical sense, approach traumatic experiences as the result of the fragmentation of one's life story, which leads to a disruption in self-continuity and the inability to narrate the traumatic event coherently and sequentially (204). Because of that, "How much concern is there for organizing the narrative through chronology? If the narrative is discontinuous or if it skips over long periods, what effects do these gaps have on the story produced?" (Smith and Watson 171). Mostly, the questions are answered before inferring that Koirala suffered much for the nation, and all these are reflected in his disjointed text.

Consequently, the concepts of democracy and nationhood are indispensable for Koirala throughout the text. He perceives Nepal as an imagined political community and actively works towards the sovereignty of the people and nation, accepting challenges and enduring hardships in the process.

Correspondingly, *An Autobiography* of Nehru recounts the mental wounds of the Indian freedom fighters. It pleads for developing horizontal comradeship among the Indians, though Nehru, as the author claims that the writing does not have any politics more than being engaged in prison for their therapeutic purpose. In such a

situation, Philippe Lejeune relates that the narrators develop an “autobiographical pact,” and their readers are based on the integrity of the narrations (12) as interpretation becomes inevitable in deciphering the politics of such writing.

Moreover, Venkitachalam considers the digging of the diverse layers of memory as an “archaeological model” in narration (315). Such a culture of interpretation aligns with Nehru’s autobiography, as he delves into the multiple layers of his experiences and memories to construct a complex narrative that reflects his journey and the historical context of life is full of anecdotes of struggles.

Moreover, it tells the tales of trauma and does the popular politics of patriotism. Gayatri C. Spivak argues, “When we speak for ourselves, we urge with conviction: the personal is also political” (179). Besides, it is natural to be political in the case of a politician’s autobiography. Further, writing an autobiography is a daring venture of discovering oneself. Janet Malcolm declares that one should not be afraid to invent, particularly oneself in autobiography (297-8). Such invention resonates with Nehru’s approach in his autobiography, where he shapes his narrative and identity to present a version of his life that aligns with his beliefs and aspirations, blending personal truth with literary artefacts.

Nehru has also written his life story and history, as Manning Clark said that his life was for hammering the “last nail in the coffin of British Australia” (qtd. in Mark McKenna 213). However, the autobiography of Nehru does not describe the last moment of the British in India, as it was published during the anti-colonial movement for national consciousness. As explained by D. K. Hingorani, consciousness serves as a force for freedom in the case of nations that have faced years of colonialism. Still, it is challenging to develop horizontal relationships among nations with diverse and complex linguistic, cultural, and religious patterns, like in India (32). National

consciousness can promote independence in post-colonial countries, but achieving unification in diverse linguistic, artistic, and religious contexts, such as India, presents significant challenges.

Nehru highlights that Indian nationalism was revitalized as a reactionary force against colonialism during the Indian Independence Movement. However, as remarked by him in the Eastern world, religion often served as fundamental for nationalism then, and was not acceptable to him (26). Anderson also believes, “If the development of print-as-commodity is the key to the generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity, still, we are simply at the point where communities of the type ‘horizontal-secular, transverse-time’ become possible” (37). Nehru’s belief concerning secularism stands on “an entire divorce of state from religion” (Gould 6). However, different cultural and religious aspects were exploited while fighting for independence in India by his leaders and party as the roots of nationalism germinated in South Asia, particularly in India, in the Independence Movement (Upreti 537). The demand for self-determination in politics has developed the re-enchantment of the imagined community in India.

Nehru identifies the nationalist movement of India as a new nationalism. The economic and educational, as well as religious factors, were active in narrating discourses regarding new nationalism, which particularly “grew up from above-the upper-class English-speaking intelligentsia and this was naturally confined to the Hindus, for the Muslims were educationally very backwards” (Nehru 477). Upreti also posits that this group represented the indigenous elite who sought to rally the populace in opposition to foreign rule in the name of nationalism (537). It does not apply to Gandhi, who borrowed religious terms like *Satyagraha* and *Khilafat* from Hindu and Muslim communities.

Among different factors, as commented by Dženana Husremović and Maida Koso-Drljević, “religion is often an important determinant of defining collective identity” (360). The statement suggests that religion plays a crucial role in shaping collective identity, and it is considered a noteworthy issue supporting the expansion of cultural trauma. Similarly, Nehru narrates, “the annual sessions of the Congress became a little more exciting and the Muslim League began to march with the Congress” (34-35). It shows that in the earlier movements for independence, major religious communities of India were together to minimize the political and psychological subjugation in the motherland rather than their direct religious’ necessities. It is natural that “the struggle for independence required support and involvement of different communities, religions, and groups” (Upreti 541). Gandhi is rational, even creating discourses bridging diverse groups for the nationhood of India, but faced a tragic assassination by an internal and extremist religious group within the nation. However, Upreti also interprets the attempt to bring different religious groups together for independence as creating a platform for developing the politics of tolerance in the form of secular nationhood (541) as dreamt by Nehru. Colonialism was a suffocating barrier between the British and the Indians in India. “Each bores the other and is glad to get away from him to breathe freely and move naturally again” (Nehru 31). Considering colonialism as trauma, it can be argued that “anti-colonial cultural and social movements emerged, constituting one of the principal forces for civil repair in the twentieth century” (Alexander, *Trauma* 141), giving rise to anti-colonial nationhood. Indians have experienced the discomfort of feeling like strangers in their land, while the British likely felt uneasy due to the rise of the nationalist movement in India.

To recover from the suffocation, Indian activists prepared and planned to endure more suffering for the ultimate solution to the political and psychological wound. Regarding such preparedness, Nehru narrates that his “father- discovered later- tried sleeping on the floor to find out what it was like, as he thought that this would be my lot in prison” (46). Nehru reflects on his father’s empathy and solidarity with the freedom struggle, as his father attempted to experience the hardships of imprisonment by sleeping on the floor, anticipating the sacrifices Nehru might face. Nehru recounts, “Both of us had a distressing time, and night after night I wandered about alone, tortured in mind and trying to grope my way out” (46). The father and son’s shared experiences of hardship and commitment to India’s independence highlight their dedication. Volkan’s concept of “chosen trauma” describes how tragedy is embedded in collective memory and passed down through generations, even to those far removed in time and space from the actual event (48). All the political rehearsal is also a chosen trauma for nationhood.

Chosen trauma serves as a foundational element in shaping collective identity, as it fosters a shared historical narrative rooted in ancestral suffering and group dynamics. The transmission of the group’s “injured selves” allows for the creation of a common history based on ancestral trauma and in-group and out-group dynamics, eventually establishing the connection between trauma, memory, and ontological safety (Volkan 48). Such a form of “social trauma influences group identity; it shapes individual and collective coping processes as well as transgenerational transmission” (Hamburger et al. v). It implies that social trauma experiences affect both individual and collective identities, affecting how individuals deal with and pass on these impacts to future generations. The inference is made stronger as Nehru describes his college days in a foreign land and reveals, “I was a pure nationalist; my vague

socialist ideas of college days having sunk into the background” (38). As primarily defined by Anderson, a nation is “an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). Political ideology does not have space in his definition of a nation, as Nehru practices. Religion as a cultural construct has a role in forming nationhood, but Nehru is not concerned with this factor. However, Western education, particularly the European model, has played a noteworthy role in formulating the belief in socialism as his political ideology.

During *Satyagraha* Days in India, the political environment was infused with violence. Colonial officers were showing their extreme form of brutality. There was “the complete suspension of business, firing by the police and military at Delhi and Amritsar, and the killing of many people- mob violence in Amritsar and Ahmedabad, the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh” (Nehru 46), which reminds the victimhood of colonized people, particularly Indians. In the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919, Nehru reports:

With a murderous fire mowing them down and unable to find a way out, thousands of people rushed to this wall and tried to climb over it. The fire was then directed, it appears (both from our evidence and the innumerable bullet marks on the wall itself), towards this wall to prevent people from escaping over it. And when all was over, some of the biggest heaps of dead and wounded lay on either side of this wall. (47)

The massacre was sufficient to bring nationalist Indians to realize cultural trauma. Regarding it, Alexander clarifies, “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group’s consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identities in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (*Trauma* 6).

This collective feeling of some terrible events creating an ineradicable memory ultimately turns out to be a binding principle of nationhood. In the expression of Hiro Saito, such catastrophic loss becomes “national trauma” (353) as Nehru posits colonialism and its oppression as a root cause of Indian trauma that shapes collective awareness, which permanently affects memories, and radically transforms future identities. Nehru and his friends visited the so-called Bagh after the massacre for an investigation on the side of the Indian Congress. The massacre had left a traumatic stigma in the psyche of humanity, particularly in the minds and bodies of Indians. The situation was dire, but it galvanized India to hasten its movement for independence from colonial rule.

The Indian peasants were also conscious of their independence and rights. Nehru was not from the peasant class. However, when he came into contact with the class in the independence movement in the countryside, he found them “blind, poverty-stricken, suffering mass, resigned to their miserable fate and sat upon and exploited by all who came in contact with them, the Government, landlords, money-lenders, petty officials, police, lawyers, priests” (Nehru 53). That motivates him to protect their rights through political change and economic reform, establishing a deep and horizontal comradeship with them (Anderson 7). Related to it, Nehru further explains the peasantry:

Looking at them and their misery and overflowing gratitude, I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy-going and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city, which ignored this vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, and sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India. A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, crushed, and utterly miserable. And their faith in us, casual visitors

from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me. (57)

Nehru reflects on the deep shame and sorrow he felt when confronted with the extreme poverty and suffering of India's peasantry, which starkly contrasted with his own comfortable life, awakening in him a sense of responsibility that both humbled and frightened him. However, modern Nehru was influenced by socialism in Europe when he was there for his studies, but this intimacy with the peasants sharpened that philosophy practically in the Indian model. Concerning this, Adam B. Lerner observes that Nehru, the quintessential Indian elite, faced discomfort in representing his diverse, impoverished fellow citizens, a challenge compounded by the complexity of translating their suffering into effective policy (Lerner 9). It becomes a kind of experiential learning of Indian anthropology and nationalism.

Furthermore, the peasant class was proactive in the Indian Independence Movement, and the colonial rulers ruthlessly targeted the class. Nehru explains:

Firing on *kisans* took place on two occasions in Rae Bareli district about that time, and then began, what was much worse, a reign of terror for every prominent *kisan* worker or member of a *panchayat*. The government had decided to crush the movement. Hand spinning on the *charkha* was then spreading among the peasantry at the instance of the Congress. A *charkha*, therefore, became the symbol of sedition, and its owner got into trouble, the *charkha* itself being often burnt. (66)

The peasant class active in the nationalist movement faced violence, including killings and arrests by the colonizers and their allies. It is a form of anti-colonial nationalism. The abovementioned symbols of resistance, such as the *charkha*, were often destroyed to suppress Indian will. Madhusree Mukerjee notes that extensive famine weakened

anti-colonial movements (134-35). Despite the severe impact of famines and epidemics, farmers bravely resisted the combined oppression from the regime and property owners (Nehru 67). The dream of a just nation and social equity helped alleviate the pain of their physical and emotional wounds. All these are relevant “As the world’s territory has been scaled down from empires and up from cities, globalizing rhetorics charged nation-states with the mission of democracy and equality” (Alexander, *Trauma* 159), which was massively advocated by Nehru.

All the people who were devoted to the independence of India had a sense of freedom at the center. The dream of independence has helped them to forget all their glooms. As asserted by Nehru:

The old feeling of oppression and frustration was completely gone. There was no more whispering, no roundabout legal phraseology to avoid getting into trouble with the authorities. We said what we felt and shouted it out from the housetops. What did we care for the consequences? Prison? We looked forward to it; that would help our cause still further. (76)

The frustration and operation were not forgotten; they were compromised because the strong feeling of nationhood has made the trauma weaker. The collective trauma constructed by colonialism can thus become “the epicenter of group identity and a lens through which group members understand their social environment and act upon perceived existential threats” (Porobić 255). Further, they were even ready to tolerate more suffering for the nation.

Gandhiji was one of the single most powerful metaphors for a master sufferer. Nehru and his family had an intimacy with him. Still, Nehru was mostly critical of Gandhi for mixing politics and religion. As he narrates:

Gandhiji, indeed, was continually laying stress on the religious and spiritual side of the movement. His religion was not dogmatic, but it did mean a religious outlook on life, and the whole movement was strongly influenced by this and took on a revivalist character so far as the masses were concerned. (78)

Nehru's reflection reveals his discomfort with Gandhi's blending of religion and politics, suggesting that while he respected Gandhi's moral authority, he was critical of the movement's revivalist tone and its appeal to religious sentiment among the masses. It can be logical to solve the political problem of India by observing the psychology of the people, as Gandhi has chosen religious symbols. However, this Hindu nationalism was "more evident in Congress activities, is more problematic to define but more significant" (Gould 7). Many Congress leaders, including Nehru's father, adhered to the established format of the nationalist movement, with slight adaptations, as it effectively mobilized the populace (Nehru 78). Even by being a member of a non-interactive community, there is an imagining among the members (Anderson 6) in the form of a nation and nationhood.

Nehru was a secular character, but he compromised Gandhi's working procedure and revealed Gandhi's "frequent reference to *Rama Raj* as a golden age which would return. But I was powerless to intervene, and I consoled myself with the thought that Gandhiji used the words because they were well-known and understood by the masses" (79). The retrospective reference to *Rama Raj* is repeatedly used to indicate the prospective days of Gandhi for effective communication with people. The religious and spiritual strategy adopted by Gandhi and Congress helps provide an essential "framework, space, discipline, and mobilization" (Gould 267) at the time of necessity.

Nehru was always critical of Gandhi, but he could hardly imagine the political environment of India excluding him in that context and he says, “I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question, and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set!” (386). Religion was one of the major barriers among them. Because of that, Chatterjee finds Nehru projecting Gandhi as a complex portrayal and Nehru as a confused character over the figure of Gandhi (*Nationalist Thought* 30), as Nehru did not want to mix religion and politics but could not practically oppose as Gandhi perpetually imposed it. Nehru considers John Dewey’s definition of religion a modern one in which religion is projected as “any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles, and despite threats of personal loss, because of conviction of its general and enduring value, is religious in quality” (396). He accepts the definition of religion in politics, too in terms of a healer.

By the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, a new phase of national consciousness emerged in India. Despite its cultural and religious diversity, various communities united in the struggle for nationalism, sharing a collective sense of nationhood. As Nehru expresses, this marked a defining moment in the composition of Indian nationalism:

There was a strange mixture of nationalism and politics and religion and mysticism and fanaticism. Behind all this was agrarian trouble and, in the big cities, a rising working-class movement. Nationalism and a vague but intense country-wide idealism sought to bring together all these various, and sometimes mutually contradictory, discontents, and succeeded to a remarkable degree. And yet this nationalism itself was a composite force, and behind it

could be distinguished a Hindu nationalism, a Muslim nationalism partly looking beyond the frontiers of India, and, what was more in consonance with the spirit of the times, an Indian nationalism. For the time being they overlapped and all pulled together. (81)

Nehru and other Congress leaders often disagreed with Gandhi, yet Gandhi succeeded in instilling a sense of nationalistic consciousness in Indians. He united people from diverse religions and communities for the broader common good. India is “a museum of cults and customs, creeds and cultures, faiths and tongues, racial types and social systems” (Hingorani 33). All were forgetting their suffering and mindfully performing for nationalism as the single most significant target. Religious aspects are secondary for the different religious groups as they all were oriented to the primary goal of achieving independence and nationhood.

Nehru had his interpretation of nationalism. Contextually at the time of the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-2, Nehru believed “Nationalism is essentially an anti-feeling, and it feeds and fattens on hatred and anger against other national groups, especially against the foreign rulers of a subject country” (81). The definition becomes significant, particularly in the cases of the colonized nations fighting for their nationhood. In this regard, Ernest Gellner argues that nationalism does not awaken nations but creates them where they did not exist (*Thought and Change* 169). This also implies that nationalism is not something inherent within the nation; rather, it is the product of socio-economic dynamics of the society. In the case of India, “There was certainly this hatred and anger in India in 1921 against the British but, in comparison with other countries similarly situated, it was extraordinarily little” (Nehru 81). Gandhiji’s model of non-violent resistance deliberately avoided fostering hostility toward others. Instead, it emphasized compassion and moral strength,

promoting a spirit of generosity even in the face of struggle. Reflecting this outlook, Nehru noted, “Why be angry and full of hate when we were doing so well and were likely to win through soon? We felt that we could afford to be generous” (81), capturing the movement’s commitment to ethical resistance over resentment. The anti-feeling concerning nationalism was also operated symbolically. Relating to the movement of opposing foreign garments and promoting *Khadi*, Nehru shares, “In particular, I am interested in the boycott of foreign clothes. This item of our program continued in spite of the withdrawal of civil resistance” (Nehru 95). Such peaceful resistance was optimistically launched with the hope of getting sovereignty soon rather than fighting directly using violent means.

Moreover, the covert form of resistance was not acknowledged by the colonizers, as “towards the end of November, the Congress volunteers in Bengal were declared illegal and this was followed by a similar declaration for the United Provinces” (Nehru 85). Although this created a problematic situation, the activists remained undeterred in amplifying the slogans of nationhood and independence. Reflecting this spirit, Congress leader Deshbandhu Das delivered a stirring message to Bengal: “I feel the handcuffs on my wrists and the weight of iron chains on my body. It is the agony of bondage. The work of must be carried on. What matters it whether I am taken or left? What matters it whether I am dead or alive?” (Nehru 85). The leader’s harsh yet determined message served as a guide for nationalist leaders to pursue freedom and nationhood without sacrificing their personal lives. Although colonizers mistreated prisoners’ bodies, their commitment to independence provided them with solace.

Nehru describes his first political arrest for distributing notices for a *hartal*, but “three months later I was informed in the prison, where I was with my father and

others, that some revising authority had concluded that I was wrongly sentenced and I was to be discharged” (94). It indicates the lawlessness, arbitrariness, and immaturity of the government. Because of this, Nehru had to tolerate solitary confinement. However, he was not satisfied, and he felt “unhappy and lonely outside the prison” (Nehru 95). Regarding it, Nehru says, “When so many of my friends and colleagues were behind prison bars” (95). The paradox of home resembling prison and prison resembling home arises from the comradeship among nationalists. This bond transforms the confinement of prison into a space of solidarity. It reflects “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 7) among the members of the freedom fighters.

The aggressive political environment frequently led to the arrest and release of leaders. However, for Nehru, “prison was an almost unknown place, and very few knew what happened behind the grim gates . . . the place was associated with isolation, humiliation, and suffering, and, above all, the fear of the unknown” (Nehru 96) in 1921. The situation of the gaol was “full of abnormality and a dull suffering and a dreadful monotony” (97) but not sufficient for harassing the freedom fighters. At the time of the freedom struggle, a gaol came to signify the repressive nature of colonial rule in India (Arnold and Blackburn 29). That further made them mature and stronger in the sense of bearing shocks.

Living in solitary confinement means leaving numerous possessions and tolerating several unwanted grotesques. Nehru mainly lists that “most of all one misses the sound of women’s voices and children’s laughter. The sounds one usually hears are not of the pleasantest. The voices are harsh and minatory, and the language brutal and largely consisting of swear-words” (105). There was an insensitive treatment of the detainees in prison. What other can be remembered rather than mother and motherland at the time of a grave problem? The voice of the woman

commonly indicate mother, wife, and daughter, and the motherland in the larger sense. Nehru goes on to describe the cold-hearted treatment of the colonial rulers that the prisoners received in detention:

Santanum and I were handcuffed together, his left wrist to my right one, and a chain attached to the handcuff was held by the policeman leading us. Gidwani, also handcuffed and chained, brought up the rear. This march of ours down the streets of Jaito town reminded me forcibly of a dog being led on by a chain. We felt somewhat irritated, to begin with, but the humor of the situation dawned upon us, and on the whole, we enjoyed the experience. We did not enjoy the night that followed. (118-9)

Nehru conveys a feeling of being dehumanized in prison while ironically romanticizing it. The collective traumas significantly influenced his political outlook (Lerner 19). His ability to find purpose in fighting for nationalism through non-cooperation with colonial rulers have been a healing strategy. Henry Krystal considers the traumatized situations that “Every pain aroused in the process of reviewing one’s life as an individual or history of a group merely marks an area deprived of the self-healing application of the feeling of identity, self-sameness, and selfhood” (87). The pain felt when reflecting on experiences highlights a loss of identity and self-understanding that is essential for healing. Moreover, the chain also teaches the lesson related to collaboration and cooperation as Nehru shares, “Neither of us could move at all without the other’s co-operation. To be handcuffed to another person for a whole night and part of a day is not an experience should like to repeat” (119). Nevertheless, the moment is so traumatic. Thus, he does not even think about recurring it again in anyone’s life.

Nehru often analyzed Gandhi, especially when discussing a meeting where Gandhi failed to address one of his key concerns and showed reluctance to embrace long-term projects for modern India (132). Nonetheless, Nehru acknowledges their deep family ties and the historical relationship between his father and Gandhi, highlighting their growing affection (137). Does Nehru's critical view of Gandhi's hesitation toward long-term modern projects not coexist with his recognition of their deepening personal and historical bond, suggesting that intellectual disagreement need not undermine mutual respect and affection?

The nationalist leaders from India fought for independence without regard for personal benefits, but officials subjugated them and treated them as taboo. Regarding such suppression, Nehru recounts, "Any resolution of sympathy with the national movement is frowned upon; textbooks which might have a nationalist flavor are not permitted in the municipal schools, even pictures of national leaders are not allowed there" (153). The whole education system was captured to marginalize the national consciousness of India. About sacrificing the family issue for the greater cause of the nation and nationalism, and his terrible rush of 1925, Nehru shares, "In the autumn of that year, my wife fell seriously ill, and for many months she lay in a Lucknow hospital. The Congress was held that year at Cawnpore, and, somewhat distracted, I rushed backwards and forwards between Allahabad, Cawnpore, and Lucknow" (155) as the General Secretary of the Congress then. After that, further treatment in Switzerland was suggested for Nehru's wife, Kamala. He elaborates:

I welcomed the idea, for I wanted an excuse to go out of India myself. My mind was befogged, and no clear path was visible; and I thought that, perhaps, if I was far from India, I could see things in better perspective and lighten up the dark corners of my mind. (155)

The paradox lies in Nehru's outward reason for travelling, his wife's treatment, contrasting with his inner desire to escape personal confusion, revealing a conflict between his public duty and private struggle. These elements suggest that Nehru has a troubled mental condition, indicating his need for rest.

Nehru was always against religious extremism. More specifically, he was against bringing religion into politics by different communities, but even Congress could not avoid that. He elucidates:

Many a Hindu felt that there was too much of the stand-up-and-deliver about the Muslim attitude, too much of an attempt to extort fiscal privileges with the threat of going over to the other side. Because of this, the Hindu Mahasabha rose to some importance, representing as it did Hindu nationalism, and Hindu communalism opposing Muslim communalism. The aggressive activities of the Mahasabha acted on and stimulated still further this Muslim communalism, and so action and reaction went on, and in the process, the communal temperature of the country went up. (167)

The activism of one religious group has inspired another group towards communalism and compartmentalization of politics. However, in a positive sense, both are synthesized for the immediate goal of independence, disregarding internal differences.

Nehru was one of the great nationalist leaders from India but his belief and attitude was so expanded and various socio-economic and political factors were fundamentals of his model of nationhood. Because of that, he was critical to other contemporary leaders and lived with conflicts within him. He elaborates:

I felt full of energy and vitality, and the sense of inner conflict and frustration that had oppressed me so often previously was, for the time being, absent. My outlook was wider, and nationalism by itself seemed to me a narrow and

insufficient creed. Political freedom, and independence were no doubt essential, but they were steps only in the right direction; without social freedom and a socialistic structure of society and the State, neither the country nor the individual could develop much. (175)

The overall development of the people and the nation was the major aim of his politics and nationalism. Independence was the necessary condition for achieving these but independence, just as political freedom, was not sufficient for him for the development of India. “The preparation was largely an ideological one. First of all, there should be no doubt about the objective of political independence” (Nehru 175), but not the end of the nationalistic journey. Nehru’s dream of social reform burdened his political journey, but his model of nationalism drove this pressure. Clott also believes that nationalism gets its full intensity when there is the deterioration of the domination of religious communities and dynasty rule (3). This model is shaped by his Western education, numerous visits to developed nations, and close study of Indian politics, economics, and societies.

The colonial administration was muscular against the mass campaign that was initiated to counter the Simon Commission in Lucknow after the attack and death of a leader, Lala Lajpat Rai. Enlarging on the police brutality, Nehru narrates:

I emerged with a somewhat greater conceit of my physical condition and powers of endurance. But the memory that endures with me, far more than that of the beating itself, is that of many of the faces of those policemen, and especially of the officers, who were attacking us. Most of the real beating and battering was done by European sergeants, the Indian rank and file were milder in their methods. And those faces, full of hate and blood-lust, almost mad, with no trace of sympathy or touch of humanity! (191)

The exposition of the colonial cruelty and the mental wound of the nationalist protestors presents the anecdote of the struggle and the sacrifice of the people for the sovereignty of India.

There was an extensive trade union movement in Bombay in 1928 and 29. The exploitation of labor was the core issue. As pointed out by Nehru:

All these huge profits went to the owners and shareholders, and the workers continued as before. The slight rise in wages was usually counterbalanced by a rise in prices. During these days when millions were being made feverishly, most of the workers continued to live in the most miserable of hovels, and even their women-folk had hardly clothes to wear. The conditions in Bombay were bad enough, but perhaps even worse was the lot of the jute workers, within an hour's drive of the palaces of Calcutta. Semi-naked women, wild and unkempt, working away for the barest pittance so that a broad river of wealth should flow ceaselessly to Glasgow and Dundee, as well as to some pockets in India. (198)

Nehru emphasized economic justice as a key pillar of independence and nationalism, but it was often overlooked. Berch Berberoglu argues that colonizers implemented economic strategies in developing countries to maintain control and suppress self-determination (33). Nonetheless, the trade union movement, particularly in Bombay, spread across India, fostering national consciousness and contributing to nationalism. The working class's struggles had mixed recognition in political circles.

The Congress session was going to be held in Lahore in 1929, and the English police officer who was accused of killing Lala Lajpat Rai was shot in Lahore.

Regarding that, Nehru explains:

In the Lahore conspiracy case, some extraordinary scenes were enacted in court by the police, and a great deal of public attention was drawn to the case because of this. As a protest against the treatment given to them in court and in prison, there was a hunger strike on the part of most of the prisoners. I forget the exact reason why it began, but ultimately the question involved became the larger one of the treatment of prisoners, especially Political. This hunger strike went on from week to week and created a stir in the country. Owing to the physical weakness of the accused, they could not be taken to court, and the proceedings had to be adjourned repeatedly. (204)

Political prisoners faced apolitical treatment, and court procedures were often disregarded. Their tolerance exceeded its limits, leading to non-violent resistance such as hunger strikes, embodying self-sacrifice. Laub argues that the severe effects of trauma can be better understood by considering the unchecked, unassimilated aspects of the death instinct, which are deep and impactful (“Traumatic Shutdown” 316). This posits that the death instinct and other long-term, unprocessed trauma symptoms provide a handy lens through which to view the breakdown of social and national cohesiveness in Nepal and that such a nation’s stability and sense of self can be severely compromised by unresolved collective trauma.

However, the administration was not ready to treat the wounds of the freedom fighters. Still, they did not give up and compromise with the basic ideology of independence. Nehru visits a prison and explains:

I saw Bhagat Singh for the first time, Jatindranath Das, and a few others. They were all very weak and bedridden, and it was hardly possible to talk to them much. Bhagat Singh had an attractive, intellectual face, remarkably calm and peaceful. There seemed to be no anger in it. He looked and talked with great

gentleness, but then I suppose that anyone who has been tasting for a month will look spiritual and gentle. Jatin Das looked milder still, soft and gentle like a young girl. He was in considerable pain when I saw him. He died later, as a result of fasting, on the sixty-first day of the hunger strike. (204-5)

The denial of humane treatment to prisoners, including the return to peaceful resistance through hunger strikes and the tragic deaths of protesters, is shocking. The unwavering dedication of freedom fighters like Jatin Das and Bhagat Singh inspires true citizens of India to continue their fight for nationhood. As hoped by Nehru, Congress was not the labor party representing only the proletariat: “It was, perhaps, a vain hope, for nationalism can only go far in a socialistic or proletarian direction by ceasing to be nationalism. Yet I felt that, bourgeois as the outlook of the National Congress was, it did represent the only effective revolutionary force in the country” (Nehru 209). However, Congress left no stone unturned in empowering all classes of people, particularly to advance nationalism in India.

Nehru was living with mental conflicts. He foregrounds them as “a conflict of ideas, desires, and loyalties, of subconscious depths struggling with outer circumstances, of an inner hunger unsatisfied” (219). Because of these, he became “a battleground, where various forces struggled for mastery” (Nehru 219). In this manner, he reveals his mental wound that was to be tolerated for achieving the ultimate goal of independence. For him, such trauma cannot be greater than the collective aspirations of the nation. Nehru connects writing to therapy in prison assumed to offer him solace. He further particularizes the reason, “Why am I writing all this sitting here in prison? The quest is still the same, in prison or outside, and I write down my past feelings and experiences in the hope that this brings me some peace and psychic satisfaction” (219). As elaborated by him, the motive of writing

orients towards getting tranquility that supports him in recollecting optimism and engaging himself in perpetual fighting. As per it, when memories are verbalized through narration, they transform into cultural products shaped and negotiated within a social context, underscoring the social construction of memory. Again, as we borrow the idea of Judith L. Herman, trauma evokes a desire to narrate one's experience for public ingestion (1). Moreover, the autobiography as a project of selfhood is normally bound to the politics of nationhood because of the political author and the context of writing (Majeed 163). In this way, autobiographical writing is also projected as meditation.

The year 1919 remains a haunting memory in India for freedom fighters and victims of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. On April 13, 1919, a peaceful protest against the oppressive Rowlatt Act in Amritsar, Punjab, was met with brutal violence. The British Indian Army commenced shooting at a social group, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of pro-independence activists. The event marks one of the darkest moments in India's struggle for freedom. Gandhi and his followers later connected the massacre and Satyagraha. In the record of Nehru:

The 6th of April was the first day of the National Week, which is celebrated annually in memory of the happenings in 1919, from Satyagraha Day to Jallianwala Bagh. On that day, Gandhiji began the breach of the salt laws at Dandi beach, and three or four days later permission was given to all Congress organizations to do likewise and begin Civil Disobedience in their areas. (224)

That massacre was an extreme brutality performed against humanity in India.

Elizabeth Kolsky, "violence was an endemic rather than ephemeral part of British colonial rule in India" (2). Moreover, in the words of David Heath, the "unworlding violence" (9) has crossed almost all limitations of cruelty and hammered the self-

respect of Indians. In the interpretation of Shashi Tharoor rather than punishing General Dyer, a mass murderer, British rulers honored him as “The Man Who Saved India” (173). However, despite tolerating all the tragedies, Gandhi, the Congress, and patriotic Indians did not deviate from the eventual goal of independence.

There was mass arrestment in the movement. Nehru was also arrested. He recalls the days of prison:

My barrack and enclosure were popularly known throughout the gaol as the *Kuttaghar*- the Dog House. This was an old name which had nothing to do with me. The little barrack had been built originally, apart from all others, for especially dangerous criminals who had to be isolated. Latterly it had been used for political prisoners, detenus, and the like who could thus be kept apart from the rest of the gaol. In front of the enclosure, some distance away, was an erection that gave me a shock when I first had a glimpse of it from my barrack. It looked like a huge cage, and men went round and round inside it.

(230)

Nehru was imprisoned in a jail named *Kuttaghar*. The metaphor *Kuttaghar* signifies the humiliation and dehumanization of the freedom fighters and their lack of humanity. The conceptualization of psychological trauma, as articulated by Breuer Josef and Sigmund Freud, involves defining it as an overwhelming surge of unbearable mental experiences leading to a splitting of consciousness (12) as in the above case. In solitary confinement, prisoners grappled with their psychological trauma, which took on the form of cultural trauma in their political expression. In this sense, “Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (Alexander, *Trauma* 15). The harsh conditions of the jail added further distress in

Nehru's life yet they had no choice but to endure the confinement and its hardship connecting to larger Indian communities.

Political prisoners were grouped with other convicts, including those serving life sentences. In prison, the natural flow of life was stifled, reducing prisoners to robotic existences. Many experienced deep frustrations, sometimes preferring death to imprisonment. Nonetheless, even life-sentenced inmates found a glimmer of hope in the promise of Swaraj. Describing their unlimited suffering and little hope, Nehru narrates:

Like automatons, they pass their days, each exactly like the other, and have few sensations, except one- fear! From time to time the prisoner's body is weighed and measured. But how is one to weigh the mind and the spirit which wilt and stunt themselves and wither away in this terrible atmosphere of oppression? People argue against the death penalty, and their arguments appeal to me greatly. But when I see the long-drawn-out agony of a life spent in prison, I feel that it is perhaps better to have that penalty rather than to kill a person slowly and by degrees. One of the 'lifera' came up to me once and asked me: 'What of us lifera? Will Swaraj take us out of this hell?' (231-2)

Physical wounds are visible, but mental wounds require deep empathy to comprehend their impact, which can slowly destroy a person. Astrid Hirschelmann and Abdul Rahman Rasha describe such suffering as psychological trauma, a forceful and unexpected intrusion into an individual's psyche (305). When experienced collectively for freedom and the nation, this suffering becomes collective trauma.

Nehru reflects on the deepening of familial bonds and shared purpose during the freedom struggle:

I had a special feeling of satisfaction because of the activities of my mother, wife, and sisters, as well as many girl cousins and friends; and though I was separated from them and was in prison, we grew nearer to each other, bound by a new sense of comradeship in a great cause. The family seemed to merge into a larger group, and yet to retain its old flavor and intimacy. Kamala surprised me, for her energy and enthusiasm overcame her physical ill-health and, for some time at least, she kept well in spite of strenuous activities. (236)

The Nehru family was deeply involved in the struggle for independence, and Nehru took pride in the active participation of the women in his family, both on the frontlines and in prison. Despite her declining health, his wife Kamala bravely stood by her comrades and made significant contributions in the political arena. The steadfast courage and dedication of these “mothers” were instrumental in the struggle for the motherland’s independence. As marked by Annette Streeck-Fischer, trauma is subjective and shaped by the victim’s interpretation, developmental stage, preconditions, and social environment (155). Narrating suffering transforms the personal experience into a collective understanding within the political world.

Moreover, Nehru used to spin *Charkha* in prison, which occupied him “without undue strain or requiring too much attention, and they soothed the fever of my mind” (Nehru 236). He engaged in reading and washing up to make imprisonment manageable (236). These tasks helped him avoid unnecessary thoughts and focus on meditation, providing a respite from suffering. Despite his situation, he remained committed to Indian nationhood and did not consider giving up.

It is uncommon in political history for both a father and son, as prominent democratic and nationalist leaders, to be imprisoned for the same cause. That happened in the case of Nehru in India. He explains:

Father was in very poor health when he came to gaol, and the conditions in which he was kept there were of extreme discomfort. This was not intentional on the part of the Government, for they were prepared to do what they could to lessen those discomforts. But they could not do much in Naini Prison. Four of us were now crowded together in the four tiny cells of my barrack. It was suggested by the superintendent of the prison that father might be kept in some other part of the gaol where he might have a little more room, but we preferred to be together so that some of us could attend personally to his comforts. (239)

Politics is not an endeavor for all, yet it is remarkable when a father and son unite to challenge colonial rule and assert the right to sovereignty. Furthermore, these trauma memoirs push the reader towards a masochistic stance, prompting them to empathize deeply with the protagonist or to find a sense of gratification in the narrative structure centered on suffering (Gilmore, "The Limits" 22-23). They willingly forgo personal comforts and embrace hardships in the pursuit of national independence. Through their unwavering commitment, the family has earned its place as a storied and revered presence in the annals of Indian political history. About the condition and conviction of his father, Nehru further elaborates:

Father's condition was rapidly deteriorating. Many doctors came to examine him, his doctors as well as doctors sent on behalf of the Provincial Government. It was obvious that gaol was the worst place for him and there could be no proper treatment there. And yet, when a suggestion was made by some friend in the Press that he should be released because of his illness, he was irritated, as he thought that people might think that the suggestion came from him. He even went to the length of sending a telegram to Lord Irwin, saying that he did not want to be released as a special favor. But his condition

was growing worse from day to day; he was losing weight rapidly, and physically he was a shadow of himself. (243)

What aids in transcending suffering? What emboldens an individual to stand resolutely against autocracy? As outlined above, it is undoubtedly the dedication to the nation and the aspiration for nationhood. Moreover, firm political beliefs prevent compromises with personal matters, including health challenges.

In the No-Tax Campaign, Nehru was arrested with his friends; he commenced a complete fast for 72 hours. Nehru focuses, “This was not much as fasts go, but none of us was accustomed to fasting and did not know how we would stand it. My previous fasts had seldom exceeded 24 hours” (252). It shows that tolerance and patience have perpetually emerged within him.

Nehru was also frustrated in prison but paradoxically happy with the news of the arrest of his wife on 1 January 1931 in the beginning days. He becomes expressive:

I was pleased, for she had so longed to follow many of her comrades to prison. Ordinarily, if they had been men, both she and my sister and many other women would have been arrested long ago. But at that time the Government avoided, as far as possible, arresting women, and so they had escaped for so long. And now she had her heart’s desire! How glad she must be, I thought. (253)

At first, he finds the camaraderie among the women prisoners exhilarating, offering Kamala a chance to contribute to India’s independence. Nevertheless, his joy quickly turns to worry; Kamala’s frail health makes him fear that the harsh prison conditions could worsen her suffering (Nehru 253). His emotional turmoil is a reflection of his trauma, as so many of his loved ones have faced imprisonment. “The meaning of the trauma’s address beyond itself concerns, indeed, not only individual isolation but

wider historical isolation that, in our time, is communicated on the level of our cultures” (Caruth, “Trauma and Experience” 11). The significance of Nehru’s trauma extends beyond individual experience to encompass a broader historical isolation reflected in contemporary cultural contexts. The process “highlights the meaning-making processes in the face of great suffering and the role of carrier groups and organizations, such as mass media, in the process of making sense of suffering” (Eyerman, “Cultural Trauma” 41). Cultural trauma provides a way to understand collective suffering by offering a comparative cultural sociological framework. Alexander also highlights the Mass media’s role in gaining “enormous persuasive power over others” (*Trauma* 22) in communicating trauma. This approach emphasizes how societies find meaning in the face of profound distress, and the crucial role played by groups and organizations, including mass media, in shaping the interpretation of such pain.

However, the delights behind the imprisonment of the family members for different goals stimulate a sense of pride in the sacrifice. The inference can be verified by the bites given to the press by Nehru’s wife. She states, “I am happy beyond measure and proud to follow in the footsteps of my husband. I hope the people will keep the flag flying” (Nehru 253). Her hope of continuing the ‘flag flying’ indicates the fighting for nationhood against colonialism forgetting individual problems and any imperialist threat. After Kamala’s arrest, the father of Nehru visited Naini Prison on 12 January. Their meeting was nearly two months after, and Nehru reveals, “I had a shock which I could conceal with difficulty” (253). Lerner interprets the figurative use of the word “shock” as a reference to mental distress (13). Nehru’s admission of trauma reveals his emotional condition, which he hid when interacting with his father to support both his ailing father and the independence movement.

Nehru and his comrades were not extremists. They were full of tolerance and sought to extend their understanding of nationalism in a broader sense. Nehru further describes:

Nationalism indeed seemed to us a term of wide and varied reach, if it included in its embrace both those who went to gaol in India in furtherance of the struggle for freedom and those who shook hands and lined up with our jailers and discussed a common policy with them. There were others also in our country, brave nationalists, fluent of speech, who encouraged the *Sivadeshi* movement in every way, telling us that therein lay the heart of *Swaraj*, and calling upon their countrymen to further it even at a sacrifice.

(255)

Nehru saw nationalism in more than just the active participants of the independence movement did. Even those within the group who served the colonial administration carried the burden of suffering and the longing for sacrifice. Yet their circumstances did not allow them to engage in the Swaraj Movement, highlighting the complexity of their struggle. Despite inequalities among the people, each nation is conceived as a deep and horizontal companionship, which encourages gladly die for such imaginings of nationhood (Anderson 7) and the protestors feel as that.

While interacting with Gandhi at the last stage of his life, the father of Nehru said, “I am going soon, Mahatmaji, and I shall not be here to see Swaraj. But I know that you have won it and will soon have it” (Nehru 259). Even at the time when Nehru’s father realized about own death, he was concentrated and optimistic about independence. After the death of his father, he received multiple courteous words of condolence and among them “the wonderfully soothing and healing presence of Gandhiji that helped my mother and all of us to face that crisis in our lives” (Nehru

260). Gandhi was not just a guiding figure for the Nehru family; he embodied India's independence and nationhood. This powerful nationalist symbol offered solace and hope, helping to heal the deep trauma of the family's profound loss.

After the multiple imprisonments and death of his father, Nehru visited Ceylon with his wife and daughter following the suggestion of his doctor. Particularly after visiting the monastery, Nehru claims that the "calm features of Buddha's statue soothed me and gave me strength and helped me to overcome many a period of depression" (Nehru 284). He projected confidence and commented on various aspects of his political life, yet at times, his underlying misery was apparent. It is as "a dramatic loss of identity" (Eyerman, "Cultural Trauma: Slavery" 61) of a member of a community and working through forming a group identity. Moreover, in Ceylon, Buddha was incredibly appealing to Nehru and he shares, "It is difficult for me to analyze this appeal, but it is not a religious appeal, and I am not interested in the dogmas that have grown up round Buddhism. It is the personality that has drawn me. So also, the personality of Christ has attracted me greatly" (284-5). The religious figures are iconic and secular inspirations for him. Particularly, Stefano Bianchini believes "secularization allows the coexistence of differences, and encourages their interaction and a flow of communication in plural context" (63) showing conceptually aware of such plurality of India tearing the iron curtain hanged by fundamentalists. That is one of the reasons behind his secular model of nationalism as Philip Holden finds Nehru "frequently resisting homogenizing or fixed notions of nationhood" (380). In the Indian context, it represents linguistic, cultural, and religious plurality.

Generally, Nehru philosophizes life relating to the flow of the river and reveals his individual experience of life that contrasts with his general definition. "Life seemed to be for them a smooth-flowing river moving slowly to the great ocean. I

looked at them with some envy, with just a faint yearning for a haven, but I knew well enough that my lot was a different one, cast in storms and tempests” (285). However, these storms and tempests could not damage his commitment to independence and nationhood. He was in hard times as the nation itself. Nehru further meditates, “There was to be no haven for me, for the tempests within me were as stormy as those outside. And if perchance I found myself in a safe harbour, protected from the fury of the winds, would I be contented or happy there” (Nehru 285)? It indicates that he has with mental wound but is ready to tolerate it all for the sake of the nation. His individual choice and safety are not enough to satisfy him as he has miles to go.

Moreover, Nehru was not alone from his family in this mission. Except for his ill wife in bed in Bombay, he explains, “My mother and both my sisters threw themselves into the movement with vigor, and soon both the sisters were in gaol with a sentence of a year each” (Nehru 337). The whole family has a sense of pride for actively participating in independence, even in times of intimate difficulties. Because of this, Nehru accepts that all of them were suffering from certain complexities due to “long depression and subjection, and every outlet is apt to be surcharged with emotion” (341). Thus, the “acting out” of the “working through” sentiments are prevented from being busted by the collective dream of nationhood.

Fighting and negotiation were performed in the anti-colonial movement in India. There was a Round Table Conference in London in 1932 to discuss the future of India, particularly about drafting the constitution for India. Nehru criticizes:

It was not surprising to see these representatives of vested interests, frightened by the mass movements of India in action, gathering together in London under the aegis of British imperialism. But it hurt the nationalism in us to see any

Indian behave in this way when the mother country was involved in a life-and-death struggle. (356-7)

Nehru expressed disappointment that while India was fiercely fighting for its freedom, some Indians joined British-led talks in London, siding with colonial interests instead of standing with their struggling homeland.

Nehru's interpretation reflects a nationalist perspective that challenges the Eurocentric study of India (Prakash 390). While colonial representatives displayed self-interest, some Indian representatives also shamefully prioritized their interests over nationalism. As Prakash notes, "In the 1930s, when nationalism became a mass phenomenon, a professional Indian historiography emerged to contest British interpretations" (388). Although Nehru was a political leader, his writing presents an informed counter-narrative to British interpretations.

Again, about the prison days, interview days are significant for the prisoners to be updated about the outside environment. However, the news that the prisoners get from the visitors disturbs them. Simply, the provision of interaction is appropriate for breaking the solitude of the prison. So, "Interview days were the red-letter days in gaol. How one longed for them, waited for them, and counted the days! And after the excitement of the interview there was the inevitable reaction and a sense of emptiness and loneliness" (Nehru 363). Unfavorable news generates such desolation. To escape such loneliness and to be engaged, Nehru started writing and addressing his daughter Indira.

Nehru further clarifies, "My historical series of letters to my daughter kept me occupied right through my two-year term, and they helped me very greatly to keep mentally fit. To some extent I lived through the past I was writing about and almost forgot about my gaol surroundings" (Nehru 367). In prison, Nehru's writing served as

an escape from the harsh present and a retreat into the past, offering him a sense of healing from the void and advocating freedom and nationhood academically and politically. As stated by Anderson, “Nor was anything much done to push an official nationalism through a modernized educational system” (99). Alongside writing, he observed that prisoners kept pet animals to alleviate emotional starvation. Despite their wounds and need for healing, they never wavered on fundamental issues like independence and nationhood. He encourages people to be morally strong and highlights it for achieving any destination by being fearless. He further philosophies:

It was true that the limits of human vitality and human strength were narrow, and many an individual was physically disabled or died or fell out of the ranks, or even betrayed the cause. But the cause went on despite setbacks; there could be no failure if ideals remained undimmed and spirits undaunted. The real failure was a desertion of principle, a denial of our rights, and an ignoble submission to wrong. Self-made wounds always took longer to heal than those caused by an adversary. (376)

A physically weakened person can often recover with effort, but someone who weakens himself or herself morally or psychologically is difficult to save. In a political context, self-inflicted wounds symbolize the potential division of India or internal conflicts among leaders. These challenges could hinder the journey to independence and delay the realization of nationhood. However, Nehru was aware that the countrywide fight became a point in the extensive expedition, and “it was well that repression and suffering were tempering our people for future struggles and forcing them to consider the new ideas that were stirring the world” (379). However, the repressed “event must be reclaimed because even if successfully repressed, it nevertheless invariably plays a decisive formative role in who one comes to be, and

in how one comes to live ones life” (Laub, “Truth” 70). The idea reflects on the intricate relationship between witnessing and truth in the context of conflict, portraying the process of testimony as a continuous and challenging struggle. In this regard, Nehru tolerates every suffering to strengthen the voice of nationhood, particularly political independence scientific, and sustainability.

Particularly identifying himself with all the prisoners who were suffering for the freedom movement, Nehru shares, “We put on a brave face in gaol or outside and smiled and laughed, but we smiled often through our tears, and our laughter was sometimes near to crying” (409). The description shows how trauma is deliberately concealed in prison from visitors but revealed in the form of writing to a larger audience. There lies the politics of publication as Ridjic defines social trauma in terms of encompassing an individual’s responses to a traumatic event that has broader societal implications, emphasizing the interconnected nature of personal reactions and their impact on the larger social context (85) for political visibility. This socio-traumatic feeling influences the entire social milieu.

During the freedom movement, individuals could have avoided jail, but they embraced the belief that authorities could not suppress the spirit and mindset of the freedom fighters. Nehru explains, “We went to gaol and our bodies were locked up in cells, but our minds ranged free and our spirits were undismayed. But they created mental prisons of their own fashioning, where they went round and round and from which they found no escape” (410). Imprisonment was not in their destiny. It is a welcomed one. What supports them to take risks and tolerate torture is a valid question in the context. Regarding it, the potential response is naturally nationalism because “Naked coercion, as India was experiencing, is an expensive affair for the rulers” (Nehru 411). It is expensive for the rulers in the sense that the proactive

freedom fighters from India have forgotten to live in fear. In a spiritual sense, they are concentrated on spirits and learning tolerance in prison. The death of the comrade in gaol mentally disturbs other prisoners. In 1933, “Sen-Gupta died under detention. He had been made a prisoner on his return from Europe early in 1932, while he was yet on board ship in Bombay” (Nehru 412). Gupta returned to India to make the nationalist movement stronger but the tragically end of his life in detention. Colonial rulers had to be accountable in the case. Sen was a friend of Nehru from the days of Cambridge and with shock, he reports that “His funeral in Calcutta was the occasion for a remarkable mass demonstration and tribute; it seemed that the long pent-up suffering soul of Bengal had found an outlet for a while at least” (421). Attending Gupta’s funeral was an act of protest against the authorities, providing a release for the deep-seated sense of deprivation felt by the attendees. This trauma eventually triggered the feeling of nationalism, calling for the broader unification of the people of common interest.

Nehru was habitual with arrest and release. Because of his significant time in prison, he was detached from society. After being released for a limited time, even outside the prison, he feels no solace. Nehru meditates:

I realized with a little shock, as we all do, that the world had gone on moving and changing while I lay stagnating in prison. Children, boys, and girls growing up, marriages, births, deaths; love and hate, work and play, tragedy and comedy. New interests in life, new subjects for conversation, always there was always a little element of surprise in what I saw and heard. Life seemed to have passed by, leaving me in a backwater. It was not a wholly pleasant feeling. (416)

Nehru experienced a sense of exile within his own home, feeling disconnected and burdened with pain. He missed the ordinary emotions of life and endured great suffering. Although Nehru was vocal about his opposition to Western colonialism, he openly praised the West for its technological progress. He elaborates:

It was a good thing for India to come in contact with the scientific and industrial West. Science was the great gift of the West, and India lacked this, and without it, she was doomed to decay. The manner of our contacts was unfortunate, and yet, perhaps, only a succession of violent shocks could shake us out of our torpor. (453)

Nehru's admiration for Western technological advancement is independent of his political commitments. He links Western technology and industrialization to the emergence of nationalism in the modern era. Nehru sees technological progress as a key factor shaping modern national identities, beyond mere political ideology. In the process of creating a master narrative on trauma, the representation should reflect scientific values being "subject to evidentiary stipulations" (Alexander, *Trauma* 22). Nehru further elaborates that the growth of industrialism in Europe and well along in the remaining world "brought nationalism and the strong unitary state in its train everywhere. The British can take credit for having first opened India's window to the West and brought her one aspect of Western industrialism and science" (Nehru 450-1). The perception of Nehru to the Western world is confusing for Chatterjee that he "challenged the colonial claim to political domination . . . accepted the very intellectual premises of 'modernity' upon which colonial domination was based" (*Nationalist Thought* 30). However, such critical judgment of Nehru regarding the world is helpful for Nehru in developing a model of understanding nationhood in the Indian context.

Differently, Nehru uses an analogy to describe the position of the British Government in India as “a tooth that is decaying but is still strongly embedded. It is painful, but it cannot be easily pulled out. The pain is likely to continue, and even grow worse, till the tooth is taken out or falls out itself” (461). It indicates that India has to give a big blow or develop an enduring capacity for a certain time to get independent nationhood. Moreover, Nehru does not entertain the religious nationhood in India. He observes that Hindus and Muslims who persistently cling to the past and hold on to things that are slipping away present a notably pitiable spectacle. He clarifies that he does not intend to condemn or discard the past, acknowledging that it contains many elements of great beauty that he believes will endure. However, he criticizes the individuals for grasping not the beauty, but rather aspects that are rarely beneficial and often detrimental (489). In this sense, following “civic nationalism” (Brubaker 133), Nehru imagines an inclusive, universalist, voluntarist, and liberal form of nationhood in India. During that time, various communities and cultures longed for a return to their imagined past paradises and sought to revive them, particularly through the lens of Hindu and Muslim nationalism.

There is no doubt that Nehru was fighting for self-governance in India. Nevertheless, his governance model must be in the form of good governance. With a loud and clear voice, he says:

Self-government if it is to justify itself must stand ultimately for better government for the masses. It is because I believe that the British Government in India, whatever its claims in the past may have been, is incapable of providing good government and rising standards for the masses today, that I feel that it has outlived its utility, such as it was, in India. The only real justification for Indian freedom is the promise of better government, of a

higher standard for the masses, of industrial and cultural growth, and the removal of the atmosphere of fear and suppression, that foreign imperialist rule invariably brings in its train. (503-4)

Only political freedom is not sufficient for Nehru, as he considers good governance primary for the development of the nation. So, he believes in eliminating economic and cultural injustice in the societies creating a conducive environment for different classes of people. Regarding nationhood, Gellner also believes that particularly industrial growth and labor division, demand a new form of social imagining maintaining unity among diverse groups (*Nations and Nationalism* 149). Among diverse factors for creating hierarchy and imposing hegemony in societies, colonialism is at the top of the list, and that is to be ended for both economic justice and inclusive nationhood.

While explaining his state of mind in the court concerning his seventh term of imprisonment, Nehru narrates his court feeling:

I felt very lonely and isolated even when I sat on the balcony outside before the trial began. My pulse must have quickened a little, and inwardly I was not quite so composed as I usually had been during my previous trials. It struck me then that if even I, with so much experience of trials and convictions, could react abnormally to that situation, how much more must young and inexperienced people feel the tension? (511)

Nehru often projected confidence in various political situations, but he was shaken during that routine court process. His tension in the courtroom could be linked to his concern over his wife's fragile health. As he shares in different conditions, "One shadow remained to darken my mind, Kamala's ill-health. I had no notion then how very ill she was, for she has a habit of carrying on till she collapses" (512).

Unexpectedly, Nehru also says, “I was in prison she would be free to devote herself to her treatment. It was more difficult to do so whilst I was out and she was not willing to leave me for long” (Nehru 512). All these make him confused about whether to remain inside or outside the prison house for the sound health of his wife. However, “using trauma stories as a source of political capital is common in many liberation histories” (Ramanathapillai 12) as narrated by Nehru.

Nehru was constantly troubled by his wife’s declining health in prison, yet he remained steadfast in not compromising the nation’s political well-being. “But all this unhappiness was not the fault of the gaol, though it contributed to it. It was the reaction to outside events, Kamala’s illness, and my political worries. I was beginning to realize that Kamala was again in the grip of her old disease, and I felt helpless and unable to be of any service to her. I knew that my presence by her side would have made a difference” (573). Again, he is contradictory about being good at home or in prison for her health. Earlier he said that she gets much time for herself in his absence.

Nationhood is a complex concept for Nehru, rooted in national psychology. He acknowledges how people often view themselves as fair and impartial while seeing others or other countries as wrong (517). Nehru perceives nationalism as a process of creating otherness and rejects narrow, exclusive nationalism that perpetuates the belief in one’s infallibility and blames others for one’s issues. Individual traumatic stories as a political tool are common in the history of different freedom struggles (Ramanathapillai 12). This perspective can obscure individual sufferings and portray oneself as a victim in establishing national identity.

Nehru, despite holding formal degrees from Cambridge and Harrow, gained practical lessons during his time in prison. At Alipore Gaol, he learned of Gandhi’s withdrawal from the Civil Disobedience Movement, leading him to perceive life as

bleak and barren (524). He reflected on the challenges of independence and the harsh reality of facing them alone: “Of the many hard lessons that I had learned, the hardest and the most painful now faced me: that it is not possible in any vital matter to rely on anyone. One must journey through life alone; to rely on others is to invite heartbreak” (524). In this regard, “The psychology of discovery motive: writing one’s life is a self-authorizing and empowering ‘journey’” (Smith and Watson 160). While the solitary conditions of his imprisonment were undoubtedly oppressive, they also provided him with profound insights into life. Although Nehru and Gandhi shared the struggle for independence, Nehru held distinct views on the use of violence. As narrated by Nehru:

All life is full of conflict and violence, and it seems to be true that violence breeds violence and is thus not a way to overcome it. And yet to forswear it altogether leads to a wholly negative attitude utterly out of touch with life itself. Violence is the very life-blood of the modern State and social system. Without the coercive apparatus of the State, taxes would not be realized, landlords would not get their rents, and private property would disappear. The law, with the help of its armed forces, excludes others from the use of private property. The national State itself exists because of offensive and defensive violence. (558)

Nehru considered violence as one of the factors for the functioning of a nation, distinguishing between defensive and offensive violence and recognizing it as an inevitable aspect of life. The way in which a narrator, taking on a parental role, communicates about collective violence, as well as how children and adolescents remember such events, is influenced by their cultural identity and the concept of cultural trauma (Habermas and Bartoli 205). In contrast, Gandhi rejected any form of

violence, adhering strictly to non-violence as a foundational principle of the Congress at that time. Even at the time of colonialism, different from others Nehru has so extensive interpretation of nationalism and independence. As he states:

Our final aim can only be a classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all, a society organized on a planned basis for the raising of mankind to higher material and cultured levels, to the cultivation of spiritual values, of co-operation, unselfishness, the spirit of service, the desire to do right, goodwill and love, ultimately a world order. Everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently, if possible, forcibly if necessary. And there seems to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary. (570-1)

Nehru's perspective reveals that his focus was not solely on attaining political freedom. His concept of independence encompasses a variety of elements as economic justice, with nationalism being one of the key components. While defining national identity, as expressed by Alexander, "national histories are constructed around injuries that cry out for revenge" (*Trauma* 13). Contrary to Gandhi's fundamental philosophy of non-violence, Nehru subtly proposes the use of violence as a means to dismantle the barriers established by hegemonic power structures. Nehru's understanding of nationhood is so extended. It is not limited to political independence only. Regarding the programs of Congress, he claims, "We suffer from the disease of nationalism, and that absorbs our attention, and it will continue to do so till we get political freedom. As Bernard Shaw has said: "A conquered nation is like a man with cancer; he can think of nothing else (Nehru 800). As remarked by Shaw, "Conquered nations lose their place in the world's march because they can do nothing but strive to get rid of their nationalist movements by recovering their national liberty" (Nehru 400). Thus, Nehru also does not see the solution to all Indian problems as just getting

independence. He differs from the classical understanding of nationalism. Therefore, he incorporates economics as social justice in the form of “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 7) particularly among Indians to extend the horizon of his model of nationhood.

The outer atmosphere or the natural scenario was not enough for Nehru in Alipore Gaol to offer peace. In his experience, Nehru writes, “The brief glimpses of greenery and freshness were hardly welcome to me. That sight produced in me a kind of nostalgia, a heartache, and I would even avoid looking out when the door opened” (573). There is denouement of imprisonment, both physical and psychological. The outer greenery and freshness have just become reminders of the lost paradise. About the chronic form of traumatization, Nehru deeply describes, “My nerves were obviously in a bad way in those days. My sleep became troubled and disturbed, which was very unusual for me, and all manner of nightmares came to me. Sometimes I would shout out in my sleep” (Nehru 576). It is as the lay theory of trauma where “traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter an individual or collective actor’s sense of wellbeing” (Alexander, *Trauma* 7). These immoral behaviors of Nehru as described by him, which occurred before, while, and after sleeping, represent problems related to his mind, causing profound emotional distress and upheaval.

In the later sections of his autobiographical writing, Nehru reveals the true motive for writing about his experiences in prison: to forget. Ironically, his act of remembering through writing is driven by a desire to forget different aspects of his life. Regarding it, “Who made up the reading public or consumers of the life narrative at the time it was written? Who might have heard the story recounted?” (Smith and Watson 166-67) becomes two toolkits related to the history of reading people. This paradoxical endeavor embodies the emotional complexity of balancing the politics of

forgetting with the need to remember. As Nehru shared the background of writing his autobiography:

This would also help in engaging my mind in a definite task and diverting it from worry and depression. So, in June 1934, I began this ‘autobiographical narrative’ in Dehra Gaol, and for the last eight months, I have continued it when the mood to do so has seized me. Often there have been intervals when I felt no desire to write; three of these gaps were each of them nearly a month long. But I managed to continue, and now I am nearing the end of this personal journey. Most of this has been written under peculiarly distressing circumstances when I was suffering from depression and emotional strain. Perhaps some of this is reflected in what I have written, but this very writing helped me greatly to pull myself out of the present with all its worries. As I wrote, I was hardly thinking of an outside audience: I was addressing myself framing questions, and answering them for my benefit, sometimes even drawing some amusement from them. (579)

Nehru openly discusses his motivations for writing his autobiography, viewing the writing process as a healing mechanism. While connecting trauma and script therapy, questions like “Does the narrator discuss the therapeutic effects of writing in the text? [,] Is the therapeutic value of writing itself a central theme? [, and] Does the process of writing have changed the narrating “I” and the life story itself? (Smith and Watson 172) have responded while much of literary writing is intended for known and unknown audiences, Nehru deviates from this approach, considering himself the sole audience for his work.

Despite these dire circumstances, people remain hopeful for independence, which they believe will bring light to their lives. Nehru further defines that “Solitary

confinement . . . means the slow and continuous deterioration of the mind, till it begins to border on insanity; and the appearance of a look of vacancy, or a frightened animal type of oppression” (234). Such a kind of stressful punishment creates serious psychological consequences leading to mental decline and anxiety. It also indicated the inhuman behavior of the concerned authorities towards Nehru. Therefore, a man can survive but not live in such confinement. “Even if a man survives it, he becomes abnormal and an absolute misfit in the world. And the question always arises- was this man guilty at all of any act or offense?” (Nehru 234-5). It questions the environment of Indian prisons and reports the psychology of the prisoners whether they are political or not in the jails. Because of that, Nehru believes that “One sees in prison the inhuman side of the state apparatus of administrative repression at its worst” (Nehru 235). In such a situation, writing was a single source of solace against any repression and automation for Nehru in imprisonment.

In his own words, the purpose of writing was to heal himself through script therapy during the isolating confinement imposed by colonial authorities. However, the immediate publication of the autobiography in London broadens the reach of his political perspectives and ideas. Moreover, Lerner argues that the “collective trauma Nehru witnessed and experienced during the decades before Indian independence profoundly impacted his trust in international institutions and views on representational diplomacy . . . [and] formulation of Nehruvian non-alignment” (1). Anyway, the monologue becomes dialogue to the larger community through the means of print capitalism, also bringing excessive numbers of autobiographies and biographies into the market (Anderson 204) as the memory is in the market to do its politics. Moreover, beyond the distressing environment of the prison and depressing state of mind, Nehru goes on to describe their physicality there. He describes, “I was

partly bald and my hair was grey, lines and furrows crossed my face and dark shadows surrounded my eyes. The last four years with their troubles and worries had left many a mark on me” (581-2). The physical changes that are particularly reflected in his face were affected by his psychological disposition. Regarding social trauma, Hamburger believes that trauma by name itself refers to the fact that any social and individual aspects of suffering are inevitably tied together (“Social Trauma” 14). In accumulation, the darkness and misery, which were echoed both in mind and body, were the political consequences of his activism for independence and nationalism.

Because of the deteriorating health condition of Nehru’s wife, he was released, but it was as a nine-day wonder. The countless nights were inevitable after these.

Recalling the moment, Nehru narrates:

Eighteen years of married life! But how many long years out of them had I spent in prison cell, and Kamala in hospitals and sanatoria? And now again I was serving a prison sentence and out just for a few days, and she was lying ill, struggling for life. I felt a little irritated at her for her carelessness about her health. And yet how could I blame her, for her eager spirit fretted at her inaction and inability to take her full share in the national struggle? Physically unable to do so, she could neither take to work properly nor to treatment, and the fire inside her wore down her body. (582)

Nehru had already become a dedicated freedom fighter up to that time, but the battle of Kamala against her illness and the struggle against colonialism were inspiring for the audience. Once the specific nature of the pain has been clearly defined and the victim is firmly established, a crucial issue arises: understanding the victim’s relationship to the broader audience. This involves exploring how the wider community perceives and connects with the victim’s experience and identity, and

what significance this relationship holds in the broader context (Alexander, *Trauma* 18). Particularly, how the seriousness of both husband and wife to the national struggle made them careless in their personal lives is a pathetic but heroic side of Indian history.

Again, authorities arrested Nehru and took him to Naini Prison. There, Nehru heard that Kamala's condition was worsening. He confesses that his "presence by her side makes all the difference between life and death" (586). However, he appeared to be in a dilemma. He questions, "Was my conceit and pride greater than my desire to give her this chance" (586)? Nevertheless, at the same time, Nehru shared the political standpoint of Kamal and consoled, "It might have been a terrible predicament for me, but fortunately, that dilemma did not face me in that way at least. I knew that Kamala herself would strongly disapprove of my giving any undertaking, and if I did anything of the kind it would shock her and harm her" (Nehru 586). In this way, Nehru reports that Kamala tolerates everything but not the political compromise for personal matters and family problems.

All these became instruments for Nehru to forget mental wounds and perpetually plan to fight for the nation. Experiencing and tolerating such terrible depression, Nehru believes that "life's rich gifts follow frustration and cruelty and separation" (590-1). He lives with that reality, as he can never avoid it. Nehru defines imprisonment as a place for introspection. He shares, "My long years in prison have forced me to look more and more within myself. I was not by nature an introvert, but prison life, as strong coffee or strychnine, leads to introversion" (591). In this sense, prison life became a period of intense self-discovery for Nehru. As he delved into his psyche, the prominent aspects that emerged were his depression and profound distress. Thus, the prison narrative serves as a genre commonly composed during or

post-incarceration, wherein individuals reclaim their humanity and agency within systems aimed at dehumanization and marginalization, asserting their identity amidst adversity (Smith and Watson 201). In this way, Nehru's prison writings not only chronicle his struggles but also exemplify the transformative potential of confinement as a space for introspection, resistance, and the reaffirmation of selfhood.

Nehru also identifies autobiography as egoistical writing. While talking about the completion of the writing, He says, "This egotistical narrative of my adventures through life, such as they are, has been brought up to today, February 14, 1935, District Gaol, Almora. Three months ago today, celebrated in this prison my forty-fifth birthday, and I suppose I have still many years to live" (Nehru 615). This indicates that his journey is far from over; he has more battles to fight and many more chapters to write in the future. In this sense, those with traumatic memories are haunted by relentless interruptions, as experiences insistently intrude upon the present moment (Smith and Watson 21) in prison in an egoistic form and enduring tone. Additionally, numerous stories of suffering in his life have yet to be told, as it was not written in an old age.

Unusually for Nehru, exile looks as home; home appears as exile in some situations. Being virtually out of place, Nehru evaluates himself:

I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me, as she does to all her children, in innumerable ways; and behind me lie, somewhere in the subconscious, racial memories of a hundred, or whatever the number be, generations of Brahmans. (616)

This self-reflection reveals Nehru's complex sense of belonging, highlighting the inner conflict of a hybrid identity shaped by cultural dislocation, historical memory, and an enduring, though troubled, connection to his homeland.

Moreover, according to Smith and Watson, "If identity is seen as conflictual, is this thematized in the narrative? If the narrator identifies himself as having multiple marked identities, what holds these differences in some kind of dynamic tension?" (169). Nehru's distressing psychological condition from his Western education and his focus on economics and technology rather than religion. Again, he expresses his alienation: "I am a stranger and alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling" (Nehru 617). His sense of being out of place is a result of his prolonged solitary confinement. The concept of an "imagined" traumatic event resonates with Benedict Anderson's exploration of "Imagined Communities," wherein he examines self-consciously constructed narratives of nationalist history rather than trauma itself, highlighting parallels in the process of collective identity formation (Alexander, *Trauma* 13). Additionally, considering confinement as exile is reasonable because Nehru was imprisoned by foreign rulers for advocating for the independence of his people and nation.

Despite facing political and personal adversities, Nehru continuously endeavored to endure mental wounds without straying away from his democratic political ideology. His modern nationalistic commitment aimed to foster a sense of deep and horizontal comradeship among Indian communities, demonstrating resilience in the face of trauma and a steadfast dedication to the principles of inclusive nationalism.

Ultimately, Koirala's *Atmabrittanta* and Nehru's *An Autobiography* illuminate how personal and political struggles, marked by enduring mental wounds and combat

against hegemony, forged their respective visions of nationhood. While Koirala's late-life reflections emphasize individual freedom and national identity through hardship, Nehru's more immediate account of his early political career similarly shows resilience in trauma and a commitment to horizontal comradeship. Despite their differing temporal perspectives, both narratives powerfully demonstrate how these leaders' experiences were instrumental in shaping trauma and nationalism in the South Asian context, affirming the critical role of personal narratives in collective political consciousness.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF BROODING AND RESISTING FOR IMAGINED COMMUNITIES IN BHUTTO AND RAHMAN'S MEMOIRS

In their memoirs, Bhutto's *If I Am Assassinated* and Rahman's *The Unfinished Memoirs*, both leaders narrate experiences of enduring torture and resisting authority, exposing how military regimes weakened nationhood and how the fight against exclusion was crucial for fostering national solidarity and preserving the imagined community. However, Bhutto's account serves as an urgent, direct appeal composed while awaiting assassination, whereas Rahman's offers a more retrospective recounting of his prolonged struggle from prison.

Bhutto, the past president and prime minister of Pakistan, presents the reiteration of the military coup against the civil government as anti-nationalistic activism, where the armed forces of a nation are generally considered one of the major symbols of nationhood. He narrates his trauma and attempts to establish himself as a bold nationalist leader serving the "imagined political community" (Anderson 6) of Islam from the death cell. On 5 July 1977, Bhutto was deposed in a military coup orchestrated by the army head, who accused him of manipulating the March 1977 election. In this context, the question of Smith and Watson, "What political, social, cultural, linguistic, and economic forces affect publication and international circulation today?" (166), becomes a significant question to decode the politics of remembering.

Autobiographical writings in Pakistan, though relatively scarce, often serve strategic purposes, as seen in Bhutto's narrative, which mirrors the self-defensive and self-examining functions. Penderel Moon thinks that there are not many autobiographical writings in Pakistan and that "more than two-thirds of the book is

devoted to the political reforms in Pakistan and foreign policy followed after the military took over in 1958” (813). As McKenna has argued, autobiographical writings are written to defend oneself, to claim one’s life, to set straightforward records, to examine oneself, and to give a current audience more private intuitions (211-12) in the study of the autobiography of Manning Clark. Moreover, Bhutto also performs as Clark.

After more than a year in imprisonment, the military ruler released the White Paper within 1044 pages, mainly incorporating multiple accusations projecting him as a rigger to the murderer. The Lahore High Court proclaimed the death penalty for murderers on March 18, 1978. In this situation, the text is a form of testimony directly submitted to people and indirectly responding to the White Paper. As questioned by Smith and Watson, “Why might the narrator explicitly name and address a specific reader?” (171) is a major critical question for the audience to understand the meaning of the text. Similarly, for Shoshana Felman, such testimony as a performative speech act is “to *testify*, to *vow to tell*, to *promise* and *produce one’s speech act* material evidence for truth, is to accomplish a speech act, rather than to simply formulate a statement” (18). His family appealed to the Supreme Court on his behalf, but the court ratified the earlier decision on 6 February 1979. Even the review petition filed by the family was dismissed on 24 March 1979. As claimed by Herman, it is the perpetrator’s nature to attack the victim’s credibility, and “the more powerful the perpetrator, the greater is his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments prevail” (8). Both the publication of the White Paper by the Military Regime and the dismissal of the review petition were shocking for Bhutto.

From the death cell of Rawalpindi, Bhutto wrote a testament with the papers on his knees, countering the White Paper using traumatic language. Moreover, such

“traumatic stories are told in the language of the victims, but victims have limited ownership of their stories once elevated to a political level” (Tamanathapillai 7) in terms of publication. Therefore, it was smuggled from the cell to Lahore Printing Press. Then it reached London and finally India for publication on 1 January 1979 as a text entitled *If I am Assassinated*. As per Anderson, “the very idea of ‘nation’ is now nestled firmly in virtually all print languages; and nation-ness is virtually inseparable from political consciousness” (135). In a form of print-capitalism, the publication vibrated a global audience. Furthermore, there was the execution of the decision of the court concerning assassination on 4 April 1979, resulting in political shock, particularly in South Asia.

Bhutto believes that the accusation against him in the form of the White Paper seeks to “generate hatred and resentment against him, to demolish his image” (Bhutto 31), particularly from the day of the military coup. He responded to the White Paper as “white lies” (27) by “a modern Machiavelli” (31) and believed that one “cannot start with petty lies and finish with sublime truth” (38). Bhutto counterattacks the military forces, naming their mission as Machiavelli, known for designing unethical strategies for acquiring power by rulers. Anderson presents Machiavellianism as the opposite concept of idealism (107). In this sense, Bhutto projects himself as an ideal leader. Upreti also considers the military rule as a failure in “broadening the bases of nationalism due to the decline of democratic institutions” (540). In this regard, the regime was not only weakening Bhutto but also the nationhood of Pakistan at the same time.

Bhutto attempts to expose himself as a leader who is connected with commoners, particularly peasants. He claims, “The friend of the poor is my friend and my brother. The enemy of the poor is my mortal enemy. This is my sole and

imperishable criterion and yardstick” (Bhutto 45). In his measuring criteria, the coterie of military generals is the enemies of the poor who are power-hungry, but never concentrate on the hunger of the poor. In this way, he strategically presents “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 7) to commoners as his model of nationhood.

Bhutto was in his death cell and had access to certified documents for refuting the accusation with references, but he claims:

I would have considered it below my dignity to fly at every fantasy in this fiction. In the best of conditions, some of the petty charges need to be ignored with contempt. For instance, I never used that super saloon, yet page after page has been devoted to it. The anti-climax comes when the White Paper states that I did not use it because I got intimidated by the threats of the Opposition! My countrymen do not expect me to answer such a ridiculous explanation. (Bhutto 47)

In this statement, Bhutto, facing accusations while in a death cell, asserts that he does not dignify every accusation with a response. The accusation and threat are overtly against Bhutto, but he is covertly against the democrats in terms of social trauma. Hamburger characterizes the concept of social trauma as a socio-psychological type, illustrating its role in casting a shadow over enduring social processes, influencing not only individuals but also extending to family, group, or inter-group levels in the long term (“Social Trauma” 3). Bhutto articulates his silence as a strategic choice grounded in personal dignity, suggesting that his fellow citizens would not expect such baseless accusations.

This approach highlights a strategic effort to maintain personal integrity while implicitly appealing to nationalist sentiment by presenting himself as a victim of political manipulation. Bhutto aligns himself with the nation’s people, portraying

himself as a leader closely tied to its cultural and historical roots. This narrative cultivates a shared identity and resilience, aiming to mobilize collective energy for societal progress and promote a broader democratic ethos (Sztompka, “The Trauma of Social” 194). Furthermore, Bhutto claims to be deeply rooted in the sentiments of the poor and remarks, “It may sound a rotten cliché if I say that I am a household word in every home and under every roof that leaks in the rain. I belong to the sweat and sorrow of this land. I have an eternal bond with the people that armies cannot break” (Bhutto 48). He emphasizes his bond with the people and comments on the military for disrupting this empathetic connection. Such connectivity between political leaders and the populace not only strengthens democracy but also bolsters nationhood. After the independence of Pakistan, the leaders from Pakistan asserted that “if Muslims suffered terribly during the transition, the state emerging from the trauma was well worth the fight, offering a historically unprecedented chance for Islam to regain a political form” (Alexander, *Trauma* 142). However, Bhutto endures challenges to maintain this connection through nationhood out of trauma.

Mainly, Bhutto presents a military force for torturing people, particularly his party workers. He says, they endure the suffering but “cannot forget the summary punishments awarded to our comrades by military tribunals. As I write, journalists are being arrested by the regime. More of them have been on hunger strike in the last six months than the total number who went on hunger strike in the last 30 years” (Bhutto 64). This clarifies that he and his fellows adopted the non-violence generative form of resistance. Both the “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 7) with people and acknowledgment of “print-capitalism” (Anderson 18) are managed by Bhutto here to project himself as a nationalist freedom fighter. It gives visibility and draws the

attention of national and international communities, connecting people without feeling revenge despite apparent differences.

It is not only the military regime, even the Chief Justice of Lahore High Court behaves in a satirical manner in the trial process saying “You claim to be a student of history and I am informed; you also claim to be a maker of history” (Bhutto 65). In this regard, the concept of “maker of history” means the decision about the assassination of Bhutto. While discussing such historical trauma, Jörn Rüsen believes:

Historization is a common cultural strategy to cope with the disturbing consequences of traumatic experiences. The moment one begins to tell a story about what happened, the first step is taken to integrate the destructive events into the world and self-understanding. At the end of this path, the historical narrative gives trauma a place in a temporal chain of events. (47)

In testimonial or therapeutic interactions, survivors who are usually reticent about their traumatic experiences are encouraged to share their life stories that characterize the interactive field when survivors try to recount their traumatic life stories.

The White Paper mis/misinterprets the statements of Bhutto beyond his intention. Once, the paper objected to Bhutto’s indirect verbal proposal, “Can’t we use it more to our advantage? Please discuss” (Bhutto 68) to a diplomat before the election time interpreting as asking for illegal financial support for the election of March 1977. However, Bhutto responds in his rejoinder by connecting it to broader national interest and claims:

‘More to our advantage’ does not necessarily mean more to my advantage or to that of the party. It might mean more to the country’s advantage. Such a thought would never enter the head of the compiler of this White Paper. He could not understand that the words “our advantage” meant the advantage of

Pakistan to him, our advantage means what it would mean to usurpers and personal regimes. (69)

Whether from any side, “the essentialization of self is thus intertwined with the construction of the other” (Kinnvall 93). However, it is the construction of ‘other’ within the nation makes nationalism weaker developing enmity among the members. That election became a significant event that left a massive impact in his life. Impact events, according to Anne Fuchs, are historical incidents that cause significant disruptions to both the material and symbolic aspects of life, leaving lasting effects on material culture and collective consciousness (22). These events violently disturb social, cultural, and symbolic structures, as well as the material world, which is crucial in shaping collective meaning within shared social contexts.

Similarly, Bhutto becomes sentimental and even aggressive when he reads news reports in the newspaper, closer to the regime, about defaming his son and lineage. He says:

The overreaction of the reactionaries was a manifestation of their nervousness and guilt. One reactionary Urdu newspaper wants to remind him that as he has a father, Kasuri also had a father. Kasuri has enjoyed the festivity of *Holi* with the blood of his father in Los Angeles, New York and Paris at State expense. My sons will not be my sons if they do not drink the blood of those who dare to shed my blood. This is the qualitative difference. Who are my sons? My sons are the masses-Mir Ghulam Murtaza and Shah Nawaz have been taught from birth to be their servants. (76)

In November 1974, Nawab Mohammad Ahmad Kasuri was killed, and Ahmad Raza Kasuri accused Bhutto of being the chief conspirator. Initially, evidence was insufficient to support the charge, but Gen Zia revived the FIR after his military coup.

The Lahore High Court's death penalty decision was primarily based on this case. It is not clear when Kasuri relished the celebration of "*Holi* with the blood of his father in Los Angeles, New York, and Paris" at the expense of the state but, he psychologically pressurizes on sons telling "My sons will not be my sons if they do not drink the blood of those who dare to shed My blood" is barbaric. Here the overwhelming expression of trauma is triggered by the decision of the court regarding their assassination. In the opinion of Herman, when experiencing trauma, the victim becomes powerless due to overwhelming forces. Such traumatic events disrupt the normal mechanisms that provide individuals with a sense of control, connection, and meaning (33). Thus, the above expression of Bhutto indicates the intensity of the trauma resulting from collective suffering and ultimately leading to a discursive course.

The fresh mandate of the people was offered to Bhutto through ballot and it is reflected on the road after the military coup. The administration was cruel to the protesting citizens. "When the miserable citizens of this country have been lashed, whipped and given rigorous imprisonments for saying "Jeeyay Bhutto," when women have been lathi charged, tear-gassed and marched off to jails for praying for me at the shrines of saints" (Bhutto 79). It shows both the torture given by the military regime and the popularity of Bhutto at the same time. As earlier, Bhutto again refers himself to the masses saying, "I am a man of the masses. I am a creation of the people. As such, it is inconceivable for me to become politically dependent on bureaucrats. . . . The only test for me is the people, and this test is met by political and not by bureaucratic means" (Bhutto 85). In this way, he fully credited people for whatever he had achieved. However, Ashutosh Varshney perceives, "the military creates an agonizing dilemma for Pakistani citizen . . . generating anxiety about the future of

Pakistan” (4). The frequent coups have hindered the political stability of the newly formed nation and international credibility.

Bhutto also pats on his own back and claims that in his tenure as Prime Minister, “Pakistan has gained the position of one of the leaders of the Third World, starting from that of a defeated nation in 1971” (Bhutto 91). It indicates that other forces had taken Pakistan to that level of civil war and partition. For Bianchini, partition is a political event for political sciences but it is “a cancer” that demands fundamental medications by changing social behavior (144). Still, in his proclamation, his proactive leadership has brought the derailed nation back on steel tracks. Pakistan faced partition and political instability, though military rulers attempted to justify their dictatorship as a necessity of the time. It is identical to the idea that “colonial status cannot be claimed for justifying either the India-Pakistan or the Pakistan-Bangladesh partitions” (Bianchini 142). Referring to that, Bhutto says, “The army hierarchy had enjoyed the privilege of political power to such an extent that, even after the debacle of East Pakistan within a year, some of the senior officers were plotting a *coup d'état*” (95). The period from 1958 to 1971, marked by military rule in Pakistan, saw deep social disintegration and partition. Bhutto attributed the division to the army’s unwarranted political involvement, which led to societal fragmentation. Despite the 1971 partition, multiple military coups occurred after that.

Furthermore, Bhutto recalls his speech in a common meeting of both houses on 23 April 1977, where he claimed that that was not a *desi* conspiracy but an international conspiracy against Pakistan asserting, “I was dead right. The subsequent events have been more deadly. They have hit the nail on the head” (Bhutto 121-122). That entire event have not been traumatic at that time, as Caruth calls it latency and argues, “The period during which the effects of the experience are not apparent”

(“Unclaimed Experience” 189). However, it is belatedly communicated in imprisonment before the execution of the death penalty, as a social trauma and nationhood.

Additionally, in the context of the partition of Pakistan, harshly targeting the army, Bhutto argues, “that the earlier coup d’état had served one-half of the country. Another would complete the job” (95). Bhutto blames the military for missing East Pakistan and even doubts about the unity in the remaining Pakistan due to the contemporary attitude and activities. However, Rahman blames Islam, Urdu, and the Muslim League for weakening the nationhood of integrated Pakistan (244). Through the interpretation of the Bhutto, the question of Sanjaya Chaturvedi is valid regarding “whether partition actually leads to a paradigm shift from domination to non-domination as a fundamental principle of governance at all levels” (132). Concerning the consequences of the partition, Chaturvedi’s own response is just as “realigned borders” (132) against the existing nationhood. In this way, Bhutto presents the military as myopic to the power, which weakens nationalism in the form of missing East Pakistan.

Rafi Raza, a friend of Bhutto, suggested Bhutto not confront with Military by dropping the project of the nuclear reprocessing plant, postponing the declared election, and enjoying the material comfort but he responded, “I was doing it to build an egalitarian society, to make my country strong and modern, to bring happiness to people who had no idea what the world meant. I told him that tears will always be shed but I wanted less tears to be shed and less bitterly” (121). The nuclear reprocessing plant aimed to enhance military capabilities, yet surprisingly, the military opposed it. This paradoxical stance hindered efforts to strengthen nationhood through advanced weaponry.

Interfering in various Third World nations was common in international politics. It is the responsibility of the respective governing bodies to navigate such influences in the broader national interest as Bhutto perceives contradictions in the military regime's behavior and actions:

The primary responsibility, if not the exclusive responsibility, for dislocating and destroying Pakistan's nuclear program for peaceful purposes undeniably falls on the PNA and the Junta. For this reason, both the actors in the play are joining hands openly. Foreign Governments will follow their own policies. Only we, in Pakistan, have regimes, which follow the policies of foreign governments. The more they talk of self-reliance, the more reliant they become; the more they talk of non-interference the more they allow interference; the more they talk of independence, the more dependent they become. (122)

International conspiracies undermine nationalism and cause political instability, such as the jeopardized France-Pakistan agreement for a nuclear power plant, potentially weakening national defense. Anderson posits that defined boundaries and sovereignty are critical to nationhood (7), aligning with Bhutto's plan to strengthen Pakistan's defense system to maintain national integrity.

Moreover, Bhutto becomes emotional while exposing contradictions between the words and actions of the military regime, which is analogous to imposing a penalty for adultery after subjecting the entire nation to profound violations. It is akin to declaring that the Holy Quran's guidance is disregarded, yet asserting that no one can evade the consequences of a metaphorical hell (126). Adding to the contradictions, using imageries as abrogating the constitution, rapping the country, and suspending the Quran, Bhutto muscularly attacked the military regime talking

about the cultural roots of nationalism in his favor particularly showing “a strong affinity with religious imaginings” (Anderson 10) along with moral and legal references.

As supported by the information available to Bhutto, he has to fight two battles against national and international forces at the same time. Within Pakistan, “The difference was that the unity of the Junto Front, of CCF and DAC was “desi” work. The unity of PNA was not a “desi” conspiracy. Rafi Raza was the first person to describe its foreign colors to me” (Bhutto 121). Internal conspiracies can be seen as part of democratic competition, but they become unethical when international forces interfere in a sovereign nation’s domestic matters. In this manner, Bhutto indirectly calls all nationalist Pakistanis to be united for the sovereign imagined community (Anderson 6). In this manner, Bhutto attacks internal and external subjugation, encouraging political sovereignty.

The memories project the army as a persistent political force rather than a professional entity. Its political influence began in 1954 and expanded through Martial Law, solidifying its role in governance. As expressed by Bhutto, “The Army was in politics up to its neck. It was an unpleasant and disconcerting reality, but unpleasant or pleasant, it was the reality” (Bhutto 129). In this sense, the hostility and disturbance created by the perpetual interests of the military in the politics of Pakistan drowns its professionalism, and ultimately the nation. Conversely, the army blames Bhutto for weakening Pakistan, and he rhetorically responds:

Did I try my level best to destroy the army by bringing back with honor 90,000 prisoners of war? Did General Zia-ul-Haq have the ten-year-old American arms embargo lifted, did he get the weapons from China, did he invest over one and a half billion dollars on armaments, and did he modernize

the navy, give fighter planes to the air force and missiles to the three services? Did he reorganize the defense services and establish the Ministry of Defense Production? Did he embark on defense collaboration with Muslim States? Did he conclude the Nuclear Reprocessing Plant Agreement although he called it 'my plant' in an interview with a correspondent of the Washington Post? If I tried my level best to eliminate the army, why did he serve under me for the five and a half years, and why did he accept the office of the Chief of Staff'? (130)

Bhutto presents a list of achievements from his political career, mainly emphasizing strengthening Pakistan's defense system. Bhutto strengthens the limitations and reinforces internal sovereignty as the major nationalist character (Anderson 6), promoting the defense system within his imagined community. Despite focusing on securing Pakistan, he acknowledges that he had to accommodate the interests of those benefiting from his efforts. This situation highlights Bhutto's concerns about national security, contrasting with the military's pursuit of power.

Diverse social, cultural, and political forces keeping independence at the center elevated the Indian Independence movement. Moreover, Pakistan also gained independence. In his nostalgia, Bhutto recalls:

For over three decades, civilian leaders like the Quaid-e-Azam, and Gandhi led the masses of the subcontinent in an intensive struggle for independence and freedom. Without political consciousness, political awakening, and agitations against the salt tax, the Khilafat movement. Quit India and Direct Action would not have been possible, and without those convulsions, the pillars of the British Raj would not have collapsed. . . . The people of the subcontinent, both the Muslims and the Hindus, aroused and inspired by their

civilian leaders, struggled and sacrificed not to merely hoist two new flags but to get the fruits of freedom and democracy. (Bhutto 132)

The leaders and the parties who jointly fought for the independence of India were divided regarding the nature of actual independence or the creation of secular India and Muslim Pakistan. The formation of Pakistan is an ontology that emphasizes, “the value of nationality as an organizing construct for collections of individuals who share common interests and need to mobilize for collective action” (Kinnvall 81). Bhutto emphasizes the role of the populace and leaders in establishing Pakistan. However, the military’s increasing involvement led to Pakistan’s partition and the creation of Bangladesh. Mohammed Ali Jinnah had compared the independence of Pakistan and the partition of India to “a surgical operation” (qtd. in Alexander *Trauma* 142) against the subjugation of Islam to acknowledge trauma. Even decades after independence, the army has continued political engagement, undermining the original independence movement’s focus on public consciousness and empowerment against nationhood.

Varshney proposes three strategies for Pakistan’s future and regional peace: institutionalizing democracy, reassessing anti-Indian sentiment, and managing Pakistan-India crises (17). These approaches address Pakistan’s weakening nationalism and suggest that a national awakening could restore strength and unity.

Again, Bhutto credits the general people rather than the army generals for the creation of Pakistan and says, “Pakistan was created in the name of Islam. This is true, but who created Pakistan? The Muslim masses galvanized under the civilian leadership of the Quaid-e-Azam and not under a coterie of generals created Pakistan” (132). He advocates the sovereignty of people in Pakistan rather than religion only. Moreover, he goes on to acknowledge people and projects as a single powerful source for making this nationhood sustainable saying that “only those who created Pakistan

in the name of Islam can order their chosen representatives, how to ordain that name. A usurper or a coterie carries no mandate to fulfill the task” (132). Thus, he perpetually advocates the rule of law operated by the elected government.

The culture of hegemony is against democratic principles. Moreover, it is also against the nationalism. Locating and signaling the consequences of the interplay of internal and external hegemonic power blocs in Pakistan Bhutto assumes:

The two hegemonies complement each other. If our people meekly submit to internal hegemony, a priori, they will have to submit to external hegemony.

This is so because the strength and power of external hegemony is far greater than that of internal hegemony. If the people are too terrified to resist the weaker force, they can't resist the stronger force. The acceptance of or acquiescence to internal hegemony means submission to external hegemony.

The people of this country will not tolerate either. They will rise against both hegemonies. (133)

The military regime's dominance instills fear and weakens resistance against foreign forces. For Pakistan to strengthen and democracy to flourish, the military must reduce its political role. Strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring civil liberties, and promoting political pluralism will empower the populace and fortify national unity. Because of that, Bhutto emphasizes, “Civilization means civilian supremacy. Military coup d'états are a disaster” (135) as one of the disasters faced by Pakistan in 1971.

In March 1951, during Liaquat Ali Khan's tenure as Prime Minister, an attempted military coup known as the Rawalpindi conspiracy took place in Pakistan. Bhutto notes that Khan warned generals to stay out of politics and denounced the coup as threatening democracy, national unity, and the nation itself (136). The reference also resembles the attitude of Bhutto regarding the military coup. Bhutto

goes on to blame the army for stimulating civil war in Pakistan and the partition of the Islamic nation, “Towards the end of 1972 and the beginning of 1973, barely a year after a traumatic civil war had ended with the separation of East Pakistan, another coup d’état was being organized” (Bhutto 136). In this sense, the military concentrates only on power and simply forgets East Pakistan.

In Bhutto’s observation, the Pakistani army committed multiple mistakes in history, but they have learned no lesson from the tragedy and remind us:

Historical tragedies arising out of military rule meant nothing to power-blind individuals. The flow of blood was like water down a duck’s back. The blunders of military regimes, both internal and external, were not eye-openers. The pollution of the armed forces by its involvement in politics had not conveyed any message. The catastrophe of East Pakistan and the surrender of 90, 000 prisoners of war did not teach a single elementary lesson. (136)

The military rulers, seemingly intoxicated by power, remain oblivious to the loss of East Pakistan and its consequences. Bhutto laments the bloodshed, surrender, and partition, yet the military remains indifferent to correcting its course of action through introspection. Indicating a similar context, Herman maintains that recalling and telling the facts about painful events are fundamentals for the repair of communal harmony and for the treatment of the victim (1). It reflects that trauma does not appear as traumatic at the beginning, but reappears like.

Experiencing the multiple attempts and performance of military coups in the last thirty years, Bhutto feels catastrophic that the independence that was achieved through the sacrifice of thousands of people of the land is now at stake, as “The appetite for aggrandizement, the unquenchable thirst for naked power can become a habit-forming drug. It can bring hallucinations of civil war” (Bhutto 137). There was

the looming threat of civil war. While political science students often overlook the army's role in nationalism, Bhutto strongly criticizes Pakistan's military for undermining national identity. This perspective reveals a significant gap in understanding the military's historical and fundamental role, risking further national tragedy.

Multicultural countries are so fragile compared to the monoculture while discussing the problems of nationhood. In this light, Bhutto hypothesizes, "If India had suffered from martial laws and military dictatorships, on the pattern of Pakistan, India would have been three or four separate pieces by this day. India is more heterogeneous than Pakistan" (Bhutto 138). Here, Bhutto emphasizes that political disputes and debates are essential for democracy, strengthening national unity and embracing diversity and inclusivity.

Though there was hazardous terror and significant loss caused by two World Wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the competition for producing weapons did not stop among the nations. It was directly connected to the nationhood of the nations. Similarly, concerning modern weapons, Bhutto takes the Nuclear Reprocessing Plant Agreement with France, as an outstanding achievement for Pakistan and his government, which signed:

After three years of intense negotiations, the Nuclear Reprocessing Plant Agreement was signed between France and Pakistan in March 1976. France was fully satisfied with the safeguards. . . . The United States representative on the Commission voted in favor of confirmation. The necessary confirmation and approval by the International Atomic Energy Commission would not have come if the Commission was not completely satisfied with the safeguards. In August 1976, I rejected the counter-proposals of the United States. At that

time, the French Government expressed its indignation over American interference. A consistent position was taken by France on the original Agreement until 5th July 1977. (146)

Disregarding the threats of other powerful nations, Bhutto's government in Pakistan was planning to empower the nation with modern weapons. Regarding a similar situation, Breuilly believes modernizing a nation offers keys to contextualizing nationhood (51). The military force was not ready for that. Nevertheless, it becomes a tragedy in his life as he mentioned the international conspiracies. The agreement with France could be the prime cause behind the conspiracies.

There was an obstacle in the process of materializing Bhutto's dream of the processing plant. However, "General Zia, in contrast, is thrilled by the very polite letter from President Giscard d'Estaing in which he has been told that the agreement will have to be renegotiated to deny Pakistan the promised nuclear capability" (Bhutto 147). The French are guided by a high-context culture. The meanings of the renegotiation mean the termination of the earlier agreement. "But riddled by complexes, General Zia had to add insult to injury by saying that it is a "very polite letter". What a fall, my countrymen! What a shattering blow to the dream of a lifetime" (Bhutto 147). Zia did not feel any discomfort with the non-performance of the agreement but Bhutto felt as if his paradise was lost. He was shocked by the heavy blow because Bhutto revealed, "Assiduously and with granite determination, I put my entire vitality behind the task of acquiring nuclear capability for my country" (Bhutto 147). Bhutto, as a patriotic leader, connects the power plant with the nation's protection. Because of that, he was single-minded in the project, enduring any challenges and threats.

The nuclear Reprocessing Plant Agreement with France was his dream project for Bhutto, but the dream was shattered. He expresses his agony by saying:

The General got the lemon- 'limbo'- from the President of France. Pakistan got the '*ladu*'. PNA got the '*halva*.' I got the death sentence. What difference does my life make now when I can imagine eighty millions of my countrymen standing under the nuclear cloud of a defenseless sky? (148)

Defending the territory of the sovereign nation is an unavoidable factor of nationalism. However, military rulers and the political opponents of Bhutto compelled the people of Pakistan to remain in insecurity between the barrels of weapons.

Additionally, broader national interest is downsized in the crowd of personal interests of the generals and the leaders of the PNA. For Alexander, the nationalistic "Imagination is intrinsic to the very process of representation. It seizes upon an inchoate experience from life, and forms it, through association, condensation, and aesthetic creation, into some specific shape" ("Cultural Trauma" 9). Bhutto also creates such imagination in the name of making the Pakistani boundary stronger.

Hamoodur Report is popularly known as the report prepared by the War Enquiry Commission to assess the circumstances in which the commander in East Pakistan "surrendered and the members of the Armed Forces of Pakistan under this command laid down their arms and a cease-fire was ordered along the borders of West Pakistan and India and the cease-fire line in the state of Jammu and Kashmir" (Bhutto.org 1). The report was focused on misconduct and atrocities, too. The military was also an accused class in that unpublished report. Relating to that report, Bhutto says. "I have always tried to serve the supreme national interest. I took pains to uphold the prestige and reputation of the armed forces" (149). In cultural trauma, rather than understanding it as a whole group experiencing pain together, "it is the

result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity" (Alexander, *Trauma* 15). Later, hundreds of witnesses to the commission reported the brutality of the force. However, Bhutto expresses his dissatisfaction as the White Paper was silent about that "gravest provocation and inhuman treatment . . . which show how another effort is being made to turn virtue into vice" (Bhutto 149) to crash his character. Moreover, Bhutto states, "I chose to sacrifice our political interests to safeguard the reputation and honor of the armed forces. I am receiving a wonderful token of gratitude" (150). Bhutto endures pain for the sake of national interest and to preserve the image of the armed forces of Pakistan, but conversely, the same force targets him and limits him to the death cell, a wonderful token of gratitude.

Even after the coup, the military regime did not formally publish the report because that would undoubtedly backfire. "In a press conference in Lahore about four months ago, the Chief Martial Law Administrator tried to play down the substance of the Report. He said that he had read it and there was nothing important in it. As measured by his yardstick, only those things are important which might damage me" (Bhutto 150). The report was nothing for the military, but the report was "a story of rape, plunder, and loot. If, in those days, lashing was a punishment for rape and cutting off hands for theft, I would shudder to think of the number of handless persons. Although 'purifying the blood of Bengalis' is not rape" (Bhutto 150). How the blood of a particular geography can be pure and impure. Can a crime lead so-called "impurity" to "purity"? Bhutto is traumatized by the rape and atrocities. Still, there is a question for him, as prime minister of Pakistan, why he did not take the cases to legal procedure, considering the report as one of the major pieces of evidence. Anyway, there is guilt for believing in and empowering the military.

Once, Bhutto used the phrase *Idhar Hum Udhar Tum* simply to communicate the identical circumstances, and the suffering of the different geographical locations, West and East Pakistan. It was distorted by the military regime, later connected to the partition of Pakistan. Denouncing the nationalistic interpretation of the statement, he gives his clarification relating to the suffering:

This is the meaning of '*Idhar Hum Udhar Tum*,' an expression I did not use in that distorted form; but it has come out to be true. There, the Bengalis were given hell and here we are being given hell. Over there the Bengali politicians were not fit to rule. Over here we are not fit to rule. Democracy was unworkable in Bengal. Democracy is unworkable here. Over there, the masses had to be exploited by Big Business and over here our masses have to be exploited by Big Business. Over there, the Bengalis had to get the *danda* and over here we have to get the *danda*. '*Idhar Hum Udhar Tum*.' (Bhutto 150)

That was not used in terms of dividing the nationhood of Pakistan between East and West, but coincidentally, that ambiguity was resolved with the formation of Bangladesh. Moreover, cultural trauma is a process of expanding 'we'. As stated by Alexander, "Societies expand the circle of the 'we' and create the possibility for repairing societies to prevent the trauma from happening again" ("Culture Trauma" 3). Thus, Bhutto attempts to justify himself as highly democratic and purely nationalistic by identifying with the past suffering of Bengalis and blaming the military for the partition of Pakistan.

Repeatedly, Bhutto does not miss a single opportunity to justify himself as a nationalist leader. He compares the situation of 1970-71 to the situation of 1978 and believes, "In 1970, the danger was of losing East Pakistan. In 1978, the danger is of losing all of what remained of Pakistan. In 1970, there were three political forces on

the scene. In 1978, there were only two political forces on the scene” (Bhutto 151-52). In 1970-71, the ruling party, the opposition party, and the military experienced power struggles. In 1977, the election led to the removal of the elected opposition, with the PPP then becoming the opposition. Bhutto also believes the concepts that a nation is imagined as sovereign, emerging from an era where the Enlightenment and Revolution undermined any form of divine right against a sovereign nation (Anderson 7) and expressed concern about these ongoing efforts to undermine political parties, the democratic process, and the people’s will, fearing potential harm to Pakistani nationhood by the military.

Bhutto was facing the hardest times of his life in a death cell. Even in such a situation, he never attempts to compromise and communicates in a louder voice. To make all these clear to all, he clearly states:

I was born to make a nation, to serve a people, to overcome an impending doom. I was not born to wither away in a death cell and to mount the gallows to fulfill the vindictive lust of an ungrateful and treacherous man. I was not born to be humiliated and insulted by a barbaric and spiteful clique. I was born to bring emancipation to the people and honor them with a self-respecting destiny. (152)

Bhutto repeatedly claims that serving the nation is a single purpose of his birth. Even in such a pathetic condition, the popular leader is never derailed from his fundamental principles of politics. Because of that, Bhutto claims that he is the “only person to reverse the march towards self-annihilation. I have the confidence of the people and I love my land too much” (153). The journey towards self-annihilation is an individual understanding of trauma, which is argued by Lombardi and Gordon that “the most silent and lasting effects of trauma consist of a rupture in the sense of self” (183).

However, Bhutto beholds a single ray of hope from the death cell that there can be a compromise for the greater good of the nation in case of the supremacy of the constitution, democracy, parliament, autonomy, and party system (153), casting the military from politics.

Among the diverse problems in Pakistan is the vast division of the class based on rulers and the ruled. More specifically, Bhutto explains, “The trouble is that there are two worlds in Pakistan, the world of the Masses and the world of the Masters. There is the people’s image of themselves, and there is the arrogant coterie’s image of the people” (155). In this situation, the regime has taken advantage from the innocent Pakistani. Pakistan as a nation started to miss its imaginings, which were pervasive at the time of independence.

Pakistan, as a largely dreamt and newly structured “imagined political community” (Anderson 6), was becoming weaker. Again, in the context, Bhutto expresses his commitment to them, “We trust the people and their wisdom implicitly. We do not think that the people are children who can be led by a Pied Piper or that they are lambs driven into the slaughterhouse” (155). The military regime in Pakistan is likened to the *Pied Piper*, using its influence to lead the populace into a metaphorical dark tunnel, much as the piper in the myth led innocent children to a dark cave. This dynamic victimizes the people, reflecting the regime’s control over the nation’s political trajectory.

The direct influence or involvement of the armed forces is not expected in a democracy, even in the name of a nation’s sovereignty. “If the sovereignty and the unity of a country are not safe in the supreme hands of the people and their elected representatives, it cannot be safe in any other hands” (Bhutto 157). The leader with the verdict of the people is the firm representative of the nation. Therefore, “it is an

insult to the people and their patriotism to impose a non-elected, salaried watchdog as the sentinel of national unity. This would be the death knell to national unity” (Bhutto 157). Generally, it can only be a tactic or an evil strategy of non-elected forces to be in power, exposing the discourse of national unity outside.

Again, it can be interpreted as a form of internal colonialism. In terms of the experience, “external colonialism foisted on our people a diarchy. Internal colonialism is following suit with a vengeance” (Bhutto 157). The weakening of nationhood can result from various forms of internal colonialism, as evidenced by the partitions of India and Pakistan. Consequently, the populace can serve as a more robust symbol of national unity.

Pakistan can be called a laboratory for political experimentation, particularly for the military coup. For Pakistan and Bhutto:

A coup d'état is an unpleasant experience. It leaves behind a dreadful legacy. Pakistan, the land of the pure, has become a capstan. If a coup d'état becomes a permanent part of the political infrastructure, it means the falling of the last petal of the last withered rose. It means the end. (158)

The imagery of the withered rose used by Bhutto to reflect the chaotic situation created by the military coup in Pakistan and the falling of the last petal signals that the nationhood of the nation is on ambush.

The expectation of a newly formed nation is primarily high, and the people of such a nation feel much ownership because of their direct contribution. In the case of Pakistan, because of that, Bhutto also shares, “Without the struggle of the people and their sacrifices, this category of new States would not have come into existence. And if they cannot be trusted to maintain the unity of their own creation, the *raison d'être* of the struggle and the sacrifice disappears” (Bhutto 158). Therefore, if those fail to

get ownership, the frustration of the people, who had suffered and sacrificed for the new nation, can explode immediately. In the points of Anderson, within prevailing inequality and exploitation, the nation is imagined as a community of deep, horizontal comradeship, inspiring millions over the past two centuries to willingly die for one ideal (7) but the frustration of the member of a newly imagined community can be inversely proportional to the strength of the nationhood as reflected by Bhutto.

During the war with India, thousands of square miles of land and thousands of prisoners of war were in the grip of India. In that turmoil political situation, Bhutto believes that his “government made the nation walk out of the jaws of death. We faced and overcame huge problems with the power of the people. We brought confidence in the place of chaos, and stability from the shambles of dismemberment” (Bhutto 162). Indeed, there was a pain of missing East Pakistan. Furthermore, the condition of Pakistan is to be both in the frying pan and into the fire of dismemberment.

The White Paper was assumed to be prepared by the committee examining about 900 witnesses, and they were submitted in 1044 pages. However, Bhutto defends himself that there is no direct evidence for his assassination, saying that:

If I am assassinated through the gallows, these questions will nevertheless be put very loudly because of ‘the record left behind by the regime itself.’ Until the answers come, there will be turmoil and turbulence, conflict and conflagration. In drawing attention to these documentary landmarks, I am not preaching provincialism. I am exposing and condemning provincialism. (168)

More than challenging, it is threatening and provocation. Therefore, he uses their weapon against them by saying that their accusation itself is guided by falsity and purely provocative.

Modifying the concept of “hegemony” as developed by Antonio Gramsci, Bhutto connects the military coup with hegemony. It develops the term coup-gemony to resemble the hegemony of the military regime in Pakistan. Bhutto elaborates:

At present, the greatest threat to the unity and progress of the Third World is from coup-gemony. The era of colonialism is all but dead. Only a few places remain where colonialism has still to be buried. In those places also, the burial is at hand. The Third World has to guard against hegemony, but the best way to guard against hegemony is to prevent coup-gemony. The biggest link of external colonialism is internal colonialism, which means that hegemony cannot thrive in our lands without the collaboration of coup-gemony. Military coup d'états are the worst enemies of national unity. Coup d'états divides and debases a free people. If there was any doubt on the subject, the events in Pakistan have shown that the people of the Third World have to primarily guard against the internal enemy, if foreign domination or hegemony is to be resisted. Coup-gemony is the bridge over which hegemony walks to stalk our lands. (175)

While relating to the challenges and threats to the Third World in general and Pakistan in Particular, Bhutto exposes the condition of post-colonial Pakistan to the fish which was able to jump from the frying pan in the form of imperialism but fall into the fire in the form of coup-gemony, civil war, and partition. The independence of India and the nationhood of Pakistan were established by the inevitable loss of lives and properties. However, in the understanding of Bhutto, this coup-gemony has created a fertile ground for external hegemonic power centers to enjoy the sacred land for political experimentation, which highly contributed to weakening nationhood.

Words are also contributive to gathering the mass, but action is needed to drive them for a particular purpose. Especially in time of struggle, a leader's action matters much. "Sacrifices and not semantics are required to safeguard sovereign interests. The people make sacrifices provided they can be mobilized, they cannot be motivated into making sacrifices by an unrepresentative coterie" (Bhutto 179). Internal hegemonic power blocs can hardly mobilize the people who established Pakistan, sacrificing their comfort.

In the lateral part of his rejoinder, Bhutto narrates his childhood experience of being politically active for the independence of India. He recounts:

Since my youth, I have been a fierce and unremitting fighter against British imperialism. I went to Cathedral and John Connon High School in Bombay. It was one of the best English schools in the sub-continent. Even then, as a schoolboy, I was in deep trouble for my political activities, especially during the 'Quit India' movement and 'Direct Action Day.' (180)

It has been narrated to show that he had not directly jumped into Pakistani politics through the window and to establish that he had also contributed to the Indian Independence Movement, tolerating troubles since his childhood.

When Bhutto was seven years old in 1935, his father served as a minister in the Government of Bombay. At that time, Governor Lord Braborne invited Bhutto's father and his three sons for tea. Bhutto recounts:

On being introduced to my eldest brother, Imdad Ali, who was then twenty-one years of age, Lord Braborne remarked, 'What a handsome young man.' Being a cultivated and polished aristocrat, Imdad Ali said in reply. 'I am all the more flattered, Sir because the compliment comes from our handsome Governor.' (180)

The short conversation is fully formal and limited to appreciating each other.

However, the aggressive and revolutionary comment added by Bhutto, “His Excellency, the Governor, is handsome because he has been fed on the blood of our beautiful country” (180). Generally, a child of seven hardly understands any political term. Still, in the case of Bhutto, he proactively resisted a powerful representative of British colonialism in India using revolutionary political language, as Ridjic believes that “memory of social trauma is remembered by members of the group who did not witness these traumatic events” (85). The language of Bhutto is full of suffering and a strong sense of nationalism. It indicates that he was not in politics, but politics was in him. For a split second, Braborne astonishingly observed Bhutto, and directing his finger to him and turning to Bhutto’s father, he said, “And in him, Sir Shah Nawaz, you have the poet and the revolutionary” (Bhutto 181). It is valid in both cases that this legal English, which is a rejoinder, is full of figures of speech and the perpetual attack on absolute power blocs strappingly resembles his revolutionary character.

While returning from the residence of the Governor, Bhutto’s father had asked Bhutto, “Saien, what was the need of that remark?” (Bhutto 181) and Bhutto had responded, “It was enough to release my tension; I put both my hands on my face and sobbingly, almost shouted hysterically . . . This is our country, this is our country, this is our country. I have considered every country under the yoke of colonialism as if it were my country” (181). In this sense, this writing is not only a means for countering the White Papers and defending oneself as a rejoinder. Additionally, it is a tool to release his tears, preventing them from being chronic trauma as he had released his tension orally in front of the Governor. It also signals that the subordinated, particularly colonized people, have a collective consciousness against “colonial nationalism” (Anderson 114) of the colonizer that was as Machiavellian.

Thus, Bhutto feels glory to live with his anti-colonial and anti-hegemonic character and reminds:

That is how I shall remain until the last breath is gone from my body. I continued the fight at Berkeley by spearheading every anti-colonial cause and by giving militant backing to every colored cause in the United States. In England, I had the honor of being at Christ Church, Oxford, and later at Lincoln's Inn. Both at Oxford and in London, I was in the vanguard of anti-colonial causes. (181)

Thus, all these illustrate that he was involved in the anti-colonial movement from early childhood and gave voice to Indian nationhood and independence even from colonial headquarters. He shifts from the ruled classes to the ruling class, but his revolutionary attitude remains intact. Again, in the death cell, he endures the hostile political shock, but his faith and love for the people and nation are integral. Thus, Bhutto projects himself as an anti-colonial nationalist, producing such discourses. In this sense, Chatterjee calls it "derivative discourses" (qtd. in Anderson 210), which attempt to bring the third world within a community.

Though Bhutto, with all his efforts, attempts to prove himself as an anti-colonial nationalist, in one case, he is humble to the British. Bhutto recounts:

I have been deeply moved by the honorable shelter given by the British government and the British people to my three children and my comrades. I crossed swords with British leaders and governments to assert the intellectual and moral equality of Asia. I have done this with glory to the Asian people. My battle with Britain is over. (181)

This issue is of the post-colonial period, and he appreciated the humanitarian support of the British Government and people, which was offered on democratic grounds. It does not mean he is not rethinking his attitude towards British Imperialism in India.

Bhutto blames the military regime for not only targeting him but also having the evil intention to eliminate the whole Bhutto family. Regarding that, Bhutto says:

The author of the White Paper is in a frenzied search for any flimsy pretext, any straw in the wind that might not only hang me but my wife and my children. I want my people to remember these words of mine because they are made solemnly and with the firm expectation that the eighty million people of this Nation are not without 'Gheirat.' (192)

That also means that if Bhutto is assassinated, his family members will come to give leadership as they have also contributed to Pakistani politics and were targeted by the regime. Indirectly, he has already signaled the political career of his daughter, who has become the student council president at Harvard.

Bhutto openly confesses that he has made mistakes unknowingly. Still, he is confident about his ethical values. Regarding the decision made by the court for his death penalty, he miserably says, "I am full of error, but whatever my error, I am not a corrupt person. It is very painful to be chastised in this ungrateful manner. There is bound to be retribution. My tormentors have brought disgrace to the name of Pakistan" (195). He connects this harrowing capital punishment to his nation and infers about defaming Pakistan. In this regard, Venkitachalam argues that by exposing the recurrent application of the death penalty and the political dynamics surrounding it, the narrative effectively illustrates the brutal and monstrous character of the state. This portrayal serves to highlight the state's oppressive and dehumanizing qualities through its harsh and politically motivated practices (320-21). Bhutto consoles

himself even in the case of the execution of the death penalty, reminding more than thirty-five years of public and political life, “Time will tell whether my name will be bracketed with the criminals of the subcontinent or with the heroes who have waded across its lands. My name and my reputation are safe in the custody of the people and in the heart of history” (195). He considers that the evaluation done by people makes the history of the leader and the nation, not the blame made by the military regime.

The overall system of the existing regime of Pakistan was against Bhutto, and because of that, he sensitively says, “This opera of hate is reaching a crescendo during the hearing of my appeal to the Supreme Court” (197). It signals that he was not hopeful about a revision of the verdict of the district court. In the evolution of the trauma process, as noted by Alexander, it is essential to explore questions concerning hierarchical structures, such as whether the courts function with complete independence, the extent of actions that entrepreneurial legal advocates can undertake within the system, and who holds ultimate authority over the government. These questions examine how varying levels of power and influence within legal and governmental frameworks affect the dynamics of trauma (*Trauma* 25) are the leading questions. Similarly, in the case of Bhutto, the controversial court decisions, limited access to professional advocates, and military control over the government are key factors that contribute to the expansion of collective trauma. For Porobić, “The collective trauma can thus become the epicenter of group identity” (225). Such trauma leads to an existential crisis for the members of a democratic society.

After the decision of the district court regarding the death penalty, Bhutto describes the overall environment of the death cell:

Since 18<sup>th</sup> March spent twenty-two to twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four in a congested and suffocating death cell. I have been hemmed in by its

sordidness and stink throughout the heat and the rain of the long hot summer. The light is poor. My eyesight has worsened. My health has been shattered. I have been in solitary confinement for almost a year, but my morale is high because I am not made of wood, which burns easily. Through sheer willpower, in conditions, that are adverse in the extreme, I have written this rejoinder. Let all the White Papers come. (197)

The entire environment is gloomy but Bhutto attempts to present himself as a bold political character who does not compromise with his basic ideology but the outer description of the environment resembles the internal psychology of Bhutto. Anyway, as argued by Ramanathapillai, “the storytelling of trauma creates psychological preparedness for future violence” (4). Any group can be interpreted as a victim card. Still, it resembles the decline of human rights and the democratic process.

Bhutto has demanded an open trial in his case. He wants to make people aware of the allegations by the Military against him. He clarifies the reason behind the public trial:

The concept of justice is inextricably intertwined with an open trial. The political and legal struggle for an open trial, especially if it involves capital punishment, is writ large in golden letters. Prophet Moses preached it to his people during their long journey from tyranny. The same message is contained in Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. The last and final Messenger of God dispensed justice in an open mosque and not as a ‘cloistered virtue.’ The Roman slave, Spartacus, gave his life for justice. Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates philosophized on the openness of justice. (Bhutto 197)

Open trial supports bringing truth among the people that a popular execution of the past resembles the transparent judiciary system in a particular nation as a maxim,

resembles, “Justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done” (Bhutto 198) as an essential and irreproachable custom of law. It is also a way of getting attention and empathy from national and international communities, particularly from the people of Pakistan. As Bhutto restates what he has said in the trial in Lahore District Court:

*Forget the fact that I have been the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan. Forget the fact that I am the leader of the premier party of this country. Forget all these things. But I am a citizen of this country, and I am facing a murder trial. Even the ordinary citizen and I consider myself one is not denied justice.*  
(198)

It resembles the attitude of Bhutto towards justice, particularly justice to all as a basic principle of democracy. People are certainly different in terms of characteristics, but all of them are equal and they should be treated accordingly by the country and the court.

Moreover, in the case of Bhutto, not all are upheld. Because of that, he questions:

What is an *ex parte* judgment it is the judgment of the trial court that awards the death sentence without hearing the defense of the illegally described ‘principal accused’ Is not an *ex parte* judgment? This is the extent to which I have been made a victim of criminal injustice. (198)

The question and the observation are about the existing regime and the judicial procedure of the Pakistani courts, and he thinks that he has been systematically made a victim in the absence of professional cooperation. In such a type of social trauma process, as observed by Bernhard Giesen, the law court is an “institutional arena in which the demarcation of individual criminal guilt was staged, ritually constructed,

and reaffirmed” (122). The law court is where individual criminal guilt is determined through trials and hearings, reinforcing legal authority and societal norms. However, Bhutto opposes the whole process and attempts to collect sympathy as a systematically victimized leader.

It is not about cooperation only, even professionally, the judge did not show behavior in the legal process. Bhutto narrated the rudeness, “The taunts, the frowns and shouts were reserved only for me. I was favored with the commands to “shut up,” “get up” and ‘take this man away until he regains his senses” (Bhutto 199). No professionalism is to be shown by the court in his case. The court has treated him as a recently arrested thief in a police station. Because of that, he becomes doubtful of trial judges in closed hearings. “If that practice is followed, justice will turn from the majesty of Law to the tyranny of law. It would mean the legalization of murder” (Bhutto 198). In this regard, his doubtful attitude to Military rulers also transfers to judges and courts.

Referring to the victimization of her daughter by the regime, Bhutto states, “My daughter was in detention for over five months. Her detention was held illegal by the High Court of Sindh. The regime was most upset by her release” (Bhutto 210). Differently, he appreciates the court in the case. It can be a tool to attack the military regime and give high political visibility to his daughter as the heir of his politics. Bhutto is on the eve of his execution but feels no sorry for what he has done for society and the nation. Rather than the elected government and his life, the existence of Pakistan is at the center for him. Because of that, he focuses. “More than votes are at stake. More than my life is at stake ... the future of Pakistan is at stake” (200). Bhutto shows the popular votes and lives in jeopardy, connecting it to weakening the “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 6) among Pakistanis, where people can hardly

feel in a common “imagined community” (Anderson 6). It is the nub of a patriotic leader, who overlooks political power and personal pain and entirely concentrates on the nation’s future, which is at stake.

In the past, there was a civil war in Pakistan mainly because of the debate over the national language. Moreover, concerning the civil war of 1971, Bhutto blames the Junta from West Pakistan for exploiting East Pakistan and so “a civil war is inconceivable when the armed forces as a whole are used by a Junta to act as a protective shield of the vested interests” (202). In this sense, it covertly blames military force for cracking Pakistan. The transformative influence of capitalism, particularly through its focus on commercialization, played a significant role in the development and reinforcement of national consciousness (Anderson 39). Again, while discussing the contemporary threats to the future of the remaining Pakistan, Bhutto thinks, “Mass conscience has to reach a recognized level of development and the armed forces have to split into two camps, one with the exploiters and the other with the exploited, for a civil war to take place” (Bhutto 202). On the one hand, it can be a way to create discourse that, within the military class, there are groups of exploiters and the exploited.

On the other hand, it can be the political strategy of Bhutto to divide the military force. If it happens in a civil war, there is a further threat of partition. Thus, the traumatic hypothesis of Bhutto can be perceived as a call for strengthening nationhood through geo-political awareness. Kai Erikson believes that “trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can” (186), as Bhutto expands his ideological community.

It is the right of the prisoners to get a certain level of facilities in prison houses. Moreover, for the political prisoners, there exists a specific protocol for

providing facilities, but in the experience of Bhutto, he could not enjoy the necessities, even reading and writing for the preparation of legal documents to defend himself in court. Moreover, it is challenging for a prisoner to narrate trauma in a structured manner. As studied by Habermas and Bartoli, traumatic experiences result in the fragmentation of both personal life stories and the narratives of the traumatic events themselves. This fragmentation disrupts the continuity of the self, preventing the traumatic event from being narrated coherently and sequentially. As a result, the individual's ability to construct a cohesive narrative of their experiences is significantly impaired (204). Regarding it, Bhutto has the same experience and recounts, "Most of this rejoinder has been written with the paper resting on my knee. On occasions, I have felt giddy with sheer exhaustion" (Bhutto 210). The off-balance state of mind reflects the outcome of the overall national politics and the inner environment of the cell. The non-availability of a chair and table for the former president and prime minister of the nation in the prison house reflects the bold attitude of the military regime.

The White Paper has multiple grammar errors, and Bhutto ironically attacks it, symbolically targeting the military regime, saying:

Even if it were, I would not apologize for the errors in English grammar. I would apologize for the errors in the Grammar of Politics. If some thought has not been put across clearly or convincingly, if there is a defect in the political analysis, if the logic is faulty, I would be glad to apologize but also remind the reader that I have been in solitary confinement for almost one year and in a death cell for over five months. (211)

Without being sentimental, he has expressed confidence about the correctness of the political syntax rather than the English grammar, as he was in solitary confinement

and references were not available there. In terms of temporality as a toolkit for reading autobiographical writing, Smith and Watson suggested asking, “Can you identify the time of the telling, that is, the narrative moment? At what stage in his life does the narrator compose the text?” (170). In this way, exposing the endured trauma in life and mistaken grammar in writing attacks the military regime covertly.

Again, Bhutto attacks the White Paper as a fiction, borrowing Napoleon Bonaparte’s remarks that “history is a fable” (217) and calls the “White Paper is the feeblest of all fables” (217). Moreover, Bhutto shares suggestively, “It would have been more appropriate if the White Paper had quoted Karl Marx when he said that history is written behind the backs of people. The White Paper has been released behind my back” (Bhutto 217). These two references are used by Bhutto to establish the White Paper as a white lie. Different factors contribute to the rise and fall of nations. Regarding the nations, Bhutto believes that “Through culture and civilization, some nations make themselves great (217). Similarly, he considers that “Through coup-gemony and conspiracies, other nations turn into the debris of history” (217). In this manner, Bhutto establishes people’s participation in the form of civilization and culture as the enablers of nationhood and exposes the military coup in oppressive politics as the inhibitor for strengthening the nation and nationhood.

Because of the military regime, the political system of Pakistan was in a vicious circle of labyrinths. Following Bhutto, “The matter does not close at the end of the tunnel. At the end of this tunnel, there is another tunnel. There is a tomorrow and, as you sow, so shall you reap. Either way, Pakistan will reap the bitter harvest” (Bhutto 218). It signals that the military coup is not going to offer any achievement; rather, it is facilitating to making of the problems more chronic, leading Pakistan as a failed nation. As Smith and Watson, while asking the question, “Does the narrative

engage issues involved in traumatic or obsessive memory to find ways of talking about events and sufferings that defy language and understanding?” (172), traumatic writing is a script therapy for himself and a wake-up call for Pakistanis.

People from Pakistan, notably Bhutto, also proactively contributed to the independence of India. However, the collaboration, observed at the time of the Independence Movement, did not remain intact. The partition of 1947 fueled the misunderstanding between Pakistan and India. Bhutto narrates the Indian attitude:

Over the years, she has achieved remarkable success in crippling and dismembering Pakistan. She has pursued this steadfast and unshakeable aim from the day Pakistan came into being. She refused to transfer the assets of Pakistan until Gandhi went on a fast. She abruptly closed all trade with Pakistan to destroy the economy of Pakistan, merely because Pakistan took the sovereign decision against the devaluation of her own currency. The hoary stories of repeated aggressions apart, India could not even be “accommodating” on the funds transferred by the Nizam of Hyderabad to Pakistan, nor on the division of the books of the India Office in London. (220)

India’s attempt to organize the consent as a subordinated nation was not acceptable for a sovereign Pakistan. Resources and political power as the major causes there for misunderstanding along with the consequences created by the partition. All these attempts are guided by the belief that “state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimeter of a legally demarcated territory” (Anderson 19). It can also be realized in terms of political freedom in a modern sense.

While talking about his crucial contribution to Pakistani politics at the time of the secession of East Pakistan in 1971, Bhutto gives credits to himself, “I did not merely claim to get back 90,000 prisoners of war and more than five thousand square

miles of territory, but I did get them back. Not even my bitterest enemies can deny this achievement” (221). That had brought the war to a peaceful resolution. Bhutto does that even his enemies have acknowledged him for managing the crisis, but the military regime does not appreciate him. The event is not only limited to being accepted or not by opponents. It is a fact that Pakistan missed East Pakistan in this war, but the map of Pakistan is further narrower than today in the absence of that consensus led by Bhutto.

Moreover, evaluating the attitude of the neighboring nations, Bhutto observes, “Each one of them has a direct strategic and geo-political interest in residual Pakistan. None of them can ignore it without peril to itself. Our beloved country can become a battlefield more devastating than Vietnam” (Bhutto 221). In light of the Vietnam War, it is rational to use Pakistan geo-politically a strategically to observe the whole of South Asia and China. In the case of political and economic stability, that can be an opportunity. Still, in the case of that tremolo, that only invites threats against nationality. Proposing to restore the earlier constitution and civilian rule, Bhutto claims that the “only way to save what is left of this battered and besieged land for the creation of which millions bathed in blood” (Bhutto 222). Lost was lost. However, securing residual land was also a great challenge for Pakistan at that time, as millions had sacrificed for the creation of Pakistan. Here, “the tone, emphasis, passion, and energy of a political narrative can be used to rally and unite people with a single goal” (Ramanathapillai 5). Thus, the traumatic narrative unites Pakistanis for the nationhood of Pakistan.

The mentally wounded person says many things, saying I do not say anything. As one cannot not communicate. Similarly, Bhutto says:

I would not refer to that period when I picked up the broken pieces of a sundered land in 1971, or the Simla Agreement. I would perhaps not refer to the blood, sweat, and tears I shed in seeking to create a society marked with equity and justice, my tireless efforts to bring a smile on the face and contentment in the souls of people who had shed bitter tears since Mohenjo-Daro was built. (223)

He blames the military rule for taking the nation to the stage of surrendering to India in 1971 and takes credit for reestablishing the nation into the democratization process.

While concluding *The Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru has borrowed some lines from *How the Steel Was Tempered*, where Osrovosky writes:

Man's dearest possession is his life, and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as not to be scared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past, so live as not to be tortured for years without purpose, that dying he can say, 'All my life and my strength were given to the first cause in the world-the liberation of mankind.' (qtd. in Bhutto 223)

Living with the philosophy that encourages a man to sacrifice all the comforts and endure every torture for the liberation of human beings becomes a purposeful life for Bhutto. In this context, Porobić also suggests that such traumas frequently give rise to collective memory, wherein affected groups construct a system of meanings to (re)define their identity and future orientations in response to the traumatic experiences (253). Bhutto also endeavors to demonstrate that his life and vigor were dedicated to the primary objective of the emancipation of humanity in Pakistan, exerting influence on future generations by exposing his trauma.

Politically, no other political party from Pakistan had contributed to her independence more than the Muslim League. However, as the first Prime Minister of

Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan addressed the Constituent Assembly in 1948 where he focused on:

We have not compelled anybody to join the League. Everyone is free to select and join any organization he likes provided that the organization is not detrimental to the interest of the State. Muslims have achieved Pakistan after great struggle and innumerable loss of lives. We think we will be failing in our duty if we do not crush any such movement started with the object of destroying Pakistan. (qtd. in Bhutto 226)

The League provided leadership, but it was the collective consciousness and active participation of the people that brought Pakistan into existence. When that strong consciousness breaks, nationhood remains at stake, as “nation-ness is virtually inseparable from political consciousness” (Anderson 135). The geography and culture of East Pakistan and the bourgeoisie attitude of West Pakistani leadership became catalytic factors.

For a leader, particularly for a democratic one, goodwill matters much. Opponents generally destroy that connectivity to weaken the leadership. In the case of Bhutto, too, official media were excessively used by the military regime. However, as articulated by Bhutto, the regime fails:

It is the authors of this White Paper and those behind it who have shown their petty minds by perversely distorting and twisting the most natural and innocuous events and episodes. The conclusions drawn by the compilers are shocking and preposterous, in certain parts; their venom has been nasty and poisonous against not only my person but also against my family. All right, if it pleases you, my wife was unworthy of so-called publicity given to her. All

right, if it pleases you, my daughter did not bring credit to Pakistan by being elected President of the Oxford Union. (Bhutto 231)

The perpetual attempts of the military regime to assassinate the character of Bhutto before finally assassinating him could not be done because of his popularity inside and outside Pakistan. Nevertheless, as claimed by Ramanathapillai, Bhutto narrates trauma to create a kind of alertness for coming viciousness (4), generating a sense of victimhood. At the same time, the reference to the victory of his daughter in the narration as the president of the Oxford Union indicates that he was projecting his daughter as his heir to the political dynasty after the execution of the death penalty. As remarked by Smith and Watson, “Does the narrator always remember what he seeks to? Or does the narrator call attention to things forgotten, times irretrievable?” (172) are the crucial questions for understanding the text. In this sense, legally, his explicit audience is the court, but the actual audience is his party, people, and the international community that aims to politicize his trauma. The author recollected these memories at the last minute of his life. The trauma was within Bhutto. However, it is triggered by the hurriedly approaching execution of the death penalty in latency. As claimed by Caruth, Freud’s concept of latency describes a period when the impact of a traumatic event remains hidden. Freud explains that trauma follows a sequence: first, an event occurs; then, the person represses or pushes it out of conscious awareness; and finally, it reemerges in a different form. This sequence demonstrates how the true effects of trauma are not immediately visible but instead surface over time in indirect or unexpected ways (*Trauma* 7). It reappears later and further expands to a larger community in social and political lives.

Writing and reading are just a journey from one means to another means. Nevertheless, writing with penetrating the politics and reading for decoding these

politics becomes as a journey from a means to an end. From his death cell, Bhutto expresses his trauma and criticizes the court for politicizing nationhood by blaming the military coup for weakening Pakistan's nationalism. He also laments other international conspiracies that caused him suffering and aimed to destabilize the country. Bhutto used this narrative of trauma to present himself as a nationalist, particularly among the democratic community. That was also perceived as collective trauma by the community members who live and dream of democracy. Werner Bohleber suggests that traumatized authors connect their traumatic memories to foreign entities within their psychological networks, requiring remembrance and reconstruction during therapy (329). Because of that, Bhutto opposes the military or international societies per se for their domination, as he suffered from internal coup-gemony and external hegemony. In this way, Bhutto blames the military regime for torturing people and weakening nationhood.

The concept of Pakistan was parallelly developed with Indian Independence Movement. However, the marginalization of Bangla identity promotes the fighting for solidity first but turned to rethinking existing nationalism. Following independence, Pakistan promoted Urdu and refused to integrate the Bengali language within its national framework. In this context, *The Unfinished Memoirs* by Rahman strongly challenges the marginalization of a significant cultural group and a historical language to reinforce Pakistan as a nation-state. Over time, this approach focused on the emergence of a Bengali national identity rooted in its linguistic heritage.

Philosophically, as Anderson argues, a specific script language provides privileged access to ontological truth due to its intrinsic connection to the essence of particular nationhood (36). Such belongingness to the nationhood results from the imagined mental picture of the cultural product.

Numerous freedom fighters from East Bengal played an active role in the Indian Independence Movement and the creation of Pakistan, with countless individuals sacrificing for these accomplishments. Rahman was one of them. Despite this, the Bengali-speaking population of the newly established Pakistan faced discrimination and oppression, as efforts were made to assert the dominance of the Urdu language and the leadership of West Pakistan. Focusing on such a construct of nation, Anderson argues that nationality, or what can alternatively be referred to as nation-ness given the various meanings attached to the term, alongside nationalism, should be understood as cultural constructs of a specific nature (4). Thus, the resistance to the segregation of a distinct Bengali language from the broader context of the imagined community of the nation became a pivotal historical backdrop for the rise of a new sense of Bengali nationhood within Pakistan. This movement underscored the struggle to maintain cultural and linguistic integrity amidst the prevailing national framework and ultimately played a significant role in shaping the emergence of an independent Bengali identity. Because of that, it is necessary to examine the “cultural meaning” (Smith and Watson 165) communicated by the author to understand life writings.

Autobiographical writings are about oneself, but others can also motivate one to recollect memories. Regarding his memoirs, Rahman acknowledges his wife for inspiring him to write. His wife told him in a chamber inside the jail premises, “Since you are idle, write about your life now” (Rahman 1) and he told her, “I can’t write, and in any case what have I done that is worth writing about? Will the public benefit from the stories of my life? I haven’t been able to achieve anything!” (Rahman 1). Not achieving anything indicates that he aimed to establish East Pakistan as a separate

nation because the text was written from 1966 to 69 in jail, and the Bengali language had already become the national language in 1956.

The practical suggestion of his wife to narrate the trauma is parallel to the theoretical understanding that writing a trauma narrative helps the client overcome avoidance of unpleasant memories, detect cognitive distortions, and place their experience into a larger life context by using periods. This makes them realize they are more than trauma victims (Ridjic 87-88). Following the suggestion, Rahman, instead of portraying himself just as a victim of trauma, seeks to present himself as a cultural and democratic nationalist throughout the memoirs. Beyond these, Rahman's wife has considered that her husband, experiencing mental stress in solitary confinement, could benefit from writing as a form of script therapy. The script therapy method suggests that mimicking a coherent subject position creatively can generate a therapeutic narrative, offering temporary relief from traumatic and obsessive fixation, thereby facilitating psychological empowerment and agency by momentarily restoring the fragmented self (Henke xii; Smith and Watson 172). Out of the various motives of writing, the unavoidable motive is to cope with or heal the traumatic effect.

The political journey of Rahman started with fighting for the independence of India, later he went on fighting for the independence of Pakistan, and in the final phase, he gave leadership for the independence of Bangladesh. Regarding it, Rahman shares:

I began to harbor negative ideas about the British in my mind. The English, I felt, had no right to stay in our country. We had to achieve independence. I too became an admirer of Mr. Bose and started to travel back and forth between Gopalganj and Madaripur to attend meetings. I also began to mix with the people in the Swadeshi movement. (8)

Rahman thinks that English people had the right to stay in India because Indians themselves were segregated in their motherland. That inspired him to participate in the anti-colonial movement for independence and nationhood. As articulated by Upreti, “nationalism took root in South Asia in the form of struggle for independence” (537). Thus, nationalism in South Asia blossomed primarily through fervent struggles for independence, embodying a collective quest for sovereignty and self-determination.

Rahman further elaborates, “The Swadeshi movement for self-rule had spread to every part of Madaripur and Gopalganj. It seemed to me that Subhas Bose’s party was the most powerful of all the political parties in Madaripur. Boys who were still in their teens flocked to join it” (8). The political activism of Bose was more aggressive than that of Gandhi. Thus, it was usual to attract young minds to the battle of nationhood against British marginalization.

There was no such conflict, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, while fighting for the independence of India. “In those days Hindus owned 80 percent of the shops in town. . . . We did not treat Hindus and Muslims differently. I was very friendly with the Hindu boys. We used to play, sing, and roam the streets together” (Rahman 10). They were united as both groups were subordinated in their land, and the union contributed to achieving independence. However, the secular tolerance among the people of different religions was corrupted on the eve of independence, particularly before and after the partition of India.

The Muslim League pursued India’s independence while simultaneously advocating for Pakistan as a distinct Islamic nation. Communities fighting for independence and the simultaneous struggle for new nationhood often experience profound communal traumas. As Porobić notes, communal traumas frequently result

in collective memory, which enables affected communities to construct meanings that shape their identity and future trajectories for the new nation (253). As League leaders, Mr. Huq and Mr. Suhrawardy had visited the area of Rahman at a political conference. Particularly about the meeting with Mr. Suhrawardy, Rahman recalls:

He took me by the arm and asked me affectionately, ‘Don’t you have the Muslim League in your area?’ I told him that there was no such organization and that not even the Muslim Students’ League was active here. He made no other comment but wrote down my name and address in his notebook. (10)

From that day, he was officially registered as an activist related to a particular party and a true disciple of Mr. Suhrawardy. The expansion of the Muslim League can also be perceived as the expanding ground for Pakistan along with the independence of India, generally in the two-nation theory.

The Muslim League had sewed psychology among Muslims that Pakistan was inevitable for their future growth. It signals that Pakistan was segregated from British India and even it is marginalized in independent India. Because of that, resisting the past and possible segregation, Rahman says, “All I could think of was working for the Muslim League and the Muslim Students’ League. I believed that we would have to create Pakistan and that without it, Muslims had no future in our part of the world” (14-15). It is like; he resisted colonialism for the independence of India ultimately for the cost of the liberation of Muslim nationhood in the form of Pakistan as was taught by senior activists. In his youth, he started student politics. He became popular among the students of Islamia College. There he “managed to nominate a candidate who was even able to defeat the official Students’ League candidate” (Rahma 16). At that time, the leaders from the student movements were popular at parties and campuses and were the epicenters of the independent movement.

Once, there was a political conference of the League in his area Gopalganj. There was a large mass, and “The whole of Gopalganj rang with cries of ‘Long Live Pakistan’” (Rahman 21). It can be interpreted as how people were participatory in the independence movement of India or also as how people were motivated towards the formation of Pakistan. There was also a covert ‘Long Live India’ within the overt slogan ‘Long Live Pakistan’. Thus, both interpretations were correct, as people were aggressive against the British and enthusiastic about the independence of India and Pakistan as an imagined community. As noted by Anderson, a nation is conceptualized as a community defined by bottomless and parallel amity. This sense of solidarity persists despite the significant inequalities and exploitation within the society. Nonetheless, it is this very sense of collective identity and shared cultural ideals that inspire millions of individuals to lay down their lives for the nation (7). It exactly applies to the freedom movement against British colonialism in the context of India.

Rahman and his friends accepted multiple challenges and risks for their political commitment. After participating in the Delhi conference, Rahman reports, “We decided to buy one ticket and stay in the ‘servant’ compartment” (28). There was no hesitation for them to be disguised as servants for the nation’s independence rather than serving foreigners in the motherland. It is reality and resistance against the overall political relegation.

Rahman had moral support from their family for politics. However, there was a condition. Rahman quotes the attitude of his father to his politics, “Son, I have no objections to you engaging in politics; that you are participating in the movement to attain Pakistan is also a good thing; but please don’t neglect your studies. If you don’t study you won’t become a good human” (22). Rahman’s father emphasized the importance of education for children as a fundamental priority. However, he approved

of Rahman's participation in the Pakistan movement. He adopted a neutral perspective, acknowledging that involvement in either the Quit India movement or the Pakistan movement was equally legitimate. Relating to the sentiments of his father, Rahman further recalls:

We too had an inborn hatred of the English. We were no supporters of Hitler's Nazis and yet we took delight in every news item about reverses faced by the English in the war. This was the period when Netaji Subhas Bose had formed the Azad Hind Fauj by recruiting both Hindu and Muslim Indians to fight the British. (38)

The hegemony that was imposed by colonialism was subordinating all Indians, and disregarding religions. The emergence of anti-colonial cultural and social movements, intertwined with anti-colonial nationalism, constituted a significant force for civil repair during the twentieth century (Alexander, *Trauma* 141; Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought* 159). Because of that, both communities were together to live with independence and nationhood. Rahman was also against Nazi Army but equally happy with the problems faced by the British in the war between them.

It is acknowledged that the Muslim League, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, advocated for the establishment of Pakistan as a separate Muslim nation to protect the religious, cultural, and political interests of Muslims in colonial India. Concerned about being a minority in a predominantly Hindu country, they used political actions, rallies, and negotiations with the British to press their demand, ultimately resulting in the partition of India and the establishment of Pakistan in 1947. However, it was not politically rooted in the ground. Among "four provinces where the Muslims had a majority, it was only in Bengal that the Muslim League could form a government by itself. Everywhere else it took its place in the

opposition to tamp” (Rahman 54). It was tragic that after the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 as an Islamic nation, the League leadership imposed Urdu marginalized East Bengal and the Bengali language. Highlighting this point, Husremović and Koso-Drljević assert that although religion has historically served as a unifying force, bringing individuals together into larger communities, a shared religious affiliation alone does not automatically result in the formation of a homogeneous ethnic group, indicating the interplay between religion and cultural identity (360). This requires a sincere understanding of the complex dynamics of religion and culture for the formation of larger homogenous communities.

The freedom fighters from Bengal’s appeal to include Bengali as one of the national languages for reinforcing Pakistani nationhood is a direct response to the emerging divisions based on language and regional identity. This fragmentation into East and West Pakistan and the distinction between Urdu and Bengali speakers indicate the deepening rifts within the nation. Such divisions underscore how the trauma of exclusion and marginalization can threaten unity by fostering separate identities that challenge a cohesive Pakistani national identity. Rahman discusses their struggles for the mother tongue as Anderson explains how the rise of vernacular languages, rather than Latin, facilitated the creation of national identities in Europe (14), exploring the strength of language.

Politicians rarely want to be without power, and they have the mastery to interpret their presence in power as contextually essential. Just before the independence of India, “under the leadership of Pundit Nehru, Congress, on the other hand, decided to join the government. However, Lord Wavell let it be known that five posts of ministers had been set aside for the League and it could join the government whenever it was ready” (Rahman 76). As discussed earlier, the Muslim League

interprets the sharing of ministries with Congress as connecting to nationhood. For this, Rahman claimed, “If the Muslim League had not taken this decision, the Congress would never have agreed to accept its demand for the creation of Pakistan” (76). Nevertheless, differently, it can also be interpreted that Congress was also a critical factor in forming Pakistan as the Muslim League.

People and leaders from across India, including those from the regions that would later become Pakistan, collectively fought for Indian independence. In parallel, both East and West Pakistan played significant roles in the struggle for Pakistan’s creation. Forming Pakistan in 1947, Jinnah assumed the role of Governor-General and held the position until his death. Despite this, tensions and disparities between West and East Pakistan emerged before and following the establishment of the new nation. About that, Rahman observes:

As soon as Pakistan was created, political conspiracy became rife. In particular, a conspiracy against Mr. Suhrawardy was hatched in Delhi. This was because what we in East Bengal would get as our share came to more than what the people of the Punjab, Sind, the Frontier Province, and Baluchistan would get; after all, our combined population was greater than theirs. Mr. Suhrawardy’s personality, uncommon political acumen, wisdom, and efficiency made many uneasy. (79)

The discrimination is double-edged in terms of geography and language. In the understanding of Rahman, the doubt of Chaturvedi, “whether partition leads to a paradigm shift from domination to non-domination as a fundamental principle of governance at all levels” (132) is valid, and his response is just as “realigned borders” (132) in terms of culture or geography. Particularly, referring to the case of his political mentor Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Rahman attempts to show that even by

acquiring almost all qualities. He was not projected as the prime minister, just being an East Bengali leader. Thus, a brave community is politically overlooked, institutionalizing nationhood. It is like the seed of further partition was sowed with the partition of British India as “partitions imposed by partitions” (Bianchini 54). Culturally and geographically, the earlier violent and traumatic division of the Panjab and Bengal to form a new nationhood named Pakistan is responsible for such misunderstanding in the newly formed nation.

Furthermore, Rahman expands the conspiracies against Mr. Suhrawardy because “these qualities would make him want to be the prime minister of Pakistan in the future, and nobody would be able to oppose him. Mr. Jinnah himself loved Mr. Suhrawardy. These were the reasons the conspirators felt that he would have to be cut down to size immediately (79). Cutting down Suhrawardy to a size as stated by Rahman was not a personal issue, but was only associated with him. It was observed as downsizing the role of the leaders of East Bengal in the politics of Pakistan. The failure to include two isolated geographies and diverse languages was a crucial mistake in the politics of Pakistan that made the Pakistani nationhood weaker and encouraged them to think about an alternative. Neither the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, was from the East. “Those who were opposing Mr. Suhrawardy harped on one theme was from West Bengal, and so how could he be prime minister of East Pakistan?” (Rahman 80). The culture of isolating others from the beginning of Pakistan sowed the seeds of a virtual East Pakistani nationhood.

On the eve of the partition of India, there were communal riots and mass migration. Once, following the interest of a photographer named Yakub to offer photos representing the terrible scenes of Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta to Mahatma Gandhi, Rahman and his friend had planned to meet with him. They are also designed

to offer these photos in the form of a symbolic parcel. About the nature of the parcel and the offering that Rahman describes:

We then made a packet consisting of photographs, wrapping it in such a manner that it would take anyone ten minutes to open it. We planned to give him the ‘present’ and then vanish. Among the photographs we had collected were some Muslim women whose breasts had been cut off, little babies who had been beheaded, mosques burning, corpses lying in streets and many such gruesome scenes from the riots. We wanted the Mahatma to see how his people had been guilty of such crimes and how they had killed innocents. (86)

Virtually, the packet consists of no photos, but the painful visuals of physical and mental wounds. As remarked by Catarina Kinnvall, even though Gandhi advocated Hindu and Muslim unity by Gandhi in India, he also “employed a discourse that often resembled the Hindu notion of *dharmic* obligation” (91). Moreover, it is as if the offering of the package was not the intention of the group to expose the evil acts performed by a certain religious community, but to reveal the consequences of partition in the societies. Preceding this assertion, it is evident that religion, as a significant factor, played a pivotal role in the partition. Similarly, Aili Aarelaid-Tart and Anu Kannike suggest that collective trauma can manifest as a coping strategy for managing the conflict between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (79). However, they had faith in Gandhi that he could only motivate such conflicting forces to forget the culture of taking revenge. Forgetting the joint struggle waged together against colonialism first became a tragedy for Indian Independence.

At the time of independence, the major leaders demonstrated no hostility toward the concept of the two nations coexisting. Furthermore, Rahman did not oppose India or Hindus while advocating for the creation of Pakistan. He explained,

“We focused entirely on our demand for Pakistan. We emphasized that we were not against Hindus but against the British” (Rahman 66). In this regard, they are tolerant, and such tolerance encourages them to be secular. Even after the establishment of Pakistan. The political system entered into an internal hegemonic one from the external hegemony.

To fight against both hegemonic power blocs, Rahman rarely stays at home after being politically mature. He could not get the opportunity to serve his family, particularly his father. Regarding that, he said, “All fathers love their sons and all sons love and respect their fathers. But I am unable to express the extent of my father’s love for me and the love I felt for him” (Rahman 91). All these accidentally appeared in his writing as his trauma was structured in the unconscious (Caruth, “Unclaimed Experience” 190). Writing an autobiographical text is one of the major means of expressing trauma stored and repressed in the unconscious. Once, when the father of Rahman was suffering from cholera, he visited the home where the father was in “bad shape and the doctor had given up on him. As soon as I called out “Abba”, he opened his eyes and looked at me. A few teardrops trickled down his face. I broke down in tears” (Rahman 91). In this form, his trauma is triggered by the sickness of his father.

Though he could not be a good son to serve his father regularly, he was in the process of becoming a resisting son of the nation who was eternally fighting for independence in the true sense. Rahman, as a son and a father of two children at a time, harshly expressed, “Children who are deprived of their parents’ affection are the most wretched people of the earth” (Rahman 91). He was missing to enjoy such a homely environment as a son and father. Because of these, his agony is uttered as that painful expression. Caruth rightly expresses this situation as trauma is borne by an act of departure (“Unclaimed Experience” 190). However, Rahman expresses the “tear in

the social fabric, affecting a group of people” (Eyerman, “Cultural Trauma: Slavery” 61). He was on a nationalist mission to establish the dignity of the Bengali people, particularly, resisting the monopoly of the Urdu language. Jonathan Hearn also incorporates linguistic means as one of the major themes of nationalism (67) that had emerged in the early sixteenth century in Europe and was practiced by East Pakistan in the name of the Bengali language.

The imposition of the Urdu language as a single official language of Pakistan served as an environment for the separationist politics for the emergence of the Bengali nationhood. Rahman clarifies:

It was probably on 8 February 1948 that the Pakistan Constituent Assembly met in Karachi. A topic that came up for discussion there was that of the national language of Pakistan. Muslim League leaders wanted to make Urdu the state language. . . . It soon became obvious that a great conspiracy was afoot to make Urdu and not Bengali the state language. The East Pakistan Muslim Students’ League and the Tamuddun Majlish protested against the move and demanded that both Bengali and Urdu should be considered state languages. We met to protest against the imposition of Urdu as the sole state language. This East Pakistan Muslim Students’ League and the Tamuddun Majlish decided in a joint meeting that they would form a committee to establish Bengali as the state language. (97)

The protestors’ demands echo the views of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who initially sought better representation and reservation for Muslims in the legislature as an Indian, before promoting the Two-Nation theory.

Here, in the case of Pakistan, too, the government itself stands responsible for the emergence of the voice of the separate Bengali consciousness in Pakistan. It is

generally accepted that “the most important step to be taken to counteract linguistic separatism is to develop a national lingua franca for an administrative link” (Hingorani 35). However, Urdu chauvinism in Pakistan negatively affected the national consciousness. That brought the different organizations of the Eastern region together for linguistic identity. They were characterized as soft nationalists, as articulated by Preston, emphasizing “appreciation of difference rather than insistence upon exclusivist us/them strategies of definition” (721). However, there was no space for such politics at that time. Anyway, at the initial level, the imposition of a single language and the segregation of a heroic Bengali community by the hard nationalists of West Pakistan were forcefully resisted, calling the concerned groups to make national integrity stronger. The protestors were aggressive, but they demanded inclusion for extended nationhood as Gellner stated, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (*Thought* 169). Thus, the language issue went on to shape new national identities.

Any political organization from East Pakistan, particularly students’ unions, could hardly distance themselves from the movement oriented toward incorporating Bengali as one of the official languages of Pakistan. Regarding this blending, Rahman explains:

Except for a few university students, it could be said that 90 percent of the students of the province joined us in protesting against the move to make Urdu the state language. In particular, students of Jagannath College, Mitford Medical School and Engineering College were active participants. The Muslim League let loose their goons on us. They managed to rally most of the

people against us. In some places of old Dhaka, our students got beaten up.

(98)

The protestors were neither against Pakistani nationhood nor against the Urdu language. Still, they opposed the policy of “one nation, one language” in the form of internal colonialism, as Anderson discusses the impact of colonialism on nationhood, including the use of language and cultural policies to shape colonial territories against their roots (116). However, people from East Pakistan were violently treated as non-citizens of Pakistan by the government. In democratic and independent Pakistan, the minority of West Pakistan had ruled the majority of East Pakistan. Rahman further illustrated, “Bengali was the mother tongue of 56 percent of the people of Pakistan. Thus, it should have been the only state language of the country. Nevertheless, we wanted both Bengali and Urdu to be state languages” (104) how the nationhood could be more robust by segregating the democratic voice of the majority. Consequently, it is to justify that “without democratic yearnings, there could not have been the strong republican sentiments among the nationalists” (Samaddar 95). Previously, Bengali people were flexible to maintain it but that is disregarded as a weakness. Thus, the process motivates the creation of borders.

The Muslim League of Pakistan connected the Urdu Language to one of the fundamentals of an Islamic Nation. That was not true. Different Muslim nations from the Middle East do not officially recognize Urdu as a single official language. However, the leaders from West Pakistan dominantly imposed Urdu in Pakistan, developing the discourse that Urdu and Islam are organically inseparable. The concept of social trauma delineates the psychological and relational aftermath resulting from a traumatic experience situated within societal events, particularly when deliberate persecution is directed toward a social group (Hamburger, “Social” 6). Bengali is such

a targeted social group in the context. As nations mature in a world where the coexistence of various cultural diversities with differing beliefs and territories is evident, they aspire to freedom and nationhood (Anderson 7). Leaders from East Pakistan could not show such a pluralistic attitude to the Bengali language.

The discourse was intended to hoodwink “the religious-minded people of East Pakistan with the argument that Urdu should be the state language since it was an Islamic language” (Rahman 104). In a similar vein, Anderson has appropriately emphasized that classical communities, which were connected through sacred languages, possessed a distinct character compared to the imagined communities of modern nations arguing that shared religious or cultural languages united classical communities; a different form of collective imagination and identity as indicators of modern nations (13). The people from East Pakistan were not opposed to the Urdu language; however, their deep love for their mother tongue compelled them to fight for its preservation. The marginalization of the Bengali language was intolerable for the community of East Pakistan. Again, in this light, based on Anderson, a nation is always perceived as a deep and horizontal comradeship (7). Nevertheless, it is broken by the vertical attitude of the leadership of West Pakistan ultimately weakening nationhood. Nation members, united by a shared identity, kinship, and origins, are determined by criteria set by the nation itself, allowing for diversity in language and residence while fostering a sense of belonging based on nationally defined elements (Husremović and Koso-Drljević 359). These were not adopted by Pakistan and that became a disaster for her nationhood. Rahman clears that “no nation has tolerated any attempt to insult its mother tongue” (Rahman 104). Such insult is reflected as resistance demanding to make nationhood stronger through inclusion for expanding the intensity of the nationhood. As claimed by Upreti, only “religion proved to be

insufficient to maintain the identity of the Pakistani state” (540). Moreover, language, particularly the mother tongue, also is inevitable for maintaining the territorial integrity of a nation.

Jinnah was an icon for the people of Pakistan as he had given leadership for the demand and establishment of an independent Pakistan. Just after the independence of Pakistan, he was warmly welcomed in Dhaka. However, instantly resisted by students while delivering a speech concentrating on the significance of the Urdu language for Pakistan. Rahman recalls:

Jinnah went to the Race Course ground and declared at a huge meeting, ‘Urdu will be the only state language of Pakistan.’ Some four or five hundred of us students were sitting in one corner of the field. Many of us raised our hands in protest and shouted, ‘No, no.’ Later when he went to Dhaka University’s Convocation Centre and again announced Urdu would be the only state language of Pakistan the students sitting in front of him shouted out, ‘No, no, no.’ Jinnah paused for about five minutes and then resumed his speech. I believe that this was the first time that Bengali students had dared to oppose him. (104)

Generally, one could even think about countering Jinnah, but that happened in front of him in Dhaka. Virtually, if one could counter Jinnah in Pakistan at that time, s/he could resist anyone there. Similarly, if the students could shout a slogan against the monopoly of Urdu, it was to be understood that there was fire within their hearts. Because of that, they were not only responding to Jinnah saying ‘No, no’ for Urdu only policy, that ‘No, no, no’ also means ‘we are not Urdu-speaking Pakistani’. Moreover, it also indicates, ‘If Urdu is the only identity of Pakistan, we will be no more Pakistani’. Salman Rushdie has considered Pakistan an “insufficiently

imagined” place (qtd. in Varshney 1) and it is as “the insufficiency of the founding imagination has held enduring pathologies and self-inflicted injuries in Pakistan” (Varshney 3) in front of the founding father of Pakistan. There lies not only the resistance in the shouting. Moreover, they shocked by a slogan that they had also equally sacrificed for the independence of India and Pakistan. The religious linkage is to be weakened by the linguistic and geographical differences. Nevertheless, what a partial decision and discrimination against the Bengali Language after the formation of Pakistan! Consistent with Anderson, the role of print media, such as books and newspapers, significantly contributed to the formation of such nationhood by standardizing language and creating a shared discourse connecting vernaculars and print capitalism (76). This suggests that the media serves as an active agent in fostering the concept of the imagined community, notably by providing platforms for the diverse dialects of the populace.

Both Jinnah and Rahman fought for the independence of India and aggressively struggled for the separate nationhood of Pakistan, but differed in the case of language. It is claimed that the politics in India or Pakistan were changed after decolonization, but the policies were not changed. Regarding these, Rahman recalls:

How had the Muslim League, a party that had been so enthusiastically supported by people in 1947, tasted defeat so swiftly? It could be put down to coterie politics, rule of tyranny, inefficient administration, and absence of sound economic planning. The country continued to be ruled according to British policies. But people had expected the administration to run according to different principles in a free land. They had hoped that after the English left, they wouldn't be exploited and would truly get the opportunity to improve their lot. Now their hopes were belied. People were getting frustrated. (127)

The country gained independence, but the people of the country were perpetually subordinated by a coterie following the political framework of the British. In Pakistan, authorities replaced English with Urdu, completely disregarding the Bengali language, shocking to the people of East Pakistan.

Family support is one of the vital essentials for political activism. Rahman received support from his father and wife for his activism. Nevertheless, these supports are full of suffering as Rahman observed, “Renu suffered a lot, but she never complained” (Rahman 134). The uncommunicated suffering might be shocking. That was suffocating for Rahman. In this sense, both Renu and Rahman had suffered for the nation. The wife of Rahman had a single complaint to him regarding his health and encouraged him to be conscious of an appropriate diet. As Rahman reports:

When Renu got me to herself, she said, I have no problem with your staying in jail but make sure that you have enough to eat. The sight of you has depressed me immensely. You should know that I have no one else in the world except you. My parents died when I was a child and I have no one else to look after me. How will I survive if something happens to you?’ She broke into tears while saying this and when I tried to console her, she began to cry even more.

When they saw their mother sobbing, Hasina and Kamal started kissing her.

(189-90)

Renu is brave in combating every difficulty. However, there lies deep distress as she could not enjoy parental affection in her life, and she had to care for their children in the absence of her husband. The understanding of trauma encompasses intricate psychological mechanisms, including the interval between the occurrence of an event and the emergence of its symptoms. Based on the concept of Freud, the interval between the occurrence of an accident and the initial manifestation of symptoms,

referred to as the incubation period draws a clear parallel to the concept of latency (Caruth, *Trauma* 7) in the context of trauma research. Even in such an adverse situation, she always supports Rahman to materialize his political commitment. In this sense, Renu attempts to endure all her upsets, virtually fighting together for the visibility of Bengali-speaking people in Pakistan. Occasionally, her mental suffering is released in the form of tears in front of her husband, which indicates that she is living with tribulation.

Rahman could not be with his family for a long time, but he said, “I didn’t feel like leaving them, but knew I would have to. I had consecrated myself to the cause of my country; what was the point of becoming sentimental about my family?” (159). Rahman considers a loving nation and a caring family and perceives sentiments concerning family matters as obstacles in concentrating on the nation. More specifically, as articulated by Rahman, “If one loves one’s country and its people one must be ready to sacrifice something and, in the end, might have to give up everything” (159). Whatever Rahman theoretically claims; he practically compromises everything for the greater cause concerning the people and the nation. To refer to this type of behavior, Volkan uses the term “chosen trauma,” indicating that tragic events are embedded within the collective memory of a group and perpetuated across generations beyond the lifetimes of the original survivors. This transmission of trauma can occur among group members who are temporally and geographically distant from the original event (48). Thus, Rahman willingly faces trauma for nationhood, and his wife supports him in his journey, concealing his trauma. All these also show the collective contribution of the Rahman family to the independence of India and Pakistan, and more specifically to the identity of the Bengali people.

The resistance of Rahman did not end with the independence of India and Pakistan. From his perspective, the land gained independence, but certain groups of people remained marginalized in newly independent Pakistan. He gave leadership to such marginalization of the Bengali people in East Pakistan. “I was taken to jail in December 1949. Pakistan had been created in 1947. This was my third visit to jail in these two years” (Rahman 163). Why did a freedom fighter have to be in jail three times within two years of the creation of Pakistan? Both democracy and nationhood are why there. Rahman narrates:

I tried to tell the jailed ones that it wasn't right to get involved in rioting and the killing of people; it was a sin to kill innocent people. A true Muslim couldn't kill anyone who was blameless; God and his Prophet had forbidden such action. God had created Hindus as well as us. They deserved to be treated as human beings too. Just because some Hindus in India were involved in heinous actions did not mean we should be perpetrating violence here. (165)

Rahman observed the partition riot of 1947 when the people from different religious communities had shuttered others. However, he is calm and tolerant, respecting diverse communities. As reported by Anderson, it is the sense of belonging and camaraderie within a society that enables millions of individuals to sacrifice their lives for narrow and constrained beliefs (7), strengthening nationhood. Beyond the issue of religion, Rahman resists the linguistic existence of their community in Pakistan.

The people of Pakistan gained independence from British colonialism, but immediately Pakistani establishment immediately started to be crueler than the earlier British. Rahman recalled, “In the English phase of our history, political prisoners were given certain rights, but now that we had become an independent country, these rights

had been taken away from us. In the British period, political prisoners were entitled to quality food, clothes, medicines, newspapers, sports equipment, and even a family allowance” (167). What could be more tragic for a democrat and nationalist who endured countless hardships willingly for the sake of freedom and independence, only to be subordinated and denied basic rights in their homeland?

Rahman experienced political imprisonment in the colonial period, and after independence, he was again imprisoned. While comparing these two experiences of suffering in the prison house, Rahman shares:

The kind of torture and harassment of political prisoners that was going on during their rule had no precedence in any civilized country at any stage of history. Political prisoners appealed time and again for the rights and privileges people in their position enjoyed during the British period.

Unfortunately, their petitions were ignored. They were therefore forced to resort to hunger strikes. In 1949, political prisoners went on a hunger strike for 200 days. As a consequence, Shibben Roy died in jail that year. (167)

Prisoners could exercise legal procedures during the British period, but they could not practice them in independent Pakistan. Here, Rahman identifies himself as a liberal nationalist who considers the rule of law rather than inscriptive characteristics as religion (Soehl and Karim 412). The prisoners resisted in the form of hunger strikes. The Gandhian model of nonviolent model of resistance is a form of tolerating suffering without directly upsetting others.

Threats and torture are the common tools to subjugate the leaders in an autocracy. Again, Rahman narrated the threat given by the Muslim League to opponents, particularly to his party, the Awami League:

Liaquat Ali was doing his best to stick to his word. He had said, after all, that he would wring the neck of anyone who dared oppose him or who got involved with the Awami League. Even though he had failed to wring our necks, he had succeeded in breaking the party's back by interning many of us and by adopting torture as policy. (Rahman 168)

The danger and torture which is given by insiders, are more painful in comparison to the threat and torture inflicted by outsiders. In collective trauma, in the view of Alexander, "Rather than denial, repression, and 'working through,' it is a matter of symbolic construction and framing, of creating stories and characters and moving along from there" (*Trauma* 3). Rahman has to do that. What could be more painful for such a League member? He had fought for the independence of Pakistan but was significantly marginalized by the League in Independent Pakistan. Anyway, the disrespect and suffering he faced were for unifying Pakistan.

Precisely, the condition of Mr. Shamsul Huq, a friend of Rahman, was worsening in imprisonment, and other prisoners believed that "if he stayed in jail much longer, he would go completely mad" (Rahman 170). It reflects and represents the prisoners' mental condition. The condition Rahman was also identical, so he confessed his situation, "In Dhaka jail, I was made to weave thread. I did what I could. I liked making thread. I had been feeling quite depressed and my body was suffering too from continued inactivity" (172). Here, the psychological and physical inactiveness they tolerated was just because of their activeness for their linguistic identity.

Rahman and his proactive friends could not enjoy independence in Pakistan in the true sense. What do freedom and independence mean for perpetually marginalized ones? Rahman asked, "I was being kept in this little house [prison house] so soon

after we had become independent!” (Rahman 173). The independence did not appear as an inclusive democracy for him. Unfortunately, the comrades of Rahman had converted into enemies in independent Pakistan. As reported by Rahman, the intimate friends “who used to praise me, saying ‘there is no one as efficient as you are in party work’ were now conniving to keep me in jail without trial and were doing their best to punish me” (176). He is to be expelled from his ideal imaginary community in the form of Pakistan. When the members feel that they are politically expelled from the imagined community that had a significant role in forming the community, it is customary for them to think about another community.

It is contradictory that Rahman was a member of the Muslim League and fought for the independence of Pakistan based on Islam. However, Rahman claimed, “In politics, I make no distinction between Muslims, Hindus, and Christians; all are part of the same human race” (Rahman 190). In this sense, his imaginary community is so relevant that people from various religions can be defined as a single race, which makes the Islamic nationhood of Pakistan. This considers only Urdu as a national language weaker and motivates an inclusive Bengali nationhood. As mentioned by Husremović and Koso-Drljević:

Nation-states are states where the state borders ideally or fatly coincide with the nation’s borders. However, nation-states also include groups that do not belong to the dominant nation. They form ethnic groups who seek to achieve equality or seek autonomy and separation from their home nation-state.

Multiethnic states are countries where members of different ethnic groups live, but none dominates in number over the other. In today’s world, once-national states are becoming increasingly multiethnic, owing to migration. (359)

The evolving dynamics of nation-states and multiethnic states underscore the complexity of identity politics, as the interplay between dominant and minority classes shapes aspirations for equality, autonomy, and separation amidst an increasingly diverse global population influenced by migration patterns.

In the same way, disregarding the mother tongue in a particular land decreases the community's affinity. In this sense, nationalism is not only the geography or soil but also the people's emotions, more specifically. Rahman also believes:

No nation can bear any insult directed at its mother tongue. Although 56 percent of the people of Pakistan were Bengalis, the West Pakistanis did not want Bengali to become the state language. On the other hand, Bengalis wanted to make their language the state language along with Urdu and had no objections against that language. But they mistook the generosity of Bengalis in this regard as a sign of weakness. By this time, however, Bengalis were beginning to perceive that they were being discriminated against in business, government service, and all spheres of trade and commerce. Because Karachi was the capital of Pakistan, Bengalis were being deprived of all sorts of advantages. (197)

The group of Rahman is liberal in that, even by being in the majority in terms of language, they were ready to accept Urdu as a state language along with Bangali. In the understanding of Anderson, a vernacular language generates a linguistic foundation for developing the new nationalism (119). Because of that, Bengalis were in grief. Furthermore, Anderson argues that nations have cultural roots grounded in shared myths, historical events, and symbols, which serve to unite and bind people together (10). However, the Muslim League government was not ready to incorporate the Bengali language to broaden the nationhood of Pakistan. Regarding it, Ernest

Renon states, “Nations are made in triumph and grief” (qtd. in Soehl and Karim 423). In this case, the grief motivates different nationalism in the name of language and geography. According to Yuval Feinstein and Bart Bonikowski, the collective victimhood of the East Pakistani has a profound “belief in the cultural uniqueness and moral superiority, and predestined mission of the nation” (749). In the case of separate nationhood, the Bengali language represents cultural uniqueness, the majority population signifies moral superiority, and the isolated geography embodies a predestined mission for the nation.

Related to the event of fasting to death in 1952, there were multiple attempts at force-feeding and threats, but the group continued the resistance, disregarding the terrible health condition and perpetual reminders of his wife, to at least have food in time. The supporters outside the prison house were “for the first time in the history of the world a race had shed blood for the mother tongue. Nowhere in the world had people been shot to death for demonstrating on behalf of their language” (Rahman 203). Thus, language becomes a unifying force in the context of the Bengali movement. The protestors had also sacrificed for the language as sacrificed for the nation. The central government was so intolerant that “the bullets had been fired inside the Medical College Students’ Hostel and not on the road” (Rahman 203). The autocratic and exclusive attitude of the government has been reflected in the brutality of the security forces, which use not only batons on the road but bullets in the students’ hostel.

At the time of the hunger strike, civil doctors used to visit the jail to examine Rahman multiple times a day. As he narrates:

The civil surgeon was now coming to examine us five to seven times a day.

When he was examining me on the 25th morning, I noticed his face suddenly

turned grim. He left without a word, his face ashen. I realized my time was up. He came back a little later and said, 'What's the point of dying in such a manner? Bangladesh has great expectations of you.' I was having trouble talking, but I said, 'There are many others still active.'

The word Bangladesh was pronounced by the civil surgeon, two decades before the formation of Bangladesh as a nation-state, reveals much about the psychology of the people from East Pakistan. That signals the dream of the linguistic group regarding separate Bengali nationhood. Rahman continued the strike as he described:

The work will go on. I am being punished because I love my country and its people but I am ready to give my life for it.' The deputy jailer said, 'Do you want us to inform anyone about your condition? Where are your wife and children now? Do you want to telegram your father?' I said, 'There is no need for all that. I don't want to cause them any more grief.' I had given up hope by this time and could feel my body stiffening. I wouldn't have been in such a sorry shape if my heart hadn't been so weak. A prisoner delegated to look after me now began to massage my body with mustard oil. Now and then, I felt that I was in a deep freeze. (205)

Additionally, when the jailer asked Rahman whether he had to communicate with family members, he responded by saying that he did not want to add more grief to their lives. He had given up any hope of going back to society alive, as he felt his own body was a deeply frozen lump of muscle. That means the family was already in grief, and he was also in prison with grief on one hand, and he believed that the punishment that was given to him, did not stop loving his country. In this sense, the development of collective trauma is a process of "identity construction that comprises the sense of self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy, and ultimately a sense of

meaning” (Hirschberger 2). Here, the collective trauma shapes Bengalis’ identity and significance by constructing self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy, and meaning of Bangla. Therefore, Rahman goes on resisting and accepting death rather than compromising democracy and nationhood.

The government felt pressure, and on the 27th day, they released Rahman. His father came to receive him and took him home. Rahman describes, “It was difficult to explain to my mother what had happened. My daughter Hasina embraced me and said, ‘Abba, we want Bengali to be the national language; we want all political prisoners to be freed!’” (Rahman 207). The innocent voice of the child is also an indirect form of resistance. It was a great moral strength for a father ready to sacrifice everything for people and the nation. A similar situation is pointed out by Habermas and Bartoli: “The cultural interpretation of collective violence does play an important role in how parents talk about it and how children and adolescents remember it” (205). It also reveals that the “individuals and families who faced viciousness did not suffer the pain in isolation: thus, victims and witnesses were able to recollect the events of trauma” (Ramanathapillai 4) in the form of social trauma. Daughter Hasina has heard the slogans, as they were the two major political demands. Likewise, the innocent expression of the child represents the institutionalization process of their political demands and acknowledgment of their sufferings. It also indicates how the Bengali imaginary community was expanding day by day. Moreover, “as soon as children begin to acquire language, they explicitly communicate memories in a highly contextualized way” (Habermas and Bartoli 201). The statement underscores the crucial role of language in enabling children to articulate and share memories with explicit details, emphasizing how language acquisition enhances the contextual richness of memory communication.

Similarly, Renu, the wife of Rahman, was extremely full of emotions. In the past, she had not revealed too much suffering. She endured all without exposing them. Nevertheless, this time, she pours out her inner suffering. As Renu and Rahman interact:

Why did you go on a hunger strike? Do these people have any compassion? Didn't you think for a moment about us? Can you imagine what would happen to us without you? How would I survive with two little children? What would happen to Hasina and Kamal? You might say that even without you, we wouldn't starve. But is that all one wants? And even if you had died would it have helped the country in any way?' I kept quiet. I let her go on, knowing that if we could give vent to pent-up emotions, we would feel better. Renu was usually very composed but that day a dam seemed to have burst and words came out of her in torrents. (Rahman 207)

In the hunger strike, Rahman recalls the latent shock of his wife. Rahman lets her release her mental pain, expecting to be silent at last. Her bursting indicates the accumulated torture that she experienced in her life. Theoretically, "autobiographical memories can only be communicated to others by narrating them" (Habermas and Bartoli 202). Consequently, the wife of Rahman encouraged them to narrate, asking multiple questions.

All of the circumstances were intolerable for the family of Rahman. However, these have established him as a powerful politician with expanding visibility. Commonly, the rivalry with opponents increases with one's political visibility. Raham accepts:

I had become the 'enemy' of the Muslim League politicians who had assumed power after the creation of Pakistan, but Mohiuddin had been an important

member of that party till the day he was jailed. It is often the case in politics that, in the case of strife, party members can turn on each other's throats even more fiercely than they would on sworn enemies. (Rahman 205)

Anderson describes a nation as an imagined community because its members, no matter how large or small, typically do not know most of their fellow citizens. Despite this lack of direct interaction, each individual holds the concept of belonging to a shared community with others who share common beliefs, values, and identities (6). That feeling among the major Muslim leadership formed Pakistan at the time of the independence of India. However, the enemy has become a major hindrance to the nationhood of Pakistan. That is not only the process of becoming or being politically strong and mature in the case of Rahman, but also the symbol of the weakened nationhood of Pakistan and a space for alternative nationhood in terms of cultural roots.

Pakistan and its people became independent in 1947. However, the limited people or leaders from West Pakistan mainly enjoyed independence. Because of that, Rahman resisted and argued, "As a consequence, the people of Pakistan were becoming increasingly disillusioned. The only difference, they were now beginning to see, was that the white-skinned rulers had been replaced by dark-skinned ones" (236-37). The people of Pakistan felt cheated, and particularly, the people of Bengali-speaking people felt fully illumined as Chatterjee critiques Anderson's Imagined Communities by arguing that postcolonial nationalisms assert their distinctness through a "difference" in their imagined community, particularly within a "spiritual" domain, rather than simply replicating Western "modular" forms ("Whose Imagined Community?" 521). Generally, the early post-colonial period was for democratization

in different aspects and economic reformation in the nation, but people started to become disillusioned. Rahman explicitly describes:

Pakistan was supposed to be a democracy. . . . Unfortunately, the people who had played a contrary role in the movement to create Pakistan were now trying to present Pakistan as an Islamic state and poisoning the nation's politics to achieve their ends by using religion. Instead of adopting programs of economic and social reform, the Muslim League leaders chanted one slogan in unison: 'Islam'. They seemed to feel that they had no reason to be concerned about the economic well-being of the people, which, after all, was the goal for which the working class, the peasants, and the laborers had made sacrifices during the independence movement. The Muslim League and its cohorts appeared more interested in helping the oppressors and the feudal class since these people had now taken over the reins of government. (244)

The different classes of people had struggled and sacrificed for the establishment of Pakistan, and they were guided by multiple dreams of socio-political and economic reforms. Only establishing and naming the nation as an Islamic state was not a magical solution for all the miserable contemporary problems. However, Pakistan was imagined under "Islam and anti-Indianism" as two master discourses, and Islam can be a strong uniting force in the case of greater credibility (Varshney 5). However, it became weaker in the disparity in the forms of language. The cultural wing of Islam became weak after that in Pakistan. The did not treat every citizen equally. Rather, the ruler started to be intimate with the feudal lords and oppressors, disregarding peasants and working-class people. That made Pakistani nationalism weaker. On such contrary, it is natural to make a revolutionary leader more painful and aggressive.

21 February has become a symbolic day in the politics of Pakistan, particularly in resisting the government and demanding the official recognition of the Bengali language to form the Pakistani imaginary community more extended. “No one in the province had forgotten the events of 21 February [1952]. We tried to build public opinion in favor of drafting a new constitution. We were bent on making Bengali a state language and getting autonomy for East Bengal and would not compromise on these issues” (Rahman 247). On that day, police, while protesting for the recognition of the mother language, fired at the students of Dhaka University and other activists. When there is oppression, there is also resistance. Pointing towards this, Hechter maintains that nationalism stands as a popular resistance against oppression (qtd. in Upreti 537) and the protestors do that. On the foundation of the great sacrifice, the Bengali language was officially declared as a state language of Pakistan in 1956, just as a tactic to silence East Pakistanis.

Those who died for their mother tongue were accredited as language martyrs at the national level, and on the tragic day, UNESCO recognized 21 February as International Mother Language Day in 1999. However, talking about “getting autonomy for East Bengal” after the political disillusionment and perpetual disrespect is like signaling the independence of the geography, too. Because of that, the language movement did not rest even after the recognition of Bengali as a state language. The demand for autonomy in East Bengal slowly became a movement for cultural nationalism, driven by the minority’s rule over the majority in Pakistan. “To emphasize the religious commonality and to suppress the cultural diversity under the religious banner” (Varshney 11). It was not justice for East Pakistanis, as they were not only Muslim but also strongly Bengali. Moreover, in 1972, the birth of Bangladesh as an independent imagined community, breaking away from Pakistan,

“wrote the epitaph of two-nation theory” (Varshney 11). The partition of Pakistan has shown that a nation should not disregard cultural issues, but just focus on religious aspects for sustainable nationhood.

Differently, Rahman also explores how the painful experience of marginalization generates the dream of autonomy and how it even encourages the formation of a new nationhood. That was initiated while developing the manifesto of the Awami League. Rahman recalled, “The draft manifesto we had produced at the time the Awami League was formed had stressed the need for autonomy” (168). It has a connection to a historical fact that in 1949, Bengali leaders severed ties with Pakistan’s predominant Muslim League, establishing the Awami League in pursuit of autonomy for East Pakistan. Here, the “collectivities are subjected to disruptive forces”, as noted by Alexander, and “they are challenged not only objectively, but subjectively, with sharp and persistent questions arising about their constructions of collective identities” (*Trauma* 138). It was a tragedy for the nationhood of the unified Pakistan. Disillusionment started just within two years of independence. All are possible as the Muslim League failed to represent the whole of Pakistan.

Particularly, there was a conflict between the leaders and attitudes of the Muslim League and the Awami League, as the Muslim League rarely gave credit to others for the independence of Pakistan and offered appropriate roles in the government. Regarding the perpetual subordination and culture of politicizing the religion and Urdu language, Rahman expressed his aggression:

Bengali Muslims loved their religion but they would not allow themselves to be made fools of by people who were interested in using Islam for political gains. What the masses wanted was an exploitation-free society and economic and social progress. Muslim League leaders had never presented any rational

programs to achieve these ends. All they said was ‘Pakistan will be destroyed’, ‘The Muslim League has given birth to Pakistan and is thus the country’s mother’, ‘Pakistan is synonymous with the Muslim League’, and so on. They proclaimed that the people in the Awami League and other leaders of the opposition were traitors and agents of the Hindus of India. (263)

It is seriously tragic to present only the party as the savior of the religion, nation, and nationalism, and the opponent as a traitor or foreigner. In the language of Ray, “the language of nationalism draws heavily on a discourse of rights that are grounded in traditional claims to space and common identity” (2) as limited space and cultural identity become two major factors for nationalism. Here, many of the people and leaders associated with the Awami League were also linked with the Muslim League and had equally sacrificed for the independence of India and Pakistan.

However, their disregard was tragic and weakened the nationhood of independent Pakistan. It is paradoxical how a nation and its nationalistic sentiment can become stronger by neglecting the contributions of its freedom fighters. In situations where communities have experienced mass atrocities, they often embody a binary understanding of victim-perpetrator identities. Concurrently, these communities also transmit trauma and develop one-sided historical narratives (Porobić 255), as both Leagues have performed.

In the first provincial election in East Pakistan after independence, the Awami League and its coalition forces got a landslide victory, and the Muslim League was limited to nine seats. Just after taking oath as a minister in the cabinet, Rahman heard that “Bengali and non-Bengali workers had clashed in Adamjee Jute Mill, leading to widespread violence in the area” (Rahman 269). While visiting the area immediately, they “counted over 500 corpses” (Rahman 270) in the riots between the groups.

Reflecting on a similar situation, Hamburger delineates social trauma as both a clinical and sociopsychological category, defining it clinically as a set of posttraumatic disorders stemming from organized societal violence or genocide, where not only individuals but also their social environment is impacted due to planned persecution against a targeted social group (Social 3). However, the leaders from East Pakistan showed tolerance. Ramanathapillai suggests that, in the context of Sri Lanka, narratives of traumatic events serve both as potent symbols and as effective instruments for recruiting new combatants (1). Building upon the assertion, it becomes evident that the utilization of narratives surrounding traumatic events not only symbolizes but also actively facilitates the recruitment of new combatants in the Sri Lankan context.

Moreover, Rahman argues, “If the leaders had called the people to join them in a mass action that day, we would have witnessed such a massive movement that it would have deterred any conspirators from oppressing Bangladesh in the future” (Rahman 279). However, it gestures that the trauma, which was generated by the violence, had hatched the concept of autonomy before the actual independence of Bangladesh as a new nation. In “a complicated process of development of autobiographical narrating in regard of traumatic events and, or collective violence is strongly dependent on narrative input of reliable others and social groups to whom person belongs” (Hamburger et al, “Introduction” vii). The complex evolution of autobiographical narration concerning traumatic events or collective violence is intricately tied to the influence of reliable others and the social groups to which an individual belongs, emphasizing the crucial role of external narrative input in shaping this developmental process.

Once he was ill and faced financial problems for the treatment, Rahman “felt depressed at the thought that the man who had once distributed thousands among the poor from his earnings had no money for his own treatment now. Such is fate!” (276). As articulated by Eyerman, “Memory is usually conceived as individually based, something that goes on ‘inside the heads’ of individual human beings” (Cultural Trauma: Slavery” 64). However, it is made social or collective through a social process of cultural trauma.

It represents the consequences faced by the leaders of East Pakistan compared to the material prosperity enjoyed by the leaders of the Muslim League from West Pakistan. Here, Rahman empathetically feels the pain of his political mentor. After that, “the central government had promulgated Section 92(A) and dissolved the provincial cabinet” (Rahman 277). That would be sufficient for the leaders from the Awami League to connect the riots as conspiracies to destabilize West Pakistan. Moreover, that was enough for the leaders from East Pakistan, particularly of the Awami League, to interpret the attitude and action of the central government as weakening national unity.

There was a caretaker government, and Mr. Suhrawardy was appointed to the Ministry of Law. It was suppressing for Rahman, and he was not convinced by his decision and commented, “I have no idea what kind of advice Mr. Suhrawardy got from our leaders, but he certainly made a mistake by joining the cabinet without visiting Lahore and Dhaka, and without trying to understand the mood of our people” (290). Rahman has criticized Mr. Suhrawardy, but he used to appreciate him all the time. Regarding that, while meeting with Rahman, Suhrawardy said, “I guess you are angry with me” (Rahman 291) and Rahman responded, “Sir, I am not mad but I have been wondering if I made a mistake by thinking of you as my leader all my life” (291-

92), as “Awami League was not willing to compromise on the issue of autonomy” (289). Rahman considered the participation of Suhrawardy in the cabinet as a political compromise with the Muslim League. However, the other leaders persuaded Rahman, saying, “If Mr. Suhrawardy was not going to join the cabinet, Mr. Ghulam Muhammad would be forced to hand over power to the military” (Rahman 290). Administering Suhrawardy for participation in the cabinet was taken as a conspiracy to weaken the Bengali Language Movement of East Pakistan. The audience of the memoirs perceives it also to be a witness of Mr. Suhrawardy, as he had referred to it on different pages. Witnessing is “an act of being present to observe or to give testimony on something” (Smith and Watson 207). As per Rahman, Suhrawardy made significant sacrifices for Pakistan, contributing substantial property to benefit individuals and political parties. This act of witnessing is pertinent to understanding how individuals respond to trauma.

Regarding the recent political stand of Suhrawardy as expressed by him in Dhaka, Rahman narrated, “Without mincing words, he spoke in favor of making Bengali one of the state languages and demanded that all political prisoners be freed. He also asked for autonomy for the province” (238). Up to that time, the demand for autonomy seemed to mean making Pakistani nationalism stronger through inclusive democracy. In this context, Giuseppe Sciortino underscores that the essence of the Cultural Trauma Process lies in examining the symbolic mechanisms through which suffering, whether actual or perceived, is endowed with profound and compelling meaning (9). Rahman connected the language issue to Bengali culture and developed a resistance to the significance of the new nationhood. To show the primacy of cultural factors for nationhood, Neil Z. Smelser further discusses psychological and sociological perspectives on trauma and defines cultural trauma as:

A memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation that is (a) laden with negative affect, (b) represented as indelible, and (c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions.

(44)

Smelser differentiates between psychological and sociological views on trauma, defining cultural trauma as a memory that is collectively recognized and publicly validated within a group. This type of trauma generates negative emotions, is perceived as unforgettable, and is seen as a threat to the survival of a society or a violation of its core cultural values. Because of the success in the provincial election, "The central rulers of the country realized that the Awami League had succeeded in creating opinion in favor of provincial autonomy among the people of East Bengal" (Rahman 263). Anyway, Suhrawardy's participation in the cabinet is to be for the civilian government, and Rahman's disagreement was for the Bengali language and the state's autonomy, and finally for democracy and nationalism.

Rahman's memoirs, which cover his life up to 1955 and were narrated from 1966 to 1969, detail East Pakistan's resistance to the marginalization of the Bengali population in Pakistan's mainstream politics and policies. This development is attributable to political leaders and intellectuals celebrating new levels of independence and self-governance, thereby facilitating civil recovery from the trauma of colonialism and the world wars (Alexander, *Trauma* 141). Although the memoirs were written a decade later, a period marked by significant events, they contain subtle indications of the eventual division of Pakistan in 1971 due to linguistic and territorial factors (Upreti 540). The resistance against the subordination of the Bengali race can

be viewed either as an effort to make existing Pakistani nationalism more inclusive or as laying the groundwork for an independent Bengali nation separate from Pakistan.

Finally, Rahman's autobiographical account, *The Unfinished Memoirs*, powerfully recounts the resistance of the Bengali people amidst West Pakistan's oppressive attitude. Through vivid storytelling, he exposes the trauma inflicted upon his community in pursuing cultural erasure and political dominance. Rahman's narrative is a testament to Bengali resilience, displaying their unwavering courage in reclaiming their identity. His memoir not only chronicles personal triumphs but also serves as a rallying cry for all community members who dare to resist tyranny and uphold the sanctity of cultural heritage. Thus, Bhutto and Rahman, including other two authors revise their identity along with the writing and trauma processes as explained by Mira Debs that "Cultural trauma narratives are both instrumentally developed by elite carrier groups, but must be authentically resonant with a mass public" (3). In South Asia, cultural trauma narratives are often shaped by political elites to foster nationalistic sentiments, but their impact relies on resonating deeply with the collective memory and experiences of the broader population.

In this way, Rahman's *The Unfinished Memoirs* and Bhutto's *If I Am Assassinated* compellingly narrate experiences of tolerating torture and resisting authority, exposing how oppressive regimes weakened nationhood and threatened the imagined community. While Rahman's account focuses on Bengali resistance against cultural erasure and exclusion, emphasizing resilience in reclaiming identity, Bhutto's critiques a broader hegemony (military and international) that led to national fragmentation and the torture of the populace. Despite these distinct emphases, both memoirs powerfully illustrate the critical role of their struggles in evoking national

solidarity and preserving the integrity of their respective nations against systemic oppression.

An autobiography usually gives a chronological account of someone's life, while a memoir tends to focus on particular experiences or moments. Still, the texts I've chosen and analyzed in chapters three and four are autobiographical, and they share common threads—stories of trauma, resistance, independence, nationalism, and imprisonment. Because of the fundamental nature of the genres, the analysis of autobiographies is relatively diverse in comparison to memoirs. However, intensity is at the same level.

## CHAPTER V

### INFERENCES RELATED TO THE INTERPLAY OF CULTURAL TRAUMA, SECULAR NATIONALISM, AND DYNASTIC AUTHORITY

In conclusion, the autobiographical narratives of Koirala and Nehru, alongside the memoirs of Bhutto and Rahman, however analyzed separately in terms of genres, collectively decode the intricate politics of nation-building in South Asia. These diverse personal accounts reveal how shared anti-colonial resistance gave way to postcolonial disunity, and how personal and political grief, endured through torture and resistance against hegemony, was transformed into collective trauma for nationalism.

Particularly, in this process, they present themselves as secular nationalists, often framing their vision of a secular nation as inclusive of diverse classes, religions, and genders, yet a deeper analysis reveals that this secularism is frequently articulated in ways that subtly reinforce existing power structures, including those related to gender, class, and other social strata. This is further complicated by their strategic deployment of these narratives to legitimize and perpetuate dynastic politics, subtly framing their lineage's contributions as indispensable to the nation's course and future leadership, as evidenced by repeated references to the political legacies of their ancestors and the anticipated roles of their offspring. However, they stand as being voice of the voiceless resisting hegemonic power blocs representing diverse classes of society throughout their lives.

Critically, these texts demonstrate the instrumental role of individual struggles in shaping national identity, fostering horizontal comradeship, and preserving imagined communities against exclusion, thereby profoundly enhancing our understanding of nationhood through the lens of trauma studies.

### **5.1 Unification for Independence and Falling Apart Over Nationalism**

More specifically, aligning with the first objective of the study, it concludes that the autobiographies of Nehru, Koirala, Bhutto, and Rahman vividly show a powerful paradox: while the fight for independence initially brings nations together, differing forms of nationalism later cause these same communities to fall apart. It happens because of the relatively mono-centrism of nationalism and the poly-centrism of independence and democracy.

In the study, no authors have failed to highlight their fighting and suffering for India's independence, as all were proactive from their childhood with parents or friends in opposition to colonial suppression. Such multi-generational devotion to politics stimulates their futuristic thoughts, particularly about the liberation of people and nationhood through resistance against colonial rule. Their writings' advocacy of self-governance and long-term imprisonment without compromise are other identities. They have also referred to frustration and death instinct repeatedly in their writings. However, they never compromised their fundamental ideologies as they had deep beliefs in horizontal comradeship among commoners and nationalism against imperialism, military regime, elitism, internal and external subjugation, and an absolute political system. Throughout their life, they have resisted diverse subjugation, as they were familiar with the twentieth century's global political and educational models. Consequently, for them, a nation is necessarily a dream for all, but that imagined community is not sufficient for them without independence and democracy. However, in the postcolonial era, issues like religion, language, and political encroachment dismantled the earlier convergence to divergence.

Particularly, the narratives of Koirala, Bhutto, and Rahman demonstrate how these nationalisms forged distinct identities by asserting a sovereign cultural and

spiritual domain, thereby resisting the mere adoption of others' modular forms of imagined communities and their derivative implications. Thus, the Western model of imagined community, which worked even in post-colonial India, did not perform well in the experiences of the other three nations.

## **5.2 Projection of “My Suffering Was for All of Us”**

Regarding the second objective, the study concludes that the statesmen-authors from various South Asian nations develop their personal and political grief into collective trauma by masterfully conveying the sentiment that the suffering of the authors was for all of their community members, thus transforming individual anguish into a shared national narrative of elasticity and identity. Thus, the authors develop their personal and political grief into collective trauma, particularly the trauma of colonialism and the dream of independence and self-rule, to develop collective consciousness as horizontal comradeship for the sovereignty of the nation and people.

Each leader faced different giants: Koirala fought for freedom in Nepal, Nehru helped India break free from colonialism, Bhutto challenged military rule in Pakistan, and Rahman championed Bangladesh's cultural identity. Yet, they all used their own stories of enduring torture, imprisonment, or political hardship to connect with their people. By sharing these tough experiences, they didn't just tell a story; they helped their communities remember shared struggles, feel a sense of unity, and ultimately shape their countries' very identity and politics. It's a testament to how personal pain, when shared, can forge a powerful collective spirit.

These supra-subaltern authors have mastery as influential carrier groups to use media and other various institutional arenas for the effective transformation of personal suffering into a collective one. Therefore, the writings depict such collective anguish caused by colonial subjugation and the ensuing challenges endured in

establishing a nation as an imagined political community. Their autobiographical writings depict personal and family tragedies, illustrating the intricate process of establishing new directions after the era of colonialism for their national imaginings. Because of that, the autobiographical narrations emphasize how the interaction between human anguish and national ambitions transformed the political environments of South Asia, communicating trauma through their autobiographical accounts.

These accounts illuminate traumas that have shaped India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh's national identities and political landscapes in the twentieth century. The authors recount these experiences to share past injustices, promote collective resilience, and redesign their nations' future. They politicize trauma to project themselves as nationalist leaders who sacrifice comfort and accept suffering confronting hegemonic power blocs to strengthen the nationhood of the concerned nations. The print capitalism of that era has encouraged people to form a peculiar identity among concerned community members. The print media actively helps Nehru, Koirala, Bhutto, and Rahman express personal and political anguish in their autobiographies by shifting individual traumatic memories to collective national identities. These leaders' life writings reflect their challenges and help build a national narrative that resonates with their compatriots. They create an imagined community where personal and national sufferings are brought together. The standardization of publication, as a feature of print capitalism, and autobiographical writings highlight the power of media in disseminating knowledge related to thinking and rethinking their national identities. This dissemination has united the dispersed members of an imagined community in collective interests. In the social process of cultural trauma,

the media proactively supports the development of a sense of nation and nationhood among people with identical cultural roots, fueling national consciousness.

These four autobiographical accounts, Koirala's *Atmabrittanta*, Nehru's *An Autobiography*, Bhutto's *If I Am Assassinated*, and Rahman's *The Unfinished Memoirs*, all do something incredible in transforming personal trauma into cultural trauma: they take the deep, personal pain their leaders went through and turn it into a shared national story of trauma. It's like each author saying, "My suffering was for all of us" throughout these autobiographical writings.

### **5.3 Narration of Pain for Forging Nation and Nationalism**

Relating to the third objective, the study concludes that the autobiographical writings of Koirala, Nehru, Bhutto, and Rahman are driven by the deliberate political aim of transforming personal suffering into a unifying cultural trauma, thereby legitimizing their leadership and forging a shared national identity.

Every statesman incorporates wider social and political aspects into the retelling of trauma, thereby converting personal anguish into a representation of a national battle. They represent the fusion of ideas and experiences related to imprisonment, the struggle for freedom, democratic ambitions, political journeys, and the development of nationhood in India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, respectively. The political leaders skillfully blend personal and political sorrow with societal construction in their autobiographical works, resulting in captivating accounts of their national history. These leaders use their tales not only to record their struggle but also to create a shared memory that unites their fellow citizens into a solid national identity, emphasizing the deep connection between individual suffering and the broader pursuit of a nation and nationalism through cultural trauma.

Through their autobiographical narratives, Koirala, Nehru, Bhutto, and Rahman all masterfully transform individual suffering into a shared cultural trauma that deeply resonates with their nations. By recounting their battles with incarceration, political strife, and specific traumatic events, like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre for Nehru, the coup-hegemony for Bhutto, the family exile for Koirala, and the Dhaka University massacre for Rahman, these leaders elicit a communal understanding of the past. Their writings directly reflect how distinct oppressive forces, such as colonial brutality, military regimes, the Rana oligarchy, and the Urdu-only policy, shaped their evolving political understandings of nation and nationalism.

The subjugation of cultural roots in India by colonizers, the segregation of Bengali identity in Pakistan by West Pakistanis, the suppression of individual freedom in Nepal by the absolute Rana regime and monarchy, and the coup-gemony against the elected government in Pakistan by the military regime are the sources of suffering that later developed into collective trauma. All these strengthen the concept of nation and nationalism in South Asia. These factors have fostered the emergence of sovereign national imaginings, which are predominantly republican and representative. In the context of South Asia of the colonial, post-colonial, and post-war eras, nationalism is not a natural awakening, but rather an imagined construct. In this way, they have played pivotal roles in reinforcing this concept by articulating individual traumas, thereby weaving these experiences into the collective consciousness to bolster the social fabric of nationalism.

What unites these diverse narratives is their collective power to convert individual anguish into symbols of national resilience and cohesion, thereby fostering a shared sense of identity and solidarity. However, while Nehru's work, for example, largely addresses the resistance against British colonialism, Bhutto, Rahman, and

Koirala primarily contend with postcolonial challenges to national unity, whether from military authoritarianism or internal political structures. Yet, across all four, the central theme remains: the strategic narration of personal and political grief becomes a powerful social process, ultimately developing individual trauma into a collective experience that reinforces a shared imagined communities of sacrifice and strength. They memorialize their experiences and create a collective memory that molds and maintains their nations' political consciousness and identity by effectively conveying personal experiences of trauma, which in turn contribute to the formation of cultural trauma. That further creates the politics of a nation and the sense of nationhood.

Additionally, all the authors are multilingual and aware of global politics, enabling them to communicate with a worldwide audience and enhance their visibility. The authors have utilized their captive lives for reading and writing, which sharpened their convictions and kept them informed about the international political environment. All these demonstrate the transformative power of print to educate people. Here, the role of print becomes particularly significant as it facilitates the transfer of trauma among community members, thereby expanding its impact and prospects in the form of nationalism.

#### **5.4 Recount of Memory as Intergenerational Trauma**

In autobiographical writings, the persistent and often poignant recounting of an intergenerational trauma, alongside the hardships faced by their families and children, frequently serves as a potent groundwork for the authors' dynastic authority. It, though perhaps not the family's direct ambition, often emerges from the audience's deep identification with their enduring legacy of sacrifice, particularly in terms of political legacy and liability for completing unfinished tasks.

Crucially, their narratives consistently emphasize familial contributions to nation-building, with family members depicted as inspirations and successors. This common thread of portraying personal and family sacrifices, despite varying political contexts, reinforces their roles as supra-subaltern politicians and implicitly lays the groundwork for successional authority, turning individual agony into symbols of national endurance and hope. In addition, by narrating their family stories, these autobiographical accounts, retold by their descendants either orally or in writing, continue to expand the imagined community across generations. Concerned political parties can also take advantages of that as a political heir. For these four political leaders under analysis, their autobiographical writings function as a medium for navigating and processing these traumatic experiences. Through this form of self-expression, they confront their past traumas and develop coping strategies to mitigate their psychological impact. Concurrently, they endeavor to create an extended imaginary community. By projecting themselves as social entities beyond their identities, they counteract the damage inflicted by hegemonic forces both internally and externally. Consequently, they engage in the conceptual and cultural formation of nationhood.

The autobiographical writings were composed in different colonial, post-colonial, and post-war eras, where the activism of authors for freedom and nationhood was more dominant than religion. The authors expressed a readiness for self-sacrifice without compromising their nationalist ideologies, finding solace in their suffering. Additionally, they resisted the majoritarian official nationalism present in their respective contexts. Through the narratives, leaders have endeavored to persuade and inspire the audience to form their imagined communities. In the autobiographical writings, the leaders present a nuanced analysis of the historical and political traumas

faced by their countries. Nehru articulates colonialism and feudalism as profound shocks to India, disrupting its social fabric and economic structures. He emphasizes how these forces imposed foreign control and deepened social hierarchies, impeding India's path to self-determination and modernity. Similarly, Koirala presents foreign interferences, the absolute monarchy, and the Rana oligarchy as significant obstacles to the democratic process. He highlights how their autocratic rule stifled political freedom and socio-economic development, creating an environment of oppression and stagnation. Likewise, Bhutto identifies the military regime as a root cause behind deteriorated nationhood because the regime had suspended the basic principles of democracy. He comments on how military interventions undermined democratic institutions and political stability, leading to a pervasive sense of vulnerability and marginalization among the public.

In this manner, the study reveals the central argument that South Asian autobiographies reflect the complex politics of cultural trauma, secular nationalism, and intergenerational trauma, all intertwined with the struggles for freedom and national identity. These narratives consistently convey personal anguish while mobilizing support for independence, as seen in their portrayal of resistance against colonial and authoritarian regimes. They also advocate for democracy, often from positions of extreme repression, emphasizing its importance for sustaining nationhood. Moreover, the autobiographies resist political and linguistic monopolies, asserting the significance of cultural identity. They reveal how cultural trauma serves as a foundation for constructing imagined political communities, uniting diverse populations in their fight for sovereignty.

The authors negotiate critical insights into the interplay between democracy and nationhood moderated by the social construction of trauma. Their works highlight

how compromising basic democratic norms weakens the nationhood of their respective countries. Because of that, the authors underscore the necessity of adhering to democratic norms to sustain and strengthen nation, arguing that a genuinely resilient nation cannot abandon the foundational principles of political freedom, election, and the rule of law in their autobiographical writings. Generally offering the texts to the people of their concerned nations as political heirs, South Asia's supra-subaltern political leaders politicize their trauma for the secular nation and nationhood. Thus, these supra-subaltern statesmen of South Asia transform intergenerational trauma into a collective narrative of nationhood, which, in turn, serves as a potent instrument for sustaining hereditary politics within their respective national contexts, in a case of interpretation, not as the intention of the authors.

Ultimately, South Asian autobiographical writings by statesmen articulate a complex narrative of struggle, portraying the fight for freedom and national identity through personal accounts of suffering, the strategic use of anguish to galvanize support for independence, and the advocacy of democratic ideals even under extreme pressure. These narratives resist political and linguistic hegemonies to preserve cultural distinctiveness and construct cultural trauma as a foundation for imagined political communities, thereby offering a nuanced vision for political transformation in the region.

### **5.5 Proposing Prospects for South Asian Autobiographical Studies**

At the end of the study, future directions for research on the intersection of trauma, nationalism, and autobiographical writings in South Asia could explore several nuanced and interdisciplinary areas as suggested and summarized in the following paragraphs.

Expanding the scope beyond South Asia, future studies could explore similar themes in autobiographical writings from other regions where dynastic politics and national trauma intersect. This could foster a more global understanding of how trauma informs national consciousness. This could highlight regional variations in the construction of national narratives. In this way, the study investigates how trauma, dynastic politics, and marginalized identities-such as gender, caste, and ethnicity-intersect within autobiographical writings. Such exploration can reveal how individuals experience and narrate trauma differently based on their social positions, offering deeper insight into the inclusive or exclusive nature of nationalism.

With the rise of digital platforms, future research can examine how autobiographical narratives of trauma are evolving in online spaces. The role of social media in amplifying or silencing certain voices tied to dynastic politics in the construction of nationalist discourse would be valuable for understanding contemporary shifts. It also supports understanding the public perception of the youth movement of Bangladesh and Gen Z of Nepal.

Further research could explore how trauma is transmitted across generations within dynastic political families, especially in the context of national history. This would involve probing into how autobiographical accounts reflect the intergenerational legacy of political power and national identity

Research can also explore the interplay between autobiographical narratives and visual or literary arts in shaping nationalist discourse, analyzing how trauma is represented in non-textual forms and how this contributes to the larger nationalist imagination. These directions would broaden the scope of inquiry into how autobiographical writings continue to inform and shape the evolving narratives of

nationalism in South Asia, particularly in the context of trauma, nationhood, and dynastic politics.

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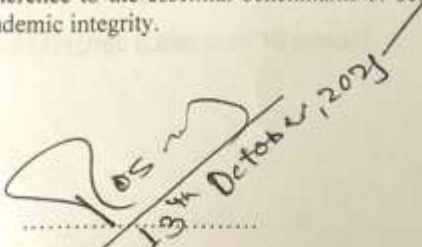
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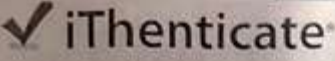
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