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Spiritual Awakening in Manisha Koirala's *Healed*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Niruta Paudel has completed his thesis entitled “Spiritual Awakening in Manisha Koirala’s *Healed* under my supervision. She carried out his research from June 2022 to December 2022. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva.

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Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma

December, 2022

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Spiritual Awakening in Manisha Koirala’s *Healed* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Niruta Paudel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

In this research, the biography Healed by Manisha Koirala is observed using a working psychoanalytical approach. Biography is observed as an important factor in engaging the reader on a personal level with the experience of trauma. By surveying Manisha Koirala's Healed co-written by Neelam Kumar's use of imagery and language, this study will examine how Neelam employs literary methods that imitate the psychological processes regarding how trauma is communicated to the waking state from the unconscious. In order to examine the psychological metamorphosis of Manisha Koirala depicted through words, theories of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth and Dori Laub that involves the unconscious and the means it used to form psychological structure capable of finding a place within the waking state, other conscious. The resulting testimony of the novel that arises as the result of these processes is also observed. This study concludes that Neelam's use of these literary methods functions to obligate the reader to involve themselves in the process of trauma and its resolution.

Abstract: trauma, awakening, literary devices, repetition, psychology, memory

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Spiritual Awakening in Manisha Koirala's *Healed: How Cancer Gave Me
New Life*

Healed: How Cancer Gave Me New Life by Manisha Koirala co-written with Neelam Kumar is autobiography that powerfully narrates moving and deeply personal story of actor Manisha Koirala's battle against ovarian cancer. In narrating her experiences, it is evident that she is enlightened from within towards perceiving the significance of life. Furthermore, in narrating her experiences, it is evident that she is enlightened with awakening experiences. Horrifying episodes that created turmoil inside her mind became so powerful feelings ultimately lead her to permanent change of being, and even a permanent state of enlightenment. In other words, the enemy of her life teaches her a significant lesson, for which her trauma becomes a tool to share with her reader through her biography. This study aims to uncover Neelam Kumar's (co-author) attempt to associate the experience of the Koirala from taking life for granted to realizing its paramount greatness with reader through the use of literary devices in giving voice to the memoir. The writing approaches used in *Healed* expose to the reader the psychological structure of trauma and show how it progresses from the unconscious to the waking state, or the aware self. This is done using psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud which focuses on the idea that traumatic experiences are repressed into the unconscious mind and that the symptoms of trauma, such as anxiety and depression are caused by the unconscious mind's attempt to cope with these repressed memories along with theories of Cathy Caruth and Dori Laub. Using this approach, this study observe and highlight the repetitions produced by the horrific event, the language used by the unconscious to communicate the event, and the need for witness and testimony to begin the resolution of the event and the acceptance of the event by the conscious into memory, resulting in a united self.

This study argues that Neelam Kumar uses storytelling, as opposed to giving a report on the factual events of germination of trauma, to engage the reader on a personal level and to humanize the people subjected to being hospitalized person and thus becoming the patient struggling to survive. Trauma can be deeply distressing and disruptive event that can change the way a person sees the world and themselves. However,

"Sometimes the process of healing and growing through the trauma can be a transformative and ultimately, can lead to a deeper sense of awareness and understanding. This can be called a 'spiritual awakening' or personal growth' as it can change the way they view themselves and the world, leading to a more holistic understanding of their self and the world" (34).

Neelam accomplishes this task through the methods of repetition in imagery and language and through testimony. This strategy turns the reader into an experiencer of the trauma.

In narrating her story, Koirala unfolds several events of her life that became dominant in shaping her life. She recounts her feelings after being discovered of ovarian cancer and how she dealt to overcome it. Amidst the feeling of hopelessness, helplessness, powerlessness, in mind, body, and spirit, she talks of how family grouped around her, forming her strongest support system. She names all the people who stood by her, detailing the little things they did, things as things as small as putting a shawl over her shoulders. As she recovers, the positivity and hope shine through the dark moments. The book is roughly divided into three chapters: the illness and fight for survival, her years in Bollywood, and insights into her own past behavior and a rough guide to living differently in the future.

Healed is a deeply personal account of the actor's struggle with cancer and her triumph over it. It is also a heartbreaking portrait of a once a time superstar, narrator with disarming honesty. *Healed* tells the story of a cancer diagnosed woman who chose to fight against it and bounces back. Her strong will to confront a catastrophic situation ahead of her and win over cancer provides a powerful narration of her life journey.

Yet, even though she was provided with every kind of clinical treatment and facilities in the USA, she continued to carry the trauma within her psyche that a deathly illness produced. This trauma caused her to go through immense breakdown and pitiful physical transformation. Her trauma begins from the very first time she knows about her ovarian cancer which goes along as the treatment session progresses, the haunting of Koirala's trauma emerges. With the fear of losing her beloved ones due to uncertainty of cure, she is immersed into a chaotic psychological condition. Her trauma is represented through characterization of her mental state and inner thoughts. Since the biography is told from first person point of view, it focuses primarily on Manisha Koralala and revolves around her. On doing that, events are narrated through the perspective of Koirala which yields immensely to make an instant attention of audiences or readers.

This study begins its work on examining the literary methods Neelam uses to engage the reader in Koirala's trauma by first providing previous research on its core topics and then discussing its working theories in the theoretical framework. From there a brief chapter on biography and its importance in creating empathy and engagement with a reader will be discussed. This will lead into a chapter on how Neelam uses repetition in imagery to engage her reader, and a subsequent chapter on how she uses repetition in language to achieve the same effect. Finally, this paper will

discuss testimony and its value in resolving trauma. This final chapter leads to a conclusion which ends the essay.

Neelam narrates an honest life journey in extremely honest way for her readers. This is supported through the article published *Anoomk word press* in the article *Honesty in Healed*. The article appreciates the honest attempt of the memoir and an insightful tale of a battle survivor beautifully told which makes you think and relevant to today's mindless living where he writes:

It takes us on an emotional roller-coaster ride through her fears and struggles and how she eventually came out triumphant.

Each chapter begins with an inspirational and meaningful quote which motivates you. She has made many interesting revelations about her journey from the high life of a Bollywood star, battling her life with ovarian cancer, support from close-knit family and friends which gave her strength, her experiences at the hospital – surgeries, pains and dreadful chemotherapies, rejections taken as challenges, how she became a better human being and the lessons learned through her journey which makes the book beautiful. (3)

The article praises the central theme of Koirala's victory in the time of hopelessness which motivates the reader in order to develop a different outlook towards life. It can be found in the essence of the biography implied in a very nuanced way. In addition, according to the article, the narrative of Koirala is a text that can bring transcendental transformation to the reader.

In addition Manoj Bohara admires the endeavor of the author for depicting the life journey of Manisha Koirala with utmost vividly. He asserts,

I find this book a reflection of true feelings. Manisha Koirala was courageous enough to confront her darkness, painful experiences and bringing stories out

of those experiences.” Moreover, he also cherishes the use of simple yet significant words to describe the events. He writes, “I believe that is the beauty and power of her writing.”

As an actress, she always focused on the minor details and the same can be found in her writing as well. After knowing about the suffering from ovarian cancer, she always has a battle with self whether to fight cancer or let it capture. At one point when she writes, “I don’t want to die”. I couldn’t control myself and tears rolled down my eyes, I closed my eyes, hold my breath for a while and a deep sigh! (5)

Bohara's interpretation of Manisha Koirala's biography foregrounds how an honest attempt in narrating own life story can have paramount impact on the reader. To elaborate, reader is hooked to the approach taken to portray challenging events without sugarcoating anything in order to create sympathy. Rather the honesty helps by making the story more relatable and authentic. When the author is truthful and transparent about the subject's life, it allows the reader to connect with the subject on a deeper level and creates a sense of trust between the author and the reader.

Indian Express in its article, “Cancer became a metaphor for all that was wrong in my life” reflects the central theme of life-threatening illness as the collective embodiment of Koirala’s predicament in her life. To exemplify, “Throughout the biography, co-writer Neelam stays true to words and keeps it precise. *Healed* is a deeply personal account of actor’s struggle with cancer and her triumph over it. It is also a heartbreaking portrait of once upon a time superstar told with honesty” (2).

The article illustrates how cancer helped her to confront and overcome the various issues she had been dealing with. In addition, cancer diagnosis is considered as a

metaphor for her feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. Hence, cancer is a metaphor for all the struggles and challenges she faced in her life, and how it ultimately gave her a new perspective on life and helped her to heal and grow as a person.

The argument of this study is supported through the work and theories of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, and Dori Laub. While reading the biography *Healed*, the reader takes part in the progression of Koirala's trauma as it reveals itself to her waking states. Using Freud's working psychoanalysis theories involving the unconscious and the means it uses to form psychological structures capable of finding a place within the waking state, or the conscious, and comparing them to Neelam's literary methods, this study observes how trauma maintains itself to engage a reader through the storytelling process.

The working definition of trauma, which supports the thesis, is taken from the work of Cathy Caruth on Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). Caruth defines trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, and a response that occurs in the uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. These events are too horrific for the mind to place in waking memory; hence, they reside in the unconscious" (58).

Caruth argues that the transformative power of trauma is that it can lead to greater understanding and empathy. In her view, trauma is not simply a memory of a past event, but rather it is a phenomenon that involves a range of psychological and physiological responses to a traumatic experience. These responses can include feelings of overwhelm, disorientation, and fragmentation, which can lead to the traumatic event becoming unprocessed and unassimilated in the unconscious. Hence,

her interpretation of trauma as a source of transformation suggests that trauma can be a powerful force for change and healing, both on a personal and collective level.

As stated in the introduction, the revelation of ovarian cancer is the source of the trauma. Trauma tells its story through hiding itself in image and language because the true story is not fully known by the conscious. According to Caruth, "Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4).

Freud's theory of unconscious employment of the defense of repression involves unconscious knowledge of and perception of an event. This conscious failure to perceive the event results in it being stored in the unconscious. Neelam engages the reader as an experiencer in this process through her writing about Koirala's trauma as it makes the journey from the unconscious to the waking state.

Accompanying this process of the violent act moving from the unconscious into the waking state are the images and language which maintain this progression of trauma from the unconscious. This is similar to how the dream is maintained through image and language. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1990), Freud writes that "the dream must take its construction from the outer world and take its material from that which we have already experienced" (6). For example, if a person is feeling that they may not achieve a work demand, they may dream of sliding down hill as they work to walk upwards. Freud also writes that, "Dreams are presented in visual images and replace thought with hallucinations and that, although the dream's intention is to communicate, it has not discovered the source material, it has only imitated or elaborated on what resides in the unconscious" (16).

To further this, he theorizes that “dreams are unfinished and unresolved thoughts consisting of fragments of the source material (in this case trauma) and are an unrecognizable reproduction of a sensation residing in the unconscious” (26). The dream then, as a story, uses imagery created through the piecing together of known fragments from the outer world in a similar fashion to *Healed*.

The psychoanalytical theories at work in this study that explain how the unconscious communicates are the primary process. According to Cathy, “Repetition compulsion, the secondary process, displacement, and condensation. Being animated by the drives, specifically the drive of the id, the primary process acts on urges for basic desires and pleasurable things” (56). This may form the image of a favorite dinner in one’s mind when one is hungry. This basic urges are seen throughout the novel when Koirala demands trivial things. She argues that repetition compulsion arose through Freud’s observance of “the mind’s unavoidable return to the traumatic experience through the dream image” (59), which led him to further his work on the primary process, wherein that which was too horrific to experience in real time kept returning. This led to further theorizing on the death drive (the desire to return to an inanimate state) and the development of the secondary process. “It is in this process that truth or reality gains the voice that is able to take the dream image beyond the primary desires of the id for pleasure and into the process of repetition compulsion” (59-60).

Moreover, while observing the suffering of traumatic effects in individuals, Freud noted a tendency to return to the origin of trauma through repetitive reenactments, wherein the catastrophic events repeat themselves. “The repetition of these painful events was not initiated by the individual; it was the trauma itself repeating the violent event through the unknowing acts of the person against their

will” (1-2). Repetition from trauma consisted of a complex relationship between knowing and not knowing for the individual. Freud’s work is further supplemented through understanding the repetition compulsion: a state in which a person is subject to the repetition of a painful event until it is able to rewrite itself in a form that will be accepted by the conscious. “In order for trauma to exist, it must first not be known consciously. The violent event was too severe or happened too quickly to be processed by the conscious, so it is rejected from being held in the memory of the waking state” (3).

The secondary process involves the further participation of the ego. The unconscious uses the dream to communicate that which has been repressed and remains within the unconscious through constructing something unrecognizable using material taken from the outer world. In this way, that which was too horrific for the waking state to place in memory becomes less horrifying. The return of the traumatic experience in the dream is not the signal of the direct experience but rather the signal of the attempt to overcome the fact that it was not direct in order to attempt to master what was never fully grasped in the first place. According to Freud,

“Not having truly known the threat of death in the past, the survivor is continually forced to confront that threat. For consciousness then, the act of survival, as with the experience of trauma, is the repeated confrontation with both the necessity of, and the impossibility of, grasping the threat to one’s own life” (62).

Furthermore, Freud’s theory of displacement explains how the violent event is shifted and moved out of its original form into something unrecognizable or more pleasurable. Through new imagery, trauma is disguised using the unknown or the ordinary and is able to fool the defense of repression using a different tactic.

Condensation is the taking of multiple thoughts stemming from the unconscious and placing them together so that they take on form or symbol a ghost like we find in *Healed*: the ghost of death that haunts Koirala time and again. The biography *Healed*, through possessing the above mentioned psychological traits, engages the conscious of Manisha Koirala and reader first through the primary process and then through the secondary process, which includes the use of repetition compulsion displacement, and condensation. Through repeating traumatic event, these mechanisms are designed to rewrite what went so terribly wrong.

In order to understand the importance of Cathy Caruth's work in her book *Unclaimed Experience* to this paper, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of its main points. Her work is built upon the understanding of the repetition compulsion: a state in which a person is subject to the ongoing repetition of a painful events until it can rewrite itself in a form that will be accepted by the conscious. Trauma is a break in the mind's experience of time and therefore cannot reach the waking memory, as memory is dependent upon the concept of past. This, both known and unknown, trauma may be viewed in the form of a narrative which reveals the violent event in repetition through images and language.

Final work relevant to this work is by Dori Laub. He suggests three distinct levels of witnessing, the level of being a witness oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself.

In the first level, the speech acts used by the subject of the traumatic event are not 'facts'. The testimony involves events and feelings that are removed and connected. They are the fragments brought forth to the individual from the source of the trauma. The individual brings forth what they know, without

participation from a third party. In the second level, there is participation, not in the events but in the account of witnessing them. The listener functions as a companion and is present in reliving the events. In the third level, the process of witnessing is witnessed, with the narrator and the listener alternating between moving closer to and retreating from the experience. (61-62)

At this stage, both narrator and listener participate in the process of listening the listener reiterates the traumatic event in order to increase comprehensibility. The narrator may confirm and add to the testimony as that narration progress toward its end. It is this voice, the experience of the trauma that witness the truth of the traumatic event.

It is apparent that the author has adopted the approach of empathy and engagement in the story while narrating the events. When someone hears a story, rather than just raw facts and data, they begin to see themselves in the same situation and build connecting emotions. By identifying other's emotions and relating them to their own self, they draw upon these feelings and lessons within the story when they're faced with a similar situation.

In the biography *Healed* Koirala is the story teller. Narration has value, both for the individual and at the cultural level. For readers of life writing, the anxiety of critical interpretation is enhanced by the referentiality of the text. The fact that the trauma depicted is real affects our emotional as well as critical response. Tony Simoes da Silva says that he realized his irreverent reading of her memoir may come across as "unethical" because of the contractual obligations of life-writing is that the reader must at the very least respect the truth, and the trauma the writer proposes" (24).

Neelam uses story as an effective means of transferring individual and or culturally specific events into the awareness of others (individuals and cultures) and

even of the self. She uses story to hook us into someone we are not but also to tell us who we are. By exploring the unknown parts of Koirala and her mother's relationship during the time of crisis, the the reader is better able to identify with the attachment of daughter and mother which Manisha had not discovered when she was fine. This can be seen in one of the chapters called "Chemotherapy" where Manisha says:

My respect for Mom went up by leaps and bound during this period. As a child, living with my grandmother, I had never discovered this side of her. But now I was amazed by her unwavering focus on my welfare. Her determination was strong. As were her prayers. I trusted her to be my intermediary with the divine putting forth strong arguments of why I should be spared. (98)

Neelam's literary methods discussed in this work display insight into how the stories we tell contribute to the creation of human identity and self, recipes that disclose to the reader what she is made of by engaging in them according to the manner of the mixing or within the literary methods employed in the story. In this regard, the reader indulges himself or herself completely with the emotion of mother-daughter relationship since it thrives exponentially during hard time.

In the same way, the structure and method of Neelam's literary choices in *Healed* are employed to hook the reader into the humanizing effects of narrative by placing the psychological processes discussed in the theoretical chapter into story form. Neelam's narrative has the intent to humanize. "To raise the question on the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself" (5). Neelam Kumar strategically employs these attributes of narrative in the novel *Healed* in order to turn the reader into what is termed in this paper as an *experiencer* of the trauma in life threatening illness.

In Freud's *Studies in Hysteria* (1893-1895), specifically the case of Fraulein Elisabeth von R, while considering the problematic issue of science and psychology, he writes that there is "an intimate relationship between the story of the patients suffering and the symptoms of his illness" (135). We see in Koirala's biography a further significance of story and self-reflexivity when she asserts her own assumption of being fighting against death much before she was diagnosed with cancer.

Through the story of *Healed*, the reader is engaged in the process of the traumatic event as it progresses from where it resides in the unconscious to finding a place in the waking state. The trauma Koirala experienced as a cancer patient was too severe for her to be able to process and therefore was unable to find a place within her conscious. Hence, the trauma began to impose itself upon her through the process of repetition compulsion. While narrating about the experience she had during her chemotherapy session, she vividly describes her inner emotions where she was going through extreme pain and helplessness at the same time. In the following quote she says:

Despite how I felt, I was in a hurry to begin my chemotherapy sessions. A twinge of disappointment pricked at me when I learnt that my first chemo appointment, scheduled for 2 January, had been postponed because my freshly operated body was weak and still under attack. The two gaping holes in my abdomen hadn't healed. Chemo at that time would have not only delayed the healing process but also put me at risk of contracting some infection. (96)

The honesty with which Koirala's wish to go under chemotherapy in order to get cured suddenly turns into disappointment because of certain circumstances. This literary approach of putting things in such a way that the reader develops sympathy for the patient. In addition, the reader also becomes curious whether everything will

fall into place eventually or not. Through this way, reader gets connected with the story rather than just consuming the facts about her journey.

The reader is engaged on a personal level with Koirala through literary tactics such as imagery and language structure wherein trauma and its story can be found using reoccurring words and figures, and what is said and not said.

“Repetition among other figures of speech is frequently used syntactic stylistic element. A writer reminds readers of the significance of specific words, phrases or sentences by repeating them, thereby designating them as keywords, phrases or sentences in the text. This is done by recurrently throughout the text”(96).

“I don’t want to die” (2). These are the opening sentences in chapter one of Koirala’s *Healed*. With phrase, the reader is given the basic framework of the progression of the story: the progression of trauma. From these lines, we know there is fear, a voice, and then an absence of that fear and voice. This is due to the repetition of the words “I don’t want to die” (2), and becomes ordinary to the reader through its familiarity. Koirala’s utterance of above mentioned phrase again and again refers to the urge of living her life and a sense of plea in front of her doctors and close ones makes a strong impact upon readers to understand her situation with abundant sympathy and love. This repetition of ordinarieness provides an opening for emotion and sensation to impose themselves upon the waking state of the reader. Neelam engages the reader’s own conscious through this mimicking of the process of the psychoanalytic theory, wherein that which is residing in the unconscious reveals itself, first driven through the primary process and then disguising itself through methods of displacement and condensation.

Repetition is a rhetorical device that demonstrates the logical emphasis required to draw a reader's attention to a key word or a key phrase in a text. "It entails repeating words, sounds, clauses and expressions in a specific order or without regard for word arrangement in order to highlight a subject" (101). Neelam uses repetition to engage the reader within the effects and process of trauma. This repetition of Koirala's trauma is experienced as *rememory* in the novel and further supported in Caruth's work when she cites Freud's own remarks about how he was struck by his patients' reliving of violent traumatic events (59). The repetition of "108" uttered by Koirala when she is lost in her thought during her chemotherapy and her desperate urge to get cured from cancer illustrates in following quotes:

I had been told that the 108 beads on the mala represented the different stages of the human soul's journey. The 108 beads are strung along with a 'guu beads'. In Hinduism, the number 108 has profound significance [...]. There are 108 *pithas*[...]. India in yogic tradition; 108 Upanishads, 108 marma points, or sacred places, in the body: and 108 sun salutation can be offered in a yoga mala. (98)

It is the *rememory* of the terrifying event that the reader engages with, through reading to how Koirala's own trauma story reveals itself to her in the form of something she dearly loved, her family.

The image must first be pleasurable, if not ordinary, in order to be received by the waking state. "Accurate representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event since, by its very definition, trauma lies beyond the bounds of 'normal' conception" (15). This accordance to Kali Tal is a concept of trauma and memory emphasizes the necessity to recreate or abreact through narrative recall of the experience.

We see this theory at work in *Healed* in Nilam's repeated use of imagery throughout the biography to engage us in the process of Koirala's trauma hiding and disguising itself through pleasurable and ordinary images throughout the novel showing how Koirala's conscious self tries to develop a survivable relationship with those images. This can be evidently observed when Neelam vividly describes about the interior of hospital and operation room frequently. To illustrate:

As I lay in the hospital bed, I trembled. I had two ports inserted into my body to infuse the drugs-one was below my right shoulder and the other on my left side, near my stomach. The nurse on duty came and put a tube into one of the ports. I shut my eyes. I heard my mom's chants floating into the room. I felt drugged. At some point, the heavy chemotherapy liquid began dripping into my body. And then, it horrible reactions. (100)

The aforementioned lines foreshadows the psychological thought of koirala as well as the physical ambiance around her. The description of medical mechanism to carry out chemotherapy serves as a reconstruction of the event and place that koirala witnessed. These description makes a firm hold in the mind of the reader where they happen to experience or make an attempt to put themselves in the position of the character itself. Hence, the reader gets a new wisdom regarding the particular situation along with the character.

This can be further understood by Caruth's remarks stating that, "Freud's speculation on the causes of repetition compulsion in relation to the origins of consciousness can indeed be understood as an attempt to grasp the paradoxical relation between survival and consciousness" (61). The event or incident of knowing about minimum chances of getting cured from cancer is the initial step of Koirala's trauma. Her desire of turning the medical report and doctor's analysis false stays very

strongly inside her consciousness which eventually takes control over her consciousness. “Dr. Advani will do the tests tomorrow and tell me that these reports are inaccurate. I know he will say it’s nothing. I can’t wait to go back tomorrow morning!” (25).

There appears to be a reality of a destructive force that fear of death imposes on the human psyche: a history of previous violence that continuously repeats itself (Caruth 76). Neelam repeats the traumatic event of Koirala’s revelation of ovarian cancer through the literary image she creates upon Manisha’s first meeting with Doctor Ghimire. In this regard she portrays the deep sense of helplessness of Manisha Koirala. To illustrate “Manisha, my dear, you have cancer!C-A-N-C-E-R? I repeated the word incredulously. ‘How can I have cancer?’” (9).

This event is again repeated in coming chapter where Manisha koirala visits Dr Advani in Mumbai after being diagnose in Nepal. In this chapter she asserts, “It was Dr. Advani who spoke directly to me, ‘Manisha, it does appear you have cancer. Late-stage ovarian cancer” (28).

This repetition of traumatic event of realization of uncertainty of life serves to blur the wall between reader and the experiencer. Thus, there begins an amalgamation between two entities to consider each other as one. “This feeling of trauma being too painful for the waking state, were placed in the unconscious through the defense of repression, but the trauma returns to overcome the fact that it was not a direct experience” (62).

The purpose of writing cancer in capital letter with hyphen in between serves as an emphasis to highlight the horror of the diseases. As the reader go through such phrases, he or she happens to get attached with the inner feelings of Manisha Koirala

where she witnessed the disease repeatedly used for several times during her patient stage.

Similarly, Neelam uses language to bring Manisha's trauma into the reader's own waking state. Moreover before analyzing it, it is important to note that Freud was pre-linguistic. The work on linguistics stemming in Formalism. Leading to Structuralism and then Post-Structuralism, came after access to these linguistic foundations. But as stated previously, Freud did observe the significance of story in psychoanalytic practice. Yet in literature, it is not only the story that experiences the processes of trauma emerging from the unconscious to the waking state, but also the reader. The act of storytelling is beholden to the audience who listens. "What is passed, finally, is not just the meaning of words but their performance" (111). Through story, the establishment of a history is gained and how that history played a role in carrying out decisions after the traumatic event is illustrated.

Throughout *Healed*, the reader and Koirala are bound together what they are unable to comprehend. The traumatic event, which was not completely absorbed by Manisha, is brought forth to the reader with the same lack of understandability. As the story progresses, the reader and Koirala move back and forth through knowing and not knowing. This is similar to the method in psychoanalysis where both therapist and patient participate in discovering the trauma. It is quite evident that, Koirala along her narration bring her anecdote about past visit to Mumbai and her perception towards the city. She says

Two things hit me instantly: Mumbai's warm humidity and its distinct smell. I remember many years ago, when I had visited Mumbai as a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl, I had wrinkled my little nose at its fishy smell. I did not know why that memory came to my mind at that particular time, but it did. Many years of

living there had made me become used to Mumbai's salt-in-the-air, fishy smell. (21)

Koirala's sudden remembrance of her first Mumbai visit acts as a contradicting situation compared to her present situation where she is visiting the city in order to get a hope for her life unlike when she was a sixteen years old girl. However, the chaotic psychological state in both the time foregrounds that a certain sense of trauma was already present before her ovarian cancer.

This language to hint at pre-existing trauma Neelam uses, such as the smell of fish and humid atmosphere to engage the reader's waking state. The smell of fish and humid atmosphere also metaphorically directs towards something which is discomfiting and urgency. As the narrative progresses, Koirala speaks of many experiences, suggesting that she was always fearful of being far from her beloved ones. In this regard, her fear of dying became the source of her trauma for being separated from her close ones forever. *Healed* is telling the story of the truth and maintaining traumatic event during the repetition in her narrative. The story wants the attention of a listener to tell the truth of trauma too horrific to comprehend within the waking state.

The use of language is taken as a major tool to highlight the pain and predicament resulting from several discouraging and precarious statement made by doctor regarding her possibility of being cured and remain alive. The fear and shaken emotions, being not entirely known to the conscious; exists as fragments residing in the unconscious, fragments that desire witness through the use of semiotic and other form of language. "These psychological chaos of the trauma, having been completed, can only be brought fort again through language. Thus, the language itself becomes the site of the trauma, and language begs a listener" (57). Stories convey more than

just information. They demand active participation between narrator and reader. Just as the unconscious must bring the not knowing and knowing the conscious, so does the story bring the same to the reader.

In Chapter Nine Koirala laments about her own irresponsible way of handling her lifestyle and taking her life for granted. She says:

My state of mind toxic, my approach to life complacent and my attitude ungrateful. So here I was, reliving the past in my head in a hospital in New York, praying desperately that I would live”.

I let out a raspy, guttural scream the moment I saw my naked body reflected in the bathroom mirror. What had happened to my marble white skin? What had happened to my mother’s precious daughter? My flesh had been ruthlessly stapled with steel pins right from below my breasts to my groin. (79)

The aforementioned quote elucidates that verb is missing, the action word. The fragmentation and incompleteness is applied in order to reveal the true state of mind that Koirala was going through during her stay in New York for her treatment. This lack of a verb in the quote, or lack of bringing forth the painful event to the waking state, is supported through Caruth’s work of knowing and not knowing. The desired object is brought forth, as is the desire for that object, using pronouns, but the action or events are entirely excluded. The reader knows the desired object but has yet to fully engage in the cause of that desired object being taken away. Koirala wants to accept the painful events that led her to the predicament.

This fragmented use of language then shifts in the later sentence, the complete sentence possessing the required subject, verb and object order. “What had happened to my marble white skin? What had happened to my mother’s precious daughter?”

The use of a verb brings meaning to Koirala and she becomes further clarified. She is

someone's daughter. There is no fragment here. She belongs to someone and there is no ambiguity in that belonging. These phrases suggest the paradoxical state of mind of Koirala where she suddenly becomes void and at the same time realizes about her family and gets awakened to some extent by accepting the situation.

The fourth key figure in literature Caruth discuss is awakening. In *Healed*, we see this awareness of new life in the narrative. The awakening involves recognizing the new life Koirala got after defeating cancer. Trauma was already present in Koirala's psychology after being diagnosed with the cancer and along with the treatment process during her stay in the USA. However, after being cancer free after five months of rigorous treatment, she acknowledges the importance of life as well as a certain degree of insecurity and fear if how she will be perceived when she returns back to Mumbai. On contrary, she finds everyone very generous towards her and motivating to pursue her disease free life. In Manisha koirala's words, she says:

How would I face people like this in Mumbai? They had known me as a beautiful, glamorous star with lustrous hair and confident strides. But now? However, as I was walking one day in a newly discovered ark near my nouse, I noticed people turning back to look at me. Some even stopped their cars. This time I met their eyes. What I saw in them was compassion and support. On a street, a man stopped to let me pass and gave me a thumbs-up! 'Manisha Koirala, keep up the good work!' he shouted. I started fealling in love with life once again. (140)

This awakening is paradoxical, uniting people's emotion with her emotion, and then with the reader who, through Neelam's (co author) construction of an unstructured narrative ungoverned by the rules is forced to investigate the images created by the character. The reader becomes an additional experiencer of the trauma by engaging in

the process of how trauma tells its story. The use of language by Neelam leads the reader toward an awakening to the horrifying effects of life threatening disease on the human psyche.

In his work *Truth and Testimony: The Process of the Struggle*, Dori Laub refers to the Holocaust and to the importance of the survivors telling their story in order to come to terms with the trauma of the violent event. He recognizes three separate and distinct levels of witnessing: “The level of being witness to oneself within the experience, the level of being a witness to the testimony of others, and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself” (61).

In *Healed*, the more the narrative goes forward, Koirala speaks of her sufferings. This is seen when Koirala pleads for being healed from cancer. “I still felt feverish, but kept thrusting it to the back of my mind. But when my fever increased, I panicked. What had I done wrong? Had I overexerted my weak body? Was it recurrence I was facing? No, not again, O diving!”(149).

This statement is similar to the notion of retelling the event of getting hopeless while she had almost out of cancer. By telling her story of being attacked by fever again, Koirala begins to establish a history or past event and hence an identity that is built upon the survivorship of those experiences.

Laub asserts that, in his second level, being witness to the testimony of others, the listener performs the function of a companion and does not interrupt the process of self-witness. This is seen through the behavior of Manisha Koirala’s Mother referred as *Ama*, “the listener becomes the witness of what a cancer patient went through and the reader engages in this level of witness through *Ama*. It is her mother who notices Manisha talking to herself and trying to distract. It is seen in the following quotes below:

One day, when Mom walked in, she was shocked to hear me speak in a voice that dripped honey, ‘ Beloved, you’ve done such a great work looking after me. You’ve been through such a massive surgery, yet you are serving me beautifully.

Yes, Ama. They’ve taken my ovaries out. But they still need my love. I’m also talking to my stomach and all my remaining organs. I am sending kind messages and gratitude to them. (110)

During this level, the survivor engages in a process wherein they are able to re-engage with the self who existed before the trauma. Thus Koirala establish an identity of a free self. She finds herself as a new person whose ovaries has been brought out by surgery. In this particular event, her mother does not interfere her in any way, rather she listens to her carefully although she later gets very panicked. Hence, in this way, the trauma of a survivor is transformed to its readers and comprehends about the new enlightenment that the survivor has gained when they have gone through trauma.

It is in the third level, the process of being a witness to witnessing itself, that Koirala’s endeavors to gain help from outside are fulfilled. Through Koirala’s stories, people around her is able to bear witness to her trauma. It is this final stage of witnessing that savers her from getting out of her negative feelings. At this level, where there is another person actively listening, this “other” contributes to the establishment of a self, someone who may be heard (66). There is someone to save. This occurs in the text when Koirala refers cancer as her teacher. This is in accordance to the quote:

Cancer became my teacher. It taught me to seek out help in various aspects influencing my health. It led me to learn yoga and pranayama and it encouraged me to deepen my spiritual understanding by going to Oneness

University. It taught me not to shy away from seeking advice from experts.

Most importantly, cancer made me focus on my behaviour as a person. I have worked hard and continue to work mindfully at becoming the best version of myself- emotionally, spiritually and physically. I grew to become the kind of person *I* would like to be with. (192)

This is yet another witness to the event, the witness created through the attentions of the reader, who has been listening all along, engaged in the same process of investigating and deciphering both the images and the language the characters themselves have been subject to. The narrator is omniscient and thus follows the third level, the process of being witness to witnessing, and using storytelling and narrative becomes paradoxical. The autobiography bears witness to cancer , to the horrific conditions that maintain it, and to the deep psychological disruption of the separation of mother and child. The reader bears witness through listening to the story.

In conclusion Manisha Koirala's *Healed* tells the story of one woman's psychological process as she comes to terms with her trauma. Co-author Neelam Kumar gives voice to these unspeakable things through the literary methods she employs. These methods behoove the listening and engagement of the reader so that healing may begin through the right to give testimony to one's own story and the understanding of that story. There is an innate feature in storytelling that passes on the true experience of events. Storytelling functions differently than giving a report of an event.

Neelam's use of storytelling and literary methods in *Healed* relate the story to the reader by mimicking the working psychoanalytical theories of Freud. In other words, the psychological structures and processes within the psyche that is present in the unconscious mind and the horrific event that caused the trauma and communicate

that event to the waking state. The literary methods of repetition, imagery, language, and testimony are used to draw the reader into a process of learning about the traumatic effects of the violent act. The reader are led toward a resolution and understanding of the originating frightful happenings of knowing about incurable disease, which was the first step in the Koirala's dehumanization. These methods of the psyche applied as literary tactics give the reader an intimacy with the critical act and with Koirala. The reader's own waking state must learn and investigate alongside Koirala's conscious the material stemming from the unconscious.

Engaging the reader as an experiencer Neelam exposes the reader to the pain and symptoms of trauma. They may come to understand the conditions that create and sustain the originating imminent act in an individual which disrupts a person from being able to recognize themselves and the truth of their history, and also understand how this disruption interferes with the ability to authorize one' own idea of self.

Further work on establishing self-identity through mote would be beneficial to supplement the understanding of this essay and the unspeakable events that create trauma, and hence its structures and productions that have been highlighted through the world of Freud, Caruth, and Laub.

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