

## Contextualizing Trauma in Literature

Apropos of what Donald Winnicott has remarked- “human life is an endless adaptation to the ‘traumatizing’ and which persists from birth to death”- pain, suffering, tragedy, fear, isolation, anxiety, and death are the realities of human existence (qtd. in Hartman 546). Whether be it in “the struggle for existence” or in “catharsis” or in “dialectical situation”, the harsh and negative properties of existence are directly or indirectly expressed or felt. All these experiences are what humanity undergoes, wants to overcome or succumbs to. Some writers celebrate death with an utmost effort to mitigate or to work-through the intensive terror it generates in their hearts. Wallace Stevens thus says, “Death is the mother of beauty” (1259), Edgar Allan Poe declares that the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover (brainyquote). Similarly, Aristotle calls tragedy the highest form of art. For Silenus, a satyr in Greek mythology, "the best thing for a man is not to be born, and if already born, to die as soon as possible"(brainyquote).All these allusions tend to consolidate Sigmund Freud’s famous aphorism “the aim of life is death” (Hartman 553).This reckoning, therefore, implies a kind of affirmation to the suffering and terror engendered by a sense of violence and death caused by different factors emanating from both sources: man-made as well as natural.

Survivors/sufferers of violence, atrocities and calamities like accidents, personal violence, physical and sexual abuse, socio-cultural stigmatization, despotism, slavery, war, natural hazards, epidemics etc. tend to create various types of shocks or devastating impacts on human behavior, psyche and physique. What might have been the mental state of the people who survived or were physically or mentally injured during colonial era, world wars, Holocaust, Apartheid, earth quakes, tsunamis to name

a few historical and natural calamities that claimed a massive number of lives and left millions injured besides personal, familial, social, cultural incidents/accidents which took place and are taking place around the world?

The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud. Therefore, George Steiner as commenting on the limitation of language to represent the enormity of the trauma of Holocaust as, “the world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason” (qtd. in Woods 342). However, they refuse to be buried but tend to recur. This recurrence usually happens when the victim encounters any reminder of the shock he/she underwent or happened to be witness of. The shock ranges from an individual experience of violence or a menacing war that engulfs the whole society or nation or beyond. Different people have their own history of pain or shock, and the intensity of the shock also varies from person to person, situation to situation, culture to culture and society to society. In this regard, David Becker posits, “trauma can only be understood with reference to the specific contexts in which it occurs including cultural norms, political context, the nature of the event, the organization of the community and so forth” (qtd. in Kaplan 39).

Remembering and telling the truths about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims. People who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional and fragmented manner. When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery. But far too often secrecy prevails, and the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom. Witnesses as well as victims are subject to the dialectic of trauma. It is difficult to find a language that conveys fully and persuasively what one has seen. The knowledge of horrible events periodically

intrudes into public awareness but rarely retained for long. Denial, repression and dissociation operate on a social as well as an individual level.

It is not always possible to narrate traumatic incidents. Nor does any artistic creation become successful to portray the experience of the victim in its original form. Lawrence Langer, therefore, confronts an anxiety if aesthetic stylization blunts the piercing reality of trauma. However, writing and literature bring the present closer to the past; educate the present and future from the experience of the past as Woods puts, “literature offers history as a prominent reactivation of the past in a critique of the present” (Woods 342). It is, therefore, ethical to bring into focus the seamy side of human civilization, traumatic stories being the most glaring. Here are a few examples how trauma found its way in letters in rudimentary forms and how its horizon expanded along with the expansion of definition and scope of the term and the meaning it entails.

Slave narratives exhibit a stark and gruesome condition of the slaves. For example, Mary Prince, Harriet Jacob and Frederick Douglass exemplify the severest form of victimhood under the white slave owners. Mary Prince illustrates the condition of the slaves thus “halter round their neck and the whip upon their back . . . disgraced and thought no more of than beasts . . . separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sisters, just as cattle are sold and separated . . .”

(21). Benjamin Wilkomirski, Primo Levi, Charlotte Delbo and others have extensively written about the traumatic problems and personal consequences of remembering the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis in Holocaust. These few examples taken from two different contexts represent the traumatic experiences of the victims and survivors. Similarly, the whole corpus of postcolonial literature, diasporic literature, feminist writings, war literature, apartheid literature have huge reservoir of traumatic

experiences of authors as well as characters. All of them unmask intricate psychological aspects of the victims/survivors/sufferers though styles and contexts vary.

To go wider and beyond a parochial boundary of the term, traumatic experiences are global phenomena that engulf humanity at different times, spaces and circumstances. Though this study overarches psychology, psychiatry, sociology, literature and other disciplines of humanities, experiences of trauma in literature and art have been expressed from classical times as Geoffrey Hartman underlines, "literature or art narrates human life symbolically not literally or referentially; this symbolic representation is an uncanny intensification. This convertibility of literal and symbolic is the 'traumatizing'" (547). Great classical heroes like Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*, Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Agamemnon in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* suffer from traumatic experiences creating a base for western civilization in which tragedy and human suffering play a pivotal role. Pain, suffering and isolations in Western literature expressed in the form of tragedy, epic, satire, irony, paradox, symbols and imageries which downplay the humor and happiness inhuman life. Prominent Renaissance literary works like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Marlow's *Dr. Faustus* present characters who are subject to great sufferings which are either caused by external forces or due to internal psychological reasons making trauma a visible feature in their behavior and personality. Romantic literature is principally created from tranquility and melancholia both of which are the symptoms of traumatized existence. Hartman locates the same plight in William Blake, Coleridge and Keats by extending the limit of traumatized self as far back as myth and artistic creation. He discerns William Blake as depicting "a mysterious turbulence in the heavens" for the sake of creation

which is itself "the catastrophe, at once shock, splitting off the reification of the mysterious diminishment" (538). John Keats opts for "viewless wings of Poesy" to "Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget /The weariness, the fever, and the fret" from the world of suffering "Where youth grows pale, and specter-thin, and dies /Where but to think is to be full of sorrow" (935). His poems are but articulations of traumatized mindset. He laments over the life itself and wants to run away from it. The ancient mariner in S.T. Coleridge's poem undergoes traumatic experiences after he kills albatross: extremes of heat, cold and thirst, glare of color, horror of the void, loss of speech. The mariner is isolated within the human world, and is caught in the pool of loneliness and solitude. This loss generates trauma. Imagination is the vehicle of creativity for Romantic writers and poets as for Wallace Stevens "violence from within responding to violence from without" (qtd. in Hartman 544). Gothic literature, which Georgia Krieiger quotes Kari Winter as calling "the terror of the familiar: the routine brutality and injustice", presents a mysterious, dreamy and perplexed state of affairs commanding a sense of horror and mystery (613). Modern works like Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* are overwhelmed with a sense of trauma generated from different sources like futility of existence, war-torn world, depletion of integrity etc. Postmodern works like Tony Morrison's *Beloved*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and V.S. Naipul's *The Mimic Men* portray the traumatic situations and traumatized characters of certain kinds.

The presence of trauma is not only limited within the literary works written in the Western hemisphere, it has been making a powerful commotion in the literature written in Nepal as well. The socio-economic conditions, historico-political turbulences and natural disasters have provided ample ground for the germination and growth of atrocities and sufferings leading to traumatic experiences. Besides personal

and natural accidents, Nepalese society underwent One Hundred and Four year long despotic Rana oligarchy shrouded with slavery and superstition which provided sufficient background for literature based on traumatic overtones. Other political and social movements following establishment of democracy in 1950 further added instances of historical trauma. As Alexander Pope's famous dictum goes, "literature is the mirror of society", Nepali literature also demonstrates several aspects of society and circumstances that condition Nepalese people's lives, feelings and thoughts.

Tracing back to the eighteenth century to the present, the Nepalese literary treasury has been remarkably large. Literary works are available in all genres with international feat and richness. The issues of pain and suffering have occupied a significant chunk of Nepalese literary world as well. Traumatic experiences have also found space in Nepalese literature. Lekhnath Poudyal's *Pinjadako Suga*, Laxmi Prasad Devkota's , *Pagal*, *Shakuntala*, Madhav Prasad Ghimire's *Gauri*, Diamon Samsher's *Basanti*, Sarubhakta's *Pagal Basti*, Parijaat's *Shirishko Phool* are some of the examples of how trauma of some kind has been acted-out or revoked. Other classical literary artists from Balkrishna Sama, Gopal Prasad Rimal, Bhupi Sherchan, Shankar Lamichhane to the contemporary writers: Krishna Dharabasi, Mahesh Bikram Shah and Jhamak Kumari Ghimire unmask the condition and experiences of agony in their works. Despite all that, the study in the domain of trauma is very sparse and incomplete.

A decade long armed conflicts from 1996 to 2006 brought forth horrendous picture of violence all over the nation and people from all walks of life and rendered quite a lot of people vulnerable and helpless. Nepalese society was adversely affected by this armed conflict which left more than fifteen thousand dead and hundreds of thousands physically and psychologically crippled, wounded and injured; a huge

number widowed and orphaned; many hundred thousand people socially displaced and economically deprived. The war could be interpreted as an excuse for political transformation with a view to ensuring equality and identity. Some might argue that war is the necessity of time and context as Sigmund Freud calls it an expression of 'hate instinct' which is natural and Karl Marx labels it an essential component of dialectic phenomenon. Yet the impact of violence to the victims, survivors and the witnesses has been deadly and alarming. Whatever justification one might endeavor to provide to vindicate war, it inevitably causes a serious damage to human society and disrupts the natural course of human development. Obviously, war is a vital source of multiple forms of traumatic experiences in society.

Mahesh Bikram Shah's *Chhapamarko Chhoro*, a collection of short stories, emerges from the abysmal context of the armed conflict and attempts to demonstrate multiple negative impacts of the war to people those directly or indirectly involved in the war, those who are indifferent to the war and political agenda buttressed by the war, those who were completely unaware of what was happening and why it was happening and those who were innocent and unknown about the cause of the whole rampant bloodshed. Critics who commented on Shah's *Chhapamarko Chhoro* either presented it as a realistic characterization of conflict or a symbolic example of class struggle. Dr. Govindraj Bhattarai in the preface of the book calls it "a collection of realistic stories about conflict and its consequences" (Preface). A famous Nepali critic, Madhav Prasad Pokharel comments, "Shah's stories are a documentation of sorrow and pain created by conflict" (7). Similarly, *Gorkhapatra* labels this book as "a brilliant and novel achievement in characterizing different aspects of conflict and war" (6). A critic, Shekhar Kharel in *The Kathmandu Post* applauds Shah's works as

“stories of subaltern characters” (7). Pushkar Lohani, a literary writer and critic considers this book “a real picture of class struggle” (4).

Having read the collection of the short stories and meditated upon the comments furnished by the critics, the researcher encounters some questions: why does Shah imply only violence, anxiety and suffering of the people in his stories while there could be many other positive things the war was expected to bring for the welfare of the people and society facing poverty and inequality? why is he motivated to ignore the slogans and ideology provided by the warring forces? and why does he concentrate on the psychological state of the characters rather than on literal devastation and physical bombardment? The answer to these questions is lying unanswered because the horizon of the critics’ observation seems to be limited within the territory of literal meaning of war, conflict and social struggle. The prolonged psychological effects caused by conflicts that destabilize human consciousness by culminating in the form of trauma are terra incognita for the critical observation on the work.

These unanswered questions provoke me to conduct an extensive research with a hypothesis that the stories in the book, *Chhapamarko Chhoro* depict on the one hand the traumatized psychology of the conflict victims and onlookers and on the other their affirmation of the violent past for future recovery. This research, therefore, probes into the short stories from the perspective of historical trauma and aims to discover how the trauma generated from the sense of loss is acted-out and worked-through. All stories in the collection will be brought under critical microscope for which trauma theory especially elaborated by Cathy Caruth and Dominick La Capra will be used as working tool for textual analysis. Freudian psychoanalysis, some



epistemological arguments and politico-cultural theories will be applied in the process of interpretation.

This research is significant in the sense that application of trauma theory to contemporary Nepalese literature is a relatively new field of research as the traditional trauma studies tends to focus on European literature with such events as Holocaust and the Western literature representing Vietnam War. This research is expected to broaden the horizon of trauma studies by demonstrating that it is applicable to Nepali context and Nepali literature as well.

## Historicizing and Conceptualizing Trauma Theory

Again, I began to see the corpse in the scrawls drawn by the pen's ink. The corpses of soldier, leader, cadre, businessman, teacher, student, peasant, clerk, employee and Maoist began flowing in the scrawl drawn by the ink dropping from my pen. Again, I began to be perturbed by the corpses of various classes and castes<sup>1</sup>. (Shah 33)

This extract from a story, "Ma ra Murdharu" ("I and the Corpses") in Mahesh Bikram Shah's *Chhapamarko Chhoro* portrays the injured and disturbed psyche of the narrator who falls into the whirlwind created by pain that leaves the trace in his mind and heart. It is one of the most intricate and fragile experiences that no objective parameters or scientific experiments can measure its texture and heal its wound. This complex aftermath of shock is a bait of psychoanalysis, psychiatry as well as sociology though none of them is able to feel the most delicate pulse of this experience nor is it possible to do away with these disciplines in order to understand what it is. Thus, there emerged a systematic study of trauma called trauma theory.

Since this theory is relatively a new idea in literary criticism and is often confused with psychoanalysis, it requires a brief discussion of its historical context and background and of its existence as an independent theoretical tool so that it will be easy for the researcher to draw relevance of traumatic studies in relation to Shah's stories.

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<sup>1</sup> Kalamko mashile koreka dharsaharuma ma feru murda dekhna thalen. Sipahi, neta, karyakarta, byapari, shikshyak, biddiyarhi, kisan, karinda, karmachari, ra maobadika murdharu mero kalambaata jhardai mashile koreko dharsoma bagna thale. Bibhinna barga ra jaatka murdharu baata ma feru disturb huna thalen.

Trauma theory is like a coral reef which developed gradually by passing through different phases of discourses and studies starting all the way from Sigmund Freud, an Austrian psychiatrist, clinician and founder of modern psychoanalysis. Geoffrey Hartman affirms that “trauma theory derives mainly from psychoanalytic sources, though it was strongly affected by literary practice” (537). Freud and his contemporaries had discovered the basic phenomena and structures of trauma. But unlike psychologists and others writing today, Freud and his contemporaries did not set to write a theory of trauma. Trauma was used to explain processes in hysteria rather than a concept itself to be theorized. French clinicians mainly J.M. Charcot and his student Pierre Janet pioneered research on hysteria and hypnosis which Freud and Breuer used in their work with their hysterical patients noting that the symptoms of hysteria were the result of trauma. In their essay “Studies in Hysteria”, they mention sexuality as a precipitating cause for traumatic symptoms, that Ann Kaplan notes as “the determining causes which lead to the acquisition of neuroses” (27). Trauma, then, was at first linked to the sexual experience of young woman within a close-knit bourgeois family and circle of friends such as was common at the turn of the nineteenth century Hartman explains, “Freud treated trauma as hysteria and said in his *The Aetiology of Hysteria* (1996) ‘at the bottom of any case of hysteria there are one or more occurrences of premature sexual experiences, occurrences which belong to the earliest years of childhood’” (539). Freud’s attention to trauma was more focused only when he studied the symptoms of soldiers in the First World War as Kaplan believes, “he [Freud] has in mind the situation of war for the external assault on the mental apparatus and hysteria for the internal assault” (31). At this point, interest in trauma focused on men involved in public catastrophes, such as war and thus opened a new chapter called battle trauma. Though he seemed to treat war trauma as war

neuroses different from sexual instincts, he did not want to relinquish the possibility that even war trauma had something to do with sexuality, while at the same time fully understanding that he did not have evidence yet of “the relations which undoubtedly exist between fright, anxiety and narcissistic libido” (Kaplan 29). Freud’s most significant discussion of trauma occurs in his *Moses and Monotheism*. He argues that traumata are either bodily experiences or perceptions, especially those heard or seen. Central to Freudian theory of trauma is a motivated unconscious. In this case traumatic event may trigger traumatic happenings, already perhaps mingled with fantasy and shape how the current event is experienced. Thus, Freud’s ideas about trauma gradually grew in complexity and preciseness from early *Studies on Hysteria* to *Moses and Monotheism* by insisting on the presence of fantasy, the unconscious and present conditions as inevitably implicated to traumatic memories.

Jacques Lacan, French psychoanalyst, talked about inexpressibility and incomprehensibility of the experience of trauma as, for him, language intrudes in the process of cognition and blurs the capacity to realize the traumatic experiences. Symptoms of trauma are signifiers while the original traumatic event is signified. For Lacan, the signification of the comprehension is not only postponed but also blurred. On the other hand, feminist psychoanalysts like Helene Cixious and Julia Kristeva critiqued Freudian interpretation of hysteria as associated with female traumatic experience. They considered Freud as biased and phallogocentrist and wanted to de-sex trauma studies so as to treat it as an independent domain of study. However, they admitted that the physical, sexual and social abuse upon women in the male-centric society gendered a number of traumatic situations in women. This is how trauma theory remained within the territory of psychoanalysis on the one hand and a bone of contention between Freudian psychoanalysts and Feminist psychoanalysts on the

other. Other politico-cultural theories like post-colonialism, queer theory and new historicism also brought forth the issues of domination, marginalization and identity crises which constituted a corpus of study which could have some relevance in the study of trauma theory.

In the wake of Vietnam War, clinical psychologists became newly engaged with thinking about trauma which received its more solid status as a topic of inquiry at the moment of its codification in 1980. This led to the study of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), terminology used by Joseph Boscarino, which replaced the terms: “shell shock” and “combat fatigue”. Dori Laub’s contribution to the volume, *Testimony* (1992) and Cathy Caruth’s earlier *Unclaimed Experience* (1986) and her edited volume, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) brought a new wave in the study of trauma theory. Books by Geoffrey Hartman (1994, 1996), Dominick La Capra (1994, 1998) and Michael Rothberg (2000) proved influential in deepening and furthering humanities Holocaust research. It quickly extended beyond Holocaust studies in the humanities, especially along with the increasing revelations about child abuse in the 1990s. Books like Janet Freyd’s *Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse* (1996) influenced film scholars like Janet Walker while Kaja Silverman had implicitly theorized cultural trauma as early as 1992.

The scope of trauma theory expanded further when experimental and cognitive psychologists entered into debates about trauma. Richard McNally’s exhaustive review of studies conducted to test the validity of the American Psychiatry Association’s Diagnosis of PTSD appeared in 2000 and it gained attention. At the same time, David Becker warned of the dangers of too readily universalizing the term “trauma”. He focused on the situation, context, socio-cultural environment rather than mere trauma per se. Thus, in certain areas of humanities and social sciences, trauma,

along with the specific form of recall termed traumatic memory, has, in the last ten years or so, become a center of concern, even leading to the emergence of a new rubric called trauma studies.

The study of trauma gets illuminated by several definitions provided by theorists/critics and scholars. For Freud, "trauma results from a breach in a protective shield that the mental apparatus sets up to ward against over violent stimuli" (qtd. in Kaplan 31). He associates trauma with the rupture of consciousness by the unconscious stimulation. Martin L. Hoffman sees the disturbance in the physiological system of human brain by trauma as it "bombards the brain's amygdala with electrical and chemical signals" (qtd. in Kaplan 37). According to Donald Winnicott, trauma is "the interruption of a sense of going on being, a fracture of the sense of the continuity of the self" (qtd. in Alcock 299). Van der Kolk, Otto van der Hart and Geoffrey Hartman associate trauma with recurrence of memory. For Kolk and Hart, it is "a special form of memory" which "produces emotions-terror, fear, shock-but above all disruption of the normal feeling of comfort" (qtd. in Kaplan 34) while Hartman defines it as a "kind of memory of the event in the form of a perceptual troping of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche" (537). Cathy Caruth provides a comprehensive and elaborate definition by creating a point of departure from general perception of trauma thus:

there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or set of events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, flashbacks, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event along with numbing that may begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event". . . .The pathology consists, rather, solely in

the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it (4).

The above definitions not only show diversified directions and effects of trauma but also invite a fresh discourse about the scope of trauma studies. Issues range from human brain function to symbolic representation. Therefore, Cathy Caruth calls the “phenomenon of trauma all inclusive” and she further adds, it is because “it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience”( 4).Let us delve into the nexus of the discourse sparked by Freudian psychoanalytical findings and newer ideas developed by Cathy Caruth and other critics. Trauma Theory attempts to establish its sovereignty by keeping itself at a clear distance from the encroachment of psychoanalysis.

The key of psychoanalysis upto now is the centralized discussion of human unconscious and how that unconscious gets expressed in multiple forms or is barred from being expressed. Freud associates dreams, hallucinations, fantasies, literary creations, arts, slip of tongue and other human behavioral and gestural patterns with “Wish Fulfillment” manifest in condensation, displacement or symbolic forms. Freudian psychoanalysis focuses on unconscious, where 'Id' dwells. His interpretation of one of the dreams triggers debate not with trauma theorists but also with other psychoanalysts. The dream goes like this:

A father had been watching day and night beside the sick-bed of his child. After the child died, he retired to rest in an adjoining room, but left the door ajar so that he could look from his room into the next,

where the child's body by surrounded by tall candles. An old man, who had been installed as a watcher, sat beside the body, murmuring prayers. After sleeping for a few hours the father dreamed that *the child was standing by his bed, clasping his arm and crying reproachfully: 'Father, don't you see that I am burning?'* The father woke up and noticed a bright light coming from the adjoining room. Rushing in, he found that the old man had fallen asleep, and the sheets and one arm of the beloved body were burnt by a fallen candle. (353)

Freud interprets this dream as associated to 'wish fulfillment' as he says, "even this dream is not lacking in a wish-fulfillment. The dead child behaves as though alive; he warns his father himself. . . . It was for the sake of this wish-fulfillment that the father slept a moment longer" (354). Freud even draws the transformed or symbolic meaning of burning as he explains, "Perhaps the complaint, 'I am burning' was associated with the fever from which the child died" (354). Freud arrives at the conclusion that the father in the dream wishes his child back alive and therefore, sees the dream like this. Disagreeing with Freudian notion of wish-fulfillment and a fear of external death, Lacan analyses it as "father's traumatic awakening" (qtd. in Caruth 209). For Lacan, it is the very identity of the father that is bound up with, or founded in, the death that he survives. This is in other words a fright from the death itself, a traumatized situation that registers in the mind of the father to see this child dead. The relation of the dream is, for Caruth, not a transformed wish-fulfilling process but a direct recurrence of the harsh reality. "It is", she clarifies "not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history" (Caruth 5). There is a direct connection between history and trauma unlike history and unconscious, and it is not associated with unconscious nor for repression but a "literal return of the event" (5).



It is this literality and its insistent return which thus constitutes trauma and points toward its enigmatic core: the delay or incompleteness in knowing. It is always problematic to decipher the dreams, hallucinations and thoughts which are literal but not assimilable to associative chain of meaning. This poses a significant threat in pathologizing traumatic event on the basis of the symptoms which are delayed, fragmented and dissociated. Another incident illustrates how history is directly related without modification or transformation to trauma:

A child survivor of the Holocaust who had been at Theresienstadt continually had flashbacks of trains, and didn't know where they came from; she thought she was going crazy. Until one day, in a group survivor meeting, a man says, "Yes, at Theresienstadt you could see the trains through the bars of the children's barracks." She was relieved to discover she is not mad. (qtd. in Caruth 6)

This amnesia occurs because the survivor's traumatized mind is so overwhelmed by the horrendous experience of history that it hits a normal functioning of human thought. Traumatized feelings repeat and destabilize the normalcy of human behavior. This child is also haunted by those terrible literal images of the trains and is not able to relate them to the incident itself until she hears a man tell the history. Caruth, thus, says, "Central to the very immediacy of this experience, that is, is a gap that carries the force of the event and does so precisely at the expense of simple knowledge and memory" (7). Trauma, therefore, happens to be a domain of study which divulges the effects of the shocks caused by any kind of violence, torture or pain meted out by a subject in various circumstances or conditions. It is a literal repetition of tremor in the form of disturbed psychological condition or erratic/irrational behavior or any kind of physical ailments. But because these symptoms erupt in belated forms and without

any logical sequence to the original event/s, pathology tends to become messy, usually erroneous and mysterious. This rupture of a usual normal situation of the subject invites concerns from different disciplines and gets translated into multiple interpretations. That is the reason why Caruth identifies the surprising impact of trauma as the dislocation of traditional disciplinary boundaries and calls for an acknowledgement as unsettling force that urges us " to rethink our notions of experience, and of communication, in therapy and in classroom" (qtd. in Toremans 334).

That trauma refuses to be simply located in the unconscious opens a serious debate which pulls psychoanalysts into crisis in defining traumatic experience. Caruth puts this way, "the location of the origins of traumatic experience as inside or outside the psyche may also miss the central Freudian insight into trauma" (9). This is how Cathy Caruth makes a departure from psychoanalysis and positions trauma theory a separate discipline. Not agreeing fully with Caruth who insists on "unspeakability" and "unrepresentability" of trauma, Ann Kaplan associates it with memory saying, "a memory... of such a trauma...enter(s) the great complex of association, it comes alongside other experiences, which may contradict it and is subjected to rectification by other ideas" (26). She sees the registration of traumatic experience in memory which is a working tool of psychoanalysis. Amidst the debate of owning and disowning of memory for the study and analysis of trauma comes up Susannah Radstone with a distinction between memory and trauma. She considers memory as the outcome of complex processes of revision shaped by promptings from the present, whereas trauma posits the linear registration of events as they happen (qtd. in Kaplan 35).For her, "trauma theory exorcises...psychoanalysis's later insistence on the agency of the unconscious in the formation of memories" (qtd. in Kaplan35). For

Radstone, therefore, trauma theorists associate trauma not with the effects of triggered associations but with the ontologically unbearable nature of the event itself.

Having defined the trauma and settled the dispute with psychoanalysis to some extent, there come up some key questions like: what are the sources of trauma and what triggers the realization of trauma after one comes back to normalcy or what are the semiotics of trauma? Can all kinds of trauma be kept in the same basket? Do all of them have the same effect, magnitude and frequency of recurrence?

Dominick La Capra delves into this mess to excavate some important issues and attempts to distinguish their threads, sources and types of trauma. He also deals with how trauma is acted-out and worked-through. Trauma, for La Capra, stems from 'loss' and 'absence'. Loss refers to the situation of lack when something the victim possessed in the past is no more now. It presupposes gain, availability and possession. Object of desire is specified: to recover the lost or lacking object or some substitute for it. If the lost object is divine, the goal may be new god or heavenly city, possibly a secular hero and/or utopia that will save the people and legitimate the self as confirm the identity of the follower. On the other hand, absence means lack, never available, incomplete from the beginning. The object or direction of desire is not specified in relation to absence. Problems and challenges orient and limit desires which are inherently indeterminate and possibly limitless. These two senses/meanings diverge towards different directions and orientations and the traumas originated from each of them show different features, symptoms and they take different courses for normalization process. There is a hope of recovery of the trauma caused by loss as it can be fulfilled though not through the same object but through some substituting thoughts. He is strictly against conflating these two ideas as he warns:

to blur the distinction between, or to conflate, absence and loss may itself bear striking witness to the impact of trauma and the post-traumatic, which create a state of disorientation, agitation, or even confusion and may induce a gripping response whose power and force of attraction can be compelling". He adds, "the very conflation attests to the way one remains possessed or haunted by the past, whose ghosts and shrouds resist distinction. (699)

La Capra classifies trauma under two headings: historical trauma and structural trauma, former originating from a sense of loss and latter from that of absence. In historical trauma, traumatic events and incidents are located and identified; the traumatizing events may at least in principle be determined with a high degree of determinacy and objectivity. It is specific and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it. It affects a particular individual or society or community; it is not a generalized/universalized form of trauma. Loss is situated in historical context and is the consequence of particular events. All losses are not same in intensity: some are traumatic and others are not; some may be more traumatic than others as there are variations in the intensity and devastating impact of trauma. Historical losses can conceivably be avoided or, when they occur, at least in part be compensated for. Traumas which are caused by Holocaust, Apartheid, wars, bombings, social-cultural discrimination, personal accidents and abuses are all grouped under historical trauma. In such trauma, the distinction among victims, perpetrators, and bystanders is crucial. The victim is not psychological category, it is, in variable ways, a social, political and ethical category. "The more general point is that historical trauma has a differentiated specificity that poses particular questions for historical understanding and ethico-political judgment" (La Capra 724). In practice

the determination of such events in the past poses problems of varying degrees of difficulty for the obvious reason that our mediated access to such event is through various traces or residue-memory, testimony, documentation, and representation or artifacts.

Structural trauma originates from transhistorical absence and appears in different ways in all societies and all lives. La Capra claims, “Everyone is subject to structural trauma” (723). It engulfs one in such a way that he/she feels a sense of isolation as Maurice Blanchot indicates in his idea of essential solitude, the mythic Fall from Garden of Eden, Heideggerian “thrownness-into-being”, absurdity as Samuel Beckett talks about or lack of ‘primordial unity’ or ‘death of god’ which Nietzsche proclaims. This traumatic experience may be accompanied with anxiety, concept of nihilism or futility/meaninglessness of human existence. It is not triggered by any event but an anxiety-producing condition of possibility related to the potential for historical traumatization. It may be evoked or addressed in various fashions: in terms of the separation from the mother, the passage from nature to culture, the eruption of the pre-oedipal or pre-symbolic, alienation from species-being, and the inevitable generation of the aporia. The victim for example may feel dejected or traumatized by a feeling of mythical mass exodus of the Jews, or by that of the inundation of the world by mythical flood, or by the feeling that he/she will have to go into hell after death where he/she will be tortured in severity. Some may be traumatized by the feeling of ghosts which cannot be located in time or space. It is, therefore, an unsettling condition of possibility that is generative of anxieties or vulnerabilities.

Though absence and loss are two distinct concepts and the reaction of which drive one to different directions, it is likely that they sometimes imbricate if not

totally conflate or mess up. 'Lack', for example, can come up to both cases: lack in loss to be completed/compensated/substituted or lack in absence to be never complete or compensated. Sometimes, absence can be converted to loss and vice versa. For example, Sisyphus's eternal doom in the underworld of rolling up a boulder to a steep mountain for eternity is overcome; and Holocaust may traumatize one as fated and inescapable atrocity for mankind and it cannot be recovered.

Trauma is itself a shattering experience that disrupts or even threatens to destroy experience in the sense of an integrated or at least viably articulated life. The radically disorienting experience of trauma often involves dissociation between cognition and effect. In traumatic experiences one typically can represent numbly or with aloofness what one cannot feel, and one feels overwhelmingly what one is unable to represent, at least with any critical distance and cognitive control. Yet, a couple of questions arise if trauma can be cured or overcome. What kind of trauma is pathologically identified as manageable and what not?

La Capra introduces two terms: "working-through" and "acting-out" with the help of Freudian analogy of mourning and melancholia respectively. In the process of 'working-through', one affirms or acknowledges the trauma and to some extent overcomes it. Working-through means work on post-traumatic symptoms in order to mitigate the effects of trauma by generating counterforces to compulsive repetition (or acting-out), thereby enabling a more viable articulation of affect and cognition or representation, as well as ethical or sociopolitical agency, in the present and future. "Acting-out" means reliving the past traumatic experiences when the event which caused trauma is reminded by any means to the victim; he or she gets an immediate jolt/shock. Mourning over the loss of someone/anything eases the process of affirming /accepting trauma and socializing oneself in the group or society/community/family.

It carries a hope of recovery as it is grounded in the sense of accepted 'loss' which can be fulfilled though not through the same object or thought but through some substituting objects or thoughts. La Capra further illustrates "mourning brings the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a reinvestment in, or recathexis of, life that allows one to begin again" (713). It allows for a measure of critical distance, change, resumption of social life, ethical responsibility, and renewal. Working-through a trauma therefore normalizes the mental state of the victim. The Holocaust survivor in the earlier example of train works-through the trauma when the incident is spotted or identified by a man. This reaffirming the agony leads one to live the life normally or find the devastating effect rather abated to the level of management. Usually, historical traumas are worked-through, though there is no definite rule for it. 'Acting-out' is realized as in the state of melancholia which Freud saw as "characteristic of an arrested process in which the depressed, self berating, and traumatized self, locked in compulsive repetition, is possessed by the past, faces a future of impasses, and remains narcissistically identified with the lost object"(qtd. in La Capra 713). Thus, melancholia is a problem of alienation, a symptom of acting-out; and one suffering from this illness cannot be cured nor the trauma be overcome. The victim feels an absence which can never be completed, which is endless and painful. If anxiety emerges from loss, like the death of the dear one, or an accident or historical trauma, it can be overcome; if it comes from absence, it is acted out only or reactivated. Sisyphus's trauma comes from loss, it is therefore worked-through while Murphy's trauma originates from absence, it is simply acted-out without being worked-through. Milton's paradise is Lost, so it is regained; Heideggerian 'thrownness-into-being' comes from absence, it is simply acted-out, so it pushes one to anxiety. A victim can work-through historical trauma but he/she is unlikely to

work-through transhistorical or structural trauma since the source of the former can be located or identified whereas that of the latter is unknown or indefinite.

There is a possibility of imbrications between acting-out and working-through as in the case of absence and loss. For example, the damage of the holocaust for some victims can be so huge and overwhelming that they fail to identify the perpetrator nor do they have any memory of sequence of events; they are simply overpowered by the trauma which cannot be worked-through, it is constantly acted-out only. But this may not happen to others who may work-through. For the trauma to be worked-through, sense of absence must be converted into that of loss. Lack which entails both absence and loss must be converted to loss. If otherwise, the result is just the opposite.

However, working-through trauma does not imply the possibility of attaining total integration of the self, including the retrospective feat of putting together seamlessly through a harmonizing narrative the riven experience of the past trauma. It does not mean total redemption of the past or healing its traumatic wounds. Any such retrospective suturing would itself be illusory. La Capra in his essay, "Trauma Studies: Its Critics and Vicissitudes" notes:

Working-through also counteracts the tendency to sacralize trauma or to convert it into a founding or sublime event—a traumatic sublime or transfigured moment of blank insight and revelatory abjection that helps to create a compelling, even disabling sense of betrayal if one departs from a 'fidelity' to it or at least to those who were destroyed by the events to which it is related. (123)

Thus, any notion of full redemption or salvation with respect to it is dubious. But at least in trauma's historical dimension, we can work to change the causes of this cause insofar as they are social, economic, and political and thereby attempt to prevent its



recurrence and enable forms of renewal. In so far as trauma is transhistorical, we can mystifyingly attribute it to an event as its putative cause or project responsibility for those who were sacrificed.

One may argue that the effect of trauma is not only limited to the victim alone, it can also be passed onto others who hear the traumatic stories or who carry the legacy of agony from the earlier generation or those clinicians/psychiatrists who attend the victim/s for therapy or who watch such events on televisions or who read such stories in newspapers/ books. This domain of secondary trauma is less talked about in canonical critical discourses. Few critics have worked on this part of trauma which includes ‘vicarious’, ‘virtual’ and ‘intergenerational’ trauma. Ann Kaplan dwells upon this domain, called ‘vicarious’ trauma. She quotes Pearlman and Saakvitne as defining it as “the deleterious effects of trauma therapy on the therapist. It is a process of change in the therapist’s inner experiences – the normal and understandable by-product of personal engagement with client’s trauma memories and narrative descriptions” (40). In vicarious/secondary experience of trauma, one perhaps unconsciously identifies with the victim, becomes a surrogate victim, and lives the event in an imaginary way that, in extreme cases may lead to confusion about one’s participation in the actual events. One, therefore, undergoes secondary traumatization, at least through the manifestation of symptomatic effects such as extreme anxiety, panic attacks, startle reactions, or recurrent nightmares, psychic numbing, flashback without personally living through the traumatizing event to which such effects are ascribed. This empathy with the experience of the patient may also produce physical symptoms such as heavy breathing, gasping for air, heart rate acceleration, body shaking, dizziness, fatigue etc. In virtual (in contrast to the vicarious) experience of trauma, one may imaginatively put oneself in the victim’s

position while respecting the difference between self and other and recognizing that one cannot take the victim's place or speak in the victim's voice. This occurs basically when one watches violence or traumatizing scene on the TV or virtual media or reads the similar stuff in print or hears the stories from others. Virtual trauma is, therefore, an empathic sharing with a conscious detachment from the original victims. Yet another kind of secondary trauma is intergenerational transmission of trauma which refers to the situation in which those not directly living through an event may, nonetheless, experience and manifest its post-traumatic symptoms, something especially prominent in the children or inmates of survivors tend to relive what others have lived.

The influence of trauma theory is not limited within the domain of study of trauma instigated by physical and psychological violence. It incorporates cultural shock with the invasion of atrocities into the subject's cultural patterns. Neil Smelson defines cultural trauma as "an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture or of a culture as a whole" (qtd. in Toremans 335). For Jeffrey 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" (1). It is by constructing cultural trauma that social group, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only identify the existence and source of human suffering but take some significant responsibility for it. Members of collectivity define their solidarity relationships in ways that allow them to share the sufferings of others. To sum up, this theory suggests a framework for understanding disruptions that an "original" culture might suffer at the imposition of an "arriving" culture resulting in

vulnerabilities of individuals, families, communities and the larger societies (Alexander 1). bell hooks' expression tells how it affects a person, "[i]n the United States it is the mask which hides the loss of so many tongues, all those sounds of diverse native communities we will never hear, the speech of the Gullah, Yiddish, and so many other unremembered tongues" (72). This kind of trauma over the loss of the native culture is manifest in several postcolonial, subaltern, ethnic, black and diasporic literature created around the world.

Having historicized and conceptualized Trauma Theory, the terminology of the theory has been clearly discussed so far. The research will now proceed to the direction of application (in the following chapter) of the concept in the text, *Chhapamarko Chhoro*. The issues brought in the discourse will be instrumental in interpreting the stories better and in a more systematic and pedagogical manner.

## Acting-out and Working-through in *Chhapamarko Chhoro*

Mahesh Bikrum Shah's *Chhapamarko Chhoro*, (a collection of short stories) secures a distinct position in conflict literature of Nepal. Though seldom brought into the mainstream of critical discussion; this work meticulously documents in fictional form the physical, psychological, social, cultural, and economic situation of Nepal that fell into a decade long conflict. The stories in this book shed light on different contours of human feelings that are adversely affected by conflicts. The most adamant devastating impact that tends to overwhelm the victims and onlookers is the feeling of trauma. These traumatic feelings affect in multiple forms and angles and the effects are manifest in the most erratic manner.

Reading Shah's short stories brings the researcher closer to the reality of the Nepalese society as Geoffrey Hartman feels, "Trauma studies provide a more natural transition to a real world often falsely split off from that of the university as if the one were activist and engaged and the other self-absorbed and detached" (544). The stories weave events related to the lives of the people living in both rural and urban settings. As the country side is a fertile area for underground guerrilla activities where the eye of the state hardly reaches, majorities of the stories carry the palpitation of the country people though several events which culminate into the form of transformational movements are set in city areas as well.

Fiction is accused of being detached from the realities owing to its nature of imaginative characters, settings and the chain of events permeated by aestheticized expressions and rhetorical tropes. It faces a charge of carrying authorial dominance and lacking historical sequence. However, Shah's stories enable one to recount events and perhaps to evoke experience, typically through nonlinear movements that allow trauma to register in language and its hesitations, indirections, pauses and silences as

Champagne claims, "fictions are not lies. They are narrative recasting of events unrecognized by history" (3). It may help performatively to create openings in existence that did not exist before. Traditional history, as Michel Foucault postulates, is written by those in power and truth is established through the discourse which operates in power relations. It deviates from recording the intricate network of how power percolates but only prides in building what Lyotard calls "metanarratives"/ "grandnarratives" like freedom, democracy and sovereignty (289). It fails to observe and acknowledge the pain of the people relegated into marginal sphere and physical as well as psychological stress. State follows only macro stories created to serve its purpose as Max Weber defines state as "that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a certain territory," (qtd. in Edkins 5). If one does away with small narratives in Lyotard's terms, "petty narratives", which do not get a visible space in the big narrative of state or which lie dormant in the form of palimpsest, he/she is removed from tracing how truths are being created and ruptured (289). Gayatri Spivak articulates that the so-called grandnarratives eclipse the presence of the subaltern and silence their voices. Therefore, Foucault proposes genealogical reading of history which "requires patience and knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material" which he calls cyclopean monuments that "are constructed from discreet and apparently insignificant truths" (317). For him the study of genealogy must acknowledge that the "world of speech and desires has known invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys" (316). Fiction penetrates those otherwise least frequented territories and darker side of life left out or unheard small narratives and excavates the issues to justify what P.B. Shelley proclaims, "poets are the unrecognized legislators of the world" (529). Dominick La Capra also believes that

fiction, if it makes historical truth claims at all, do so in a more indirect but possibly informative, thought provoking, at times disconcerting manner with respect to the understanding or reading of events, experience and memory (132). It may well explore the traumatic events including fragmentation, emptiness or evacuation of experience, and may raise the question of other possible forms of experience. It may also explore in particularly telling and unsettling way the affective or emotional dimensions of experience and understanding. In this context, La Capra adds, “Vicarious experience, linked to process of identification, may lead to the extreme blurring and effacement of these distinctions insofar as one who was not there comes to believe (or moved) he or she was indeed there and presents fiction as if it were testimony or historical memoir” (132).

In Shah’s stories, the poor people who are deprived of development are easily persuaded to plunge into war irrespective of its short or long term consequences. War is such a furnace where everything burns whether good or bad. No one is victorious in war, both sides are eventually losers. Both state and opposition groups flex their muscles and try to establish their hegemony. State uses its apparatuses: both coercive and ideological, former being more readily available and easy to execute for immediate results. Political authorities are using their power over their citizens to abuse and torture them or to compel them to take part in abhorrent acts, acts which violate their sense of self-worth and which provoke intense shame, humiliation and anger. Opposing groups and rebels make all efforts to destabilize the system and create a situation where, as W.B. Yeats says:

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
 The best lack the conviction, while the worst  
 Are full of passionate intensity. (1196)

In such state of anarchy flourishes the rampant violence, looting, sexual abuse and other chaotic condition. The 'violence' recognized as such by the historian is the one generated from or oriented to grandnarratives. It is divorced from the routine violence in the daily lives of the people. Such violence, according to Gyanendra Pandey, and many small acts of counter-violence it provokes, goes unrecorded by the state and the media-except occasionally in sensational accounts of 'criminality', 'defiance' or 'madness'-and rarely forms a part of historians' history (191-192). State prides in being able to curb the rebellion and declare martyrdom of those who lost their lives which Edkins ironically presents:

in the aftermath of a war or catastrophe comes the reckoning. The dead and the missing are listed, families grieve and comfort each other, and memorials are erected. If it is war that has been won, commemoration endorses those in power, or so it seems at first glance. Victory parades, remembrance ceremonies and war museums tell of glory, courage and sacrifice. Private grief is overlaid by national mourning and blunted – or-eased by stories of service and duty... But returning combatants tell a different tale. Survivors are subdued and even silent. (1)

On the other hand, rebels are taught to sacrifice their lives and embrace death for the cause. Wars and conflicts bring both physical and psychological wounds, the former may be healed in a span of time but the latter remains uncured. Many witness the deaths of those around them. They cannot forget and some are haunted by nightmares

and flashbacks to scenes of unimaginable horror. In their dreams they relive battlefield experiences and awake again in the sweat. Bir Bahadur, a soldier in the story, “Yuddabiram Jindabad” (“Long Live Seizefire”) feels the same when he is guarding the post from possible rebel attacks with a strong conviction. The narrator brings to light the suffering he has undergone in his life of war and fighting by saying, “Because of unlimited trauma and physical hardship he underwent while taking care of the war front against the insurgents in the isolated hill of the country, he does not know whether or not the common people of the country also bear the heartache”<sup>2</sup>(24). It is his own agony, his own experience which nobody is going to empathize. His pain is like that of Tayo, protagonist in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel, *Ceremony*, who fights in the war in Japan, gets injured and sent back to his country where he has nothing but trauma. Bir Bahadur is subjected to that same plight. In the eye of the nation, he is a minor soldier whose loss will not be much grieved. But for him and for his family, he is the bread winner and the source of his children's future. He is frequently alarmed by the whistle, sound of his fellow comrades, the flowing stream nearby, falling leaves and envisages death approaching him. He has no hope to return to his house and to take care of his wife and children. There is irony in his name: Bir Bahadur, who is not brave for himself. His bravery is confiscated of him by devastation, killing and torture of his fellow soldiers. His robotic existence ridicules his self, his name and his profession of safeguarding his nation from insurgency. Bir Bahadur is alarmed by darkness or night and desperately waits for morning. Night never brings him peace, solace, rest and sleep but fright, anger, distress and restlessness. Every night, he dies to wake up to live next morning as:

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<sup>2</sup> Usle deshko anakantar taapuma bidrohiharuka biruddha yudhako morcha samhaldha bhogeko athaha manasik peeda ra shareerik kashtaka kaaran aamdeshbasiko mutu pani dukheko chhaki chhaina uslai thaha chhaina.



In the pitch dark night, the silhouettes of the hills look like the shadows of the ghost. ... While remembering the miseries of the widow wife and orphan children of the soldiers, who lost life in the incidents of Achham's Mangalsen and Jumla's Khalanga destroyed by the insurgents' attack, he feels like crying his heart out. Remembering the picture of the soldier's widow wrapped in the white robes and the widow's son staring blankly bearing the terror on the face published in The Kantipur daily, he, too, is petrified of the doubt whether his wife and son would have to face the same fate<sup>3</sup>. (27)

Hallucination and flashbacks are what Cathy Caruth considers the symptoms of traumatic stress. Bir Bahadur is startled to memorize those incidents and empathizes with the dead soldiers, their widows and orphaned children. The wars he has fought in the past bring to his mind some dismal images and blur his present consciousness. He is lost in reminiscences which question his existence. Edkins attaches one's existence with the social one with her remarks:

our existence relies not only on our personal survival as individual beings but also, in a profound sense, on the continuance of social order that gives our existence meaning and dignity: family, friends, political community and beliefs. If that order betrays us in some way, we may survive in the sense of continuing to live as physical beings, but the meaning of our existence is changed. (4)

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<sup>3</sup> Raatko chuk ghopte jhai andhyaroma tee pahadharu bhootko chhanyan jhain drishtigochar hunchhan. ... Kehi mahina agaadimaatra bidrohiko aakramanle dhwesta bhayeka achhamko mangalsen ra jumla ko khalangako ghatanama jyan gumayeka sipahika bidhawa swasni ra tuhura chhora chhoriharuko alaap bilaap samjhada uslai daanko chhodi runa mana laagchha. 'Kantipur'dainik patrikama chhapiyeko seto vastra ma lutputiyeko sipahiki bidhuwa ra anuharma tras umarera shoonyama tolai raheko bidhawako chhoro ko tasbir samjhidaai oo kahin aafna swasni ra chhorako pani yehi habigata hune ta hoina vane aashankale trasit huna thalchha.

Memories instigate him to act-out the trauma which he relives with those past images of destruction. The feelings of trauma persist for indefinite period of time as soon as the events are reminded. Tayo in Silko's *Ceremony* could be physically healed but no doctor in white American society could heal him nor could the Native American hospital do. He could only work-through the traumatic experiences when he was brought to the cultural ceremony which could provide him with assimilable conditions. Bir Bahadur's urge of being united with the family and society is an outpouring of a traumatized soldier.

Shah's another story, "Mission in Nepal", portrays a soldier who served in United Nation's mission of peace keeping in Mozambique, an African country tormented by war and civilian conflicts which derailed the whole system of governance, society, economy and whatever could constitute a sovereign nation. Those images of war, bloodshed, rape, chaos, anarchy haunt the narrator day and night. In his dream, he meets his Mozambiquan friend, Lino who is deputed in peace keeping mission in Nepal the way the narrator was in Mozambique. Caught in between a happiness of meeting his friend after ten years and embarrassment of being a citizen of a war-torn nation where ironically his friend comes to rescue the people and to keep peace, the speaker takes him to a restaurant in Kathmandu and talks about the bygone days in Mozambique. He feels extremely saddened to be fated to welcome a UN Peace Mission which is a mockery on his own service in Mozambique. He sees a large convoy of peace keepers running in the streets of Kathmandu, scarcity of ration, fuel, groceries, skyrocketed price of everything in the market, dismantled buildings, extreme poverty, a very dismal picture of a country, a failed state. He looks into the eyes of his friend who expresses the same desolated, distressed images of devastated Mozambique. When Lino informs him that he is going to 'Kolpa' which the

narrator corrects as 'Rolpa' saying, "Don't forget to look at my house in ruins over there. Perhaps the wild weeds have sprouted in that place"<sup>4</sup> (59). He is traumatized by the desire of the lost home, the home which symbolized his unity, and integrity and the warmth. That lost object still haunts him in dream. When home is gone, one feels displaced and is bound to live the life of refugee. One's past and present are disconnected and he or she feels insecure and always vulnerable the way Salman Rushdie in his book, *Imaginary Homelands*, sees the broken images of the land he was born and brought up in. He creates imaginary home in his mind since the real home is lost forever. The narrator's home is also lost and he is caught in anxiety. Therefore, he requests his friend to see that home as an alter ego. All of a sudden, he sees a nightmare of destructive explosion of bomb which he expresses this way:

Right at that moment, there was a big explosion at the restaurant we were staying. Our bodies were hurled into the air like the football. I shouted loudly- "Lino ...." But I could not hear Lino's voice. I had woken up from a dream. My body was completely wet with sweat. The heart beat was abnormal. How horrible was the dream I saw!<sup>5</sup> (59)

Nightmare, sudden awakening and startle in this story indicate traumatic awakening, the way a father wakes up from this dream in which his dead son clasps his arm and says, "Father, don't you see, I am burning" (Freud 353). This reference synchronizes with the dream of the soldier. In both dreams, there is a latency of terror in the mind caused by events around him. According to Cathy Caruth, "it is an imperative to

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<sup>4</sup> Teha timile pani mero khandahar baneko gharlai herna nabhulnu. Sambhawatah ahile tes thaunma jangali jharharu umreka holan.

<sup>5</sup> Thik tehi bela haami baseko restaurantma thoolo bisfot bhayo. Haamraa shareerharu bhakundojhain haawaama ufre. Ma jodle chichyayen – "Lino...". Tara Linoko aawaaj sunna sakina maile. Ma sapanabaata biunjheko thiyen. Mero shareer pasinale nithrukka bhijeko thiyo. Mutuko gati asaamaanya thiyo. Kati beevatsa thiyo maile dekheko sapan.

awaken that turns between a traumatic repetition and the ethical burden of survival” (221). The narrator wants to dream, the dream of peaceful country, beautiful country, the nation full of natural vibrancy and cultural harmony. But this is broken by sudden nightmares.

In the story, "Chhapamarko Chhoroi" ("Son of the Insurgent"), Shah brings on stage two characters: son of a rebel and son of a soldier, the witnesses are soldier himself and rebel's wife. Both children bring with them the image of animosity, anger and revenge. The captive wife of the rebel watches her son display his war skills which he learnt from his father. His face and activities remind the army official of the terror. The latter interprets it as an open challenge to his ego. Therefore, he says:

Sticking my head out of the window, I look at the insurgent's son. My eyes are teeming with cruelty now- cruelty formed by trauma his insurgent father had inflicted on me. Thinking that if his father found me disarmed, he would not waver even slightly from preying on me the way a wolf chases, catches, bites, and finally preys on a deer after playing with it, I start casting my piercing gazes at him. ... We both were scared of the insurgent's son<sup>6</sup>. (51)

This is a subtle example of acting – out of trauma. The presence of the rebel's son brings the police officer the images of violence that the insurgents inflicted on the soldiers. He relives the event which he has either experienced or heard or seen. Anger and vengeance are natural symptoms when the traumatic events are located or

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<sup>6</sup> Ma jhyal bahira munto nikalera chhapamarko chhorolai herchhu. Mera aankhanma ahile krurata jhalkiraheko chha usko chhapamar baabule diyeko maanasik peedabaata sirjit krurata. Uskobal shareerma ma aafna dristiharu ropna thaalchhu yo sochdai ki yesko baabhule malai nihaththa fela paryo bhane bwonsole mreegalai kheddai, chhopdai, tokdai, luchhdai, antyama khelai khelai marera aafno shikar banaye jastai banauna rattivar aafno mana dagamaga paarne chhaina. ... haami dubai chhapamarko chhorobaata trasit chhoun.

identified. He sees the face of enemy in the innocent child's eyes and the activities and behavior of enemy in the child's behavior. The security officer does not recognize the child's father, nor does he know his behavior. Traumatic experience is not logically regulated nor is it consciously argued and analyzed. It just erupts and shocks irrespective of time and space. Cruelty conceived in the mind of the officer is tantamount to the cruelty he accuses the child's father of harboring. According to Dominick La Capra, when one acts-out the trauma, it is like experiencing the same event of violence; it is a reminder of the suffering of whatever kind. This feeling is further intensified when the child giggles at him. The narrator, security officer, feels numbness and terrified. This is reflected in the following lines: "He giggled. I felt there was horror hidden in his laugh now. Goosebumps sprang all over my body in no time. I felt my body growing cold"<sup>7</sup>(52). Traumatized symptoms occur in mind and their effects are manifest in body as well. His body starts reacting to the terror and he feels numbness in his mind and body.

An insurgent is assigned to digging ditches to bury the corpses ferried from the site of war in the story, "Auta Arko Khaldo"("One More Pit"). Hundreds of others are given jobs to carry the dead bodies up to the ditches. He has to dig as fast and large as possible because he has to bury hundreds of corpses there before dawn so that they can run away to their shelter by the time vision is clear and the enemies will not be able to spot the burial to count the casualties. He has been digging hundreds of trenches and has buried thousands of warriors. Some are buried before they are pronounced dead since keeping the fatally wounded in the camps, and nursing them day and night would be a nuisance, time consuming and expensive. As long as

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<sup>7</sup> Oo khitkhithansyo. Maile anubhava garen, ahile usko haansoma bivitsataa lukekothiyo. Mero shareerma hararra kaandahar uumriye. Shareer chisobhayeko aavaasvay omalai.

warriors are able to fight, let them fight; once they are not able to fight and fire any more, they are good for nothing. Burying them is the easy solution. On top of it, they are cautious that the casualties on the part of the insurgents should not be known to the state armies, which would otherwise encourage them or boost the morale of the enemies. Now he starts lamenting over the loss of his comrades; some of them were known to him while many were unfamiliar faces. He remembers that he had buried his father also whose decaying body was lying at the bank of a stream. He is traumatized to remember a lady whom he knew for quite some time and developed an affair. Now she is also buried in the trench he has dug. He is overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, agony, pain and futility of life. It seems to him; to be born is to go to war, to be killed and to be buried just in futility. This feeling drives him mad, bewildered and blind. The omniscient narrator reports:

A cold wave of pain rises in his heart while digging the pit every time. And, he goes mad for a little while at least thinking of the images of human beings being buried in the new pits. "Perhaps I will also die like this one day and any one of my comrades will bury my body in the pit like this. And, along with my dreamy eyes, the dreams I have seen will be covered with clay with me." The realization of his own death made him further emotional.<sup>8</sup> (70)

The more trenches he digs, the more he suffers from melancholic thoughts. He sees his face upon the faces of the inmates of the grave. He is lost among the dead bodies within himself. The meaninglessness of life overpowers him. This traumatic

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<sup>8</sup> Harek patak khadal khanda usko hridayama peedako ek arko chiso lahar uthne garchha. Ra, nayan khaadama puridai gairaheko maanab aakritiharuko kalpana garera u nimesh vayepani bahulaune garchha. 'Sahedma pani yesai gari marnechhu ek din ra mero shareerlai pani mero kunai saathile yesaigari ek din khaadama purnechha. Ra masangai maile dekheka sapanaharupani mera swopnil aankhansangai khadalko maatole chhopenchhan'. Aafno mreetyuko aavashleuslai jhan vabuk banayo.

experience emerges from historical sense of 'loss' and deepening into a structural sense of 'absence' leading to existential shock which cannot be easily overcome. In such state of trauma, one falls victim of depression, self-destructive behavior, anxiety, low-self esteem and difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions.

Traumatic experiences occur not only to victims, though this is most common, but also to perpetrators when they are overpowered by a mixture of their own guilt and vicarious effect from the trauma of the victims. For Edkins, events of the sort we call traumatic are overwhelming but they are also a revelation (5). The concept of trauma oscillates between victimhood and protest. Violence has double edges: it hurts others as well as oneself. Same is the effect of a slayer in a story, "Badhshalama Buddha" ("Buddha in the Slaughterhouse"). His job was to slay captives everyday. He had slain thousands of human beings with finest skill and art. He was, therefore, very popular for the owner of the slaughterhouse, other slayers used to envy him for being closer and dearer to the owner on the one hand and for being a skilled and artful slayer on the other. He used to decide the type of torture to the captive based on the charges levied against him/her. He was known to do justice to the convicts within the parameters of their own law. Now, he is himself captivated for the charge that he was running away by quitting the job. He is also waiting for the same fate his victims used to do before him shuddering and begging for life. His earlier profession took a turn when he was moved by a boy who waiting for slaughter from the slayer was least affected by its cruelties. By the time, he was to be chopped into two pieces, he claimed, "You can kill me, but can't defeat, Badhik"<sup>9</sup>(2). This expressions most traumatized the slayer who felt helpless, and who suffered from a pain of guilt, cowardice and shame which the narrator reports this way:

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<sup>9</sup> Timile malai maarna sakchhau, taraparaajit garna sakdainau badhik.

Seeing the glint of his eyes, he, along with his blood-spattered sword, had trembled for the first time. Not the extreme hatred towards Badhik but the infinite compassion was teeming in his eyes. Seeing the infinite compassion rising in his eyes, the cruel hunter inside him had shaken from the very root.<sup>10</sup>(2)

The trembling cruel slayer is defeated by the gravity of human heart and love and non-violence. He trembles in remorse and in shame the way Edkins calls "shame is overpowering in the case of trauma: shame for being helpless in front of the perpetrators or shame for rendering other helpless " (45). To produce what are seen as symptoms of trauma, an event has to be more than just a situation of utter powerlessness. It has to entail something what Edkins defines as "betrayal of trust". That betrayal of trust is present in the mind of the slayer and those victims in the slaughterhouse. Saadat Hasan Manto's story, "Cold Meat" presents Ishar Singh, the protagonist with similar state of mind. He comes to the hotel with mysterious unusual look on his face in the midnight where his beloved Kulwant Kaur is waiting for him. Inquired insistently by Kaur where he had been to those days, Isher Singh turns pale, gets startled and starts quivering. The sexually aroused Kaur is enraged when Singh is helpless which drives her mad. When she bruises him with the kirpan and forces him to say what happened and whom he slept with, Singh says:

"I ... I threw the trump, but..." His voice sank.

Kulwant Kaur shook him violently, "What happened?"

Isher Singh strained to open his eyes and gazed at Kulwant Kaur

Shaking with rage.

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<sup>10</sup> Uska aankhako tej dekhera oo pahilo patak aafno raktaranjit talawarsangai lagalaga kanpekothiyoo. Uska aankhama badhikprati chram ghreena hoina, apaar dayako vaab urliraheko thiyoo. Uskaa ankhamaa jaagrit dayako vaab dekhera oovitrako nirdaya bjadha pani jaraidekhi halliraheko thiyoo.



"She...she was dead... a corpse...a lump of cold flesh. Jaani, give me your hand."

Kulwant Kaur placed her hand on his. It was colder than ice. (211)

The traumatic situation Isher Singh has fallen into is because of extreme guilt and shame for torturing others, killing them, looting other's properties and raping a corpse. This trauma pushed him to utter numbness and finally death. The slayer's state of mind is numb and he suffers more than the one whom he slayed. This is best expressed in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* "once more is his weak reason so benumbed, so paralysed, and so dull" (34).

Shah's another story, "Sipahi ra Salik" ("Police and Statue"), portrays a picture of traumatized police who is guarding a statue at the middle of the road which is totally vacant due to curfew that turns the whole city blank and lifeless like graveyard. When people who come out to the street for a short time, they are forced to evacuate the street immediately and curfew is clamped. He is worried and shocked due to silence, vacuum, desertion, lifelessness on street and city on the one hand and due to his shooting of so many innocent civilians, wounding many of them, torturing them, killing them while he is guarding a lifeless statue at the cost of the thousands of people. The narrator sees his unstable self loathing condition as:

He lost his interest in his work without any reason. He, who became a soldier to serve the citizens, has been guarding the emotionless and lifeless statue by imprisoning those very citizens in the house. His mind went topsy turvy. Helplessly, he brooded over nothing. ... No matter how hard he would try to console his mind, he was growing weary because of the stillness and eerie silence around. The desolate road slumbering like an anaconda in the noon, the human adobes

turned prison houses, and nothingness and hollowness resembling the  
cremation shore had rendered his mind restless.<sup>11</sup> (120)

This is an experience of internal terror generated by void and pickled with shame and  
guilt. Coleridge in his "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" shows the condition of the  
Mariner after he kills an albatross which brought good omen. He is caught by remorse  
and the situation becomes dismal and desolate as the poem goes below:

Down dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be;  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the seal  
.....  
Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.  
Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink. (815)

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<sup>11</sup> Uslai kinakina aafno kaamprati bitrishna jaagna thalyo. Nagarikharuko sewaka laagi sipahi  
vayeko oo tinai nagarikharulai gharavitra thunera sambedanahina ra jadbat salikko rakhwari  
gariraheko chha. Usko man vitra uthalputhal vairahyo. Oo kimkartabyabimudha banera  
shunyama tolairahyo. ... Tara manalai jati samjhauna khojepani waripariko chakmannata ra  
kahalilaagdo nishshabdatale uslai uraath laagiraheko thiyo. Diunsai ajingarjhai lampasar  
parekosunsaan sadak, jhyalkhanama parinata vayeka maanab aawaasgrihaharu ra  
shmashaanjhain pratit hune saapekshik shoonyata ra riktataale usko manalai bechaina  
tulyairaheko thiyo.

Geoffrey Hartman comments on the condition the mariner undergoes as "The dread watchtower of man's absolute self", same is the condition of the policeman watching the lifeless city (542). It is a remarkable externalization of an internal state. The police man is self-defeated, creating a self through accusation. His gratuitous act leads him not to being but to nothingness and to utter solitude. He could kill the people in a spur of second, but he cannot because he is sick and inner commotion is shaking like in an instance Zarathustra says to a boy, "If I wished to shake this tree with my hands, I should not be able to do. But the wind, which we see not, troubleth and bendeth it as it listeneth. We are sorest bent and troubled by invisible hands" (Nietzsche 39). The police man is also troubled by the invisible feelings: feeling about his own guilt and blindness and the silent power of the people. Trauma in the mind of the police man is this invisible "hands".

"Eventually, he broke into tears clasping his son's head smeared with mud, dust and raw blood. He cried his heart out, he cried frightening the wild animals. Bending down towards the earth, he kept mourning for a long time kissing the dead son's face in the desolate corner of the forest"<sup>12</sup> (18). This is a scene from Shah's one of the stories titled, "Babuko Kandhma Chhoroko Sutiraheko Desh" ("The Country where Son is Sleeping on Father's Shoulder"). A father is mourning over the death of his son who was mysteriously killed with his head cut off the body and thrown nearby. His son was neither a rebel nor a security personnel, he was an ordinary boy unaware of the war. May be, he was suspected of being the enemy of one of the warring forces and finished. This condition drives father mad, he does not know what he is doing; he is yelling and pleading for help to identify the culprit. Nobody gives

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<sup>12</sup> Antatah:hilo, dhulo ra aalo ragatle latpatiyeko chhorako tauko chhatima chyapera oo vakkano chhadera royo. Oo chaupattai royo, jangali janabarharulai sameta aatankit paarnegari royo. Jangalko eklaas thaunma aafno chhorako mreeta anuhaarlai chumdai dheraibersamma jaminma ghopto parera bilaap garirahyo.

any attention to his agony. His agony is cosmic pain as shown in a Hindu myth where Lord Shiva carries the decaying corpse of his beloved wife, Satidevi and wanders aimlessly. Psychoanalyst, Carl Gustav Jung calls myth the most articulate expression of long preserved unconsciousness collected from ancestry which he terms, collective unconscious. The plight of the father is the plight of the traumatized human being who behaves idiosyncratically by losing connection with the real conscious existence. He speaks in hallucinations to his dead son as if he were alive by muttering, "These stars are your future but mine is only you, my son"<sup>13</sup> (19). His presence is a dread for others. His behavior frightens others. When he advances to security people for a hope that they help him whatever way possible, he is disdained and given no permission to advance. "Carrying the son's head on his shoulder, he wobbled up to the road. Green flies were circling around the head. ... They had seen a man carrying the dead man with the flies circling around for the first time. May be this man was a lunatic"<sup>14</sup>(20-21). He is not a mad man, he is a traumatized man. His trauma is engendered by what La Capra calls 'loss', the loss of his son, of his dream, of his happiness and of his family. His trauma multiplies trauma to others who see him wandering like an insane man, because they act-out their own experiences when they see the brutally beheaded boy. Thus trauma of a person may ripple around and affect others as well. This story echoes the spirit of Anton Chekhov's famous story, "Grief" in which a father laments over the death of his beloved son. He wants to share his grief with whoever he meets on the way but all turn deaf ears to his agony. Distressed, he finally goes to a stable

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<sup>13</sup> Ti taaraaharu timro vabishya huntara mero vabishya vane timi nai hau mera chhora.

<sup>14</sup> Oo chhorako taukolai kandhma raakhera larkharaudai sadakma niskyo. Taukoma hariya jhingaharu vankirahe kathiye.... Yesari jhinga vankiraheko mareko maanchheko tauko kaandhma bokeko dekhera hidiraheko maanchhe vane thiniharu pahilo patak dekhiraheka thiye. Sayad yo maanchhe paagal ho.

and shares his grief with a horse who silently listens to him proving to the traumatized father that the horse is more humane than human beings.

The conflict has affected people so much that they are scared of looking out after the sun sets. If someone knocks the door of his/her relative's house, it frightens the inmates. They have seen, undergone and heard the daily stories that fighters from both sides (rebel and state) come at night, molest them, extort money, force them to stay overnight or feed them, kidnap them in case both warring groups encounter, then the house is a battlefield. If one of the groups detects the presence of the enemy in that house, then the inmates would be charged of sheltering the enemies or spying. Under this reign of terror are living Nanda, her husband and their daughter, Ninu in the story, "Banda Dhoka ra Samaya" ("Closed Doors and Time"). All of a sudden, some strange sound is coming: the sound of pounding boots, whispers, a bang of a heavy load on the floor etc. Nanda and her husband peep out through a small hole and notice a group of people have gheraoed their house. Both of them tremble with fear and bewilderment. In a moment, Nanda wraps up few cones of corns in a cloth, bundles them up and hides it so that the gunmen "banduke" will not get anything to eat because she hopes to manage with this stuff for a couple of months. She is instantly reminded of a woman, Rupsara who has been living miserable life after her husband was kidnapped from home and thrown dead. This sight further makes her restless. She fears her daughter-in-law would face the same fate had her son not gone to India long ago. Yet her fear has not abated:

Roopsara's face danced into his eyes. Roopsara, clad in red blouse and sari, dancing and singing at Teej, and Roopsara, wrapped in the white sari, sobbing her heart out. Both Roopsara were the same but the times she lived were different. With her own eyes, she had seen a group of

gunmen carrying her husband away grabbing him on his hands and feet by force one day, and the flies circling over her husband's corpse lying on the terrace of the paddy field on the third day.<sup>15</sup> (75)

That traumatizes her so much that she wants to hide her husband as well as her daughter since she had heard of her neighbor's daughter raped by some gunmen. Startled to hear the voice of her daughter, she panics as where to hide her. She curses the youthfulness of her daughter also. Her daughter, Ninu obediently enters into a bamboo drum ("bhakari") where they store grains. But she is too big to be accommodated inside the narrow and short space. "She had already lost her head in her attempt to protect herself from the hands of the hunters"(6)<sup>16</sup>. The whole house is rocked with terror and everyone is out of consciousness and out of mind, he/she is full of indefiniteness about his/her lives, womanhood and sanctity.

Similarly in another story, "Gaonma Geetharu Gunjidainan" ("Songs do not Echo in the Village"), the narrator wants to meet his parents at his home in the country side. He goes as if stranger to his village which looks to him like a long abandoned and accursed place where there is no song, no beauty nor cultural vibrancy. Everyone is frightened with everyone. There is no trust with anyone. All youth have deserted the village; some have gone to guerrilla war some others have fled to India in search of their better future. The narrator is stranger to his own village where he was born and brought up. All doors are closed, no human voice is heard.

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<sup>15</sup> Usko aankhama Roopsarako anuhaar nachyo. Raato cholera dhoti lagaayera teejma geetgaudai-nachdai gareki Roopsara ra seto dhotima beriyera daanko chhadera roiraheki Roopsara. Tee dubai Roopsaraharu eutai thiye tara usle vogeko samaya vinna thiyo. Ek raat bandukeharuko samuhale lognelaai gharabaata jabarjasti nikalera haatkhatta samaudai jhyaikutti paarera lageko ra teshro din khetko kaanlam aaafno logneko laasmathi jhinga vankiraheko aafnai aankhale dekhkeki thiee usle.

<sup>16</sup> Vyadhharuko haatbaata baachne prayasma oo pahile nai ardhabeos hvaisakeki thiee.

Only few old folks, women and children are living in terror, uncertainty and agony. His parents cannot keep him at home even for a night for fear any gun man might spot him there and take him away either to kill or to be killed. The whole village is traumatized, void and lifeless. People talk in whisper inside home. Any sound they hear will be but the sound of firing and of explosion to remind John Keats' lines:

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
 And leaden-eyed despairs,  
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
 Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow. (935)

She urges him to go away soon saying, "Sano Babu, did you hear the sound of the gun? Alas, the guns have begun to be fired in the village. Probably the gunmen have entered this village once again. My son, run away before these guns arrive to our house"<sup>17</sup> (16). Whether she hears the sounds of gun shots or not, this is what she is habitual with, not with the sounds of the birds nor of youthful songs. To love is to be separated from each other not to be together. This is the irony of life and humiliation of existence. Humiliation triggers trauma and pushes one to the state of anxiety.

The story, "Mero Kukur Ajhai Bhukiraheko Thiyo" ("My Dog was Still Barking") presents a boy whose father is missing and who is living a troubled childhood sans care, food, security and future. All of a sudden, after lulling her son to sleep, his mother leaves the house in the middle of the night. Every day she used to collect little food to feed her son and to keep her alive. But this night she is not there. Awakened and to his dismay, the little boy looks around for her but she is not spotted. Frightened boy thinks:

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<sup>17</sup> Saanobaabu, timile bandukko aawaaj sunyou? Hare, gaonmaa bandukharu padkina thaalekaa chhan. Samvabtah bandukeharu feri chhire yesh gaonma. Tee bandukharu padkadai haamro gharama aaipugdaa samman timi vaagihaala merobaabu.

My mother, who had slept embracing me, had disappeared all of a sudden. Whether the ghost took my mother away the way it did my father. A tempest of doubts and suspicions whirled in my mind. But I had not seen the ghost dragging my mother away. If not the ghost, who took my mother away? Where did she go leaving me alone in the bed?<sup>18</sup>(80)

The boy's hallucinatory expressions are the outpourings of trauma. For him, when someone is missing in the night, it is because of the ghosts. The deadly dreamy image of the ghosts is so deeply seated in his mind that he thinks they have taken his beloved mother. He yells, screams, runs around, goes up and down with a hope that he might find his mother. He hopes to see her back home with some food but his efforts and wishes bring no result. Traumatized and haunted by so-called ghosts, he is running from one place to another in search of his mother. "Suddenly, I felt somebody was trailing me. I remembered the ghosts who had dragged my father away. I started running shrieking with fear. The village dogs also started barking and running"<sup>19</sup> (82). Even dogs are feeling strange to see this boy's unusual behavior. He used to be so scared of darkness, but now his fear has shifted from darkness to ghosts the feeling of which is driving him crazy, numb and helpless. Ghosts signify some invisible terror, the source of which is unknown. This haunts every time perpetually and overpower

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<sup>18</sup> Raati malai angaalo haalera suteki mere aamaa maile thahai napaai achaanak haraayeki thiyin. Katai meraa baalai jhain vootle meri aamaalai ta lagena. Mero manmaa shankaa – upashankaako aadhibeheri chalyo. Tara maile vootle aamaalai ghisaardai lageko dekheko thiyina. Vootle nalageko vaye kasle othaayo meri aamaalai? Kahaa gain uni malaai eklai ochhyanma chhadera?

<sup>19</sup> Achaanak malaai laagyoki mero pachhipachhi malai pachhyaudai hidiraheko chha. Maile baalai ghisaardai lagne vootharu samjhen. Ma darale chichyaudai daudan thanle. Gaonka kukur haru pani vukdai daudan thale.



the will of man to live. Man then surrenders to those dreary dreamy images and remains as if insane.

Shah has used Swiftian satire in his stories, "Pashuavatar" ("Avatar of Animals"), "Human Farming" and "Ekadeshma" ("Once upon a Time"). Jonathan Swift, in his well known essay, "The Modest Proposal", presents a grotesque picture of exploitation and torture by British absentee landlords upon Irish civilians by offering them Irish infants as food. He implies the British have nothing left to exploit but to devour human flesh in the form of different delicacies. Similarly, Shah uses this tool to present a picture of animals which laugh at human beings and declare their reign in the land and chant slogans against humans. Human settlement is surrounded with animals which are mocking at them. So-called human beings in the settlement are helpless to see "Four giant men were raping a minor girl. One person was pulling the hair of the girl. Another was biting the breast of the girl with his teeth. His claws were disfiguring the face of the girl"<sup>20</sup> (63). This scene is extracted from the story "Pashuavatar" where human beings are being converted into animals while animals have maintained their conventional ethics. In "Human Farming", human beings of different variety are being produced and shipped to different foreign markets. The greatest demand is of those who are robotic, conflict-ridden and those who do not think but do what is ordered to them. There are different blocks where different categories of men and women are stored to be supplied. The narrator keeps record of some of the blocks and hears the manager say, "In this block, only the persons, who have lost their memory power because of extreme stress triggered by the armed conflict, are left. They are physically robust but mentally like the innocent

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<sup>20</sup> Euti naabaalig yubatilaai chharjanaa vustighreharule balaatkaar garirahethiye. Ekjanaa yubatiko kapaallai aafnaa haatle luchhiraheko thiyo. Arko aafnaa daantaharule yubatikaa stana tokirahekothiyo. Aafnaa haatko nangraale yubatiko anuhaar kshata bikshata paariraheko thiyo.

children"<sup>21</sup>(96).He visits another block where he finds another set of people. "There was no passion for life on the face of those women. Though they looked physically normal, they were not mentally sound"<sup>22</sup> (97).These are the examples of traumatized people due to conflict and its byproducts. The manager of the farm is happy to receive more demands of those 'physically-fit and 'mentally-retarded' human machines. Human beings are no more human beings since they lost every property of human existence. They live without reason, without love and without hope.In the story, "Ekadeshma", there is disgusting site of a village where a corpse is rotting in a house with a window open and whole surrounding is polluted, people are suffocating and many of them fall sick and start dying. Nobody is ready to take any initiative to bury or take that decaying corpse away from human settlement. They are all scared of it and dare not go near, watch it by stuffing their noses due to the unbearable smell. The living human body is deader than the dead body itself. They rather start migrating from that village but cannot move that corpse away because they corpse is what they are extremely scared with. Corpse is a symbol of violence, symbol of chaos and hell. Shah has used several figurative devices like symbol, irony, satire with an aim to best represent the situation. Hartman associates such tropes with trauma thus, "trauma theory throws a light on figurative or poetic language, and perhaps symbolic process in general, as something other than an enhanced imaging or vicarious repetition of a prior (non) experience" (540).

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<sup>21</sup> Yesh blockma sashastra dwandako kaaran atyadhik tannable aafno smarana shakti gumaayekaa byaktiharu maatra rahekaa chhan. Yiniharu shaarireek rupmaa hattaakattaa chhan tara maanasik rupkaa abodh baalaka jhaichhan.

<sup>22</sup> Tee aaimaaiharuko anuhaarmaa kunai jijeebishaa thiyana. Shaareerik rupma saamaanya dekhiye pani maanasik rupma swasthya thiyenan tiniharu.

Shah has presented the stories with the essence of trauma in their hearts but in different ways and the effects of shock engendered from different sources of violence. One of the most moving stories of trauma is "Kidi Jiyale Karnalima Faal Halin" ("Kidi Jiya Jumped into Karnali"). An elderly poor woman has been displaced from her village, Jakot and has been living the life of a refugee in the District Headquarters of Humla, Simikot. She is forced to leave her dear home, cattle and village because of conflict. She does not have anyone to look after her, her son has gone away in search of his livelihood and has not turned up then. She is a refugee in her own country living in utter depravity, desperation and dread. The meaning of life seems to disappear with loss of home, culture, family and status. This can lead to a sense of confusion and purposelessness, in which inner resources become dislocated or seem lost. Traumatic experiences, as a consequence of war or conflict profoundly compound these feelings. Her babble in her unconscious is all about her lost belongings, village, house, nature, land etc; she is trembling all the time, emaciating, pining away, always sobbing, reluctant to speak, and insomniac. "There was a thick scar made of tears from the eyes to the chin. Kidi Jia was getting weaker from inside out of the grief of being driven away from her own village, where she was born, grew up and enjoyed the family life. She had already been mentally deranged"<sup>23</sup> (107). Her condition is best expressed by an Afghan Refugee poet Shahibi Shah thus:

A bridge had collapsed

Behind me

All washed out

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<sup>23</sup> Aankhadekhi chiudosamma aansuko gaadhaa khaatabaseko thiyo. Aafu janmeko, hurkeko, grihasthee jeebanma ramaairaheko aafno gaonthaonbaata besahaara vayera lakhetinupareko shokle Kidi Jiya vitraidekhi galiraheki thieen. Unee maanashik rupmai bikshiapta vaisakeki thieen.

No way to cross over  
 Cut off from the people who  
 Matter to me  
 Here are bits of me that can not fit in a new pattern  
 I hold onto the memory  
 It links me to the other side  
 Of the river  
 I hold on right to it  
 Like a child who treasures  
 Her doll. (qtd. in Alcock 292)

When we are displaced into a new physical and cultural environment, the bewilderment and profound sense of dislocation can manifest itself in physical disease. This has become the case of Kidi Jiya, protagonist of the story, who is suffering from home sickness. Alcock defines homesickness as " a reaction to the loss of things you loved or took for granted in your old environment, but also to be the strangeness of what you encountered in the new, the changed manner of living climate, the food and other various troublesome accidents " (294). Her return home has been traumatic, her illusions shattered by the reality of her experience. Frustrated with the life and miserable existence, Kidi Jiya disappears from the headquarters to meet the guerrillas and plead them for her return. *KidiJia*, "who came to ask for the justice with the insurgents, fainted when she learnt that she was under the surveillance as a suspect"<sup>24</sup> (115). Much of the impingement which people experience not only pierces the mind, it has also been a violation of the body, which has its own memory.

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<sup>24</sup> Bidrohisanga nyaya maagnaayeki peedit Kidi Jiya aafaishankit aparaadhiko aashankaamaa nigaraanimaa pareko thaahaa paayepachhi murchha parin.

This old woman is physically and mentally worn, socially isolated, culturally stripped off and economically deprived. She has no other hope to live with. As her trauma intensifies, she loses herself, sees futility of her existence and wants to end her life.

The narrator notices such unnatural features in her behavior and says:

I felt that Kidi Zia was sinking into the deep grief. Her eyes were brooding over nothing. She was not being able to be satisfied despite her stomach being filled with rice. May be the village and the house, which were destroyed within a moment, were glimmering in her imagination. She had not found any meaning of living her life<sup>25</sup>. (115)

Then she commits suicide by jumping into the Karnali river. A traumatized person puts full stop to her life. Alexander sees the response of historical trauma in a constellation of features like depression, self-destructive behavior, suicidal thoughts and gestures, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger and difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions (1).

All this analysis centered on how trauma is acted-out in Shah's stories. This answers the researcher's two of the queries put up in the first chapter:

why is he (the writer of the short stories) motivated to ignore the slogans and ideology provided by the warring forces? and why does he not show the literal bombardment or physical devastation in his stories but concentrates more on the psychological effects on the characters?  
(Contextualizing 8-9)

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<sup>25</sup> Kidi Jiya gahiro bishaadmaa dubiraheki chhan jasto laagiraheko thiyo malaai. Unkaa aankhaa shunyamaa tolaairaheshaa thiye. Vaatle pet variye pani uni santusta huna sakiraheki thieenan. Saaya daunko kalpanaamaa gaonghara ra bamle dhwesta paariyeko ghara prakata vairaheshaa thiyo. Muglaan vaahiyeko chhorako ninyauro chhabi udaairaheshaa thiyo. Uni aafno jeeban jiunuko kunai saarthakataa vettairaheshaa thieenan.

Because the ideologies tend to cover the pain of the victims, the pain which is never healed by the rhetoric enshrined in the ideologies. These pains/sufferings/terror s generate trauma which are activated and reactivated throughout the victim's life.

Traumatic symptoms are severer bombardment in psychic functions of human being (as shown in the analysis above) than literal bombardments or physical devastation.

External damage causes greater damage in human consciousness.

Yet one more question remains to be thoroughly answered: "why does Shah imply only violence, anxiety and suffering of the people in his stories while there could be many other positive things the war was expected to bring for the welfare of the people and society facing poverty and inequality" (9)? The answer to this problematic is partially answered in the above discussions which consolidate a finding that the violence, suffering, dread and death are the more prominent and more telling outcomes than any constructive development the war has brought. Still one more mystery lurks behind Shah's narrating such events; it is a process of working-through the trauma. By encountering a traumatic incident in the form of a story, the victim acknowledges the events and tries to suture the wound. This is also a possible means of recovery from traumatic upheavals. Dominick La Capra sees the chances of working-through the traumatic experiences which originate from historical cause. Literature or fiction for that matter activates the acting-out of the trauma in order to work-through this. Tim Woods in his essay, "Mending the Skin of Memory" brings a remarkable reference about the narrative of Holocaust survivor Delbo to claim that the accounts of her (Delbo's) experiences in Auschwitz are her attempt to mend the skin of memory. He says, "Constructing history, the activity of remembrance, the repetitive emergence of an uncontrollable 'other' and narrative form, forge a matrix of therapeutic practice" (339). Similarly, Meenakshi Verma considers remembering

trauma a personally empowering strategy. The inscription of trauma narratives may be a necessary, sufficient and compelling means of establishing recognition. Shah, by projecting the horrendous impact of conflict and war, has made all possible efforts to work-through or affirm or overcome the negative effects in a way of "catharsis". Therefore, almost all stories strive to find a reconciliation or affirmation of harsh realities for the betterment of future. In the story, "Badhashalama Buddha", the slayer confesses his criminal past and adopts a principle of non-violence. He is not affected by the approaching death, rather feels empowered while he says, "Buddha, at your feet I surrender"<sup>26</sup> which becomes more prominent and his executioners are also moved by this as the narrator reports, "This dazzling voice was slowly awakening the Buddha inside him"<sup>27</sup> (6). He is trying to pass from hell to purgatory. His silent opposition to brutality and atrocity becomes more resonant in the slaughterhouse. So the narrator hears only those words. In "Mission in Nepal", the narrator is awakened from his nightmare and is happy that at least that is not a reality but just a bad dream. And he wishes that not to happen again as he says, "But may these horrible dreams never come true"<sup>28</sup> (59).

The symbolic meaning of Nature, appreciation of snow-capped mountains, taking coffee in a restaurant in an amicable way suggest his effort to the direction of working-through. The story, "Yuddabiram Jindabad" ends in reconciliation between both the warring forces and their affirmation of peace. The widowed women, orphaned children, dejected parents and frustrated as well as frightened people advocate peace and they express their willingness for reconciliation even though they

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<sup>26</sup> Buddhams aranam gachhaami

<sup>27</sup> Yes prakhara aawaajle tiniharuvitrako buddhalaai pani sustari biuntaairaheko thiyo.

<sup>28</sup> Tara yee beevatsa sapanahaaru kahilyai satya navaidiun.

are living miserable lives."In the injured state, both the warriors raised their hands and roared together- "Long live ceasefire!"<sup>29</sup> (29).

In the story, "Gaonma Geetharu Gunjidainan", although Fulwa's husband has gone to jungle to fight with armies, she is amicable and welcoming to a soldier who was her childhood friend. In the story, "Babuko Kandhma Chhoro Sutiraheko Desh", the father is moving from pillar to post carrying his son's decaying head with an attempt to work-through the pain. He wants to share his pain with others and get a relief. The narrator wants to console his wife who is agonized with the news and pictures on TV about bombing and deaths in the story, "Ma ra Murdharu". He wants to divert her attention to the bright and vibrant part of life rather than pain, suffering and death. The title story is evidently showing zeal of working-through with the symbolic presentation of bicycle. The wheel of bicycle represents normal functioning of life. The narrator's animosity with the rebel's son abates and he starts loving him as well. Calling the name of God though he is supposed not to, the ditch digger in "Euta Arko Khaldo", wants to get rid of this job of burying his fellow fighters. He wishes the end of war. The dog is still barking with a hope that the boy's mother will return, and the boy's trauma will be worked-through in "Mero Kukur Ajhai Bhukiraheko Thiyo". The story, "Sadakma Gandhiharu" shows the victory of non-violence over violence. The narrator changes his mind of taking up arms and fighting against injustice and poverty to the means of peaceful protest for the same goal. The soldier gives in before the sea of unarmed human procession chanting slogans for democracy and salutes their demand and unhindered mission in "Sipahi ra Salik". Kidi Jiya, the protagonist in the story, "Kidi Jiyale Karnalima Faal Halin", is trying her level best to

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<sup>29</sup> Ghaaite abasthaamaa nai aksmaat tee dui yoddhaharule aafnaa haatharu maathi uthaaye ra ek saathgarje – yuddhabiraam jindaabaad.



negotiate with the perils of life. Therefore, she goes to the rebels' camp, tries to persuade them, wants to forget whatever is lost from her and desires to reinvent everything until the end of her life.

Those other stories which do not show any expressions of reconciliations but only agonies and terror still keep within themselves the tendency of working-through built in the traumatic experiences themselves. Revoking Trauma is itself affirming it and looking for a way to recover or normalize.

Shah's traumatic stories unmask cruel history of Nepal on the one hand, while on the other they educate people to feel the grotesque picture of the past so that such thing will not be repeated. Tim Woods offers the same idea, "history stems not from the motives of realism and record, but from the ethical need to use the past as a warning to others about future survival"(343). Shah's stories are also unrecognized history in the form of fiction. For Terrence Des Pres, narration is "not only a remembrance of things past but a remembrance of things to come – an art of anticipation as well as recollection" (qtd. in Woods 344). Projecting suffering and agony of the people in the stories, Shah is hoping to evade war in the future as Gomaa Sally comments on a slave narrative by Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, "she [Jacobs] is hoping to alleviate slavery by arousing the women of the North to 'a realizing sense', that is a combination of affect and rational thought, 'of the condition of two millions of women at the South" (373). The narrator has intimated the setting, characters and their circumstances to make the stories as down-to-earth as possible. The local dialects spoken in far and remote parts of Nepal have found their space in the stories by bringing to the fore the voice of the voiceless and thus rupturing the hierarchy of center and margin. In addition, silences are more articulate than speech because the undeniable presence of pain robs the sufferer of ordinary

speech, reducing him or her to pre-linguistic utterance in the form of screams or cries.

Several victimized characters are silent in speech but violent in mind.

### Conclusion: Trauma and Its Implications in *Chhapamarko Chhoro*

As Edward W. Said perceives "texts . . . are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, and society – in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly", Mahesh Bikram Shah's collection of short stories, *Chhapamarko Chhoro* stands out as a documentation of excruciating condition of the Nepalese people engulfed and inflicted by a decade-long armed conflict that rendered thousands dead and millions tormented with physical, psychological, economic and socio-cultural ailments (1212-1213). The sufferings of the people are more exacerbated when they are in a position to express for fear of all kinds. Conflict breeds pains, terrors, isolations and anxiety which are even more subaltern experiences than violent retaliation with the means of coercion. The vulnerable and marginalized groups and communities have their own version of suffering which might not have proper enunciation through the master narratives of the so-called powerful. Though there is no more adequate language to express pain than the inexpressibility itself. Elaine Scarry finds "no referential content" to show pain while David Morris calls it "a subjective experience, perhaps an archetype of subjectivity, felt only within the solitude of our individual minds" (qtd. in Gomaa 373). This inexpressible pain erupts suddenly in the forms of traumatic symptoms that disrupt the normal functioning of human thinking and behaving and sometimes leading to the state of madness, aphasia or schizophrenic conditions to literal death. Shah's characters suffer from all these conditions which can be best illustrated in the mental condition of an anthropologist, Philip Gourevitch who expresses his feeling on the genocide in Rwanda:

The killers killed all day at Nyarubuye . . . Day after day, minute by minute, Tutsi by Tutsi: all across Rwanda, they worked like that . . . the dead at Nyarubuye were, I am afraid, beautiful. I could not settle on

any meaningful response: revulsion, alarm, sorrow, grief, shame, incomprehension, sure, but nothing truly meaningful. I just looked, and took photographs, because I wondered whether I could really see what I was seeing while I saw it. (qtd. in Verma 155)

This kind of feeling is what Shah has tried to express. He has taken photographs in letters, words, tropes, ironies and satires. His narrators try to photograph the interior cuts and lacerations in the minds of the characters. In several stories, narrators themselves become victims which make the stories more firmly grounded in the socio-political context of Nepal. This trajectory of pain and suffering could only be studied through the perspective of trauma theory which painstakingly unravels the issues, interprets them and gives a clearer, more vivid analysis of the settings, characters, languages, silences, and tropes used in the stories. Therefore, the research has made ample discussion over nuances among different aspects of the theory.

The research has worked on basically two aspects of trauma in Shah's stories: acting-out and working-through. When trauma destabilizes human consciousness and behavior, the victim may come back to normalcy or he/she may continue to remain subject to indefinite traumatic experiences which keep recurring. It depends on both: the magnitude of trauma or the identification of the original event. Working-through or affirming or acknowledging trauma is a way to pacify the victim from vehement jolts/shocks and hurts. All disciplines working in the field of trauma like psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology or literature aim at finding solution in working-through the traumatic effects. Dominick La Capra delimits the possibility of working-through by classifying the sources of trauma; if it originates from a sense of 'loss' which the historical trauma is usually caused by, it may be possible to work-through; if it comes from 'absence' because of which structural/transhistorical trauma usually

takes place, it is difficult to work-through, it rather gets frequently acted-out. However, 'acting-out' and 'working-through' are not opposite entities, they complement each other. Trauma is always acted-out in both historical as well as transhistorical cases, but the enigma lies in working-through which does not necessarily mean overcoming, or recovering; it is a kind of acceptance of the plight and attempt to assimilate with newer circumstances.

Shah's short stories mentioned above locate the clandestine wounds festering in the people and society who have become helpless witness to slaughters, rapes, anarchies, suffering, isolation, desolation, poverty, fragmentation, kidnapping, torture, looting violence in multiple forms and magnitudes. When Nietzsche writes in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* about human hatred in the past, of the great 'It was' that cannot be changed and cannot be willed, it is necessary to remember that the past as he conceives is a past of pain, terror and suffering. Meenakshi Verma quotes:

It is not only important to acknowledge the fact that what has already happened cannot be changed, but it is also essential to recognize that the will is crucial in seeking to alter in any way what has already taken place. It is also the understanding that the past, that is, what has already taken place, and the memories it generates, or of which it is composed, is constituted by suffering. We remember trauma; we are made as ourselves out of trauma. (lxviii)

Shah's stories act-out the trauma so that the victim may locate the painful events and empathize with the characters, narrator and plots of the stories. Story for Lawrence Langer is a chronological narrative, it unfolds with relief, allows on to pass through the event, and seeks transcendence; while plot brings memory's confrontation with details embedded in moments of trauma, it brings pain and anguish, dwells on horrors

of the moments and enmeshes the witness in the events of the past (qtd. in Woods 344). In other words, plot acts-out the trauma while story works- through. Shah's short stories weave plot (acting out) and story (working through) together in the form of sheaf.

Since Shah's stories historically engage the task of self construction, they initiate the project of making and writing history. Their representation constructs the subjects and mediates between subject and historical narrative that is supposed to resonate between the subject's life experiences. Telling stories about trauma, even though stories can never actually represent original events what happened, may partly achieve a certain 'working-through' for the victim. It may also permit a kind of emphatic sharing that moves us forward, if only by inches. Narration plays an important role especially in engaging post-traumatic symptoms of limit events and experiences.

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