

Tribhuvan University

*Rizal's Torture Killing Me Softly: A Story of Trauma and Recovery*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Chitra Karki has completed his thesis entitled “Rizal’s *Torture Killing Me Softly: A Story of Trauma and Recovery*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2069/11/15 B. S. to 2071/02/18 B. S. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Rizal’s *Torture Killing Me Softly: A Story of Trauma and Recovery*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Chitra Karki has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

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Chitra Karki

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## Abstract

The present project entitled “Rizal’s *Torture Killing Me Softly: A Story of Trauma and Recovery*” dramatizes traumatized, dehumanized and problematized life of the Lhotsampas people in particular and all the Bhutanese people in general due to cultural clash and conflict caused as a result of ill governance and discriminatory laws. The root causes of trauma in the life of people include some of the policies of the government that protect and promote the Ngalongspeople and their Drukpa culture discarding and excluding others by implementing no objection certificate (NOC) for getting jobs and buying and selling property, no voting right for the Lhotsampas, Marriage Act, Land Act, Citizenship Act and use of mind control technology through electromagnetic radiation (EMR). Discrimination and ill-behaviour to the Lhotsampas people haunts them throughout their life and throughout the world wherever they go as the third country settlement of refugees thereby discarding their originality and identity, and leaving them no option to work through their trauma except to share with their friends, relatives and family members about the ongoing problems. In this sense, *Torture Killing Me Softly* is a saga of trauma and its recovery of Bhutanese people resulted due to failure of the government to respect democratic norms and values, and due dearth of far-sighted vision.

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## **I. Tek Nath Rizal's Writings and Trauma of Bhutanese Refugees**

This research entitled “Rizal’s *Torture Killing Me Softly: A Story of Trauma and Recovery*” closely analyzes Bhutan’s deplorable politics and governance system that brings cultural clash and conflict among the people of different cultures thereby making the life of all Bhutanese people in general and Lhotsampas people in particular traumatized, dehumanized and demoralized. The root cause of the cultural clash is not the extremist views and intolerance of the people but the discriminatory and prejudiced systems made by the government including laws, acts and other provisions. The government rejects multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-civilizing circumstances of the nation, and instead of helping diversities to be more prosperous as an asset and pride; it prohibits and bans as national taboo. The anti-democratic norms and values practiced by the so-called democratic government deceitfully and treacherously betrays the international community even through its slogan of Gross National Happiness instead of Gross National Sufferings and its policy of exclusion instead of inclusion, the very heart of democracy.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* is the story of trauma, its recovery and mind control technology. The traumatized and dehumanized life of the Lhotsampas people is caused due to wrong and discriminatory policy of the government. The cultural variation and difference is not taken as the prosperity and wealth of the nation but as stigma and disgrace. So, in the name of maintaining cultural purity and integrity, the government suppresses, oppresses and dominates other cultures through ethnic cleansing and one country one language policy. In this sense, one language, one caste, one religion and one ethnic group is protected and promoted by the government by exploiting and discriminating others. There is no thread of morality, humanity, ethic

and rationality in the activities of the government. Among two dozen languages spoken in Bhutan, only Dzongkha language is given official status and imposed forcefully upon the people of other languages. The legal system in Bhutan is discriminatory. The government applies Tsa-Wa-Sum law in the nation according to which the king, country and government cannot be criticized. The obligation of no objection certificate (NOC) for getting jobs and buying and selling property, no voting right for the Lhotsampas, Marriage Act, Land Act, Citizenship Act and use of mind control technology through electromagnetic radiation (EMR) are the cruel and discriminatory means of suppressing Lhotsampas people and ways of dismissing them from the mainstream culture.

People from other cultures except from Ngalongs are tortured mercilessly, killed ruthlessly, raped inhumanly and traumatized extremely. There is no security and protection for them inside their own country. They are made refugees in their own country and later they are made refugees in different countries. In this pandemonium matrix of the country, the people from Lhotsampas are forced to undergo different painful and bitter experiences. Through different obligatory policies of the government their culture is crushed and they are forced to adopt the Tsa-Wa culture and law and wearing national dress Bakhu (gho/kira) or to leave the country taking shelter in other countries. They share their pains and sufferings to their family members, relatives and friends, and even to the international communities. Their settlement to the third country including USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Denmark, and The Netherlands works as soothing balm to their wounds but many of them do not think it as good solution.

Throughout their life in Bhutan and other countries as refugees, Lhotsampas people keeping on proving that they are not anti-nationalist. In order to work through



their ongoing traumatic condition, it is their compulsion to launch campaign and battle against the injustice and atrocity of the government from inside and outside the country. Through their continuous attempts they become partial successful and at least attract the attention of the international communities. In this conflicting milieu of Bhutan presented in the book, it is better to view the text from the perspective of cultural trauma theory. As cultural trauma theory examines the root causes traumatic life of people as well as their responses towards the traumatic condition, it is best suited in case of *Torture Killing Me Softly*. Moreover, in order to show how the Bhutanese people work through their ongoing trauma, this theory is important as well as indispensable critical apparatus to view the text. Moreover, this theory provides justice to the main thrust of the book. The ideas of the theorists, critics and scholars including Cathy Caruth, Patrick Parrinder, Jeffrey C. Alexander and Dominick LaCapra, are incorporated in course of doing research.

TekNath Rizal is one of the top leaders of Bhutanese refugees, and a political and human rights activist in Bhutan. He was born into a farming family in the village of Lamidara, Chirang district, the southwestern part of Bhutan on 28 March 1947. He was educated at local schools to primary education level, but received no secondary school education. Involving in various jobs, he ultimately became a social worker. In 1975 he was chosen to represent the people in Lamidara Sub-Division in the National Assembly of Bhutan. He served for three consecutive terms from 1975 to 1984. While working as a public representative, the Royal Government of Bhutan also gave him an additional assignment from 1977 to 1985 as a labour recruiting officer for the Department of Trade and Industry. In 1985 TekNath Rizal was unanimously elected as Royal Advisory Councilor to represent the southwestern part of Bhutan. He was appointed as a member of the judicial system in the High Court. In 1986 he was a

member of the Royal Audit Commission when it carried out an audit exercise in various districts.

He sacrificed his ministerial position and royal class lifestyle while raising voice for ordinary, poor, and minority Bhutanese for their justice, freedom, and human rights. He is regarded as “one of the historic political personalities and human rights activists of South Asia” Dr. Indrajit Rai in the preface of the book (14). In 1989, TekNath Rizal formed the People's Forum for Human Rights, Bhutan (PFHRB) while in exile in Nepal. In November of the same year, Rizal was abducted from Jhapa, Nepal to Bhutan and in November 1993 sentenced to life imprisonment. He was accused of “creating misunderstanding or hostility between Bhutan and friendly countries” and “sowing communal discord between different communities in the Kingdom” (Welsh 13). In January 1994, Rizal is transferred from Thimphu Central prison to Chemgang prison, which was constructed by the Druk government to keep political prisoners only after the democratic movement erupted in Bhutan. He was granted general amnesty along with 200 other prisoners by the High Court as per the direction of King Jigme Singye Wangchuk on their National Day on 17 November and the Silver Jubilee year of King Wangchuk's accession to the throne.

Rizal has written several books, some of which included his accounts of mind control torture. The books have been very successful in Southern Asia. *Torture Killing Me Softly* is about his experience of several years of imprisonment in Bhutan with an emphasis on the electromagnetic radiation (EMR) mind control torture. *From Palace to Prison* (2009) is a document reflecting the Sectarian, Absolutist Policy of the government of Bhutan through population politicking in the facade of Gross National Happiness. This saga of an individual is moreover a meta-history of an autocratic regime persisting even at the dawn of 21st century. It captures the

nightmarish life of Bhutanese refugees under great trial, trouble and tribulation thereby questing for the glorious life in their own soil. It is an autobiographical describing the life of Rizal himself in different circumstances in Bhutan and countries. It gives detailed description about how the government is against the Nepali-speaking people, and what policy it adopts to erase the Nepali-speaking people.

His next book entitled *Ethnic Cleansing and Political Repression in Bhutan* (2004) is about the actual condition of Bhutan. It brings historical sketch of Bhutan and highlights how Bhutan has adopted ethnic cleansing policy in order to dominate, discriminate and torture Nepali-speaking people. It is an open discussion against discriminatory legal system of Bhutan, which promotes one ethnic group at the cost of other groups. *Nirbasan* (1997) is about Rizal's exile life in India and Nepal. It illustrates political condition of Bhutan and it criticizes the wrong policy undertaken by Bhutanese government adopting different acts, laws and legal provisions. His search for existence and identity in the communities which are alien to him is dramatized in this book. The ups and downs, trials and tribulations faced by the Nepali-speaking people in Bhutan are represented in this book.

All the books written by Rizal have autobiographical touch. They are based on his personal experiences. They highlight the actual condition of Bhutan, Bhutanese people and different discriminatory legal systems adopted by the government. Moreover, they show the conflict, clash and tension among different ethnic groups. In this sense, Rizal's books should be historically located in order to get the actual gem of the book.

Upon its publication in 2009, *Torture Killing Me Softly* is received widely and analyzed differently through different perspectives. It is taken as the illustration of mind control technology with the depiction of electromagnetic radiation (EMR). It

dramatizes the misuse and abuse of governmental power and authority. It is analyzed as a postmodern text with the postmodern content. Considering the book as a science fiction, Cheryl Welsh praises the books for its futuristic brain torture tools that can be used in the prisons and other places in order to manipulate and dominate common people as well as targeted groups:

Rizal's book [*Torture Killing Me Softly*] sounds like a science fiction horror story about torturers using futuristic brain torture tools in a very medieval fashion. But the facts show that it is much more. The U.S. and other major governments have harnessed science and technology to develop secret electromagnetic radiation (EMR) mind control weapons for intelligence purposes, for interrogation and torture, and for neutralizing the enemy without killing . . . Rizal's book is one of the most convincing allegations of government mind control targeting in a long line of high profile mind control claims of torture and political repression. (Welsh 2)

*Torture Killing Me Softly* epitomizes government's repression to the political prisoners and oppositions in order to torture, traumatize and dehumanize them. Though the purpose of electromagnetic radiation (EMR) is intelligent one and used for improving the activities and behaviours of the abnormal and deformed ones, it is misused by the government. With the help of this technology, the Bhutanese government accuses the political prisoners as mad, lunatic and deviated, and tries to correct their activities as per its plans. So, technology in the hands of selfish agent becomes destructive and counter-productive. In this sense, Rizal's book is one of the most convincing allegations of government mind control targeting in a long line of high profile mind control claims of torture and political repression.

Describing the book as more than autobiographical, Acharya and Bhattaraisay: “*Torture, Killing Me Softly* is based on his 10-year jail term in Bhutan. The book not only delves into Rijal’s life but also details the extreme level of torture one human being can afflict on another human being” (13). They further praise the book as “it talks about the use of ‘mind control device’ to torture him [Rizal] and a number of Bhutanese freedom fighters. The device, internationally, is regarded a big human rights violation” (13). They further say:

Rizal, a refugee leader in exile for more than a decade, has chronicled a harrowing tale of his prison life in Bhutan in his new book *Torture Killing Me Softly*. . . he narrates his predicament while he was stuck in Bhutanese jails for a decade. The most startling aspect of the book—apart from the routine torture the state metes out to its opponents—is the use of sophisticated mind control devices by the ruling elite of Bhutan. One finds hard to reconcile the image of a pastoral country with its employing cutting-edge torture tools bestowed by modern science. (Acharya and Bhattarai 12)

For them, *Torture Killing Me Softly* is more than an autobiographical book because it encompasses the heartbreaking, poignant, depressing and distressing experiences of all Nepali-speaking people in Bhutan. It is the gloomy saga of them and thus it brings out the dark sides of Bhutanese government. Moreover, it shows the politics of different legal provisions made by the government in favour of mainstream Bhutanese culture, language and people discarding and disregarding the Nepali-speaking people.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* highlights the issues of marginalized and subaltern people. Nepali-speaking people out-sided from its mainstream history. Their voices are buried, hidden and suppressed within the veil of biased national history. Their

identity is not recognized, their voices are not heard, their existence is not realized and their situation is not addressed by the Bhutanese government. The law is against them, the government is against them and even the international community is against them to some extent. In this way, their basic human rights are confiscated, their freedom is constraint and their equality is crushed. Bipin Adhikari in *Spotlight Newsmagazine* describes:

The book is an authoritative, rich and compelling narrative of the man who represents the movement for democracy and human rights in Bhutan. It might once again remind the rulers of the present day Bhutan that there is no sustainable alternative to national reconciliation between the monarchy and the opposition forces. Bhutanese need national unity, and the new king has a meaningful role to play in this regard. (6)

The book is not just about his personal experience, but also “the nature, extent and magnitude of mental and physical tortures inflicted upon hundreds of citizens in the Bhutanese prisons and virtually throughout the nation on a daily basis” (Adhikari 7). It is also related with the thousands of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and other places of the world. The book familiarizes readers with three main ethnic, linguistic and religious groups of Bhutan - Ngalongs, Sharchhokpas and Lhotshampas. The author emphasizes that all these groups lived in perfect communal, religious and ethnic harmony through centuries, until the fourth king of Bhutan; Jigme Singye Wangchuk ascended the throne in 1974, and started a discriminatory regime in the country. These arrangements were especially aimed at the Lhotshampas - the Bhutanese people of Nepalese origin. It explains how circumstances forced Nepali-speaking people to leave their motherland into exile in Assam and Sikkim, and then in Nepal. Another

critic, Deepak Adhikari calls *Torture Killing Me Softly* as “a harrowing tale of prison life” (2). He further analyzes as:

The most startling aspect of the book [*Torture Killing Me Softly*]—apart from the routine torture the state metes out to its opponents—is the use of sophisticated mind control devices by the ruling elite of Bhutan. One finds hard to reconcile the image of a pastoral country with its employing cutting-edge torture tools bestowed by modern science . . . Bhutanese torturers . . . induce anomalous behavioral changes and create disassociation . . . the harmony began to fall apart in the late 1970s with disenfranchisement of Lhotshampas and with the so-called “One Nation, One People” policy, an anachronistic campaign in a country marked by a mosaic of cultures, religion and ethnicity, stripped many ethnic Nepalese of Bhutanese citizenship and curtailed their basic rights. (2)

He finds beauty in its presentation of reality without distorting. There is contradictory situation in Bhutan which is presented without reconciliation. Pastoral beauty of Bhutan is paradoxically presented with the conflict-ridden world full of tensions, stress and pressures. He criticizes the opposite relationship between pastoral country and its harsh and rule. In fact modern scientific and technological inventions are misused and abused in Bhutan in order to make the life of Nepali-speaking people harsh and difficult. Technology is used to demoralized and exploit people. It becomes the terrifying means in the hands of the government. Nepali-people in Bhutan are displaced from “one of the world’s least known ethnic conflicts” (Hutt53). This ethnic diversity cannot be managed properly because of which diversity becomes the main cause of the present plight of Bhutan.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* is about the politics of the government in order to uplift some of the ethnic groups at the cost of other groups. “It is a saga of sufferings and struggles that continues to this day with no end in sight . . . The book is really useful to know about how the authorities used torture against the freedom fighter and human rights activist” (Gautam12). It shows the way the government uses its authority and power over its civilians through different apparatuses. Moreover, “the book has giddy details of torture called ‘mind-control’, a techno-savvy surveillance technique applied on him during his decade-long incarceration in Bhutanese jails, hitherto little heard of at least in this part of the globe” (Wagle 14). In this sense, *Torture Killing Me Softly* is about the use and misuse of scientific and technological inventions in order to fulfill vested interests and selfish motives. The government can confiscate and abduct the basic human rights of its people with the help of such inventions and as a result instead of improving the living standards of the people, these inventions turn their life into hellish.

Through the study of analysis and interpretation of different critics and scholars regarding their views on *Torture Killing Me Softly*, it is clear that it has some traces of autobiographical elements but it is more than that because it encompasses the overall situation of Bhutan and its Nepali-speaking people. It is about the postmodern version of truth and it is also dangers about the misuse and abuse of science and technology. In this sense it is science fiction and it predicts the possible use of such inventions in prisons, schools, hospitals and other places. Drawing on and departing from these critics, this research views the text from the critical perspective of trauma. Cultural trauma remains the heart of this research though the basic idea of psychological trauma is also unavoidable while discussing any kind of trauma.

Trauma refers to an event, series of events, or context that is emotionally



overwhelming. The individual feels helpless or powerless to control the event(s) or situation. Trauma is used mostly in medicine and psychology. But, there is a current effort to borrow the concept of trauma from medicine and psychiatry and to introduce it into sociological theory and even. In literature, the author explicates the notion of cultural trauma as applicable to the theory of social change. S/he defines cultural trauma as the culturally defined and interpreted shock to the cultural tissue of a society, and presents a model of the traumatic sequence, describing typical conditions under which cultural trauma emerges and evolves. Cultural trauma is treated as a link in the ongoing chain of social changes; depending on the number of concrete circumstances, cultural trauma may be a phase in the constructive formation of culture or in the destructive cycle of cultural decay.

The word trauma comes from Latin, meaning “wound.” In this case trauma refers to a psychological rather than a physical wound. It overwhelms an individual’s ability to use normal coping mechanisms to adapt to a situation. It disrupts an individual’s frame of reference i.e. beliefs about themselves and the world. Cultural trauma is one that we as a social group experience together, with our experience being that of perpetrators, victims, or spectators, with all of us deeply affected by the experience as representing some form of violent interruption to our lives (Habermas 21). It can be defined further as:

Trauma as a cultural process is based on symbolization; this process takes place between the event, which has been traumatogenic for a community, and the establishment of its representation. The analysis of trauma as a cultural phenomenon can be grounded in the outlined concept of cultural memory with such essential dimensions as: communication, reflexivity of the knowledge about the past,

axionormativity, affectivity and, last but not least, orientation toward the future. Collective trauma in particular shows the symbolic, emotional and moral dimensions of memory as a cultural phenomenon, the temporality of which is not limited to the past in the present, but also encompasses the future. (307)

Trauma is a symbol that condenses the tragic experiences of the age that saw two world wars. Their extreme manifestation is genocide. This relatively recent term, introduced into international law by Rafał Lemkin, is crucial in the semantics of contemporary, universal humanism. Trauma was initially understood as a psychological phenomenon – it appeared in the works of the French psychiatrists Pierre Janet and Jean-Martin Charcot, who had encountered the problem of personality disorders among World War I veterans (315). Trauma theory shifts the question from “Why did this happen to you and how can you change to prevent it from happening again?” to “What is your response to what has happened and how can you manage that response so as to feel better?”

The understanding of trauma has frequently been dominated by interpretations rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition. According to this approach, defense mechanisms are a key issue and successful therapy requires bringing the experience out into the open – its articulation. Although analogies between psychoanalytically perceived individual trauma and collective trauma may be useful, in a cultural analysis of trauma attention should be focused on “reflexive processes of communication, interaction and symbolization” (Whitbeck 126). Cultural trauma indicates the individual, community and intergenerational effects of the terrorizing and traumatizing events like genocide, warfare, ethnic cleansing, massacres, and

forced migration and so on. It is the intense feeling of fear, mental stress, distress and grief in response to harmful mental, emotional or physical situations or events.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* is suitable to view from the perspective of trauma theory. It spreads its coverage of trauma from the freedom fighter, Rizal to other Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people. The basic cause of their trauma is cultural difference. They have no any mistake except their cultural difference - difference in culture, language, civilization and rituals. The overall saga of Nepali-speaking people in Bhutan is detailed in this book with the detailed description of Bhutanese national policy of ethnic cleansing. The discriminatory laws support the government to go against them. Everything is done as per predisposition and preconception - not on the basis of natural law but on the basis of partial and prejudiced system of the government. In this sense, the trauma of Nepali-speaking people in Bhutan is socially and culturally constructed. It is caused because of the wrong policy of the government. It shows the short-sightedness of the government which forgets the fact that prosperity flourishes in diversity.

Thus, the present research brings cultural difference into centre in order to show its prime role to cause conflict, tension and clash in the society breaking its harmony, concord and synchronization. The Nepali-origin and Nepali-speaking people are forced to live miserable inside Bhutan as well as in different places of the world. Their plight and predicament goes with them. The government uses all of its apparatuses including prison, military, hospital, school and working places in order to dehumanize, demoralize, discriminate and dominate them. Moreover, different legal provisions are made and carried out in order to finish off their history and identity, and in order to deprive them from their basic and fundamental human rights. As the root cause of their present predicament, cultural trauma remains the heart of the research.

The ideas developed by Jeffery C. Alexander, CathyCaruth, C. M. Chemtob and others. In order to show the responses of people and their process of getting rid of their trauma as well as their revolt against the government the government, the concept developed by Dominick LaCaprais also incorporated in the research. The research has been has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter is the introductory section, which provides basic concept of the theory, themes and approaches to the study, purpose of study, limitations of the research, literature review, and brief biography of the writer and so on. The second chapter is the depth and detailed textual analysis along with supportive theoretical framework in embedded form and conclusion is drawn in the third chapter squeezing the crux and kernel of the overall research.

## II. *Torture Killing Me Softly: A Story of Trauma and Recovery*

The current research entitled “Rizal’s *Torture Killing Me Softly: A Story of Trauma and Recovery*” examines the traumatic condition of the Lhotsampas, the Nepali-speaking people of Bhutan in particular and all Bhutanese people in general. The government intervenes the cultural and social systems of the Lhotsampas by forcefully imposing the mainstream culture of the Ngalongs thereby bringing clash, conflict and collision among different indigenous cultural groups of Bhutan. The national policy of ethnic cleansing is implemented; unnatural and irrational laws are made and carried out; NOC (No Objection Certificate) is made compulsory in order to buy land or to get job in which Nepali origin people are not included. All these systems are introduced with the aim of dehumanizing, torturing, traumatizing and problematizing the life of the Lhotsampas, who are given only two options - either to leave the country or to follow the mainstream culture. As a result of such partial and biased policy of the government, the Nepali-speaking people are forced to choose necessary adaption and many of them are made refugees and compelled to live in the camps. Though *Torture Killing Me Softly* follows the ups and downs and TekNath Rizal and encompasses his observation of mind control technology used mainly in Bhutanese prisons, it also shows how the government makes use of schools, hospitals, police force and other agencies for torturing people. Moreover, along with the people from Lhotsampas community, other people including the people from Ngalongs, and Sharchokpasas well are not left untouched from the present pathetic plight of Bhutan.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* is a story of pains and sufferings of Nepali-speaking people of Bhutan. The main cause of their problem is their cultural difference. This difference leads them towards conflict and clash with the mainstream culture in Bhutan. As there is no system of respect for the difference for its uniqueness, rational

collision is started. The mainstream culture of Bhutan wants extermination of other cultures as a result the Nepali-speaking people are “suffering from untold stress” (42). They are “subjected to solitary confinement,” they are fragmented from their family, they are punished without any fault and at last they are banished from their motherland (42). They get no human rights, nor do they get respect and self-dignity inside their country. Moreover, they are dehumanized, terrorized, exploited, subjugated, demoralized and penalized without any fault. This situation renders them irritated, aggravated and annoyed, as a result they go against the government and appeal international community and organization for the restoration of their basic human rights. The expression of their painful memories and agonized stories can be taken as their attempt to get rid of the problems. Furthermore, they share their feelings and experiences to their friends, relatives, family members and international community at large i.e. the best way to adopt as a means of working through their trauma.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* dramatizes sadistic mind control torture along with other physical torture used in Bhutan for the political prisoners and other common people who do not follow the mainstream culture of the nation. The book exposes how the rulers of Bhutan have been successful in keeping international human rights groups in the dark. The book chronicles Rizal’s harrowing jail experience in Bhutan - “why he was imprisoned and how he was inhumanly tortured, brutally persecuted, by the Bhutanese authorities using the mind-control device and other psychological tactics” (14). It describes the way he was severely tortured, treated inhumanly and punished degradingly. The causes of the trauma of Bhutanese people along with their activities to come out of the ongoing trauma are elaborated in depth. The people are forced to leave their country or to change their culture. In course of

time, lose their original and native culture due to encroachment and intrusion of the so-called mainstream culture.

The word trauma comes from Latin, meaning “wound.” In this case trauma refers to a psychological rather than a physical wound. It overwhelms an individual’s ability to use normal coping mechanisms to adapt to a situation. It disrupts an individual’s frame of reference i.e. beliefs about themselves and the world. Cultural trauma is one that we as a social group experience together, with our experience being that of perpetrators, victims, or spectators, with all of us deeply affected by the experience as representing some form of violent interruption to our lives (Habermas 21). Sociologist Jeffery C. Alexander has coined “A Theory of Cultural Trauma” mainly to criticize lay trauma theory. For him trauma is an act of signification, hence something social. Jeffery C. Alexander stresses the social dimension even further with the notion of cultural trauma:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group conscious, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways . . . cultural trauma is first of all an empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and casual relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions and actions. (Alexander 2)

Trauma is rooted in cultural process. Though the understanding of trauma has frequently been dominated by interpretations rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition, in a cultural analysis of trauma attention should be focused on “reflexive processes of communication, interaction and symbolization” (Whitbeck 126). Cultural trauma indicates the individual, community and intergenerational effects of the terrorizing

and traumatizing events like genocide, warfare, ethnic cleansing, massacres, and forced migration and so on. It is the intense feeling of fear, mental stress, distress and grief in response to harmful mental, emotional or physical situations or events. Cultural trauma involves more than physical destruction of people, property, and landscapes such as might be seen in warfare or ethnic cleansing. It directly or indirectly attacks what constitutes culture, of which there are some essential yet vulnerable elements: body/space practices, religion, histories, language, state organizations, and economics (Petschauer and Isaenko 97). The attacks may include the prohibition of language, spiritual/healing practices, or access to public spaces. There may be rape or interpersonal violence to destroy families, the elimination of traditional authority figures within a community, or elevation of an authority or outside agency to bypass the traditional systems of authority. Loss of land, and language, breakdown in familial relationships, and lack of respect for elders are examples of cultural bereavement that troubled the traumatized people.

Native languages as primary keys and bearers of cultural identity and tradition were targeted for elimination (Spack 72). The Bhutanese government adopts the policy of extermination and elimination of different cultures announcing one culture and one language country. *Torture Killing Me Softly* thus highlights traumatic experience of the people resulted due to government's wrong policy.

The concept of trauma is highlighted even through the setting of the novel. The description of places where the narrator visits indicates the dangers because "chilling air was blowing from the snow-capped mountains; even the occasional sunshine was marred by the wispy clouds drifting across the sky" (18). This provokes the ongoing the trauma of the narrator. It makes the narrator, "I felt as if I had come to a different world" (18). He describes the situation of a worksite in Chamkuna of



Bhutan where the workers “seemed quite scared” and “a group of women sang in a chorus while working . . . it sounded like an expression of their agony. On the contrary, the rich and the powerful would play archery (the national sports). This made me sad” (18). The trauma of people in the working place is shown as:

We are here to work for the king, as ordered by the government officials; we have to work sincerely and continuously for a month without wages. Every day at seven in the morning, the government officials stamp our faces; we have to have thirty stamps after a month, and then only we are allowed to return to our village. If the marks are found to be less than thirty, we have to work for another seven days as compensation. And, if we return to our village without the marks, our village head would either send us back or put us in the jail, with the charge of deceiving the king. (19)

A lady worker having marks on her face made by rubber stamps speaks these lines. These lines express how much the workers are maltreated in the working places. The workers are destined to work without wage and they are penalized without any reason. They are forced to work in the dangerous situation and they are not allowed to live with peace and tranquility in their village. Their duties are fixed by the government and they need to fulfill their responsibilities and duties at any cost.

The life of people from Lhotsampas community is traumatized by the government itself. Instead of protecting their fundamental rights, the government abducts them for following different cultures. Their traumatic life in the prison is narrated as:

They were compelled to spend a painful life in prison at the hands of a revengeful regime. Their family members had been evicted, their

daughters had been raped and victimized, and some of their family members had been killed. Their belongings, properties, lands and animals had been seized and, finally, they were imprisoned and subjected to horrendous torture. Their only crime was that they were prosperous and hailed from Lhotsampa community. (76)

The people from Lhotsampa community are imprisoned and they are subjected to horrendous torture while their family members are mistreated by the government officials. Their property is seized, houses are burnt, daughters are raped and family members are killed. Through his book, *Torture Killing Me Softly*, Rizal expresses his experience of 10 years of imprisonment in Thimphu Central prison and Chemgang prison. It is the saga of Bhutan's historical movement from racial integration to racial cleansing. During the beginning of 1990, the government launched the policy of so-called "national integration" that rendered Nepalese speaking people in the condition of statelessness causing a large scale emigration to Nepal. Due to this discriminating policy, some 87,000 people were compelled to be refugee in Nepal and some 15,000 others are dispersed in the neighbouring areas of Nepal and India. It means one sixth of total population of Bhutan is compelled to leave the country and many other Nepali speaking people are forcefully made to accept Drukpa culture and tradition. They were given torture in their country and they are bound to live hellish life.

The Bhutanese policy of enforcing Drukpa traditions and culture led to a campaign of suppression of Nepalese cultural expression in Bhutan beginning from 1990, revocation of citizenship and intimidation, arrests and sometimes torture of ethnic Nepalese, resulting in a large scale exodus to Nepal. This policy attempted to impose the northern Bhutanese code of conduct throughout the country, including by imposing the wearing of Bhutan national dress (gho for men and kira for women)

during official public activities. Rejecting this policy in one of the leaflets, “Bhutan: We Want Justice” People’s Forum for Human Rights raises the voices of Nepali-speaking people:

The great crime of the government at the moment is that it does not respect individual identity. A government is for the people. It is bound to respect individuals. The dress, the language, the religion are part of every man's individual identity. Bakhu (gho/kira) does not make a Bhutanese. The cowl does not make the monk. A Bhutanese does not become a lesser Bhutanese when he/she does not wear them . . . It is too difficult to understand that the Nepalese will not lose or gain his Bhutanese identity by wearing or not wearing Bakhu. Identity is something deeper than a piece of cloth you put on.

Instead of respecting diversity, the Bhutanese government suppresses it and imposes the northern culture throughout as a code of conduct. The people are compelled to use northern dress i.e. Bakhu (gho/kira) as national dress, they are forced to speak Dzongkha language as mandatory language, and they are made to follow other northern systems which are alien to them. In this sense, they lose their origin, identity and existence. Such situation traumatizes their life because it is not easy to forget someone’s culture and follow unknown and alien culture. Liberty and freedom are anathema to Bhutanese government. The government turns deaf to the basic human rights of people.

Cultural trauma indicates the individual, community and intergenerational effects of the terrorizing and traumatizing events like genocide, warfare, ethnic cleansing, massacres, and forced migration and so on. It is the intense feeling of fear, mental stress, distress and grief in response to harmful mental, emotional or physical

situations or events. It is associated with the members of the community and their collective memory, which is haunted by the disturbing and distressing events. Cathy Caruth defines trauma in her “Unclaimed Experience” says:

. . . trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled receptive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares, is central and requiring image of trauma in our century.  
(181)

This definition clearly shows that trauma is described as the response to an unexpected violent that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashback, nightmares and other repetitive phenomena. The events does not become trauma in itself but its long-lasting haunting effects makes it traumatic. Thus, traumatogenic effects of the events, accidents, domination and other negative events are known as the cause of trauma. *Torture Killing Me Softly* captures the experiences and re-experiences of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people. They cannot get rid of the tortures given to them by the government agencies themselves.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* describes Rizal’s personal experience while living in Bhutan. Rizal has been imprisoned, tortured and ultimately expelled from Bhutan. It also documents the overall saga of other people living in Bhutan under the code of ‘national integration’ and Citizenship Act. Different code conducts are introduced in order to ban the cultural activities of the Nepali-speaking people. They are punished unnecessarily for the crimes they have not done. In this sense, *Torture Killing Me*

*Softly* describes the pathetic condition of Bhutanese people mainly Nepali-speaking people. It is clear from these lines:

Tying hands and legs with a rope, putting pins, nails, glass and other non-eatable things in meal, blindfolding, making him eat like an animal, giving flour with water and salt for eating, beating with canes, sticks, batons, chains, leather belts, rifle butts, on the back, head, arms and feet. Torture was not confined to primitive physical assault by using whips, clamps, chains, ropes and giving electronic shocks but also involved application of various scientific devices on my conscience Psychological Exploring privacy, compelling to reveal personal thoughts and creating psychological terror by using different scientific techniques. (12)

The extreme kind of punishment as explained in these lines is resulted from nothing other than cultural difference. The Nepali-speaking people are not only dehumanized, exploited and punished but also they are terrorized in the prisons. Their privacy is disclosed, their freedom is looted, their identity is crushed and their dignity is marred in discriminatory policy of the government. In this the government is presented as torturer and causative agent of all forms and all kinds of discriminations and traumas of Nepali-speaking people.

Cultural trauma is an attack on the fabric of a society, affecting the essence of the community and its members. Cultural trauma, unlike an individual trauma, is “not naturally existing, it is something constructed by society” (Alexander 2), which leads to “a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric . . . the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all” (Eyerman 61). Communities are not necessarily traumatized, but more

*deeply affected*, which can both threaten the group but also serve a “positive function...as a force for social becoming” (Sztompka 194). Comparing cultural trauma with that of psychological and physical trauma, Ron Eyerman says:

As opposed to psychological or physical trauma, which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all. While it may be necessary to establish some event as the significant “cause,” its traumatic meaning must be established and accepted, a process which requires time, as well as mediation and representation.

(87)

As cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory. Neil Smelser offers a more formal definition of cultural trauma that is worth repeating: “a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is (a) laden with negative effect, (b) represented as indelible, and (c) regarded as threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions” (26). The concept of traumatic stress and the multidimensional nature of cultures require a conceptual framework by which to address core issues that have direct relevance to understanding the nature of trauma as embedded within a culture and its assumptive systems of belief and patterns of behavioral regulation. *Torture killing Me Softly* fits to the above definition. The situation of Bhutan is laden with negative even for the

native and mainstream culture. Moreover, the situation is threatening and challenging to the existence and identity of the people.

The country has three main ethnic, linguistic and religious groups - Ngalongs, Sharchokpas and Lhotsampas. Ngalongs, the ruling group, control the monarchy, the government and dominate the economy. They inhabit the north-west region of the country, belong to Tibetan ancestry, speak Dzongkha language and practice Drukpa Kargyupa sect of Mahayana Buddhism. Sharchokpas belong to Tibeto-Burman ancestry, live in eastern and central region and speak Tshangla dialects and practice Nyingmapa sect of Mahayana Buddhism. Lhotsampas (literally, Nepali-speaking people of the South) are restricted by law to the South and had to take the responsibility of guarding the Indo-Bhutan border as well. They speak Nepali language and largely follow Hindu religion. In addition to these three dominant groups, there are a dozen other groups, smaller in numbers, including Khengs Brokpas, Mangdepas, Kurteopas, Doyas, Adivasis, Tibetans and others. All these ethnic groups migrated to Bhutan at different points of time before the turn of the 19th century. In fact, Bhutan has often been called a country of immigrants, ruled by an autocratic regime. For centuries, people belonging to these different groups had lived in perfect communal, religious and ethnic harmony. Tolerance, co-operation and compromise had been the hallmarks of the Bhutanese society. But such harmony saw a gradual loss with the ascent of the fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The third King Jigme Dorjee Wangchuck, who had been dynamic and had introduced several administrative reforms, unexpectedly passed away in 1972.

With the enthronement of Jigme Singye and especially after 1977, when Marriage Act was enacted, the plight of Nepali-speaking people is degraded as “Bhutanese people were barred from marrying foreigners. In practical terms, it meant

that Bhutanese could not marry non-Bhutanese” (19). With this system, “on the pretext of decentralization, in 1980, the despotic ruler had captured the Lhotsampas historical and legal documents from the Commissioner Office of Sarbhang. After that, the regime, in a bid to erase the original names given by our ancestors, renamed the Southern districts and towns” (19). With the change in name of different places, the trauma of the Lhotsampas increased because their identity and history are lost. They have nothing of their own in their country. Their history is marred, identity is erased and their freedom is captured by the government.

Cultural trauma is a threat to culture of people which also affects their identities, individualities and characteristics. The identities of people in Bhutan are affected and even threatened by intervention of the government. It even memorizes people of their past – be it happy or sad. People are attached with their past, they respect their history but as dramatized in *Torture Killing Me Softly*, the mainstream history is imposed upon the marginalized people and they are forced to accept it. This trend has traumatic effect in their life. In this sense cultural trauma has its historical power too as:

The historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and though it is inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. And it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience: since the traumatic event is not experience as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place and in another time. If repression, in trauma, is replaced by latency, this is significant in so far as its



blankness – the space of consciousness – is paradoxically what precisely preserves the event in its literality. (Caruth 4)

Thus, to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. It compels people to remember their painful or blissful past. In this sense, with the help of its historical power, cultural trauma traumatizes people even further more. The traumatic condition, brought about by traumatizing events or situations, culturally interpreted as traumas, is in most general terms an unusual condition, an uncommon state of affairs - some disruption, dislocation, or disturbance, provided that it is experienced or perceived negatively – as painful, harmful, unpleasant, repulsive (Sztompka 458). It is in this light that cultural trauma brings forward traumatic experiences of people. It even memorizes people of their past deeds- both good and bad. People in Bhutan want to follow their native culture but it is taken as the act of sin and illegal as per the government. They are penalized unnecessarily as a result of difference in their culture. They have done nothing wrong except following different culture but it is taken as anti-national act. Thus, *Torture Killing Me Softly* attracts the sympathy of the world where different cultures are celebrated and freely followed.

The trauma of the Lhotsampasis intensified with different laws. The government made different laws in the name of reformation of the nation but all of the laws are targeted against the Lhotsampas community. Land Act 1980 is introduced “severely curtailing the economic activities of the Lhotsampas” (19). Green Belt Policy 1984 is enacted aiming to “create a forest-belt along the Indo-Bhutan border” in order to “displace the Lhotsampas”(19). Citizenship Act 1985 was promulgated and implemented with retrospective effect from 1958, which forced the Lhotsampas to “produce a proof of domicile in Bhutan prior to 1958. Those who failed to do so were made to sign the ‘voluntary migration form’ at gun-point and were subsequently

evicted from the country” (20). Besides, “the victims were not allowed to complain. Moreover, their relatives too were barred from complaining on their behalf” (20). These rules limit the life of the Lhotsampas and as a result they are restricted within the boundary.

In the process of disturbing their life, One Nation One People’ policy was introduced in 1986, “under which National Dress Code was promulgated, making it mandatory for every man and woman to wear Gho and Kira, throughout the day, violation inviting stiff fines” (20). The identity of Nepali-speaking people is mared as “Dzongkha, a local dialect spoken inside forts, was declared the national language and was made a mandatory mode of communication throughout the country, simultaneously banning Nepali language in schools and offices” (20). This was a severe blow to the Lhotsampas because the scripts of Dzongkha and Nepali are poles apart – the former is Tibetan while the latter is Devanagari. To add insult to the injury, “for every religious ritual, the Lhotsampas, who predominantly followed Hinduism, needed permission from the Buddhist Lama well in advance, even to conduct the last rites” (20). The Lhotsampas are given blow after blow by the government. Their culture and religion is not protected and supported rather problematized by the government. They are discriminated in each and every aspect of life as “the regime made it mandatory for them to procure NOC (no objection certificate) for services, including businesses, travel and admission to schools, colleges, hospitals and agriculture. And, the police had prior instructions not to issue NOC” (20). These activities trouble and problematize the life of Nepali-speaking people.

Cultural difference in Bhutan is taken as a crime. This difference is not respected. There are many ethnic communities in Bhutan with their unique and different cultures and civilizations, but the Bhutanese government adopts the policy of

fostering one culture at the cost of others. Because of this policy of the government, all other cultures are at margin and they have to follow compulsorily the mainstream culture. This situation is narrated as:

There are many ethnic communities in Bhutan, like Brokpas, Doyas, Totas, Khengs, Mangdepas, Lepchas and others, besides the three main communities – Lhotsampas, Ngalongs, and Sharchokpas. The Sharchokpas are indigenous peoples of Bhutan, but they too are neglected, discriminated against and humiliated. Neither their good services to the nation are appreciated, nor do the ruling elites allow them to prosper . . . Due to the suppression, members of Sharchokpa community were either forced to flee the country or stay back in a state of repression. (60)

The government does not enjoy in diversity. It does not protect the variation in the country and in the name of making unity; it forcefully imposes strict code of conducts upon its people. One nation, one language and one culture is the slogan of the government. Moreover, national dress is imposed on the people. Among the indigenous ethnic groups, only Ngalongs is supported by the law and other groups are discriminated and even forbidden by the government. Moreover, the main target of the government is Lhotsampas community. Cultural trauma is caused when one culture is dominant over culture and wants to control it. When the people of different cultures live together, there is high possibility of cultural clash and conflict. They fight in order to maintain supremacy of their culture.

Different laws and policies are made and enacted in Bhutan in order to give pain and suffering to the Lhotsampas. In the name of cultural purity and cleansing, the difference in culture, language and religion is rejected. The government makes false

statistics in order to dominate and exploit the minority groups. The following lines show the coercive method of the government:

Overall, the cumulative objective of these policies, laws and regulations was to bring about ethnic cleansing. As a final nail in the coffin, in 1988, a census exercise - undertaken only in the South - was implemented with retrospective effect from 1958. Under it, citizens were arbitrarily classified into seven categories, transforming a large number of genuine citizens into non-citizens, foreigners and encroachers. The net-effect of all these laws was that hundreds of innocent citizens were victimized by the coercive methods. And, the census teams were at the forefront of these activities. These acts not only denationalized the Lhotsampas, but also triggered subsequent eviction. As a result, they were forced to leave their movable and unmovable properties behind. (20)

It is clear that the government is not for the people of all communities, all languages, all cultures and all religions. It is in support of only Ngalongs and Sharchokpas people. The Lhotsampas are denationalized and called as non-citizens. Their rights are confiscated by the government and they are restricted in the limited field. They are not allowed to do government jobs and they need to take permission in order to do other jobs and business. This situation creates frustration in them. The rules and regulation of Bhutan are responsible to inflict trauma of Nepali-speaking people.

Cultural trauma is the outcome of cultural clash and conflict that occur in a specific place. People from different cultures, fight for maintaining superiority of their culture over other cultures. They do not accept the uniqueness of other cultures and single-headedly advocate the superiority of their culture. Moreover, they attempt to

impose the norms and values of their culture on other cultures discarding the difference. Therefore, cultural disorganization, displacement and incoherence are created:

The conditions for cultural trauma are ripe when there appears some kind of disorganization, displacement, or incoherence in culture – in other words, when the normative and cognitive context of human life and social actions loses its homogeneity, coherence, and stability, and becomes diversified or even polarized into opposite cultural complexes. Looking at it from the perspective of the actors, we may speak of *cultural disorientation*. . . . the duality, split, ambivalence, clash within a culture, emerging suddenly, rapidly and unexpectedly, and embracing the core areas of cultural components, such as basic values, central beliefs, and common norms. (Petschauer453)

When there is the presence of multiple cultures and there is not consistency, understanding among different cultures, there emerges cultural disorientation. Cultural disorientation is apt to occur when some significant, sudden and unexpected episode of social change gives a blow to the very central assumptions of a culture, or more precisely is interpreted as fundamentally incongruent with the core values, bases of identity, and foundations of collective pride. The sudden change is not accepted by other cultures. This leads to conflict and clash. Cultural disorientation appears when people find themselves in the grip of a new culture that is alien to their native and original culture. People find themselves in a cultural world completely at odds with their indigenous cultures, and if this is culturally defined as painful and unbearable serious collective trauma emerges. *Torture Killing Me Softly* describes the trauma of people resulted from the attack of the mainstream culture of Bhutan over other

cultures. The presence of alien and different culture beings inexpressible pains and sufferings to them.

Cultural clash becomes unavoidable when mutually incongruent cultures are involved in intense interactions, repeated and routine dealings. Circumstances conducive to this situation is found in multicultural societies, where numerous, diverse cultures are brought into daily contact with each other. If cultural tolerance is not practiced in such condition, cultural disorientation and clash is emerged thereby leading to the traumatic life of the people mainly of marginalized culture. In this sense, “disorientation may be due to some internal cultural invention, introducing themes incongruent with the earlier culture, disrupting its coherence, producing a redefinition of meanings, re-evaluation of beliefs” (Petschauer 455). Though “all cultural incongruences or inconsistencies do not necessarily turn into cultural traumas,” they are the main cause of traumatic life people because “such maladjustments, tensions, and clashes are *perceived and experienced* as problems, as something troubling or painful that demands healing” (455). In this sense, cultural difference in multi-ethnic society becomes the causative agent of trauma of the people living in such society.

There is cultural conflict and clash in Bhutan among three groups -Ngalongs, Sharchokpas and Lhotsampas. The royal family wants to foster Ngalongs culture and system throughout the country. The king himself is narrow-minded and takes his culture and history as superior to and greater than others. So, Rizal writes: “I was deeply upset with the king’s racist attitude” (22). The unequal treatment and discrimination done by the king and royal family makes people agitated. As the situation becomes frustrating throughout the country, many people live in suffering and many of them commit suicide: “The unfolding incidents of suicide and

restlessness in the South” (22). Due to the conflict, a handful of Lhotsampas guided by their vested interest even stood by the regime that committed atrocities to their own kin and kith” (23). People in the south “lived as prisoners in their own country” (24). These events clarify the trauma of general people in Bhutan.

In the prison, Rizal describes the inhuman and atrocious activities done by the administration of the government. People are kept in the prison in different feigns and they are tortured and even killed without any specific reason. The author quotes the examples from the history and shows the traumatic condition of the people. He sketches the “horrifying accounts of how people had to undergo gruesome punishment” in the prison (26). He talks about the assassinations Shabdrung, who is being worshipped in the Bhutan now. Garjaman Gurung was brutally killed in 1921 just he spoke against the assassination of Shabdrung. In the spring of 1951, Mahasur Chhettri, who “raised his voice against the autocratic system, and demanded democratic change in the country,” was thrown alive into the river (26). He recollected such events from the pages of the history and as a result, “I remembered the stories of crucifixions of many politically conscious Bhutanese citizens. These images tormented me” (26). Trauma of people can be seen in the treatment done to them by the guards and the authority:

I have vivid memories of atrocities meted out to Tibetan refugees in the mid-seventies. The monarch associated the Tibetan refugees with the problem in the palace. The regime conducted an operation in which several refugees were killed, women were raped. The regime unleashed a terror and looted cash, valuables and jewelries from the refugees. Overnight, the refugees were deported to Jaigaon in West Bengal and Hattisar in Assam, India. A few of them stayed on inside

Bhutan. Those who stayed were not allowed to grow long hair and read books in their mother tongue. These acts were aimed at assimilating them with the culture of the ruling elite. The properties looted from the refugees were auctioned in Thimphu. (26)

The prisoners are kept in the dilapidated condition inside the prison. Besides the ramshackle condition of the prison, the prisoners are in most frustrating condition. They are kept “handcuffed and shackled . . . for twenty-four hours, which was inhuman and against the normal practice in a civilized society” (43). They are forced to live a traumatized life “under feudal hubris of ruling elites” (43). Moreover, “the use of bowstrings in place of handcuffs is also a regular practice which often causes involuntary defecation and urination, and ultimately breaks the thigh bones, making the person disabled for life” (44). In this system of punishment, “the condition of the female prisoners was more pathetic” because “they are made to work odd jobs” and are “exploited inhumanely . . . especially forced to undergo sexual exploitation at the hands of jailers” (44). Various acts of sexual perversion are ordered by the guards. For instance, “prisoners were ordered to perform anal sex between father and son, to masturbate in their presence, and so on . . . Guards often hit the sexual organs of the prisoners with their boots and laughed at the expression of pain. The female prisoners were sexually harassed and abused” (59). This mistreatment crosses its boundary when “the father was order o urinate in his son’s mouth” (59). Nepali-speaking people cannot defend themselves because the “court is held in an alien language” for them and in the court “verbal and arbitrary law is the basis of all decisions” (44). This shows the strategies of the government to traumatize the life of the Lhotsampas.

The Nepali-speaking people are not allowed to raise their voice. The monarchy does not play the role of integration. It discards its role of unifying people



and does not respect the difference. It brings extremist policy against the Lhotsampas. Rizal advocates the voices of the Lhotsampas and demands equality in the country. His genuine voice and decent demands are not respected by the government instead he is taken as “the world’s most wanted terrorist” and “a hardcore criminal” (45). He is arrested and imprisoned in the charges of: “Fomenting and masterminding the disturbances in the South,” “deliberate misinterpretation of the government census policy in 1988” and “planning, directing and coordinating subversive activities against the regime” (45). All the time, he is kept in dilapidated condition and he is forced to live a terrific and dangerous life as:

Out of stark fear, I brushed aside my hunger, sleeplessness, pain and illness, and started to write down my thoughts. I described the problems of the South, referring to my earlier petition to the king. The regime had begun its intimidation tactics. An armed soldier kept standing right in front of the room. . . . My freedom and privacy was compromised. I was completely under their control. Outside the government guest house, armed forces were patrolling. The constables, posted inside the room to keep close watch on me, allowed me to go to the less-than-appealing toilet, but continued to gaze at me with unblinking eyes. It was a manifestation of the state’s totalitarian character, displaying its superciliousness in total disregard of human values. (27)

When the police are present in front of Rizal in the prison and watch him every time, he started to feel even more hatred and disgust to the government and its activities. As a result of his ongoing trauma, as the writer writes, “I started to feel the irritation and hatred” (27). He does not like the presence of the police force in front of him.

Moreover, “I started feeling allergic to their unrelenting and hardened presence” (27). Along with the sense of hatred, irritation, disgust and abhorrence; he has “totally lost my sense of appetite” (28). He even feels guilty of not doing anything as “I covered my face with the blanket, an act that to a degree relieved me of my angst” (28). Due to his trauma, “I was disconnected from the outside world” (28). The condition is degrading in the prison as the writer writes: “I was experiencing an acute isolation and suffering in the most deplorable and inhuman conditions, besides being detached from my social milieu” (28). In this way, the prisoners try to adjust with the situation and the trace of their traumatic life can be observed in their activities.

The prisoners are made “the victims of the deafening sound” and are forced to live in “in complete isolation” (28). Such deafening sound severely affects the psyche of the prisoners. In order to control them and their activities, the images are made in the mind through such repeated sounds in the mind. The prisoners are not allowed to talk to anyone and are continuously exposed to such loud and monotonous sounds. This kind of mind controlling technique is used in order to manipulate and change the concept of the prisoners. By knowing their personal life and extracting personal information, the prisoners are easily tortured and given pains. The physical punishment and torture is seen in the following treatment to Rizal:

They fastened my legs and slipped the shackles onto them. When they hammered the nails into the shackles, the blows shuddered through my bones. Incidentally, in my right leg, a sharp rod was attached which caused a nagging pain. I was treated worse than an enemy and the agony which I experienced cannot be justly expressed here. The scars caused at that time are still intact today. After the shackling was complete, I was taken to another room and made to sit on a chair

placed in the centre. A guard was instructed to bring an electric wire and then asked to prod me with it. It gave a little pinch, nothing serious compared to the inhuman and cruel treatment I was already subjected to. But the wire must have had a hidden strength, as it left a large recurring cancerous wound on my back, which has remained unhealed till date. (30)

The inhuman treatment to the prisoners is seen in the above lines. The government becomes cruel to the people of different cultures. Their life is made traumatic just because their culture is different. Instead of respecting the difference and get the benefit of rich cultural variation, other cultures are othered and marginalized. Other cultures are suppressed, oppressed and dominated by the so-called main stream culture.

There are tremendous effects of trauma in the life of people. Their normal pace of life is disturbed and they live a tormented and shattered life. They become pessimistic and cannot think about the prosperous and better future. In this condition, “the simple act of sleeping proved difficult” (30). Moreover, “going to the toilet and eating food also turned out complicated, especially when the authorities decided to shackle my hands behind my back. The regime refused to see me as a human being and tried every trick it possessed to degrade my condition” (30). Other effects are also seen in the prisoners like “images of unwanted and unnecessary objects such as the king’s naked images would come to the mind” (30). They “often lost power to think” (30). They even feel their “culture and identity was on the verge of extinction” (30). They even “forgot the names of their family members” and when they remember with great effort, they feel it “a great discovery” (30). They find it “difficult to make distinction between different human sentiments” because their “emotional facilities

are totally drained off” and as a result they “respond irrationally” (31). Due to endless torture given to the people of Lhotsampa community, they get “psychological problems and constant headaches” and their “relations became strained”(85).In this sense, the prisoners are forced to live inhuman life within their own country.

The effects of mind control technology can be seen even in dream and other different activities of the people. The overall life of people is completely disturbed. In a sense their life is out of order. This situation is clear:

The device was capable of manipulating my dreams and disturbing sleeping patterns. I experienced terrible nightmare. I was made to bite my tongue to wake up from the deep slumber. This caused heavy bleeding. In the nightmares, I found myself reaching atop a big cliff where death was physically standing before me. I had to undergo many hallucinations as though I was dying. The experiences of having reached a dreadful place and standing before a deadly animal, like a tiger, occurred to me regularly. In addition, I suffered sudden breathing difficulties from an unseen pressure. I had terrible headaches, severe fever, choking from food, increased palpitation of my heart, high blood pressure, nose bleeding, unbearable burning sensation, among others. The flow of my urine was interrupted. I had burning sensation on my hands, legs and eyes, throbbing pain on my feet. I also experienced excruciating itching. I had countless pimples all over the body. (32)

The prisoners are tortured even in their dream. They see nightmare in the night and they dream nothing except death. It is the result of their pessimistic thinking of their life. They have terrible headache, palpitation in the heart, severe fever, breathing

difficulties, high blood pressure, nose bleeding and so on. In the prisons, “several Lhotsampas had been tortured to death” in this sense prisons are the sites for killing and torturing people (49). So, “the mechanism was torturing my inner soul, leaving me with unbearable pain. My slumber and appetite were not under my control. I had been transformed into a dead body with only the consciousness alive” (32). In this sense, the prisoners are facing extreme form of trauma in the Bhutanese prisons.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* excavates the actual but degrading condition of different prisons in Bhutan. When Rizal was transferred to different prisons inside the country, and was kept there, the condition is revealed. The prisoners are traumatized by worsening the condition of the prisoners. The basic human rights are deprived inside the prison. The physical condition of the prisons is wretched. In “Rabuna Prison: The Living Hell,” Rizal describes the unsuitability of the prison as “ominous-looking prison building where. . . a bevy of soldiers removed the shackles from my legs. Instead, iron bars were fixed, joining both feet . . . An abundance of snakes were found in the vicinity. The area was infested with frogs, rats, cockroaches and mosquitoes” (37). Moreover, “the quality of the food was low--it was not only inedible but also unhygienic and unfit for human consumption. The RBG adulterated the food with nails, pieces of glass, fish bones and dead insects, among other hazardous materials.” (37). The extreme form of torture is observed as: I was allowed to eat my food only after smoking forty cigarettes. This was the worst kind of torture I ever endured during my incarceration in Rabuna” (39). This condition adds pain to the injury of the prisoners.

The prison reminded me of the stories told about Nazi Concentration Camps, during the World War II . . . In Rabuna jail, I was kept on the ground floor, but here [Dradulmakhang prison] my cell was on the first

floor of a dilapidated building. Some obnoxious odor wafted through my cramped and damp cell causing constant nausea. The criminals were allowed to make fire [but] . . . the hidden intention was to create problem for me through the dense smoke emanating from the fire. When the criminals were taken out on labor duty, prison officials threw chili powder in the fire. One can imagine the suffocation created by the fumes of burning chilies in a room without the ventilation. (40-41)

The government tries different strategies to dehumanize and humiliate the Nepali-speaking people. Many of the Lhotsampas are killed mercilessly. “Some of the army officers and civil servants from the South were dismissed from the service, and then they are mentally abused. After controlling their minds, many were returned into government spies and sent to the refugee camps in Nepal and India. Some were turned into slaves and forced to work inside the country” (49). Consequently, they live in the degraded condition with frustration, dissatisfaction and disappointment. The government provokes them commit suicide by creating dilapidating condition because “the king tried his level best to make me commit suicide by supplying the blades, ropes, beer bottle, the iron-hook on the ceiling and the live electric wires left unattended. And, that was why he started propagating to the whole world that I was on the verge of committing suicide and had gone insane” (43). The government applies all its effort to trigger them to commit suicide and perform unusual and strange activities in order to prove them mad and insane:

To my amazement, there was something else inside the matchbox: a brand new razor blade. . . . Perhaps, the regime hoped that I would commit suicide in utter despair. It was not the first time the regime had provoked me to commit suicide. It reminded me of a rope which was

left in my room just a few days ago--it would have been a convenient appendage to the iron hook on the ceiling. The jail officials deliberately chose the time to keep the rope when I was attending hearings in the court. The most brazen effort to exhort me in committing suicide took place when a technician, on the pretext of repairing the electric wiring, opened the wiring system and spent the whole day doing nothing. In the evening, he left the live electric wires exposed, went out of the room and did not come back. Thus, the wires remained dangerously exposed for a long time. (42)

There was “no provision for storage of drinking water” in the room but whenever “the guards supplied water to me, it was always brought in an empty beer bottle” because they wanted me to make use of the bottle either to end my life or, in a fit of rage, to attack the guards so that in the name of self-defense they could justify my killing”(42). Rizal forwards his arguments that the guards“evolved different strategies to get rid of me and started provoking me towards committing suicide. For this purpose, first, they made me depressed through mind-control technique and then conditions conducive for me to commit suicide were created” (42). Rizal remembers the strategies of the government applied in the villages to torture and kill them because “there was a time when women committed suicide in my village after their husbands were forcefully taken to labor camps. When the breadwinners were missing for a long time, the women, out of helplessness and overburdened by having to nurture children, jumped into the river.” (42). In this sense, the government is responsible for the suicide of the people.

Rizal is critical of the legal system of Bhutan. Bhutan claims that its legal system meets international standards. But if we study the overall legal system, it is

found hollow and illogical. The judiciary does not function on the basis of the common sense and people's welfare but "the judiciary functions under the command of the king" (44). It never goes against govern and declares "government action unlawful" because "the entire aim of the judicial system is to extract a confession of the crime, usually under physical and mental duress. Overall, the judiciary is disparate vis-à-vis civilized society" (43). Moreover, "judges do not need any legal qualification and training" (43). This shows that the judiciary is formed for adding pain to the suffering of the people. It traumatizes and dehumanizes common people:

In the name of justice, people are made to suffer for crimes they never committed. Those working for the interests of the royal family are more iniquitous than the royal family itself, as they carry out their work with impiety towards the people and their rights. The torture system of medieval times still continues in all the district courts, police stations and in the prisons. A person whether innocent or a criminal, is bound to be confronted by three things. He is either caught or arrested for enquiry and presented before a court . . . Sometimes the suspect is arrested and incarcerated without trial. But, more likely, he/she is condemned for life imprisonment or a termed sentence. . . . Relatives do not have the right or guts to enquire the authorities about their family members in prison. (44)

The judicial system of Bhutan is against the welfare of people. Instead of protecting their rights, it criminalizes them and punishes them without any reason. Mainly it is against the Nepali-speaking people and suppresses their activities on the basis on cultural differences. The Nepali-speaking people are arrested and punished without any reason because "the suspects arrested for trial have to undergo various tortures



through traditional methods” namely whipping by the police and the judges” (44). The cultural activities of the Ngalongs and Sharchokpas are supported by the law whereas the activities of Lhotsampas are restricted. In this sense, legal restraint is imposed upon the activities of Nepali-speaking people. This legal system further traumatizes their condition.

Jigmi Y. Thinley, the then prime minister of pseudo-democratic country, Bhutan is presented as hypocrite elite from his community, who hates the Lhotsampas with a racist mind-set. He is taken as “the Sakuni of Mahabharat, a Hindu epic, who advised the king for ethnic cleansing of the Lhotsampas” (46). He is responsible for “espousing destruction of properties, arson, and rape in the South along with day-light robberies by the retired army personnel” (46). The government makes every possible plan to erase Nepali culture inside Bhutan. Nepali-speaking people are given two alternatives - either to follow Bhutanese culture completely discarding their native culture or to go out of the country. So, “more than one hundred thousand Lhotsampas had been forced to leave the country at short notice” and “while male members were detained, the regime summoned their wives and made to sign ‘voluntary migration forms’ at gun-point and evicted from the country,” similarly, “those who were serving in the army, police and administrative services were singled out and imprisoned across the country” (50). In this sense, the Nepali-speaking people had to face inexpressible pains and suffering in Bhutan, which is clear from the following lines as well:

The regime’s torture on the Lhotsampas was beyond comprehension and compensation that exceeded all norms of civility. The inmates continued to narrate their pains and sufferings. They were left for days, with their hands and legs tied with ropes, in such a way that they

remained motionless while they were being tortured. They were kept without food for many days and whenever it was served, it was some flour in a rusted tin container with salt and water. These innocent villagers were also made to bend like animals and lick their food from the ground. Many had been killed in the South after details of their property and wealth were extracted. Some met their death under the boots of the guards in the most horrific manner. (50)

The difference in culture is the base by which the Ngalongs dominate and humiliate the Lhotsampa. The law is in favour of the former whereas the latter are treated as non-human. They have to face different ordeals inside the prisons. There is no specific reason behind why they are “driven away from the country” and why “they had to go through inhuman behavior” (52). Even the representatives of UN do not listen their voices and automatically believe in the version of government’s truth. The questions they ask to the Nepali-speaking people including why they are there, why they go against the government and why they launch anti-government movements etc. make them irritated and agitated. Even the doctors leave their ethics and do not soothe the prisoners. Their treatment is full of fraud because they serve the interest of the government. Rizal says: “the insolent doctors inflict more torture than the police” because they tell lie of the patient’s condition and even provide wrong medicines to them. This fact is proved with the declaration of Ashley Eden in the book *Political Mission to Bootanin* which it is mentioned that “Booteahs are full of fraud and intrigue, and would not scruple to murder their own father or mother to serve their interest” (56). Rizal’s encounter with medics in the prison was a proof of the epithet.

There is no need of specific reason for the government to send South Bhutanese “in military custody” and “many had been kept in the army prison for

several years without access to any legal recourse” (70). Because of discriminatory legal system in Bhutan, “many people have been arrested on false charges and have gone missing while in custody. Many families have been disintegrated and separated” (70). There is difference in treatment among the prisoners on the basis of culture, language and regionality. The Nepali-speaking prisoners are kept under full control of the administration whereas the prisoners from the North are given freedom in the prison. In this sense, treatment is not done on the basis of the gravity of the crime but on the basis of their culture. “Many of the northern Bhutanese criminals, imprisoned for life, were legally allowed to live in the nearby forests in temporary huts, with their wives and children. Such a system existed nowhere except Bhutan” (70). This is the instance of discriminatory law of the government.

Theory of cultural trauma is developed by the sociologist, Jeffery C. Alexander and for him “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). Eyerman defines cultural trauma as “laden with negative effect, represented as indelible, and regarded as threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions” (2). He ascribes no difference to national trauma and cultural trauma; both involve a struggle for meaning, identification of the victims, and an attribution of responsibility, with individual memory subsumed under collective memory and the cultural trauma articulating group membership and pervading future generations. Nicolas and McIntosh suggest cultural trauma is associated with cultural histories and such histories are like infected wounds, “where individuals, families, and nations carry unresolved trauma from their past. It shows . . . in the whole web of

social dysfunctions alcoholism, drugs, and even institutional corruption. It shows wherever human dignity has been compromised” (18). Moreover, Alexander gives cultural trauma an ethical dimension, although he does not explicitly use the notion ethics:

Insofar as they [the collective] identify the cause of trauma, and thereby assume such moral responsibility, members of collectivises define their solidarity relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the suffering of others. Is the suffering of others also our own? In thinking that it might in fact, societies expand the circle of the web. By the same token, social groups can, and often do, refuse to recognize the existence of others’ trauma and because of their failure they cannot achieve a moral stance . . . by refusing to participate in what I will describe as the process of trauma creation, social groups restrict solidarity, leaving others to suffer alone. (1)

Thus, Alexander’s aim to deny that trauma is grounded in something objective becomes a way of stressing the ethical character of the cultural trauma process. It is the process by which the group of the community are affected. In this sense, cultural trauma affects the group of the large community. It is not limited to one single person or individual. It affects the whole community. In case of *Torture Killing Me Softly*, all the people of the Lhotsampa are affected and traumatized.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* dramatizes collective traumatized process. All the people of the Lhotsampa are equally traumatized by the government. If they do not become the blind supporter of the government, they are not allowed to stay inside their own country. The Nepali-origin people undertake different steps of such process. When they are deprived their basic human and compelled to chose two options -

either to leave the country or to follow the mainstream culture, they show different responses towards the governmental actions and policies. Rizal along with his friends even fight against the cruel policy of the government. Although losing friends and tolerating torture are difficult, Rizal says, “I was gradually becoming accustomed to it” (39). The prisoners developed the strength to win such torture and adjust themselves as per the situation. They have no option left except to tolerate the pains and sufferings given to them by the authority.

Sharing is another strategy applied by the traumatized Bhutanese in order to get rid of the problems. They told and retold their painful memories and agonizing stories to their friends, relatives and family members so that the concerned ones are aware of the possible hazardous situations and get ready for that. Rizal says: “I have a vivid recollection of my mother narrating those stories and counseling the neighbors not to commit such acts. Since childhood, she always told us that life, in due course, might create some moments, inflicting sorrow and pain on us, but at such times, we should never think of ending the life” (42). He says that “it was my mother’s teaching that helped me survive those days of extreme brutality” (42). This is how the Nepali-speaking people in Bhutan learn to survive and accommodate in the adversary situation.

Rizal himself shares his stories to his friends, journalists, human right activists and representatives of ICRC and other organizations. He feels happiness in sharing his experience to the world. In the preface of the world he writes that this book is written in order to share his knowledge and experience to the world. He writes, “I left no stone unturned in expressing my predicament. I informed them that I was being tortured through mind-control techniques. I narrated all the experiences I had gone through” (43). The main objective of writing this book is clarified in the preface. It is

clear that Bhutan is not less than living hell for the people who do not follow the mainstream culture. One culture and one language are imposed upon the people in the name of cultural purity. The writer explains the condition of Bhutan as:

Spending ten years of my life in the most degrading and inhuman conditions in the prisons, I made a considered decision to share my experiences with the rest of the world. The primary objective behind writing this book is to reveal the other side of the so-called last Shangri-La, where ethnic cleansing is being practiced as a state policy, in the name of maintaining cultural purity. The nature, extent and magnitude of mental and physical tortures inflicted upon hundreds of citizens in the prisons and virtually throughout the nation on a daily basis came to the knowledge of the world in 1990. The destructive method invented and employed by the rulers is aimed at crushing the human spirit and shackling liberty and is a crime against humanity.

(12)

These lines from the preface of the book clarify the actual condition of Bhutan and marginal people. Being the member of non-mainstream culture, the writer faces several hurdles and curdles in prison as well as outside. The policy of ethnic cleansing has increased the trauma of people. Their basic human rights are not respected. They are not treated as human beings and punished mercilessly. They are forced to live the life of refugee after being expelled out of the country. There lacks respect for other different cultures in Bhutan and one and only culture is regarded as supreme, civilized and standard thereby rejecting and suppressing others. The writer wants to share this condition to the world. Rizal shares the existence and effects of mind-control technology to “the various experts – doctors, scientists, army officers, even

intelligence agents” among whom some of them accepted the existence of such devices (97). This kind of sharing helps him to prove his suspicion.

The Nepali-speaking people do not lose the hope and aspiration of the degrading situation. They fight against the torture imposed upon them by the authority. They attempt to prove their innocence. They are against the claim of the government that the Lhotsampas are anti-nationalist. It is clear from Rizal’s remark: “I spent my days and nights defending my innocence and clarifying the accusations heaped upon me” (47). The victims including Rizal try to release from their tortured memory through sharing. They tell each other as well to the doctors from Bhutan, India and other countries in order to soothe their pain. Though they are mistreated from the doctors accusing them of speaking against the king, they adopt this method. Rizal says: “I explained to the doctors the details of the torture and my illness” (83). The doctor accused him “of speaking unjustly against the king” and refused to treat him, they even do not believe in “the existence of the mind-control device” (83). Rizal shares his “prison experiences with Indian scholars, politicians, journalists and senior citizens” intending to find the solution (85). They attempt “to spread awareness about the problems created by the regime” (86). That is how they are compelled to fight against the government and to search solution to the present ongoing problem even by taking the support from the international communities.

Thus, *Torture Killing Me Softly* is the story of the pains and sufferings of Bhutanese people in general and Nepali-speaking Bhutanese people in particular along with their process of recovery. The main cause behind their trauma is cultural difference for which the government cannot address or manage. In spite of celebrating its cultural difference and flourishing its uniqueness, the government adopts the policy of intolerance in the name of ethnic cleansing. It implements one country one

language policy and imposes the systems of mainstream culture on other cultures and consequently traumatizes the life of people. The traumatic saga of the Bhutanese people is illustrated along with the life of TekNath Rizal's personal experiences in different prisons in Bhutan and refugee camps in Nepal. The coverage of trauma is elongated along with mind control technology that captures records and controls the activities of the people wherever they go. In the matrix of extreme traumatization, the Lhotsampas people are forced to go against the government and even to seek help from the international communities. Moreover, sharing their painful stories to their family members, friends and relatives works as soothing balm to reduce their trauma. Their third country settlement also can be considered as one of necessary attempt to work through their trauma. In this sense, *Torture Killing Me Softly* is the story of Bhutanese people's trauma and its recovery though they do not get complete recovery and have to keep on struggling in order to establish their basic human rights.



### III. Trauma, its Recovery and Mind Control Technology

After interpreting and analyzing the book, *Torture Killing Me Softly* by Tek Nath Rizal thoroughly and extensively, the researcher concludes that it is the story of trauma, its recovery and mind control technology. The traumatized and dehumanized life of the Lhotsampas people is caused due to wrong and discriminatory policy of the government. The government does not respect the cultural variation and difference as the prosperity and wealth of the nation rather in the name of maintaining cultural purity, it suppresses, oppresses and dominates other cultures through ethnic cleansing and one country one language policy. Except Ngalongs, the mainstream culture of Bhutan all other cultures are demoralized, discouraged and de-legalized thereby advocating one nation, one language, one religion and one culture. People from other cultures are tortured mercilessly, killed ruthlessly, raped inhumanly and traumatized extremely. Their properties and belongings are destroyed and they are sent to the prisons, where they are tortured through mind control technology. People are forced to leave their country and live as the status of refugees. In this sense, human agony, misery and distress cross normal boundary. Bhutan becomes a living hell for the people from Ngalongs community because it single-headedly and one-sidedly uplifts one culture by destroying, ruining and spoiling others.

Trauma of people is increased when Bhutan goes against democratic norms and values; international conventions and treaties; and basic human rights. There is no thread of morality, humanity, ethic and rationality in the activities of the government. Nearly two dozen languages are spoken in Bhutan but only Dzongkha language is given official status and imposed forcefully upon the people of other languages. As per Rizal, “all the poor people including Lhotsampas, Sharchokpas and Ngalongs are equally oppressed and victimized by the regime”(115). The cultural

difference is the base on which ground the government of Bhutan takes the side of the ruling class i.e. the Ngalongs and makes other suffers a lot. The legal system in Bhutan is discriminatory. The government applies Tsa-Wa-Sum law in the nation according to which the king, country and government cannot be criticized and “this law declares any act of making conversation and correspondence criticizing the king and his government by the citizens as treasonable offence inviting life sentence or death” (58). People from Lhotsampas community are captured without any reason and accused of treason without their involvement in any anti-national activities.

*Torture Killing Me Softly* dramatizes the recovery of people from their suffering. The people from Lhotsampas community learn to adjust as per the situation. As they have no option, many of them are adjusted and accommodated with the mainstream culture. But many of them leave the country and live in Nepal as refugees. They fight against the wrong policy of the government by taking the support of the international community. They challenge the Gross National Happiness of the government and replace it with that of Gross National Sufferings. They share their pains and sufferings to their family members, relatives and friends, and even to the international communities. Their settlement to the third country including USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Denmark, and The Netherlands gives them ointment to their wounds but many of them do not think it as good solution.

Thus, *Torture Killing Me Softly* is an epitome of traumatic life and its recovery. The Lhotsampas in particular and all indigenous ethnic groups in general are compelled to live traumatized and dehumanized life due to wrong policy and discriminatory laws implemented by the government. Some of the means of the government for suppressing and dominating Lhotsampas people include: one country and one language policy, ethnic cleansing policy, obligation of no objection certificate

(NOC) for getting jobs and buying and selling property, no voting right for the Lhotsampas, Marriage Act, Land Act, Citizenship Act and use of mind control technology through electromagnetic radiation (EMR). These systems become supportive to the government to control, dominate, manipulate and discriminate the Lhotsampas thereby making their life hellish and traumatized. Due cultural conflict, clash and collision; the Lhotsampas people are forced to choose two alternatives - either to leave the country or to follow the mainstream culture. Many people are turned refugees and revolt against the government and welcome international communities to solve their problems and many of them settle in the third countries. In this way, *Torture Killing Me Softly* brings the ever unresolved and debatable refugee problem of Bhutan and its possible solutions highlighting the traumatized life of the people from the Lhotsampas community.

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