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# A TALE OF A TRAUMATIZED MOTHER IN “LIWANG 2006”

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## **Abstract:**

*Nepal has been known a land of peace. But, due to various factors, this country has witnessed many facets of violence in different parts. A decade long conflict between the rebel and national security force that devastated the country's economic, political, social and cultural discourse has become an integral part for creation of new genres for readers and writers. This mnemonic past along with other historical details, as an integrative focal point has induced creative mind to generate the lifelike situation i.e. disappearance of Purnaman, characters i.e. Dilsara, Bainsamali, ChitraBahadurPunmagaretc along with their creative artifacts. RajkumarDikpal, a prolific storyteller in Nepali literature edifies these characters in his story “Liwang 2006” in the background of ten years long Maoist insurgency. It unfolds an old mother who has lost her only son who used to dream of her only happiness. And the trauma of these commoners is a means to represent the political scenario of the nation.*

**Key Words:** *mnemonic, record, rejuvenate, conflate, ameliorate, grief, trauma.*

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## **Introduction and Objectives**

Violence has been prevalent in South Asia and people living in this area have been prolific to violent activities which have been a matter of issues. In the pretext of talking about the war and mass killing South Asia is a war-hit region in the world, that has witnessed various inter- state and intra –state clashes and caste, ethnic and regional conflicts that have left the society in terrific condition. This region has got remembered with long – standing violent that destroys material, social and personal well being and has created different conditions of individual and collective trauma. Its impact has now extended into the future spreading beyond personal to the social and political life of the communities. The then revolutionary party CPN (Maoist) insurged its People's War that started in February 1996 and continued for more than ten years leaving more than 1300 dead and hundreds and thousands bodily injured as well as millions displaced stranding here and there as internal refugees thronging around the district headquarters and capital towns. Those who succumbed the war and war- inflicted areas ieRukum, Rolpaetc have been living their lives with the memories they got during the war – ridden era deciphering those memories in the print forms and letting the young generation know what the war was like and how the PLA and national security forces fought and others witnessed. Past traumas don't simply pass or disappear with the passage of time, rather those traumatic events are remembered in collectivenarratives that can shape the attitudes towards the self as well as other people. Traumatic stress has become more prevalent and complex in contemporary lives of those who involved in war and they are eager to

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express their feelings and write their experiences in the print form. Rajkumar Dikpal's "Liwang 2006" has unfolded the traumatic facts of this area how people in the name of escalating security and better life of common people have been synonyms of aggravation of their sociopolitical discourse. In this article, a traumatized mother, who is the representative of all mothers living in the hinterlands of Nepal, has been presented with a message that war is now enough and everyone is longing for peace.

## Trauma as a Tool

Trauma as silence aftermath of violence has been prevalent to various communities which have witnessed violence. If traumatic events aren't worked through, they can encroach the victims with insecurity. Cathy Caruth explains, "The story of trauma, then as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality-the escape from a death, or from its referential force-rather attests to its endless impacts on a life" (7). Trauma, as a subject of study has been used either in the medical field or literary world, but it has occupied a great area of discussion. "Psychological trauma is a subject of a great professional and public interest." (Wastell, xv) That trauma studies has become a part of psychology is all related to human psyche which illuminates the past memories that may be dimly recalled. "Trauma is an emotional shock, producing a disturbance, more or less enduring of mutual functions ..... The concept of 'shock' is a central to the definition of trauma." (xvi) More or less, the bereaved forebore all the events daily confronting the terrible effects of accounts, war and mistreatment, massacre, rape, brutalism etc that come as a shock in mind and the survivors of these horrific events may suffer the ongoing distresses and "the effects of these events are seen as marking survivors with deep, disturbing and debilitating psychological scars." (xi) Various past events shape the memories into the form of trauma with its meaning. "Trauma implies a breakdown of both meaning and trust – in a world that has been shattered, overturned. It encourages "rapid sudden and radical impacts on the 'body social'." (Bell, 8) Besides such casualties, memorials of past injustice and apologies for previous misdeeds, constitute 'a civic ritual of recognition essential for reconciling the oppressors and oppressed.' (21) Only thinking about the holocaust and horrible past, life can't be spent rather facing and enriching those traumatized events, one can go ahead.

The phenomenon of traumatic events always remains a matter of issue which seems to become all-inclusive, but it has been taken importantly because it brings the people to the limits of everyone's understanding. In this context, Cathy Caruth elaborates, "If psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience" (45). As the connotative meaning of trauma, it unfolds the physical and mental wounds, but with its denotative assumption, it can vary the dimension of its usage as it appeals the persons. The ethics of memory is adjacent to the ethics of forgetting, hence, memory is in a sense, beneficial and helps the potential for moving forward envisaging an alternative future. That trauma can be related to aestheticism does not only conflate the damage, it pertains to artistic and cultural representation of those horrible damage. Certain outworks seem "to bring us to borders of traumatic encounters in ways that are disturbing and provoking, even painfully so, but also at the same time aesthetically enjoyable." (Ray, 134) Many past events, maybe horrible and unbearable that time and even later to reminisce, however, can be a part to formulate a creative work for the

world to exemplify, notify and even to show the world what those events were like. “Historical experiences compel a new reflection on capitalist modernity and open the shrinking possibilities for enlightenment and emancipation.”(140) Although we live in a world that is torn and shattered by violence in different names and causes intensified by the scale of conflicts and catastrophes, violence etc that have been understood as integral to purge the human positions and emotions from the earliest time of human civilization. “The metaphor of trauma draws attention to the ways that extremes of violence break bodies and minds leaving indelible marks even after healing and recovery ..... Trauma can be seen at once as a socio-political event, a psychophysiological process, a physical and emotional experience, and a narrative theme in explanations of individual and social suffering.” (Kirmayer, Lemelson, and Barad, 1). And these narratives bring a new picture in the mind of readers from time to time until they are artistically presented in a new forms, in a sense, trauma and those scenarios that happened aftermath have been a subject to trace psychologically not only to the survivors but also to the readers and witnesses who later read and perceive those horrible events, but they tend to cause a deeper appreciation, for they would, in any way, bring a new dimension of thinking, achieving and penetrating the sequences of events and results of that would be certain to fall, otherwise something other that maybe more traumatic would proceed in some cases, indeed pain, suffering and trauma felt aftermath have been used constructively in the form of literary writing i.e. memoir by many veteran personality who involved, witnessed and survived in any way from the historical as well as social, political and cultural events. People’s War in Nepal had been taken very glorious war for those who undertook it as a means to liberate from the chain of suppression, but on the whole for other people it was and still a border between oppressed and oppressor, proletariat and feudal, reactionary and revolutionary. Many participants remained eager to sacrifice first, so that their name would be written as a cause of sacrifice for people and many unwillingly became victimized from either side.

## **A Traumatized Mother in Liwang**

The ten year long insurgency has been remembered for different purposes: some take it as a great historical event for the liberation of underprivileged people and other take it as a bloodshed event. For many other people it has become a good area for writing fiction ameliorating the pathos of people living the conflict-ridden areas like Rolpa, Rukum etc. Raj Kumar Dikpal, a well-known literary figure who has penned either in journalism or in story writing depicting “human miseries and the ultimate height of tragedy caused by war and other social ills,”(KC,129) and portraying the picture of war-prone society and conflict afflicted people is able to bring the pains of commoners living in the hinterlands out in the form of literary writing. “Liwang, 2006”, a story taken from his anthology *Under the Shadow of Terror* deals with a realistic and “harrowing picture of an old woman whose son has gone missing after a group of government gunmen steal him away from his house one night before the backdrop of Maoist-Government war in Nepal.”(130) The presentation of Dilsara, an old woman who has lost her son who was sandwiched between the two warring combatants and prone to have a detached life in the foreign land for employment to support his family making his old mother, Dilsara very happy. But one day for unwillingly giving a shelter and food to the rebel the family had to pay a huge cost as the security persons took him away and his whereabouts is still unknown to her. The storyteller has succeeded in bringing out the traumatic grief of this sixty-two years old mother who has

undergone with the pain that she could not share to other in spite of several attempts people do to make her speak about her pangs except pronouncing "Purnaman" repetitively time and again. The narrator of the story finds her staring to the distant hill named Gwarpa Hill instead of basking the heat of sun in the winter season in Tudhikhel and she would not leave until the dim rays of the sun bid farewell to Dharampani highland. "She drowns in sorrow after the government gunmen abducted her son, Purnaman, from their own home in Iriwang, under the pretext of making an inquiry. Like the flowing water of Dhangsikhola, tears rolls down her cheeks, but Purnaman's condition is as much unknown as the amount of water flowing downstream." (Dikpal, 134) Kidnapping, extortion, mass massacre, hacking, butchering innocent denizen in front of their kin, displacement from their own places, internal and external refuge etc are those means of suffering that this conflict causes in the life of people living in those areas. Dilsara and her daughter Bainsamali, the owner of local hotel, Hotel Jaljala at PeepalChautari, reminisce him and the memory of the lost one has retreated to what they are aligned to be – the sites of eulogies for elucidating him to any strangers. "Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it, it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic." (Hunt, 101) Both mother and daughter have taken him as a part of their memory that is specific, collective, plural and yet individual, along which both are destined to live their life. But history belongs to everyone and no-one, whence its claim to universal authority and societies and individuals take responsibility for memory. (101) The People's War, as historical fact that remains in the memory of all those who endured it and survived it with more hardship. In this way, they, appearing to stand outside society and applying the historical microscopic and objectively interpreting and recording the past, have become irrespective of society. As a result history annihilates the mnemonic past through the objective systematic record. The grief, both women are undergoing with has been changed into the past record which only with the speed of time some people may organize in the form of a narrative or will be lost amidst the mist of memory. Staring at the distant Gwarpa Hill and spelling 'Purnaman' each time and not speaking to anyone sitting on the ground of Tudikhel is a symbolic tool for the consolation of trauma she is enduring to this old woman, and quenching the thirst of the strangers with the help of narrative about the whereabouts of her brother is manifestation of the pain she along her mother has been anticipating how much burden is being felt in the heart of an old woman who has lost her appendage of her old age. Their memory, a "mode of resistance to a language that forgets the essential vulnerability of flesh in its reification of state, nation and ideology," (Edkins, 100) has only one way to have their lost one. After all, what one always wants while living in pain is the release from the pain in any way expecting peace one day.

## Conclusion

Life goes as it does, human lives as he or she does and destiny works as it wishes. Human life passes on as it deserves. In the same way, history, being written in any way whether one does anything or not, is an important mnemonic past in which many people have donned their dresses up, but what matters here is whether it is recorded or not. Ten years civil war has become a part of history and Purnamans are those people whom the history has engulfed and gobbled down, but the survivors like Dilsara and Bainsamali are in the process to rejuvenate the forgotten facts out of their memory and try their best to fill up the gap with the help of memory sharing the narrative to the listeners. Sometimes, narrating painful stories can help one soothe the pain feeling for a long time.

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