CHAPTER ONE

The Need for a Comprehensive Framework

Trauma theory tries to turn criticism back towards being an

ethical, responsible, purposive discourse, listening to the

wounds of the other. But if it is truly to do this, this point of

convergence also needs to be the start of a divergence, of

an opening out of theory to wider contexts. Trauma is

intrinsically multidisciplinary if this criticism has a future,

it needs to displace older paradigms and attend to new

configurations of cultural knowledge.

-- Roger Luckhurst

A central claim of contemporary literary trauma theory

asserts that trauma creates a speechless fright that divides

or destroys identity…. However, a discursive dependence

upon a single psychological theory of trauma produces a

homogeneous interpretation of the diverse representations

in the trauma novel and interplay that occurs between

language, experience, memory, and place.

-- Michelle Balaev

Taken together, these epigraphs put spotlight on the contour of trauma studies

demonstrating the domination of psychoanalytical model despite the magnificent

proliferation in trauma discourse. Due to such reality in the development of the theory,

the study into trauma still struggles for dynamic exploration. In such a scenario, the first

chapter reviews major postulations on and application of trauma from Freud to the recent time and posits a framework which demonstrates that trauma studies is still guided by one-dimensional approach. And, as the dynamic study of trauma does not appear feasible from the existing paradigms, the chapter also formulates an alternative framework to examine trauma as a consequence of multiple variables.

Trauma: from Psychoanalysis to Literature

The twentieth century, which has been witness to catastrophic and cataclysmic activities of many kinds, has proliferated psychoanalytical notion, trauma, in a range of field of studies and disciplines. In Luckhurst's words, "Trauma study now includes many fields, focusing on psychological, philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic questions about the nature and representation of traumatic events" (497). Trauma scholars from most of these fields largely agree that the term was ushered in its present critical formation by Sigmund Freud in *Moses and Monotheism*, a seminal book which revised the ideas expressed in his earlier two books. Unlike the two books – *Studies in Hysteria* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* which trace the origin of traumatic neurosis in the repressive zone that is created post to particularly shocking experiences or fantasies – *Moses and Monotheism* assigns the genesis to incubation period. Central to the postulation in the revised version is the idea of, to borrow Kaplan's assessment, "motivated unconscious" (32). The phrase, as Freud himself has elucidated, signifies how memory of a traumatic event can be lost over time but then regained when triggered by some similar events:

> It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has

developed a traumatic neurosis. (84)

The relationship between the original moment and its reemergence into awareness has been referred as *Nachträglichkeit* by Freud and translated by Laplanche as afterwardness. As explained by Laplanche in his response to Caruth's question if his inquiry was linked to the issue of time, Freud's sense of the word has two aspects: first, "the experience of the outside world …; it is immediate time, immediate temporality"; and second, "the temporality of retranslating one's own fate of retranslating what's coming to this fate from the message of the other" (*An Interview with Laplanche* 124).

A further extension of Freud's concept is the incorporation of *Nachträglichkeit* in the diagnostic canon of the medical and psychiatric profession in the 1980s as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Replacing the well-known phenomenon like 'shell shock'/ 'combat fatigue', the medical nomenclature posited that the stressor is "outside the range of usual human experience" due to the fact that the violent and terrifying texture destroys the normal neurobiological process (American Psychiatric Association 250). With the incorporation of psychological trauma as formal diagnostic category of PTSD, in Micale's reading, "western psychiatric medicine has led the way in opening up this field of study" (1). The appropriation of PTSD is available in the humanities through the works of Soshana Felman, Dori Laub, Cathy Caruth and Geoffrey Hartman, among others, with their concern for the interpretation of personal and social histories. Since then, trauma has become a key perspective in the broader cultural domain: a framework for investigating the relationship between individual experience and historical events, cultural representations and social formation.

Of these four major contributors, psychoanalyst Laub and Yale literary critic Felman "strive[s] to grasp and to articulate the obscure relation between witnessing, events and evidence" (xiii). In their collaborative work, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing*

in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, they make a case for vicarious trauma and argue for its urgency. The need is felt, as they state, due to the fact that Holocaust is "an event without a witness" (xvii). They elucidate the process of vicarious trauma through the analysis of the discourse produced as an aftermath of the historical traumas: it avails via the response of both artists and even ordinary people's accounts. Regarding the reason for the selection of the corpus, they say, "the major texts, films and documents submitted to the scrutiny of this book […] were all written and produced subsequent to the historical trauma of the Second World War, a trauma we consider as the watershed of our times". Stating further they declare that traumatic past is not an event, but a consequence:

> … the book will come to view [the trauma] not as an event encapsulated in the past, but as history which is essentially *not over*, a history whose repercussions are not simply omnipresent […] in all our cultural activities, but whose traumatic consequences are still *evolving* […] in today's political, historical, cultural and artistic scene. (xiv)

Laub contributes to this conclusion primarily by investigating the impact of listening to traumatic experience. The experience, he contends, "precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction". Yet, the hearer becomes "the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time" (57). In other words, the hearer co-owns the traumatic event though the rendition of trauma is inevitably constrained by the impossibility of adequate representation. Felman, on the other hand, finds it unavoidable to examine the relationship between pedagogy and trauma grounding on assumption that testimony is a literary genre of post-traumatic century, *i.e.*, the twentieth century. With her experiment in the seminar class of Yale graduate students, she concludes, "a 'life testimony' is not

simply a testimony to a private life, but a point of conflation between text and life, a

textual testimony which can *penetrate us like an actual life*" (2). This postulation along

with Laub's vindication apparently demonstrates that they emphasize on what Berger

calls, "retrospective reconstruction of the traumatic event" (572). In other words, they

aim to construct testimony, which in Felman's words,

> seems to be composed of bits and pieces of memory that has been
>
> overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or
>
> remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor
>
> assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference.

Defining further in higher abstraction, she calls testimony, "a discursive practice" (5).

The idea of testimony as discourse, in Cathy Caruth's reading, "extends beyond the

question of individual cure" and compels the scholars in different fields to think the way

to access, "history that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose truth there is no simple

access" (*Trauma* 6). Truly, Laub and Felman's contribution in trauma studies is

important in two ways: first, they transport trauma beyond neuro-anatomical inquiry; and

second, they bring resurgence of interest in trauma studies.

Unlike Laub and Felman's concentration on testimony, Caruth's take on trauma,

centers on the nature of belatedness to describe the dynamics of the field. Her

undertaking commences with the definition of trauma in her introduction to one of the

first collections on the interdisciplinary study of trauma, *Trauma: Explorations in

Memory*. She draws on the work of psychologist Freud and neurobiologist van der Kolk

to reinforce post-effect sense of trauma: "a response sometimes delayed, to an

overwhelming event or set of events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive

hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event". This proposition

points that trauma manifests only after latency to make it feasible in a narrative as the

event is assimilated "only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it" (4). Because the event is not grasped yet carries inherent ability to reoccur, it compels the traumatized person to survive the trauma by finding ways of bearing witness to it. The necessity, Caruth calls on Freud's famous account in *Moses and Monotheism*, "is not a pathology that is of falsehood or displacement of meaning but of history itself" and it is "absolutely true to the event," (5). Hence, in Caruthian sense, trauma exceeds the sense of mere symptom of the unconscious to the possibility of history. Caruth furthers Freud's concept of belated experience in another seminal book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* by turning to literature. Literary texts fascinate Freud, she argues "because literature like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" (3). "For Caruth", in Anne Whitehead's assessment, "literary fiction plays a crucial role in providing the reader with a narrative which is not straightforwardly referential, but which nevertheless offers a powerful mode of access to history and memory" (13). A problematic issue that Whitehead points out in her analysis of Caruth's statement concerns an underlying flexibility in the concept of history. Whitehead maintains that Caruth characterizes trauma as "possession by the past that is not entirely one's own" and as such it occurs not necessarily in the individual who experienced it but in "future generation" (136). The extended inference, as many critics view, is misleading, and thus Caruth has been opposed and criticized.

In *Trauma: A Genealogy*, Ruth Leys points at indiscriminating treatment of two contradistinctory sides – perpetrator and the victim of trauma – in Caruth's conjecture. According to her, Caruth's conclusion blurs the differences between the experience of the opposites: "the experience (or non-experience) of trauma is characterized as something that can be shared by victims and non-victims alike" (305). Seconding her, not only the

feminist critics but also postcolonial critics, have objected Caruth as the theory falls short

"to act as a break against rather than as a vehicle for cultural and political Manichaeism"

(Radstone 9). Another critic, LaCapra, has also written words of caution to Caruth's

postulation. According to him, Caruth's work conflates historical and trans-historical due

to her indiscriminating treatment of the words.

Trauma as Criticism

The confrontation to "Caruth's alleged elision of the specificity of subject

positions and power differentials", to borrow Rothberg's phrase, is a symptomatic of

criticism to psychoanalytical trauma theory. In the array of dissidents, we can find many

scholars starting with Michael Roth. Other critics in the list, among many, include

feminist critics such as Elaine Showalter, Judith Herman, Laura S. Brown, Susannah

Radstone, and revolutionary psychiatrist such as Frantz Fanon. Feminist critics states that

the traumatic experience of other than male often finds no spaces in Caruthian sense as

her definition of trauma has been constructed from the experiences of dominant groups in

Western society.

Ending the genealogical overview of critiques, this dissertation now concentrates

on a few remarkable critiques. Here, it begins with Kali Tal. Tal's bottom-line

assumption does not differ from the theorists of abreactive model of trauma. Her

statement on the limitations of trauma exemplifies the influence of the model: "Accurate

representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event since, by its

very definition, trauma lies beyond the bounds of 'normal' conceptions" (15). However,

her approach differs from that of Laub, Felman and Caruth, for she approaches the issues

in trauma from feminist perspective rather than from psychoanalysis. To set her

approach, she asks many research questions at the beginning of the first chapter:

What does the act of testimony of 'bearing witness' mean to an individual

survivor, to a community of survivors? How are testimonies interpreted by different audiences? […] How are survivors' stories adopted to fit and then contained within the dominant structures of social, cultural and political discourse? (3)

In order to respond to the nature of interpretation and adaption of individual testimonies, she analyzes diverse writings that range from Holocaust to the Vietnam War to the sexual abuse of women and children. Tal concludes that trauma uses "three strategies of cultural coping – mythologization, medicalization, and disappearance" for the appropriation of survivor experience (6). To state it simply in her words, "representation of traumatic experience is ultimately a tool in the hands of those who shape public perception and national myth" (19). It is apparent, as Berger has evaluated, "Tal bases her views of trauma on cognitive psychology and a feminist politics that identifies strongly with the testimonies of rape and incest survivors" (579). Tal's undertaking, it can be concluded, shows her pre-occupation with patriarchal domination in testimony discourse and the need for as nearly possible unmediated and un-interpreted discourse.

Despite such a grand appeal for the liberation of trauma discourse, Tal does not escape an archetypal paradigms, Leys evaluates. In her words, the speculation of Tal as of many writers ranging from Freud to her time demonstrates fundamentally antithetical ideas namely mimetic and anti-mimetic theories. Hence, it fails to give any new direction to trauma studies. Illustrating the first type, which is based on the mechanism of hypnotism, Tal says: "[it] holds that trauma, or the experience of the traumatized subject, can be understood as involving a kind of hypnotic imitation or identification in which, precisely because the victim cannot recall the original traumatogenic event, she is faded to act it out or in other ways imitate it". In other words, the post-traumatic state is a dissociated experience in which the affected person imitates the traumatic memory as if

in a hypnotic trance. The second type, anti-mimetic, holds trauma as "purely external event that befalls a fully constituted subject, whether the damage to the latter's psychical autonomy and integrity; there is in principle no problem of eventually remembering or otherwise recovering the event" (298-99). From this perspective, psychological trauma is an external event in which the shock is registered without the active participation implied by mimesis.

The idea of two possible ways of trauma registration remains an abiding issue in Dominic LaCapra's writing too but with the implication in historiography. LaCapra, whose concern is "moral and hermeneutical dimensions of representing trauma history", holds that there are two approaches to historiography: documentary or self-sufficient research model and radical constructivist model (Ball 4). In the first model, the historian seeks to establish objective facts from archival sources and other primary documents to show what exactly happened in the past: "on this first approach, gathering evidence and making referential statements in the form of truth claims based on that evidence constitute necessary and sufficient conditions of historiography". In the second, "referential statements making truth claims apply at best only to events […] essential are performative, figurative, aesthetic, rhetorical, ideological, and political factors that 'construct' structures – stories, plots, arguments, interpretations, explanations" (1). With this distinction, he implies that relativist position can have unacceptable application, especially for the representation of traumatic historical events. The representation, he argues, requires the historian's "empathic unsettlement" – feeling for another without losing sight of the distinction between one's own experience and the experience of the other.

To sum up, LaCapra's postulations like former writings reveal the concern for the critical and ethical issues in representing traumatic experience and thus leave space for

another dimension in trauma studies. Assessing the existing corpora of the trauma theory,
Kaplan asserts that there is a need for a more complex model than that of Caruth and
many psychologists due to the fact that "the model of trauma as dissociation in
individuals involves too rigid view of what happens to memory in extreme situation"
(42). Rothberg's appraisal – critics of trauma studies raise important issues and highlight
the need for a more cosmopolitan and politically savvy trauma studies – also reverberates
Kaplan's judgment (90). Kaplan's urge bases on her observation that most of the models
fall short of appropriateness due to their neglect for how the brain functions in trauma:
"Each theorist presents one psychic mechanism as defining what happens in trauma,
whereas it seems to me that things are more complex" (36-38). Her account of how brain
functions during traumatic event sounds convincing:

> We can distinguish three possible kinds of brain function in firsthand
> trauma: first the dissociation function (which so attracted humanists) in
> which the trauma is not accessible to cognition or memory, and where the
> event is understood to come from outside, not mediated by the
> unconscious; second, the circuitry just referred to, which involves both
> dissociation and cognition, thus allowing for the trauma to be in conscious
> memory; and finally, a function not discussed by neuroscientists and
> which goes back to Freud's 'seduction theory' where the victim of trauma
> involving perpetrators and their victims partly identifies with the
> aggressor. (38)

Clearly, using the insight from neuroscientists on how mind functions during traumatic
event, Kaplan challenges widely accepted assumption that trauma is unidimensionally
experienced by each victim. She states that a victim's response depends on the particular
situation, an individual's specific psychic history and formation, and the context for the

event. But because she adheres to 'Foucauldian notion of discourse' instantly after this criticism, it deters her from modeling any framework that would appropriately illustrate the function of these variables.

Prior to Kaplan, many scholars had also brought the issue of variables to the fore; they had spotlighted on how the other factors including the mind function play equally decisive role in determining the nature of trauma registration. Judith Lewis Herman had illustrated how context facilitates or hinders trauma registration: "To hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance (9). Psychiatrist Laurence Kirmayer had also outlined some of the contingent factors: "Registration, rehearsal, and recall [of traumatic events] are governed by social contexts and cultural models for memories, narratives, and life stories" (191). David Becker had also argued along the same line: "Trauma can only be understood and addressed with reference to the specific contexts in which it occurs" (2). The context Becker mentioned included cultural norms, political contexts, the nature of the event, the organization of the community, and so forth.

What constitutes trauma in the assessment of these authors including Kaplan is not entirely dependent on the nature of event; as individuals suffer trauma in social and more specifically cultural context, the meaning of trauma is largely shaped by them.

A New Dimension

Herman, Kirmayer, Becker and Kaplan's incorporation of context attempts to orient trauma theory from the realm of the individual and the traumatic event to the other components in trauma especially the collective. Nevertheless, the departure still grounds on an understanding of trauma as timeless, repetitious and infectious. Scholars who are credited for pioneering this shift include Kai Erikson, Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka.

Erikson represents an important orientation through his attempt to direct the

notion of trauma from an individualized context to traumatized communities: "Indeed, it

can happen that otherwise unconnected persons who share a traumatic experience seek

one another out and develop a form of fellowship on the strength of that common tie". He

addresses the question how trauma operates collectively by resorting to one of the forms

of rhetoric, *i.e.*, ethics. For instance, we can take his notion of transference: "traumatic

wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos – a group culture,

almost – that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it

up" (185). The reliance on only one of the modes of rhetoric thereby mapping out other

two modes – pathos and logos – makes Erikson's analysis incomplete. It is only with the

works of Alexander and Eyerman that the idea appears more convincing. Alexander

investigates the relation between memory, public discourse and collective identities.

Regarding the ontology and epistemology of cultural trauma, he says, "[it] 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 future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways". Specifying further, he

adds that trauma does not exist naturally; rather it is "a socially mediated attribute" that

can be made either "in real time, as an event unfolds", or "before the event occurs, as an

adumbration", or "after the event has concluded, as a post-hoc reconstruction" (1, 8).

Eyerman too contributes significantly in shifting the attention from psychological to

cultural trauma. His assertion can be exemplified through the following lines:

> 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. (61)

The distinction leads Eyerman to claim that the narratives of massive trauma experienced by culturally distinct groups can recreate the experience for the people who share the same race, religion or nationality. With this principal, he infers that the collective memory of slavery in the past traumatizes the descendents of slave and determines their identity. Implicated in the idea of identity construction, as Smelser says, is an issue of "mechanisms that establish and sustain trauma". According to him, the mechanisms of psychological trauma are "intra-psychic dynamics of defense, adaptation, coping, and working through" and the mechanisms of cultural trauma are "social agents and contenting groups" (39).

Cultural trauma, as posited by the above mentioned authors is very promising as it emphasizes the sequential relation between identity formation and identity destruction. Moreover, it delineates on the role of media like newspaper, radio and television. Nonetheless, the postulation raises a number of questions. A major critique of "the proponents of the cultural trauma paradigm" comes from Wulf Kansteiner. She says, "[…] the growing body of work has created an aestheticized, morally and politically imprecise concept of cultural trauma, which provides little insight into the social and cultural repercussions of historical traumata" (194). A prominent Nepali scholar, Beerendra Pandey also demonstrates problem in the revisionist notion of trauma posited by Alexander and Eyerman: "As my theorizing and exploration of the discourse of traumatic memory of the partition of India shows, the literature of trauma does not necessarily offer a means of overcoming instability, contaminated as it is with the ideological contours of the dominant culture to which the trauma belongs" (136-37). Another contradiction, visible to any critical eye, is embedded in Alexander's assumption that a theory based on empirical evidence in west can "fluidly be extended to the

experiences of trauma outside of Western societies" (25). The universalizing assumption

suffers greatly from potential imperialistic fallacy if extended and applied to multicultural

contexts. In other words, as cultural trauma is specific society bounded, we should not

imagine homogeneous impact of any event over all the individuals.

Need for an Alternative Conceptual Framework

Not only the cultural and psychological but also any of the existing postulations

on trauma, due to their limited application, hardly provide framework to study the

contingent elements that determine literary rendition of trauma. Hence, it is necessary to

formulate an alternative to canonical trauma theories that would account for the diverse

representation of any traumatic event. For it, one of the best ways can be inter-

disciplinary borrowing of a communication model as proposed by George Gerbner.

Surely, the process of trauma rendition is distinct from general communication

practice and as such critics can be skeptic about the relevance of Gerbner's model in

trauma studies. Point to note before the words of skepticism is that the seminal model

overcomes any of the limitations in the existing communication models such as Harold

D. Lasswell's, Claude Shanon and Warren Weaver's, Charles E. Osgood's and Wilbur

Schramm's. Unlike these mechanical and mathematical models, Gerbner bases the idea

on his succinct definition of communication as "social interaction through messages"

(qtd. in McQuail 13). The model's wider applicability, to use Fiske's assessment, is a

function of its universal significance, "it can explain any example of communication, and

in particular draws attention to those key elements that are common to each and every act

of communication". More theoretically, the model "relates the message to the reality" and

sees communication as multi-step process having means and control dimension (24). The

framework thus accounts major elements of communication from perception to cognition

and ultimately to affective processing. George Gerbner has developed the following model.
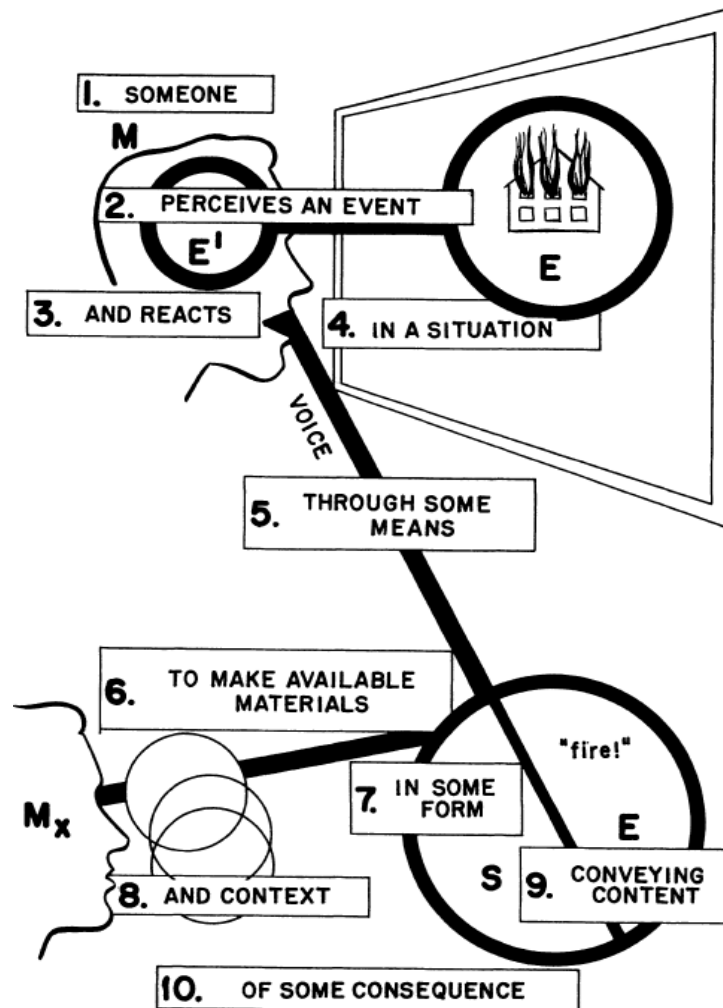

Figure 1: Gerbner's graphic model [Source: Gerbner 175]

This model is based on the verbal model in which he discusses ten aspects in communication process namely person, event, reaction, situation, means, availability, form, context, conveying context and consequences. M (someone), in this model, is a communicating agent, a perceiver and a reactor as well. The process of perception and reaction, however, is not simple: it is constrained by the factors like situation and means

consecutively. In the next step when the message is communicated, it aims to transfer

through both form and content. Finally, when it reaches the listener, it is perceived in

certain context and as a consequence brings some result.

　　　　Gerbner's model appears as illustrated in figure 2 in its graphic form. The revised

model encompasses all the components of graphic model to broaden the scope of its
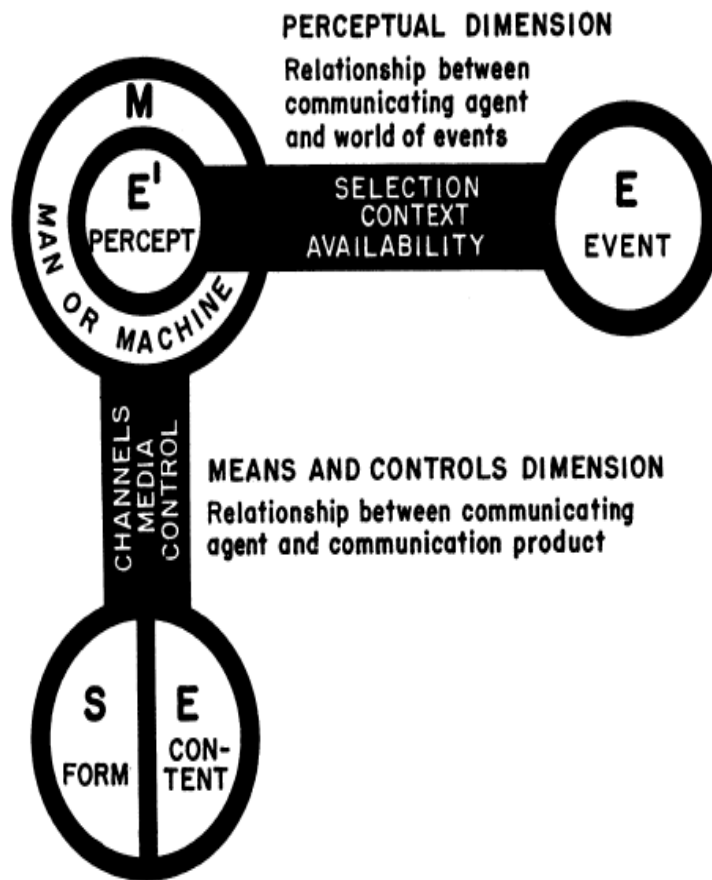
application.

Figure 2: Basic generalized graphic model [Source: Gerbner 175]

　　　　However, the basic generalized model too fails to account a step further from SE

which is necessarily a next process of communication. The model below, which is further

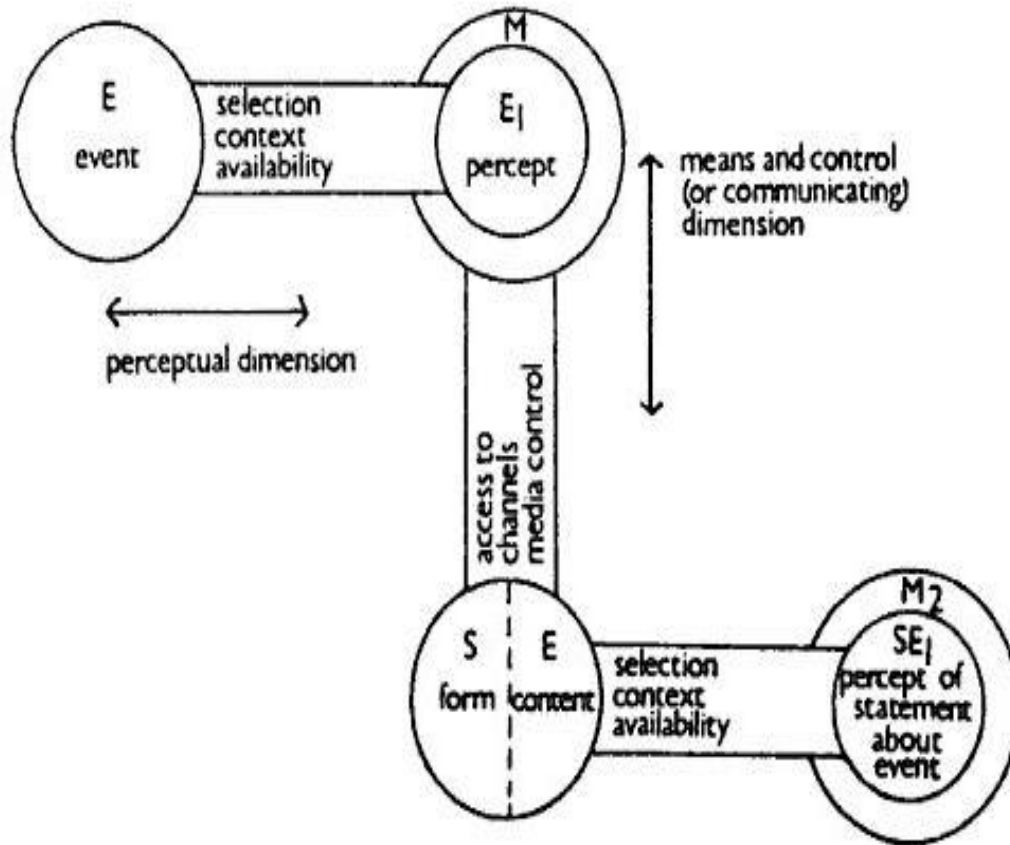modified version, demonstrates the next step in the process.

Figure 3: Gerbner's general graphic model [Source: Fiske 25]

The model is to be read from left to right, beginning at E (event) which is

perceived by human beings or machine as E_1 (percept). The process of perception is not

simply a matter of "taking a picture" of E; rather it is a process of active interpretation

determined by a variety of factors such as selection, context and availability. Selection,

which is commonly known as gatekeeping in media, is "the process by which countless

messages are reduced to the few" (Shoemaker 79). In writing, the same process operates,

but with three dominant devices of creative writing – foregrounding, backgrounding and

eluding. Context refers to the activities and occurrences in particular space and time

during the event. Availability concerns both the quality and quantity of the traumatic

events. According to Gerbner, availability is "a feature of the horizontal, perceptual

dimension relating the communicating agent to the world of events and statements

available to him" (179). In the vertical dimension of the model, M formulates statement about the event, to use Gerbner's code, SE to which we normally call the 'message'. S stands for signal and E refers to its content. To send that message, M has to use channels (or media) over which he has a greater or lesser degree of control. The question of 'control' relates to M's degree of skill in using communication channels. The process can be extended ad infinitum by adding on other receivers (M_2, M_3 etc.) who have further perceptions (SE_2, SE_3 etc.) of the statements about perceived events.

When the model is transported to trauma studies, it precisely describes the trauma process. E (event) stands for traumatic event. E_1 (percept) refers to the perception of E by M (a traumatized person) determined by various factors like selection, context and availability. The registered experience generally remains latent until it is triggered by similar event. But for the experience to take the form of written discourse, the perception needs to meet appropriate conditions – access to communication channels. When all these appropriate conditions are met, it constitutes form and content to take the structure SE (trauma narration). The narration, which is also conditioned by factors like selection, context and availability, is infectious as it carries potential to traumatize M_2 (second person).

Analyzing trauma representation from this framework demonstrates limited scope of the existing theories and thereby challenges the assumption that any particular model can be un-problematically exported to study trauma narration. It does so, as already described, by illustrating the limitations of existing models: it demonstrates that any of the existing trauma theories spotlight on one or two of the stages in the trauma process. Hence, Gerbner's framework's strength is its acknowledgement of all the contingent factors of trauma ranging from the registration of the event to its expression, and finally to its affect. In what follows, the dissertation demonstrates how various theories of

trauma foreground certain elements in their postulations by examining Felman, Laub, Caruth, Tal and some cultural trauma theorists.

The concentration of Felman is on the third and the fourth step; mapping out all the variables between E and SE, she argues that M_2 i.e. listener can reenact trauma equivalent to M. More specifically, any person need not experience trauma to be a victim: to feel something akin to the pain of a holocaust survivor, it is sufficient to watch videotapes of survivors and listen to their stories. Along the same line, Laub emphasizes on the role of the listener. The listener, for him, "is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*. The testimony to the trauma … includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time" (57). Specifically, he makes it clear that the listener, as a witness, plays a crucial role in testimonial narrative. In contradistinction to Laub and Felman's take on traumatic testimony, Caruth's theory is wider in its scope because it inflects its incorporation of Freudian psychoanalysis with poststructuralist insight. Firstly, the theory highlights the significance of M_2 in constructing the original traumatic event. Secondly, it foregrounds an element between E and E_1 – the nature of the trace of trauma available to the mind. Linked up with the dissociative function of the mind, the trace is a proof of the fact that the mind is unable to register the event. Thirdly, it implicates that traumatic experience must be rendered into narrative structure through communication process in order to alleviate psycho-traumatological suffering. The scope of Caruth's theory, as enumerated, is so wide that it seems to encompass all the components in afore-discussed Gerbner's communication model like selection, context, access to channels, and media control. A critical consideration, however, reveals that Caruth's implicit idea about the response to traumatic upsurge as an intrinsic nature of "traumatic experience and memory" remains at odds with the acknowledgement she credits to the other constituent elements in the

trauma process (Balaev 150). Ruth Leys has rightly demonstrated the contradiction in

Caruth's argument. Caruth's commitment to empirical claim – "traumatic symptoms,

such as traumatic dreams and flashbacks, are *veridical* memories or representations of the

traumatic event" – according to Leys, elides the epistemological-ontological assertion

that "traumatic symptoms are *literal* replicas or repetitions of the trauma and that as such

they stand outside representations" (229). Simply stated, Caruth, on the one hand, accepts

traumatic reoccurrence as exact reproduction of the original event and on the other calls

trauma an un-assimilable.

Other theories of trauma also do not succeed in taking into account all the

elements in the trauma process. For instance, Tal's framework limits the corpus of trauma

study to the event's representation by the real victim. Her reservation regarding the

agency of trauma rendition – denial to the authenticity of any other narration than that of

victims' own account – limits the study firstly to the agent and secondly to the reason for

trauma. Similarly, theories that base their arguments on emotional spread of trauma

symptoms due to close and extended contacts with traumatized individuals have many

loopholes. Theories in this category comprise of interrelated and overlapping rubrics like

vicarious trauma, secondary trauma, cultural trauma, intergenerational trauma. Most

prominent and comprehensive of all is cultural trauma posited by Jeffrey Alexander who

takes it as a tear in the hole of the social fabric. Apparently, as cultural trauma delineates

its concern on "how and under what conditions the claims are made, and with what

results", it has double edge (9). Firstly, it concerns the "dimension of representation": the

nature of the pain, the nature of the victim, relation of the trauma victim to the wider

audience and attribution of responsibility. Secondly, it inquires into influential cultural

agents: religious, aesthetic, legal, scientific, mass media and state bureaucracy (12-19).

Despite such a wide spectrum, the theory suffers from fallacies. A major problematic in

this theory is the dedication for the homogeneity of representation for the purpose of constructing "sufficiently persuasive narratives" (27). Another serious error in this theory exists at conceptual level – cultural trauma emphasizes on epistemology of trauma as the only domain of study and denies its ontological aspect. Explicit in this postulation is a denial to any nexus between the nature of traumatic experience and the effect it produces over the other individuals.

A separation of the two complementary factors -- experience and effect -- impairs any scholarly inquiry. Hence, any comprehensive inquiry into trauma discourse, as Laurie Vickroy also argues, demands the study of both epistemology and ontology of trauma along with an inquiry into socio-economic factors: "The social environment, the severity of the event, and the individual's characteristics and experience all determine how someone will cope with trauma. Social supports are essential to survivors' adjustment" (14). But, since such examination is not feasible with the existing theories, Gerbner's model best suits the purpose. The framework developed out of the model acknowledges that the literary rendition of trauma is relational and emerges relative to various factors that exist in perceptual as well as means and control dimension. Thereby, it accepts the multiplicity of representation and makes both the underlying and apparent factors its domain of inquiry.

An investigation into the framework's perceptual dimension offers the opportunity to examine both personal conditions and social environment that existed during traumatic event. One of the prime concerns for researchers in this dimension would be inquiry into how individuals internalize the traumatic event. Some other pertinent issues to analyze would be the nature of the event's availability, the context and the selection. It is at this stage, researchers find the insight from the existing propositions useful. The insight from Dori Laub facilitates understanding of physiological procedure

of trauma perception. His thesis that the magnitude of trauma registration is largely

determined by the victim's proximity with the event proves productive. The proximity

phenomenon, according to him, are distinctly of three types: "being a witness to oneself

within the experience", "being a witness to the testimonies of others" and "being a

witness to the process of witnessing itself" (*Truth and Testimony* 61). Another insight

derivable from Anne Kaplan, which suggests that trauma experience is dependent on the

process of brain function during the event, proves equally useful. According to her, brain

functions are of three types, "the dissociation function", "both dissociation and

cognition" and "seduction" (38). The study of trauma process in the light of elements in

means and control dimension also invites scholars to appraise the role of ideology and

ideological state apparatus, to borrow Luis Althusser's term. Pertinent issue to investigate

at this stage would be the interrelationship between media access and the nature of the

control over trauma discourse.

Since the rendition of trauma is an outcome with its characteristics process, an

investigation into the narration demands answers to what role the process plays. To

answer the question, the dissertation makes an interdisciplinary borrowing: Gerbner's

model from communication studies to intersect with trauma theory. The framework

developed thus begins with the traumatic event (E) overtaking a person (M), thereby

subjecting him or her to a traumatic perception (E_1). The perception is determined by

various factors like selection, context and availability. Once the perception meets

appropriate conditions – access to the communication channels and control over the

discourse – it constitutes form and content to be SE (trauma narration). The narration,

which is also conditioned by factors like selection, context and availability, is infectious

as it carries potential to traumatize M_2 (second person). Utilizing the model, I

hypothesize that any inquiry into trauma literature should (a) probe into the nature of

availability, context and selection during the traumatic event, and (b) the traumatized person's access to media channel and control over the discourse.

For the empirical underpinning of the argument, the dissertation relates the framework to *Palpasa Café*, *Forget Kathmandu* and *Chhapamar ko Chhoro* [The Son of a Guerrilla] written by Narayan Wagle, Manjushree Thapa and Mahesh Bikram Shah respectively. The concentration of the study will be on whether the framework appropriately addresses why the rendition of the Maoist insurgency and state-counter insurgency in the three texts demonstrate variance.

CHAPTER TWO

Literary Rendition of the Maoist Insurgency

Testifying to the past has been an urgent task for many

fiction writers as they attempt to preserve personal and

collective memories from assimilation, repression or

misrepresentation. […] Trauma narratives – fictional

narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience –

have taken an important place among diverse artistic,

scholarly, and testimonial representations in illuminating

the personal and public aspects of trauma.

-- Laurie Vickory

The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: an Overview

An inquiry into the commencement of what the Nepali Maoist refer as "People's War" takes us compellingly to the decision made by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in March 1995. The meeting, as Prachanda's document presented at Central Committee meeting in 1997 recalls, "formulated a detailed plan programme for the final preparation and initiation of the war" against the semi-feudal and semi-colonial system prevalent in Nepal (qtd. in Karki and Seddon 202). Before the War, however, the party's political front's chairman, Baburam Bhattarai, presented forty-point memorandum to the then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba on 4 February 1996. The memorandum also contained an ultimatum to initiate an armed struggle from 17 February if appropriate measures were not taken to fulfill their demands. The government, as the Maoist say, did not show "appropriate concern" to the demands.

The Maoist's understanding of the government's indifference provided a perfect context for them to implement the plan as decided by the Central Committee. They initiated the War four days before the deadline by ransacking the office of the Small Farmer's Development Program in Gorkha. The same night, they attacked police posts in Rolpa, Rukum and Sindhuli districts; they also targeted a distillery factory in Gorkha, "the house of a feudal-usurer in Kavre" and the enterprise of "a multinational company (Pepsi Cola) in Kathmandu" (Prachanda qtd. in Karki and Seddon 203). The preparatory phase of the War ended in March 1996.

The success of the preparatory phase buoyed up the Maoist to continue their insurgency with "a wave of guerrilla actions, sabotage and propaganda actions" (204). The second phase, *i.e.*, initiation, blended "military and non-military actions" to direct and concentrate the forces and activities "in accordance with the envisaged roles of the different Zones" (205). The major activities during this phase included raiding police outposts, looting state-owned Banks, seizing arms from "local tyrants", eliminating "local tyrants, police informers and policemen" and setting fire to the house of the Home Minister in Kathmandu (206). The third phase, which is named as continuity, started in June 1998. In this phase, as the priority was given to military action, they "intensified attacks on the armed forces of the enemy by means of raids and ambushes in the principal areas of struggle" (240). Similarly, they not only "boycott the local elections" but also "force[d] the elected officials to resign from their posts" (Karki and Seddon 23). In other three consecutive phases – fourth (October 1998 - July 1999), fifth (August 1999 - June 2000), sixth (July 2000 - February 2001) – they intensified their reaction. For instance, when their politburo member, Suresh Wagle, was killed, they responded with simultaneous attacks in twenty five districts.

After the completion of the six plans in February 2001, the party defined its

political line as the Prachanda Path. The Path aimed at expanding the party's base areas in villages. Then, a halt of the Maoist armed activities occurred with the ceasefire in July 2001. The cessation let the Maoist organize political rallies and demonstrate them as "a potent political force" (Thapa and Sijapati 119). The negotiation which was hold simultaneously brought them thrice to the table but did not prove fruitful. In November 2001, Prachanda declared that their bid to establish peace was rendered unsuccessful by reactionary and fascist forces. After the end of the ceasefire, Maoist extended the target to Nepal Army and ventured their guerrilla activities into the cities. The earliest instance of the extension was an attack over the army garrison in Dang. Their highly successful attack, in Thapa and Sijapati's evaluation, was carried out in February 2002 when the rebels raided Mangalsen and "decimated both the army platoon stationed there and the district police force" (136). As a successful guerrilla venture in cities, they assassinated Inspector General of the Armed Police Force, Krishna Mohan Shrestha.

The second halt in Maoist attacks took place in January 2003, i.e., after King Gyanendra's takeover. Unlike the first one, this ceasefire had been Maoist agenda: "the Maoist had been calling for this for some time, but the government's agreement to it was largely unexpected" (Hutt 14). What followed then was a series of talks, but to break out another insurgency in August the same year. The break swerved the course of politics as the Maoist joined the alliance of five parties engaged in reversing the King's takeover. Together, they waged Jana-Andolan 2 against the monarchy and brought its fall. Finally, the Maoist signed a twelve-point agreement in Delhi in November 2005 to end the armed struggle officially.

The response of the government to the activities of the Maoist prior to the agreement in 2005 constitutes another side of the insurgency. Starting even before the initial period, that is when the Maoist staged a rehearsal of the War in Rolpa in October-

November 1995, to use Hachhethu's observation, "the government treated it as a law and order problem" and tried to address it by "police repression" (61). The first of these responses in large scale was police operation code named 'Operation Romeo', an action that "treated everyone as a potential Maoist" with the actions like "random arrests, torture, rape, and extra-judicial killings, leading to the complete alienation of a large part of the local population from the government" (Karki and Seddon 23; Thapa and Sijapati 48). The next operation was Kilo Sierra II which unlike the former was spread out across all the Maoist-affected regions of the country and ended with around 500 killings (Thapa and Sijapati 92). Other operations include Jungle Search, and Search and Destroy. A characteristic of all these operations was the specificity and thus they were aimed to curb space specific insurgency to which they failed.

The fallibility of the police forces compelled the government to withdraw them from many locations and construct a paramilitary unit – The Armed Police Force. When the Force also did not produce the desired result, the army was thought of as the last resort. After much debate and especially after the declaration of the State of Emergency in November 2001, the government handed over the responsibility of security to the Army. With the emergency, the government promulgated Terrorist and Dispute Activities [Control and Punishment] Ordinance (TADO). The act declared the Maoist terrorists and curbed, among many rights, freedom of thoughts and expression, peaceful assembly and movement, right against preventive detention and constitutional remedy.

The activities of the government vis-à-vis the activities of the Maoist reveal an interesting trajectory, *i.e.*, violence followed by peace to escalating violence. And the consequence is a wide range of not yet fully understood effects both on individuals and on societies. The available statistics yields the following data: 16,278 killed, 1500 disappeared, 75,000 injured and 250,000 internally displaced. This is, perhaps, as much

as we can quantify, but the statistics fails to capture the human dimension of the war perpetuated upon a large number of people. The magnitude of the impact over tortured, raped, abducted and otherwise physically brutalized, as human right activists say, remains to be fathomed out. The wide range of sufferers also hints at incomprehensibility of trauma victims' types; yet for the purpose of simplification, we can categorize the victims mainly into three types. The first type comprises the people traumatized mainly by the security forces: at individual level, the category consists of people targeted for their real or perceived support for the Maoist and at mass level it includes Maoist attacked through operations under different code names. The second category incorporates people who were hardly involved in any of the sides but faced it as they happened to be in the particular situation. About the sufferer of this type, Nepal writes, "Ordinary people were killed by the police for giving food and shelter to the Maoists; they were also killed by the Maoists for providing food and shelter to the police" (430). Similarly, the third group includes police or alleged informers of police or the cadres of other political parties tortured by the Maoist.

The Maoist Insurgency in Discourse

Maoist armed conflict is the most terrifying single case of violence arising from the clash between the state and a political party in Nepal. As such, the trauma remains at pivotal position in the memory of a wide range of people. Of these memories, many have already found a room in narratives. Some of the accounts are from the trauma victim; other narratives come from people such as news reporters who might have been the observers; and many other are from the researchers who analyze the insurgency. And still some are from veterans focusing on combat experiences. In brief, the texts about the conflict vary from analysis to interpretation.

The analytical books constitute a huge bulk. Some of them are: *The People's War*

in Nepal: Left Perspectives (2003) edited by Arjun Karki and David Seddon,

Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal (2003) edited by Deepak Thapa, *A*

Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgence, 1996 to 2004 (2004) co-authored by

Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapati, *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*

(2004) edited by Michael Hutt, *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: The Challenges and the*

Response (2004) written by S. D. Muni, *Maoists in the Land of Buddha: an Analytical*

Study of the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal (2004) authored by Prakash A. Raj, *Nepal*

Facets of Maoist Insurgency (2006) edited by Lok Raj Baral, *The Maoist Insurgency and*

Nepal India Relations (2006) written by Shiva Dhungana, *Maoist in the House* (2007)

written by Tom McCaughey, *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty*

First Century (2009) edited by Mahendra Lawati and Anup Kumar Pahari, *Hindu*

Kingship, Ethnic Revival, and Maoist Rebellion in Nepal (2009) written by Marie

Lecomte Tilouin. Most of these books contextualize and explain why and how Maoist's

violent insurgency grew in Nepal. For instance, *A Kingdom* by Thapa and Sijapati

analyzes the causes of Maoist taking the gun, and "its rapid success within a few years"

(53). Similarly, Hutt's book provides a multidisciplinary explanation for the emergence

and radicalization of the movement.

Other corpora include the books that narrate the severity of insurgency and the

consequent traumatic experience over the individuals or the society. Termed as trauma

narratives by Laurie Vickory, these writings represent personalized response to the

catastrophic effects of the conflict (1). In this category too, we have a long list: Mahesh

Bikram Shah's *Sipahi ki Swashni* [The Soldier's Wife] (2002), Narayan Wagle's

Palpasa Café (2005), Manjushree Thapa's *Forget Kathmandu: an Elegy for Democracy*

(2005), Samrat Upadhaya's *The Royal Ghost* (2006), Govinda Raj Bhattarai's *Sukarat ka*

Paila and *Stories of Conflict and War* (2007), Mahesh Bikram Shah's *Chhapamar ko*

Chhoro [Son of a Guerrilla] (2007). Each of these narrations tells the stories of the individuals whose lives were deeply affected by the Maoist insurgency and state counter-insurgency. The corpora has registered a significant addition after the peace agreement in 2005 as the Maoist cadres involved directly in the frontline also intensified the publication of their experiences during the insurgency. These include Tara Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwati ko Diary* [A Diary of a Young Guerrilla Woman] (2010), Uttam Kandel's *Jokhim ka Paila* [Risky Steps] (2009), Nirmal Mahara alias Atom's *Gaurabsali Itihas ra Yuddhamorcha ka Anubhutiharu* [Glorious History and Feelings in Battle Field]. An anthology, *Marxist Sahitya ra Janayudda ko Saundarya* [*Marxist Literature and Aesthetics of People's War*] published in 2010 analyzes many of the writings by the Maoist cadres. Since all the texts except the anthology present subjective accounts, it is natural to observe variation in these narrations. The variety testifies that any traumatic event is not one-dimensional phenomena experienced and represented identically.

From such a big corpus, the dissertation has selected only three books for scrutiny. None of these books, however, belong to the category of objective analysis or the cadres' writing. The parameter in selection is the recognition of the books in terms of awards/achievements: *Palpasa Café* and *Chhapamar ko Chhoro* belong to the list of Madan Puraskar winning writings; and *Forget Kathmandu: an Elegy for Democracy* records itself as a book published from an Internationally reputed publication house.

Wagle's *Palpasa Café*

Narayan Wagle's Madan Puraskar winning novel *Palpasa Café* is one of the most widely acclaimed novels which sets its plot against the time when "a series of shocking incidents" were taking place at formidable speed (1-2). The novel expounds on the experience of Drishya, Siddhartha and Palpasa through the first person narrative. Describing the nature and the subject of the novel, Wagle says, "I've completed this

novel based on whatever information I've been able to piece together" and adds that the story, "was [Drishya's] story, after all, and told from his perspective" (229-31). Drishya is a witness to both Siddhartha's brutal murder and Palpasa's terrible fate and thus he lives the scar of traumatic experience. Despite being in such a condition, he owns a dream of opening a café that would be named after the woman he loved. The narrator, who is a friend to Drishya, is a witness to his experience.

In the preface of the witness account, Wagle provides a brief setting, which shows the narrator attending a concert in Birendra International Convention Centre. Post to the Concert, the events develop very dramatically. The rise in action begins when the narrator reaches Thamel and waits for his character, Drishya, to come for the interview before he finalizes the novel that is based on Drishya's story. There he hears that Drishya has been abducted. Concerned and worried about him, the narrator attempts to rescue him, but any of the endeavours do not succeed. Then, his memory recalls Drishya's bearing witness in which he had been a listener.

The narrator's retrospection commences from Goa where Drishya as a tourist is spending Bohemian life style. There, he encounters Palpasa and envisages instantly that she "will be [his] girl" (16). When he re-meets her the other day, he undergoes a series of sensational experience ranging from romance to disappointment. Back to Kathmandu, Drishya remains busy in his gallery and becomes busier after the critique of a Dutch lady: "You make beautiful paintings but they are cold. In most of them, the colors don't seem to suit the subject matter" (45). Stunned by such a critical remark, he grows "increasingly depressed and reclusive" to the extent of picking up a paintbrush daring. (46). But restraining himself, he gets instigated to find "a book about the balance of color and light in traditional Nepali art" (50). Coincidentally, the search for the book reaches him to Palpasa's grandmother. Drishya, thus, meets Palpasa and continues the rapport set in

Goa, but again to find it short-lived. A swerve in Drishya's romantic and carefree life

ensues after the Royal Massacre. Particularly, the turn begins when his childhood friend,

Siddhartha, who is already underground Maoist guerrilla, visits him unexpectedly putting

him in a "Catch -22 situation" (76). Siddhartha insists Drishya to put aside his romantic

ideology and witness the bitter realities that exist in the countryside. Finally, Drishya

yields to Siddhartha's persistence, and thus his journey to the sites of trauma begins.

The visit awakens Drishya with a bleak picture of the countryside – forceful

recruitment of the children, merciless sabotages and brutal killings of the civilian. The

first instance of the Maoist activities Drishya witnesses is Siddhartha's oratory to

persuade an old man to permit his daughter to join guerrilla. In the journey ahead "on a

hill red with rhododendrons", he hears stories of atrocities: police ambushed, schools

closed, teachers killed, and the cowherd's classmates abducted (104). When Drishya

meets retired army uncle, Rup Lal Ale, he gets in-depth information about the Maoist

recruitment policy: "They take away anyone who's young and strong" (112). In the base

area of the Maoist, he meets tourists who are there to "inaugurate a school they'd donated

a million rupees to build" (121). It gives him a glimpse on the nature of the government's

control in the countryside. The stories of atrocities become more intensive when Drishya

communicates with a woman after crossing a settlement of displaced people. Because her

son is in the police, the Maoist have demanded a hundred thousand rupees if not the

second oldest son (126). More horrible picture comes from the account that he hears from

a man: "[The small girl's mitini] picked up a bomb when she was playing, and it

exploded in her hands" (150). Terrified with such brutal reality in the countryside,

Drishya heads to the headquarters, but to witness another terrible scene. While living in a

lodge at night, he hears sound of marching feet in the backdrop of the silent market.

Suddenly, the light goes out and telephones become dead. Then, there starts typical

guerrilla attack:

> Across the river, I saw a giant fireball explode and disappear instantly. A
>
> loud bang drowned out the gurgling of the river. […] There was another
>
> loud explosion and the house shook to its very foundation. […] Again
>
> there was sudden silence, followed by the voice speaking through the loud
>
> speaker, then another attack. Again the earth seemed to slip and slide.

When the attack ends, the scene appears devastating: "The bank had been blown wide open. The jail had been broken into and the prisoners released. None of the government officers had escaped attack. Every house with a signboard had been hit. The road was littered with bullets, shells and bombs" (130-31).

The series of shocking occurrences, both in the town and the countryside, finally make Drishya sense that Siddhartha's request proved eyes-opening, "I realized Siddhartha had done me a favour by bringing me back to these hills" (152). Fostered by this realization, he wants to see Siddhartha before his departure to Kathmandu. Coincidentally, a man guides Drishya into the woods through "thorn bushes and low branches" to a solitary house and then hands over the responsibility to another man who leads him along a trail near a cliff and finally a girl takes the responsibility (161). The girl, when irritated by Drishya's bourgeoisie questions, fires bullet to warn him not to inquire any further; the sound invites some people who "grab […] and blindfold […] him" (165). When his blindfold is lifted, he sees Siddhartha and calls him by the name in excitement. Immediately, some people run after, cordon and kill Siddhartha brutally. Feeling guilty, he returns "soaked in Siddhartha's blood" from the jungle to the bus station (167). In the night bus bound for Kathmandu, he accidentally becomes co-passenger with Palpasa. On the way, the bus gets trapped into the ambush planted by the Maoist; it kills everyone inside the bus including Palpasa. Finally, when he reaches

Kathmandu with the scars, he visits Palpasa's grandmother to inform what happened to

her granddaughter. But seeing the condition of the grandmother, he finds no words to

convey the news. While living in such a state, one day, "five strangers" who do not

appear "art lovers" enter his gallery to "ask [him] a few things". Any of his excuses turn

defunct to deter their intention; they take him "by the arm" (225-27). Immediately after,

Wagle hears the news of Drishya's abduction and tries to rescue him.

Thapa's *Forget Kathmandu: an Elegy for Democracy*

Manjushree Thapa's *Forget Kathmandu: an Elegy for Democracy* chronicles

major happenings in Nepali history in the light of the royal massacre in June 2001. The

assassination of King Birendra's family and the aftermath compel her to retrospect the

entire history of Shah Dynasty. Shedding light on the necessity to retrospect, she writes:

"After the massacre at the royal palace, garbled thoughts about the past jammed my

mind, making me feel: I *know* all this because something like this has happened before"

(51). What she finds through her archaeological lens is the need for correction in

textbooks that prescribe treacherous Kings as glorious (58). Similarly, she sees the

democratic process fallible due to the post 1990 development. Describing the period, she

evaluates, "The People's Movement of 1990 had spread enlightenment aspirations

throughout Nepal. But because political parties were so occupied with their own power

struggles, the majority of people had received very little from democracy" (131). Such a

condition, which she calls "bad politics", is the cause of the Maoist upsurge. Hence, she

concludes that bad politics dominates Nepali history from Prithvi Narayan Shah's

unification time to the first decade of the Maoist armed conflict.

Thapa provides instances of bad politics legacy in Nepali history throughout the

text. The discussion here, to delimit the corpus of study, maps out the account till the

restoration of Democracy in 1990. Hence, the dissertation purposively examines the

chapters that concern the Maoist insurgency directly; it is the second last chapter of the book where Thapa deals with the Maoist. Based on her visit into Maoist-held territories in west Nepal along with a human right activist Malcolm, she documents the voices of sufferers, skeptics and optimists. Characteristically, she testifies through the voice of the people in these localities that the majority of people live in poverty; very small minority abuse human rights; and teenager boys and girls take the gun. These narrations based on the underlying identity of the speaker can be broadly categorized into four types: from the Maoist or Maoist sympathizers, from security forces, from non-Maoist, and from the author's standpoint.

The narration of the first type begins with a driver they meet in Chupra; he informs them that the Maoist "don't bother people like [them]"; rather the security force accuse them of supporting the Maoists because they "hitch free rides on the buses" (173). Further description of the driver portrays Maoist judicious in the eyes of the sufferers: they punish men who get drunk and beat their wives; they make any man marry the woman he makes physical contact with. Driving ahead, they meet two Maoist girls waiting to hitchhike. The girls inform that they fear the security forces though there is a ceasefire. In Dullu, they meet local area secretary of the Maoist, comrade Rebel. He recalls the "atrocities committed by the state" before the ceasefire and defends the Maoist counter-insurgency prior to the ceasefire as reciprocation "out of necessity, not out of desires" (192-93). Another Maoist they meet is a short and bearded man whom Thapa views indifferently: "I was worried that this grim, muttering Maoist would follow us out of the village, possibly all the way to Jumla, condemning the heedless locals to dire consequences" (197). Similar indifference appears when Thapa reports their encounter with area committee member D. P. Rijal: "[the man] subjected us to a large, jargon-laden speech about his party's fight against the semi-feudal, semi-capitalist comprador

bourgeoisie rent-seekers, foreign imperialists, informers and capitalist roaders" (201). Other narrators in the category include a young Maoist man, Comrade Kopila, Comrade Sandesh, and Comrade Kanchan Sagar.

The narrations from security forces, on the other hand, constitute a small portion of the text. One of such delineation comes from the CDO's statement, "I can't speak on things that happened before I came here" in response to Thapa's question on the involvement of the Army in "the beatings, the killings, the rapes, the explosives dropped from the air". Another source is the Captain's response during their meeting in CDO office and in the hotel. The first conversation reveals that the armies "conduct[s] health camp, so as to win the hearts and minds of the people" and the second divulges the denial to "the beatings, killings or rapes" (222-24).

The rendition from non-Maoist constitutes a major portion of the book. This chunk can further be divided into two categories – the first from self-declared neutral individuals; the second from cadres of non-Maoist. Rajendra Pandey, a former MP of UML, provides an instance of the second category. He reports that political parties have been successful to reclaim their "political space again". Other sources include a plump, precious boy and a dark, twenty-something man with thick, fierce brows. Compared to the second category, the first group is more critical. A common denominator in the accounts of all these people is accusation either to the government or to the Maoist. A dandyish man exemplifies this stand when he denies the need of both the government and the Maoist -- "Just let us go back to the way we are" (217). A contractor also blames both the sides -- "The Maoists keep stealing explosives from the construction site […] and the state security forces accuse the construction staff of selling it for profit" (218). Another narration of indictment comes from a teenage boy when he recalls the Army's response after the Maoist attack in Mangalsen: "Last year they shot the ward chairman, Dilli

Prasad Acharya […] He wasn't even a Maoist […] They just shot anyone who was outdoors in those days […] A teacher in the same school was shot as well" (209-9). Similarly, a woman recalls -- "[The Army] beat anyone they met on their patrols – men or woman. They beat at least fifty-sixty people in this village […] One woman of 22, had been raped here. Sometimes later, another, 24, and a third, 25, had also been raped" (210-12). Next narrator, a man says --"The government thinks we're all Maoists, but the fact is nobody likes them" (214). Other people who narrate the atrocities of the Army include depersonalized figures like an old man and the men in the courtyard.

The largest of the corpus, which weigh the activities of both the sides but with some sympathy to the civilians, comes from human rights activist. These voices reveal bitter experience undergone by the people due to the atrocities of the Maoist and the government. An underlying notion in these voices is a blatant criticism of the government. Of the critique, the first two are (a) a human right activist Surya Bahadur Shahi, and (b) the head of the Teachers' Union Raj Bahadur Budha. The security forces, as they say, still arrest and detain Maoist; and the Maoist "force [the teachers] to join their party and donate five percent of [their] salaries". If the teachers do not donate, the Maoist target them; and if they do, the government "freeze[ing] their salaries" (182). Thapa's encounter with a teenage girl provides another instance of human rights violation: "I saw the army […] And then I heard the shots […] They weren't Maoists, you know" (200). Tula Ram Pandey's experience of working as a journalist reveals another facet of human rights violation.

Shah's *Chhapamar ko Chhoro*

Mahesh Bikram Shah's Madan Puraskar winning *Chhapamar Ko Chhoro* [Son of a Guerrilla) is an anthology of short stories. The book comprises eighteen short stories presenting various dynamics of the Maoist armed conflict. Of the stories, the three

namely "Pashu Awatar" [Animal Incarnation], "Kurshi Parwa" [Chair Carnival] and "Human Farming" do not rectify to be traumatic narratives. Rather than presenting traumatic events, they demonstrate the extremes of debased human values in the political, social and scientific sphere. The remaining fifteen can be classified thematically. Firstly, there are stories that depict the chaotic condition of remote locations and the consequent impact over the particular character. The second group of stories portrays individual's relation with the victims of insurgency who exist in the form of decaying, dead or dying bodies. The third group reveals the psycho-social dynamics of the Maoist cadres. The fourth group demonstrates the activities of security forces.

The stories in the first category – "Gaun ma Geetharu Gunjadainan" [Songs do not Resound in the Village], "Kidi Jiya le Karlalima Hamfalin" [Kidi Jiya Plunged into the Karnali River], "Mero Kukur Aajhai Bhukiraheko Thiyo" [My Dog was Still Barking], "Bandha Dhoka ra Samaya" [Closed Door and Time], and "Bandha Dhoka ra Sapanaharu" [Broken Door and the Dreams] – demonstrate the psychology of people after the Maoist initiated insurgency. "Songs do not Resound in Village", the second story in the anthology, presents the consequence of the war in a very peaceful village from the first person perspective. During his visit to the village, the narrator witnesses the scenes of sabotages: not only the building where he had begun education has been demolished but also the telephone tower constructed with the villagers efforts have been turned into metamorphosis of iron tower (7). He also finds most of his childhood friends missing from the villages. Surajram, Maghuram, Laxman, Chameli among others have left their houses either by entering the revolutionary camp or fleeing to India because they did not will to enter the jungle (12). Seeing such a stark condition, the narrator flees from his village anticipating that everything will be restored to its normal in future: "The spring shall return in the village. The villagers will sing songs of spring. And during the

time, I will be whistling songs in the street of my own village without any fear, being confident and having no hesitation" (17)[1]. The atmosphere of terror that is described in this story sets the tone for other tragic events. Another story, "Kidi Jiya Plunged into the Karnali River", depicts the pathetic condition of a woman victimized by the atrocities of the Maoist. Like many rustics, Kidi Jiya is forced to abandon her village due to the fear that the young member in the family will be abducted. When she reaches Simikot, she comes across the narrator whose predicament is analogous to her, yet provides shelter to her out of affection. Other two stories, "Closed Door and Time", and "Broken Doors and the Dreams" dramatize the atrocities in a microscopic way. "Closed Door and Time" dramatizes the fear of the family members when they are surrounded by the people in combat who are certain to empty the food in stock making it their snacks (74). "Broken Doors and the Dreams" presents the life of a woman Jasmaya whose son has entered jungle. While in bed, trying to sleep, Jasmaya hears sound of the door open. But when she goes to the door, she finds no one there.

The stories that can be put under the second category are "Ma ra Murdaharu" [Me and Corpses], "Ekadeshma" [In a Country] and "Babuko Kandh ma Chhoro Sutiraheko Desh" [The Country where the Son is Sleeping in the Father's Shoulder]. "Me and Corpses" exhibits the people who are indifferent to the ongoing peril in the country. The narrator, a middle aged man living in a city, is hardly affected by the scenes of deaths. Though the scenes of death tolls in television frequent, he remains untouched; rather he maintains usual life by dancing in the restaurant -- "We did not listen the sound of firing

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[1] गाउँमा वसन्त फर्कनेछ । गाउँलेका ओठहरुले जीवनका वासन्ती गीतहरु गुनगुनाउन थाल्नेछन् । र, त्यसबेला निडर निश्चिन्त र निस्फिक्री भएर म पनि सुसेली हाल्दै गाउँको धुलाम्मे डगरमा धुलो उडाउदै आफ्नो गाउँ गइरहेको हुनेछु ।

[Gaunma Basanta pharkanechha. Gaunleka oothharule jeevanka basanti geetharu gungunauna thalnechhan. Ra, tyasbela nidar nischanta a nisfikri bhayera ma pani suseli haldai gaunko dhulammai dagarma dhulo udaudai aafno gaun gairaheko hunechhu]

not the sirens of ambulance and fire brigade. And, we did not see human beings transforming other human beings into corpses" (37). "In a Country" displays similar but more intensively disastrous picture. It flaunts the society that shows indifference even when the corpses produce malodorousness. "The Country where the Son is Sleeping in Father's Shoulder" demonstrates a father striding with his son's head smeared in blood. Having found his son's head decimated from the trunk, he goes to the chairman of Village Development Committee hoping that the chairman would be judicious to him. Instead, he transfers the responsibility to the security forces, who respond him without empathy. When the chain shifts to the police, they blame the Maoist. Finally, when he does not get justice even from the office of the Chief District Officer, he collapses to the ground.

In the third category, we can put "Euta Arko Khadal" [One Another Pit], "Sadak Ma Gandhi Haru" [Gandhi's in the Street], and "Badhsala ma Buddha" [Buddha in a Slaughter House]. These stories are different from the stories in the fourth category because they contrast the Maoist against the activities of security forces. "Buddha in a Slaughter House" narrates the story of a former assassinator now captivated and put into prison. He has been brought back as he tried to run away from his responsibility. Back in the house, he faces the predicament of the other prisoners when he denies the Mahanayak's order to continue assassinating human beings. Ready for assassination, he ironically chants Buddhist hymn with which the whole house resounds. "Gandhi in the Street" illustrates intra-personal conflict taking place in a man who is "regretful for the past, angry with the present and skeptic about the future" (98). "One Another Pit" presents the story of a militia who digs pit to bury dead bodies of friends during the Maoist attacks. He hardly remembers the number of pits he has dug; the only two he remembers are of his father and a friend.

The presentation of the security forces in the stories of the fourth category –

"Mission in Nepal", "Yuddhabiram Jindabad" [Long Live Ceasefire], "Sipahi ra Salik"

[The Constable and the Statue], and "Chhapamar Ko Chhoro" [Son of a Guerrilla] –

demonstrate an interesting phenomenon which the dissertation examines in the third and

the fourth chapter. In this chapter, it brings to the fore the issues incorporated in these

stories. "Mission in Nepal" renders a peaceful country turning into a war zone and the

subsequent arrival of UN mission to maintain peace. Presented through dream technique,

the story signals the condition that is likely to occur. "Long Live Ceasefire" narrates the

activities of constable Birbahadur set in the Maoist hit areas. Presenting the

psychodynamics of a soldier in war zone, the story shows how futile it is for the soldiers

to get involved in the war. A constable, Birbahadur, fights till the foe's bullet hits his

chest and yet kills the enemy. But, when the combat ends, he hears the declaration of

ceasefire by the government and the guerrilla. "The Constable and the Statue" is another

story that presents the predicament of a soldier functioning in turbulent atmosphere. The

story is set at a time when People's Movement II was about to reach its apex. The

commander who is set to protect the statue abides by the chain of command, fires bullet

to the protesters but finally finds him incapable of controlling them, let alone the statue.

"Son of a Guerrilla" dramatizes the psychology of an officer in security force. Seeing the

son of a guerrilla in his courtyard, his blood boils and eyes grow wild and fiery. The

memory of the guerrilla's atrocities adds fierceness to his anger and boils up hatred over

his son. Nevertheless, he controls himself and dillydallies before he allows the boy to

play with his son.

CHAPTER THREE

The Process of Trauma in Wagle, Thapa and Shah

Trauma, therefore, presents a unique set of challenges to

understanding. Further, because traumatic events often

happen due to social forces as well as in the social world,

trauma has an inherently political, historical, and ethical

dimension.

-- Elissa Marder

The mechanism through which a person perceives traumatic event and constructs

narrative based on the process does not apply uniformly for all the individuals. There are

multiple factors that define the cognitive development, which proceeds from

understanding to assimilation and finally to reconstruction. Differences occur from the

early stage at structural level (availability, context and selection) to content level (the

rendition). In the following two sections -- Trauma Cognition: Perceptual Dimension, and

Trauma Rendition: Means and Control Axis -- the dissertation concentrates on the trauma

process in the three authors namely Narayan Wagle, Manjushree Thapa and Mahesh

Bikram Shah.

Trauma Cognition: Perceptual Dimension

The perception of any event, as many of the neuroscientists like Zacks and

Swallow have stated in their research of the neuro-anatomy of the brain, commences

when the mind chunks the ongoing neural activities into discrete events. Based on this

notion, perception is an organization of cacophonous wash of information that comes in

through the senses; they illustrate how the mind functions during any normal perception

(2). The basic underlying assumption here is human senses continuously and dynamically takes in data. The intake is then resolved into a manageable number of separate entities based on identical characteristics.

Certainly, the model of Zacks and Swallow looks cogent but its major limitation comes to the fore in its appropriateness to trauma studies – a fact that becomes ostensible from the cognition process during trauma, which unlike normal perception, is characterized by disorganization and incompleteness. As Kolk and Hart point out, "when people are exposed to trauma […] they experience speechless terror" which "cannot be organized on a linguistic level" but "as somatic sensations, behavioral reenactments, nightmares, and flashbacks" (172). This perspective defines trauma cognition as inassimilable and thus inaccessible for representation. Indeed, it is due to the skepticism of this kind trauma theory generally rules out the possibility of mimetic trauma rendition.

A prominent trauma theorist Geoffrey Hartman argues that the knowledge which comes from trauma comprises "traumatic event, registered rather than experienced" and "memory of the event, in the form of a perpetual trooping of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche" (537). The statement implies that traumatic event bypasses perception and consciousness and thereby compels us to question the deterministic conception – a deposit from the past is mimetically represented later – in trauma narration. Another scholar in trauma studies, Anne Kaplan, drawing on the findings of psychoanalysts and neuroscientists, states:

> Only the sensation sector of the brain – the amygdala – is active during the trauma. The meaning making one (in the sense of rational thought, cognitive processing), namely, the cerebral cortex, remains shut down because the affect is too much to be registered cognitively in the brain. (34)

Kaplan's statement focuses on the issue of resistance to narrative representation, which challenges the associationist view of truth that looks upon trauma as the survivors' recall of a veridical experience. And, it is indeed such a subversion of the truth value occasioned by resistance to the narrative linearity that remains one of the most pertinent issues in trauma studies.

The explanation by Kaplan and Hartman are a few instances of scholarly answers to why trauma resists mimetic rendition. None of these vindications, however, account comprehensively for the variables that come in the way of a linear representation; it is due to the fact that these explanations consider trauma in terms of neuro-anatomical reaction rather than a condition determined by an individual's relation with the event and the socio-political situation. To account the variables, this dissertation utilizes the communication model with two axes, one belonging to perceptions and the other to means and control. The study of perceptual dimension evinces the contingent factors responsible for the trauma process and a further investigation into means and control axes would answer why the trauma finds such representation.

To demonstrate the application of the framework, the dissertation implies it in the three texts written on the Maoist armed conflict – *Palpasa Café*, *Forget Kathmandu* and *Chhapamar ko Chhoro* [Son of a Guerrilla]. Initially, it discusses availability, context and selection in the perceptual axis; then it analyzes the issues of access to media channel and control over the discourse in the means and control axis.

Availability

Availability concerns the nature of the individual's relationship with the event either in terms of the function of the witness' mind during the traumatic occurrence or in terms of the proximity to the event. Though the issue of the way the mind functions during traumatic event has been conceptualized and applied effectively in trauma studies,

the matter of the victim's nearness with the event is yet not appropriately brought to the fore. Indeed, the victim's physical propinquity enables intimate witnessing and thereby bolsters perception. Having assumed that availability is one of the predictor variables, the dissertation, in this section, makes an analytical study of the nature of trauma availability to Wagle, Thapa and Shah, and its effect over them.

The traumatic experience that Wagle underwent has its source in (a) his witnessing of traumatic experience as an editor of national daily, and (b) Drishya's testimonial account of the traumatic experience inflicted over him due to the killings of Siddhartha and Palpasa. Apparently, Wagle's privilege as an editor has significantly contributed in the novel. The author's own compelling account in the opening chapter is worthy quoting here:

> We publish stories like it every day. Today's newspaper already carried an almost identical story; tomorrow's would as well. It was the same thing every day: security personnel losing contact with headquarters, land mines, bomb blast, the killing of suspected spies, deaths of victims being rushed to health posts. (6)

Dixit has pointed out another source closely related to the first one: "Wagle has visited remote corners of this rugged country, bringing stories about the neglect and apathy of officialdom to the notice of a government in faraway Kathmandu" (96). Nonetheless, it will be questionable to assume that the novel renders trauma only based on his visit. The author's confession reminds of the limitations: "To write more honestly about Drishya's experience, I probably should've trekked through the hills as he did. But I'm a busy man. I don't have time for a long trek like that" (Wagle 232). Since, he cannot afford time to trek; he relies on the primary witness, Drishya.

Like Wagle's, Thapa's encounter with the traumatic experience perpetuated by

Maoist insurgency is secondary. The trauma triggered and intensified simultaneously by King Birendra's assassination impinges a sense of vacuity in her: "We lost the truth; we lost our history. We are left to recount anecdotes and stories, to content ourselves with myth". The condition compels her not only to retrospect the history from Prithvi Narayan Shah but also to have firsthand witness of the atrocities caused by the state and the Maoist before the ceasefire in 2003. A dynamic development in the nature of trauma availability becomes clear from the following observation. The accessibility commences with her passive involvement -- her witnessing parallels the experience of the elites of the Kathmandu valley. As she has confessed, she accessed the events through the media -- "I kept up with what was happening in the country as much as any person" (137). But, in the second phase, the passive involvement transforms to the active one. It begins with her compulsive visit to the sites of traumatic incidents. When "watching television news or reading the papers or listening to the radio left [her] feeling defeated", she does not find it easy "to keep [her] mood up" and wants to "take up meditation" (137-8). But none of them help her to work through the trauma. Finally, on January 2003, she sets for the visit: "a friend and I were in the unsightly clump of wooden houses of Chupra village in Dailekh District, west Nepal" (171). She meets wide range of trauma victims ranging from the perpetrators to the victims in both sides. In many instances, she gets involved in general and open-ended interview situation; and in some, she sticks to focused and in-depth interaction. A fact derivable from this situation is that the secondary witnessing is further constrained by the nature of bearing witness. Hence, trauma availability to Thapa is due to her bearing witness with the traumatized people, and witnessing trauma through the media projection.

   Shah's access to the originary trauma is different from Thapa's and Wagle's. If trauma is available to Wagle primarily due to his location as an editor and a close friend

to the eyewitness, the availability to Shaw is due to his position as a Superintendent of police set in the Maoist infested areas. Such a privilege as a witness to trauma avails him even the catastrophic conditions firsthand. His preface to the book is conspicuous about the nature of availability: "This is a reality I have experienced. I am also a character of armed-war! I am lucky among the writers for being able to feel and experience the armed war in different time and context as an eyewitness. I have tried to transcribe the trauma of war in my stories" (ix)[2]. Instances of correlation between availability and representation in the events described by Shah in his stories will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

Context

The idea that the context plays significant role in the phenomenology of perception and assimilation has been central in cognitive psychology. A number of models that explain cognitive-perceptual interface also demonstrate the effect of context on perception. These models state that each of the victims bears the scar in different ways as the events befall individuals in particular locations and within specific contexts. That is, the context either provides or denies the support required for cognition. Context during perception includes the milieu – the historical, cultural, and institutional environment – in which a traumatic event occurs. In Herman's assessment, social context is of higher significance:

> Without a supportive social environment, the bystander usually succumbs
>
> to the temptation to look the other way. That is true even when the victim

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[2] यो मैले भोगेको यथार्थ हो । म पनि सशस्त्र द्वन्द्वको एक पात्र ! मैले सशस्त्र द्वन्द्वलाई फरकफरक समय र परिवेशमा आफ्नै आँखाअगाडि जसरी अनुभव र अनुभूत गर्ने अवसर पाएँ, एक लेखकको हैसियतले त्यो अवसर पाउने म एक भाग्यमानी लेखक हुँ । मैले सशस्त्र द्वन्द्वको पीडालाई आफ्ना कथाहरुमा उतार्ने प्रयास गरेको छु ।

[Yo maile bhogeko yathartha ho. Ma pani sashastra dwanda ko ek patra! Maile sashastra dwanda lai pharak pharak samaya ra pariwesh ma aafnai aakha agadi jasari anubhav a anubhut garne awashar paaye, ek lekhak ko haisiyat le tyo awashar paune ma ek bhagyamani lekhak hun. Maile sashastra dwanda ko peeda lai aafna kathaharu ma utarne prayash gareko chhu]

is an idealized and valued member of society…. To hold traumatic reality

in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the

victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance. (8-9)

The context she mentions ranges from relationship with friends to the political

movements. It is important to note that the acknowledgement to context necessitates a

shift in the focus in trauma studies from the notion of a photographic image to a

situational simulation of the traumatic events. Kansteiner has argued compellingly for the

study of the context because "the way we react to and try to make sense of our suffering

cannot be separated from the specific social context" (211). Unfortunately, the

postulation of Herman and Kansteiner's, has not got the deserved place in trauma studies.

To illustrate and reinforce the significance, this section through the study of the three

authors provides a comprehensive account of the role of context in determining the

trauma process.

In Wagle's case, the context comprises of (a) the Maoist insurgency gradually

turning intensive in Kathmandu, and (b) the government's absence like existence in most

of the rural areas. The macro-political context during the traumatic event in Kathmandu

encompasses the developments from the Royal massacre in June 2001 to the consequent

development mostly till but also after King Gyanendra's political moves in October 2002.

Before the massacre, Kathmandu had been very sparsely familiar with the Maoist

activities, as they had carried out very few activities beyond the countryside. But the

massacre provided a safe time for them to enter Kathmandu and show their intensive

presence with the guerrilla activities. The government, on the other hand, had been

restless about the Maoist and would detain anyone without warrants. Contrary to such

identical conditions in the headquarters, most of the villages were the Maoist controlled

and the security forces would reach these places very sparsely.

For Thapa, the cog of the context is the massacre of the royal family and the vacuous vision of the political leaders at a most momentous moment in Nepali history. The unprecedented massacre pushed the country "to brink of chaos" and compelled a citizen like her to feel that "terrible things were afoot" (19). After the massacre, the political environment deteriorated more: the Maoist escalated their insurgency and the major politicians "continued to botch and bungle", and the King "took the opportunity to steer the government back towards an absolute monarchy" (157). The wheel of the context is the social environment, especially the environment of the western Nepal during the ceasefire in January 2003. It refers to the time when "the government and the Maoist had agreed on a code of conduct for the ceasefire, which bound them to allow people to move freely through the countryside" (171-72). The ceasefire permitted limited mobility and granted partial right to expression. The army would scrutinize people's movements and interrogate them if they felt it necessary. The army's counterpart halted their attacks but intensified their political propaganda.

For Shah, the context is the socio-political condition of the country from an intensive Maoist insurgency to the forced defeat of the King, Gyanendra. Phenomenally, it includes the society that existed during the intermittent truce. The ceasefire, which started with Sher Bahadur Deuba assuming the office of the Prime-minister, ended before 2002 and necessitated a state of emergency. The government then handed over the responsibility of dealing with the Maoist to the Army. But, the Army also could not carry their work as the Parliament refused to extend the emergency period. What followed then was a political turmoil: Nepali Congress split into two factions; the King usurped the executive power. The king's appointee, the Chand government, declared truce and carried out a dialogue but without success. The democratic political parties, despite the ban over them, sustained their protest against the King with the formation of an alliance. To calm

down the protests, the King replaced the Chand government with another puppet

government led by Surya Bahadur Thapa. The Thapa government too tried for dialogue

but met the same fate. The intermittent pattern of conflict and truce during the insurgency

came to an end only with the toppling of King's rule in 2006.

Selection

The nature of the selection of traumatic events is a matter largely determined by

the proximity with the site of trauma and the milieu in which the traumatic event occurs.

But the decisive factor in the selection is an individual preference which is a function of

the person's outlook. That is, whenever traumatic events take place, people are involved

in their specific ways. The involvement becomes inherently inflected with prejudices of

different types. Judith Herman's insight from cutting-edge research on an individual's

impossibility to keep a neutral stance throws a flood of light on the inflections:

> When the events are natural disasters or 'acts of God', those who bear
>
> witness sympathize readily with the victim. But when the traumatic events
>
> are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict
>
> between victim and perpetrator. It is morally impossible to remain neutral
>
> in this conflict. The bystander is forced to take side. (7)

The abstention from taking sides is impossible, as Herman explains, due to the reasons

such as the perpetrator's exercise of "power to promote forgetting" through the means

like secrecy and silence (8). The power factor certainly counts but it is not the sole cause;

there exist other variables that instigate partiality.

An alternative explanation to why trauma is selective comes from Jeffrey

Alexander. For him, "It is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national

societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the

existence and source of human suffering but 'take on board' some significant

responsibility" (1). The responsibility, he states, is political. He also argues that the institutional arenas – religious, ethical, legal, scientific, mass media, state bureaucracy – mediate trauma rendition: "Linguistic action is powerfully mediated by the nature of the institutional areas and stratification hierarchies within which it occurs" (15). Alexander's claim reverberates Marxist inspired factors in punctuating mimetic rendition of trauma experience. In the discussion below, the dissertation examines the consequence of multiple factors including the ones stated by Alexander.

An examination of Wagle's perspective reveals that the determining factors in selection are twofold. The first is his voice discernible in Drishya's perspective on art and politics: "Art isn't politics. Painting is like music, removed from day-to-day life. It's a medium that touches the heart and the mind simultaneously. It seeks only the synergy of brushstrokes and colours. I use colours to express beauty. I'm not involved in politics" (85). This, however, does not mean that his perspective is absolutely apolitical: we find an underlying agency that is inspired by the politics of peace. Regarding his stand, he has explicitly stated, "The stand I'd taken was that of people who resisted the warmongers on both sides. I belonged to this, third force" (213). "The third force" signifies a large community that comprises politically conscious or even apolitical professional who think that the insurgency and counter insurgency would not be beneficial to any party. The standpoint they hold is brokered by denouncement of any violence irrespective of any condition.

The prism that constrains Thapa's selection is also twofold: (a) the perpetual propping of her identity as "a bourgeois with aspirations to being an intellectual", and (b) her position as the human rights activist. The second of the positions looks apparent and manifests frequently. Here is an instance of human rights activists' position presented with statistics:

Tellingly, only five of the 147 killings here had been perpetrated by the

Maoist. Of the 142 killed by the state security forces, all were alleged to

be the Maoist killed in combat. Amnesty International and other human

rights groups were saying that up to half of those killed by the security

forces were not the Maoist engaging in combat, but unarmed Maoist and

innocent civilians. (201-2)

Similar information emerges when she recalls Kotwada incident, "This was where, on 24

February 2002, the security forces had shot dead more than 34 workers, including 17 who

had come here all the way from Dhading District, near Kathmandu, to find work" and

adds that the regulation for the civilians to obtain passes from District Police office is a

"violation of the code of conduct" (220-21). With this statistics, she makes a ground to

justify the activities of the Maoists: "If I had grown up in one of these villages, and were

young, uneducated, unqualified for employment of any kind and as a female, denied basic

equality with men – hell I would have joined the Maoists, too" (248). The standpoint then

surfaces with a cosmopolitan concern:

If the insurgency was not resolved through peace talks, the girl, and so

many of the people we had met on this trip, could die in the course of war:

All the villagers, caught between the Maoist and the state security forces,

and all the children and young, lost people who had joined the Maoist,

wanting a better life. I thought of all the policeman and soldiers losing

their lives for an unwinnable war, all to feed and clothe and shelter their

families, who were no better off than the Maoist. (249-50)

In other words, she evinces empathy with the victims to the extent that she becomes a

participant and a co-author of their trauma.

Selection of the events by Shah seems to be a function of paradoxical morality perpetuated by the responsibility of his job and the consequence it might bring at the end of the armed conflict. On the one hand, the responsibility as a police officer permits him only to show the brutality of the government but on the other, the fear that the government falls does not let him be one-sided. This dilemma manifests in the anthology with the simultaneous castigation of the Maoist and the criticism of the government. Shah's explicit statement that he has been sensitive to the pain of security forces, guerrillas and civilians, and he has not been biased towards any side in representing their pain validates that he has maintained the paradoxical standpoint[3].

Trauma Rendition: Means and Control Axis

The knowledge of trauma that comes through the prism of availability, context and selection manifests only when there is an access to medium for its expression. The media can be physical gestures or verbal communication or written discourse. In case of media such as physical manifestation and/or therapeutic conversation, the trauma victim has an active access to channels. Consequently, the articulation does not suffer mediation, "[The survivor] tells [story of the trauma] completely, in depth and in detail" (Hermann 174). However, in the case of written discourse, there are many constraints. For instance, the victims, in order to put across their perspectives, need to have access to print media; but the elite-controlled media only eludes them if they do not meet their requirements.

The examination of such constraints has not been adequately carried out though a few researches have tried to incorporate the issue. An early example of investigation into

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[3] लेखकका रुपमा मलाई विद्रोही छापामार र आमनागरिकहरू सबैको पीडाले संवेदनशील बनाएको र कुनै पक्षप्रति पूर्वाग्रह नराखी मैले आफूले अनुभव गरेका युद्धका पीडाहरुलाई कथामा संश्लेषण गर्ने प्रयास गरेको छु।

[Lekhak ka rupama malai bidhrohi chhapamar ra aamnagarikharu sabaiko pidale sambedanshil banayeko ra kunai pakshyaprati purwagraha naraki maile aafule anubhav gareka yuddhaka pidaharulai kathama samslesan garne prayash gareko chhu.]

the issue of media in relation to trauma is Alexander and Eyerman's study. In his account of the institutional arenas in trauma process, Alexander remarks, "Mediated mass communication allows traumas to be expressively dramatized and permits some of the competing interpretations to gain enormous persuasive power over others" (28). In other words, trauma rendition through media may be used for political purposes. The media responsible for such mediation, as another cultural trauma proponent Eyerman observes, are newspaper, radio and television. Following their line of argument, the dissertation analyzes different aspects of political economy of media that address the issue of access to the channel and discourse control.

Access to Media Channels

The channel for communicating trauma is primarily physiological since trauma in its manifestations usually takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours. The physiological corpus is purposively left as scholars in humanities are less concerned with these manifestations. And, the study is delimited to the examination of channels only to the publication houses as the dissertation examines only the written discourse. More specifically, the analysis concentrates on the three authors' (Narayan Wagle, Manjushree Thapa and Mahesh Bikram Shah) access to the channels. The main purpose of this part is twofold; first, it demonstrates that access to media is a function of social power and popularity that any individual enjoys; and second, this reality bears its impact in trauma narration.

Wagle's access to the publisher and publication house provides an appropriate instance of co-relation between the two elements mentioned above. When the novel was in its making, Wagle was not only an editor of a powerful daily newspaper, Kantipur, but also a popular columnist in the newspaper. The most accessible channel in such a context would be newspaper. But he opted for another medium as he was aware that journalistic

reporting cannot include perspectives and thus newspaper would not be appropriate

medium for trauma rendition. Dixit echoes Wagle in the following admission:

> As journalists in Nepal, we feel that every story of a landmine killing
>
> children, abduction of students, young women disappeared by security
>
> forces is a heart-rending family tragedy. Unfortunately, by the time the
>
> deaths are reported the manner of their reporting turns them into statistics.
>
> We rarely see, hear or share the pain and personal loss of someone's loved
>
> one. (10)

Because Wagle was aware of journalism's inadequacy to provide a true picture of the

nation's trauma, and had social power, he could choose "the medium of a novel to get the

real story across" (10). The publisher of Wagle's novel is Nepa~laya, originally an event

management commercial company established in 2001. Initially, the company organized

stage shows of Nepali musicians not only to raise funds for social/educational institute

but also to raise social awareness. Simultaneously, it helped artists create their social

image. After two years of the company's operation as musical event organizer, it was

transformed into a foundation having the slogan, "artists create … rest we care". One of

the major objectives set under this banner was the publication of books. And,

interestingly, their debut novel, *Palpasa Café* turned out to be very successful one.

Thapa's access to the channel is also the function of her reputation as already

established author. She had authored widely acclaimed novel *The Tutor of History* and

the collection of short stories *Tilled Earth*. The specific channel that published *Forget*

Kathmandu is Penguin Publication House, India. Founded in 1985, the publication house

accepts only those authors who meet the requirement like "language, literary merits,

readability, style, competition, marketability and sales potential". Of the prescribed

requirements, four of them -- readability, sales potential, competition and marketability --

lead to the same denominator, *i.e.*, business. The domination of the lexicons from business demonstrates that the primary concern of the publisher is profit.

Shah's factor for channel access is similar to Thapa's; because Shah is an established writer among the Nepali readers, he had no problem in getting offers from reputed publication houses. The publisher for his collection of stories is Sajha Prakashan, Nepalese government owned publication entity. Established in 1964, the publication house is under the guidance and supervision of the government and operates activities such as publication, production and distribution. The criteria set for selecting the texts for publication include the concerns like mutual interest of the author and the reader.[4]

The purpose of cursory discussion on Shah's, Thapa's and Wagle's access to media is meant to illustrate two things. First, it aims to demonstrate how the social power of the individuals affects medium selection; and second, it provides context to study the nature of authorial agency in discourse control.

Discourse Control

The last of all the factors in trauma rendition is political economy of media, *i.e.*, media ownership and its consequence on the author's control over the content. In a sense, the function of discourse control is analogous to the function of gatekeeping in trauma cognition. And similar to trauma cognition, gatekeeping operates at higher level in low-intensity media control, and thus the experience that the traumatized victim wants to pass

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[4] साहित्यसाधक-लेखक-पाठकहरूको रुचिलाई ध्यानमा राखी देशमा सांस्कृतिक, साहित्यिक र शैक्षिक जागरण अभिवृद्धि गर्दै अनेक आयामबाट योगदान पुऱ्याउने काममा अहम् भूमिका निर्वाह गर्दै आएको साझा प्रकाशन वाङ्मयका अनेक क्षेत्रमा क्रियाशील छ र यसले नयाँनयाँ ग्रन्थहरूको प्रकाशन गर्दै आइरहेछ ।

[Sahityasadhak-lekhak-pathakh haruko rucheelai dhyanma rakhi deshma sanskritik, sahityik ra saikshik gajaran abhibridi gardai anek aayam bata yogdan puryaune kamma aaham bhumika nirwaha gardai aayeko sajha prakashan bangmayaka aanek kshetrama kriyashil chha ayeshle nayanaya granthaharuko prakashan gardai aayirahechha.]

through undergoes higher sanitization. Theoretically, the bigger the author's control over the media, the higher the possibility of unmediated representation.

With regard to media ownership, one of the pioneering studies on discourse control is carried by Hermann and Chomsky. They explain how money and power filter out the news appropriate to allow the government and dominant private interests to get their message across to the public. The explanation is based on their view, "[…], the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them" (xi). Cultural theorists such as Eyerman have also observed identical phenomenon even in trauma rendition.

> Such experience is usually mediated, through newspapers, radio, or television, for example, which involves a spatial as well as temporal distance between the event and its experience. Mass mediated experience always involves selective construction and representation, since what is seen is the result of the actions and decisions of professionals as to what is significant and how it should be presented. (3)

Eyerman is right in pointing out that media mediates but as his observation comes without any concrete mechanism to study the dynamics, it is essential to advance the idea further.

Drawing insight from Herman and Chomsky, the dissertation proposes that the trauma researchers study the nature of authorial control over the discourse. The method cogent to study the nature of control will be in-depth interview with the concerned authors. To crosscheck the reliability of the author, the information obtained from the interview need to be set against (a) the author's perspective as it is revealed in the text, and (b) the corporate principle of the publication house.

Despite the fact that the dissertation implicates the importance of investigating

political economy and spotlights the methodology, it purposively overlooks to study the

three author's control as they belong to the elite group and thus own higher authorial

agency.

CHAPTER FOUR

Trauma in the Three Novels

The third chapter examined the process of trauma in Narayan Wagle, Manjushree Thapa and Mahesh Bikram Shah in terms of availability, context, selection, access to channel and discourse control. The analysis illustrated that these factors bear influence over the three authors very significantly, though not in the same ways.

Wagle was exposed to second hand trauma which he selected through the perspectives of the "politics of peace". The context during his experience included the government's deployment of army to quell the Maoist activities. Traumatic overtaking of Thapa, a human rights activist and a "bourgeois with aspirations to being intellectual", was also secondhand (136). Nonetheless, as the context in her case was provided by the Royal massacre and a short truce, the trauma process followed different contours than that of Wagle. Shah's encounter with originary traumatic event which was shaped by a police officer's paradoxical morality was first hand. Since Shah acquired first-hand trauma, in the context of the socio-political condition from 2002 to 2006, the process of trauma took its own course. In this chapter, the dissertation exemplifies how the trauma process as identified in the three authors has affected the rendition in their texts -- *Palpasa Café, Forget Kathmandu* and *Chhapamar ko Chhoro*.

Trauma in *Palpasa Café*

Narayan Wagle's trauma process is rendered via the publisher Nepa~laya, which is primarily a commercial foundation but carries objective to promote peace. This section argues that the trauma process determined by these factors – secondary trauma, the deployment of army as a context and the author's perspective – defines the trajectory of

trauma narration in *Palpasa Café*.

Wagle bases the novel on vicarious trauma inflicted upon him due to Drishya's bearing witness to traumatic events. Hence, to understand Wagle's rendition, the study establishes the background of Drishya's traumatic condition. Drishya, a painter in a metropolitan location with Bohemian life style, encounters his childhood friend Siddhartha after the Royal massacre. Since Siddhartha has "turned to violence", Drishya thinks that sheltering him would "invite […] trouble from the security forces"; but, he finds denial for the same impossible: "If I denied him shelter, I'd be inviting trouble from his people" (77). Even though he is in such a limbo, Drishya swerves his mind after a long debate and decides to visit the countryside with Siddhartha. The journey provides him the brutal reality to inflict trauma on him. Drishya is affected doubly: one by Siddhartha's predicament -- "He was lying in a pool of blood but was still breathing"; and the other by Palpasa's tragic fate -- "Everything seemed to be on fire. I heard people groaning […]. Through the blaze, I could hear the horrible shrieking of the passengers trapped inside the bus […]. In no time, all that was left was a charred skeleton" (186). The magnitude of such events' impact can hardly be imagined. Generally, such conditions strike the bystander with speechlessness and overwhelming reactions. And when narrated, such experience resurfaces with scenes of incredible vividness, broken sentences, gestures and overwhelming behaviours. So, it can be deducted that Drishya's bearing witness would bear these features.

Having established that Drishya's bearing witness must have contained these characteristics; the analysis now concentrates on *Palpasa Café* to examine the nature of narration. The dissertation examines this issue with reference to the narration of four major traumatic events: the Maoist's attack in the district headquarters, the news of a small girl's mitini's death, Siddhartha's treacherous murder and Palpasa's tragic fate.

The attack in the district headquarters is so terrible that he sweats as in summer day though it is a cool night. The next morning, he witnesses the lodge owner "trembling violently" and her son with his pants wet (133). Another narration, *i.e.*, that presents Drishya's experience when he is vicariously traumatized by a small girl's mitini's death:

> This hill shouldn't have been so hard to climb. It wasn't that steep but my legs felt weak. I didn't know why I felt so drained of energy. I felt as if I was walking in a funeral procession. Though I was wearing shoes, I felt as if I was stepping on hot rocks. My rucksack wasn't really heavy but it felt like a bag of stones a drill instructor might make a recruit carry for punishment. (151)

The description presents the narrator with the detail of physical manifestations of trauma. His inability to carry out even routinely work and incapability to distinguish even diametrically opposite experiences amply justify that he underwent the traumatic experience very badly. The narration that presents Drishya's condition after Siddhartha's murder translates his feeling in similar vein: "I couldn't understand what he was trying to say. I looked into his eyes. They tore my heart out. […] I sobbed. I screamed. I wept like a child. […] I began to feel feverish. I felt as if I were drowning in a sea of sand" (166-67). Similarly, the condition after Palpasa's terrible fate accounts the trauma poignantly:

> My whole body was shaking like a leaf. All my dreams and desires were suddenly gone, as if they'd been a bird flying off the branch of a tree. […] Why had I gotten on the same bus as Palpasa. […] As the sun came up, I wished I could wake up from the nightmare. (186-87)

The trauma has left such a scar that he re-traumatizes when he reads a letter handed by the grandmother. Accounting his traumatic experience and the work that he carries out to work through trauma, the narration reads, "Every movement was devoted to images.

Even when I didn't have a brush in my hand, lines and colours danced in my mind. I needed to keep working on the series to remind myself I was alive" (216). The experience during his sixth painting in Palpasa series is worthy to note: "I wanted to put hope into the figure of Palpasa. At first, I'd painted her in vermilion but it looked like blood. I couldn't even distinguish between vermilion and blood" (211). Its worthiness comes to the fore in the sense that the trauma takes constructive direction.

The narration, especially post to Palpasa's death, reminds of working through, a phenomenon forgrounded in Freud's psychoanalysis and developed further by Dominick LaCapra. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma* LaCapra refers to one of the ways in which the victims treat the past: "one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recognize something as having happened to one (or one's people) back then which is related to, but not identical with, here and now" (66). In other words, there is potential both to sustain and leave the traumatic experience. The leaving, which is called working through involves the features like "conscious control, critical distance, and perspective" (90). These features are discernible in the novel. Wagle's confession that he still did not know some of the basic facts about Drishya, and has "constructed [the other characters] purely from snippets of information Drishya had given me" echoes the theoretical underpinning (231-32). Moreover, the episodic nature of Wagle's participation in Drishya's bearing witness – "I'd interviewed Drishya many times" – rectifies that there is working through.

Drishya has been shown working through his trauma. An underlying factor for such representation, the dissertation argues, is Wagle's perspective of "the politics of peace". As a peace lover, he should necessarily sanitize the scenes of atrocities. A dominant technique used for this purpose is a "metonymic substitution" which is originally used in trauma rendition by juxtaposition to show similarity of traumatic

experience and its narration (Bernard-Denals 1308). For instance, when he narrates the Maoist attack in the district headquarters, he juxtaposes it with the description of popular film figures like Manisha Koirala. Similarly, during the people's response to traumatic events the juxtaposition brings a humorous event and a pathetic event simultaneously. This technique in Wagle's hand, instead of producing the desired effect of similitude, conjures up meta-ironic effect to reduce the intensity of the traumatic time. Further, the intensity of trauma to the readers is reduced by foregrounding the romantic love affair between Palpasa and Drishya.

The contribution of context in determining the contour of rendition appears in the text especially in the description of security forces' atrocities. As it was a time when the army had been in operation to quell the Maoist, any of the narrations that concerned the army demanded sanitization. The following example illustrates a cause-effect relationship between the context and trauma narration. In describing the abduction of Drishya, the narration elliptically presents the perpetrator: the readers find it equivocal to identify the abductor. Fulan's description implies the involvement of the Maoists, whereas Wagle portrays it as the army's work.

The eliding of the army's atrocities, working through of Drishya's trauma and the approximation of the description of the traumatic events conduce to the conclusion that the context, availability and the selection are the determining factors in trauma narration. Wagle's narration only proximate the traumatic time; it fails to produce the verisimilitude of the event.

Trauma in *Forget Kathmandu*

Manjushree Thapa's trauma process is rendered by Penguin Publication House India, a commercial conglomerate that operates mainly with business principles. The narration presents the trauma inflected over a person by the history of the country and

intensified after the assassination of King Birendra. The traumatic condition compels her to focus on two aspects: one, on the political history of Nepal and the other, on the plight of people in remote locations. Thapa's trauma due to Nepali history is structural whereas in the second case, the trauma is vicarious. In the discussion below, the dissertation shows that the factors such as vicarious trauma, the ceasefire as a context, and the author's perspective determine the trajectory of trauma narration in *Forget Kathmandu*.

Thapa's rendition foregrounds the condition of western Nepal when the country was enjoying halcyon times due to armistice. The narration brings distinctly four sets of people. The first sets of narratives come from the Maoists or their sympathizers. Their stories detail the sufferings which emanate the sense that the state has really abused its authority. By contrast, the second sets of narratives give a different picture. Uttered through the non-Maoists, they retrospectively foreground the atrocities that contrast with the present peaceful condition. The third set of words comes from the security forces. Their narration demonstrates the characteristics of trauma perpetrator's falling back upon secrecy and silence. Human rights activists are the fourth set of narrators who rejuvenate the sense of suffering inflicted upon the civilians primarily due to the atrocities of security forces. The spectrum of the suffering validates that Thapa's accessibility governs the narration. In other words, she succeeds in showing the suffering of many people as it was easily accessible to her.

To argue that selection has equally powerful impact in the narration, I recall the two-fold direction that her narration takes. Apparently, her selection is filtered through two major perspectives. The first is the politics of human rights. This is an important point that the dissertation gives further treatment after the discussion on the second perspective. The second is her location as a bourgeois intellectual -- an outlook which dominates the first four chapters after the introduction wherein she re-enacts the history.

Further analysis of the content in this part reveals the working of the second view point at the micro level. Triggered by the traumatic event, Thapa begins to re-enact the history from the perspective of a person, who "passes the days in a lost-in-the-trenches daze about the present moment, piecing together shards of history and references and facts […], is haunted by the realization that much knowledge is incomplete in Nepal" (50). She finds the past as a corpus imbued with "celebration of the Shahs", as a body of writing defined by "jingoism of [the] Panchayat era" that failed to recognize Shah Kings as "a convoluted lot", as a corpus teeming with "alleged intelligence agents" whose responsibility was to inform on the dissidents, and as an account rampant with "mismanagement, abuse and corruption scandal" (52, 61, 109, 117). The images used to represent the history illustrate her reactionary characteristics, which as the Marxists argue, resembles the nature of bourgeois who aspire to appear intellectual.

The perspective of a human rights activist dominates the last two chapters, which render Thapa's conversation with the villagers in the western part of the country. The narrative excerpts appear from distinctly four sets of people showing the sufferings of civilians due to the brutality of the authorities, the rays of hope at the end of atrocities, the hints of threat from the security forces. These narratives try to impart the sense that the author has included the suffering of all the people. Nonetheless, the way the narration brings the Maoists' torment dominantly compared to the suffering of other group of people compels the reader to question if the author is impartial. The response to this question hardly asserts impartiality; rather it answers that the author's perspective is that of human rights activist.

Thapa's authorial position as a human rights activist becomes palpable when we analyze the author's underlying assumptions in her voices. The idea that the officials in authoritarian states exercise power to inflict violence upon their subjects for political

expediency comes to the fore quite explicitly. Thapa sticks to this standpoint in the following lines: "There was not a trace of government here, not a single sign of what the Nepali state had done in all its centuries of existence" (203). In another instance, she writes, "If it was a crime for the state to violate its citizens' political liberties, I thought, it should be equally a crime to violate their economic rights" (219). Forcibly the criticism against the government comes when she counters the captain's statement that they run health camps, "If that was the army's job, what then was the job of the civilian government" (225)? The statement Thapa expresses at the end is quite interesting as she sides with the Maoists:

> I for one was sick of the Maoists. Given that – over the decades – the state had done so little for them, they were justified in demanding their rights. But what did their violent methods achieve? The powers that be – including donor countries funding the government – would not tolerate a Maoist victory. So, unless the present peace talks succeeded, the security forces would continue their brutal campaigns, and all civil liberties would be lost. (227)

The statement reverberates a theoretical underpinning according to which ideological biases shape the nature of representation.

No doubt, Thapa has presented a wide spectrum of suffering as it was easily accessible to her. But because of her attitude as human rights activists, she fails to depict the Army in any positive light; rather she concentrates on the suffering of civilians at the hands of the security forces. This syllogism thus justifies that the context, availability and selection impinge on trauma narration.

Trauma in *Chhapamar ko Chhoro*

The publisher of Mahesh Bikram Shah's trauma process is Sajha Prakashan, a

Nepalese government owned publication entity. Shah's encounter with originary

traumatic event, which is shaped by a police officer's paradoxical morality, is first hand.

Since Shah acquired first-hand trauma, in the context of the socio-political condition

from 2002 to 2006, his anthology *Chhapamar ko Chhoro* renders an intensive picture of

the insurgency.

Vividness in the atrocities of conflict becomes ostensible throughout the novel as

the author demonstrates detention, abduction, torture, tension, and gruesome deaths.

Along with these atrocities, the anthology depicts the desolated villagers, ransacked

houses and terror-prone environment. Stories which depict such conditions include

"Gaun ma Geetharu Gunjadainan" [Songs do not Resound in the Village], "Kidi Jiya le

Karlalima Hamfalin" [Kidi Jiya Plunged into the Karnali River], "Mero Kukur Aajhai

Bhukiraheko Thiyo" [My Dog was Still Barking], "Bandha Dhoka ra Samaya" [Closed

Door and Time], and "Bandha Dhoka ra Sapanaharu" [Broken Door and the Dreams].

The story, "Kidi Jiya Plunged into the Karnali River", presents the situation characterized

by property seizure, threat, forced migration and enforced labour. Kidi Jiya, a rustic

experiences all the sufferings simply because she wants to live without supporting the

Maoist. Similarly, "Songs do not Resound in Village" presents a desolate village which

once was a very peaceful village. During his visit to the village, the narrator finds most of

his childhood friends missing from the villages. He also witnesses the scenes of destroyed

school buildings and demolished telephone tower. In a sense, instances of Shah coming

to terms with his experience abound with verisimilitudes. Such a representation is due to

the availability of the event to Shah, a police officer stationed in conflict torn zone.

The anthology presents stories not only of the Maoists but also of the security

forces. This diversity in the plot of the stories also shows the nature of the events'

availability. The anthology, however, does not render the trauma without narrativization;

many instances of interpolations emerge mainly due to the author's perspectives. Firstly, as a police officer set to curb the Maoists, he scrutinizes the Maoist activities seriously, and refrains from representing police as perpetrator. Secondly, as a witness of decadence of the existing government, he hardly finds words of thanks to them; rather he exposes the stupidity in the government's employment of the security forces.

The appropriation of the Maoists can be discerned in Shah's treatment of a man in the slaughterhouse. The story "Buddha in a Slaughter House" narrates the life of an assassinator now turned into a prisoner. He has been brought back as he tried to run away from his responsibility. Back in the house, he faces the predicament of the other prisoners when he denies the Mahanayak's order to continue assassinating human beings. Ready for assassination, he ironically chants Buddhist hymn with which the whole house resounds. Another story that concerns the Maoists is "Gandhi in the Street". It represents a Maoist cadre who regrets for the past, sees the present meaningless and fears the future. The depiction reminds of dialectical relation between a victim and perpetrator. The perpetrators hardly account the victims in positive lights; rather they concentrate on their evilness.

The function of selection also manifests in Shah's choice of the devices of storytelling. The first technique is foregrounding of the frame. By creating the frame rather than the context, Shah relativizes his guilt as a Superintendent of police. The frame, unlike the context, selects a few images out of the historical panorama and thus provides smaller than the real picture. An instance of such framing appears dominantly in "The Country Where the Son is Sleeping in Father's Shoulder". The story demonstrates a father striding with his son's head smeared in blood. Having found his son's head decimated from the trunk, he goes to the security forces, who respond him without empathy. When the responsibility of investigation shifts to the police, they blame the

Maoist. Thus, the irresponsibility of security forces elides to foreground the atrocities of the Maoists.

The first frame is the anti-Maoist stance: the insurgency insinuated by them and its impact over the citizens. "Closed Door and Time" dramatizes the fear of the family surrounded by the people in combat who are certain to empty the food in stock making it their snacks. The framing that presents the Maoist in negative light swerves to positive depiction when Shah presents police atrocities. The second frame is apathy to the government; it surfaces dominantly when Shah views the conflict as a consequence of the politicians' insensibility. Through the three stories out the eighteen stories – "Animal Incarnation", "Chair Carnival" and "Human Farming" – he demonstrate the extremes of debased human values in the socio-political sphere. Similarly, through the story of a constable, "Long Live Ceasefire", Shah shows lack of vision of the government. The story narrates the activities of constable Birbahadur set in Maoist hit areas from the first person perspective. A constable, Birbahadur, fights till the enemy's bullet hits his chest yet kills the opponent. But, when the combat ends, he hears the declaration of ceasefire by the government and the guerrilla. The story reveals that when the narration concerns the activities of the police, sanitization sips in different form. Another case of sanitizing security force's atrocities is corroborated by the police officer's humanitarian treatment to the son of a guerrilla. "Son of a Guerrilla" dramatizes the psychology of an officer in security force. Seeing the son of a guerrilla in his courtyard, his blood boils and eyes grow wild and fiery. The memory of the guerrilla fires the fierceness of his anger and hatred towards his son. Nevertheless, he controls himself and dillydallies before he allows the boy to play with his son.

A device that he purposively avoids is the epic narration. Consciously, the author eludes the episodic, Boccaccio-like frame, which grants the characters autonomy to tell

their stories without authorial filter and author freedom. For instance, "Another Pit"

presents a Maoist cadre digging a pit to bury the dead guerrilla, but without his voices. As

the narration comes from a third person perspective, the character gets filtered through

the narrator.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Trauma theory which came of age in the mid 1990 has been a tremendous groundswell of interest in a wide range of fields and disciplines. Consequently multiple schools of thought such as psychological trauma, cultural trauma, betrayal trauma, vicarious trauma, historical trauma have appeared. But, despite such a wide proliferation, any of the theories do not comprehensively account all the variables in trauma process. Psychological concept of trauma suffers from internal contradiction: it simultaneously (a) assumes trauma as overwhelming event that does not fall into consciousness, and (b) argues that the narration of trauma provides an access to the originary events. Similarly, the experience at the interval of occurrence and rendition, which is called belatedness, has attracted many other critiques. The shortcoming in the abreactive model, it appears, is addressed in cultural trauma theory by highlighting the political dimension of the experience. Consequently, the theory also shifts the inquiry into trauma from what is remembered to how and why it is remembered. Nonetheless, this orientation also suffers from fallacy because of inherent contradiction in the assumption. Theoretically, an inquiry into epistemology and pragmatics of an issue without a study of ontology tends towards abstraction. Other directions also suffer as they do not account multiple variables that determine trauma process and its rendition. In such a scenario, there is hardly any possibility of studying all the components that bear impact on trauma narration from any of the existing theories. The limitation hence necessitates an alternative approach, which the dissertation proposed with a framework derivable from interdisciplinary borrowing of Gerbner's graphic model from communication studies.

The communication model starts with E (event) which is perceived by human beings or machine as E_1 (percept). The perception is determined by a variety of factors such as selection, context and availability. Selection is commonly known as gatekeeping in media. Context refers to the activities and occurrences in particular space and time during the event. Availability concerns both the quality and quantity of the events. In the vertical dimension of the model, M formulates statement about the event, to use Gerbner's code, SE to which we normally call the 'message'. S stands for signal and E refers to its content. To send that message, M has to use channels (or media) over which he has a greater or lesser degree of control. The process can be extended *ad infinitum* by adding on other receivers (M_2, M_3 etc.) who have further perceptions (SE_2, SE_3 etc.) of the statements about perceived events.

When the model is transported to trauma studies, it becomes precise framework not only to describe the trauma process but also to explore the function of different factors during trauma rendition. E (event) stands for traumatic event. E_1 (percept) refers to the perception of E by M (a traumatized person) determined by various factors like selection, context and availability. The registered experience generally remains latent until it is triggered by similar event. Once the perception meets appropriate conditions – access to communication channels – it constitutes form and content to take the structure SE (trauma narration). The narration, which is conditioned and filtered by factors like selection, context and availability, is infectious as it carries potential to traumatize M_2 (second person).

The dissertation implicated the framework to study the literary texts that concern Nepali Maoist movement. It inquired if these factors bear impact in the trauma process thereby determining the nature of rendition. Simply stated, the study attempted to answer what factors underlie the rendition of traumatic events. The three texts analyzed here –

Palpasa Café, *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy* and *Chhapamar ko Chhoro* – demonstrated three different pictures of the conflict.

Drishya's trauma, which follows the brutal killing of his friend Siddhartha and his beloved Palpasa, traumatizes Wagle who narrates his trauma as the first person witness. Thapa's, *Forget Kathmandu*, gives a witness account when the conflicting sides have agreed on ceasefire. The book with a human rights slant presents the suffering of the civilians through the foregrounding of the Maoists voice. Shah's, *Chhapamar ko Chhoro*, bears witness to the suffering of the civilians, atrocities of the Maoists, plight of the security forces and the negligence of political leaders in the context when successive truce and violence were taking place rapidly.

The factors responsible for the diverse representation of any traumatic event are availability, context, selection, access to media channel, and discourse control. In case of the three authors, the two elements – access to media channel and discourse control – seem to have very marginal effect as all of them belong to the elite's group and thus own higher authorial agency. Since the two elements bear no significance in the three authors' rendition, these variables have been purposively overlooked whereby the concentration has been allocated to the first three elements' impact. Wagle experienced vicarious trauma when the country was in the hands of army and filtered it through the prism of the politics of peace; the content elides the atrocities of the army, presents Drishya's trauma in the frame of working through and approximates traumatic events. On the other hand, Thapa's adherence to the human rightist's perspective in bearing witness to people's experience during armistice, not only shows the security forces in negative light but also resorts to the sufferings of the civilians through identitarian inscription. The predicament that testimony raises – avoiding sympathy turning into over identification – finds no resistance in Thapa. Contrary to Thapa, trauma rendition of the time between truce and violent break up of

insurgency from 2002-2006 by Shah delineates vulnerability of security personnel, the atrocities of the Maoists, the political delinquency and the suffering of the common people. But the narration shies away from becoming testimonial account because of the nature of availability, context, selection, and discourse control.

Theoretically, an inquiry into trauma literature demands the study of both trauma process and political economy of media. The process finds unmediated representation at physical and psychological level; but when it has to be in written discourse the experience is appropriated if there lacks proper access to channel and discourse control. Trauma representations, thus, do not resemble because these factors bear their influence over individuals differently.

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