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# Manifest Trauma and Remembering Sorrowful Terroristic Life in Dikpal's "Liwang 2006"

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## Abstract

*This article is an attempt to study different aspects of trauma in Rajkumar Dikpal's story "Liwang 2006" with the help of psychological trauma and its major assets. The story is written on the background of ten years long civil war which caused the death of more than fifteen thousand people and millions of others remained homeless for a long time. Among many war affected people, Purnaman, Dilsara Ghartimagar, Bainsamali, the main characters in the story, are the people who become victims of the insurgency and have to go through painful traumatic situation. This paper tries to show how they become traumatized and how severely they go through this situation. For this, the major assets of Caruth and other trauma theorists as theoretical tool have been applied to analyze the trauma and its post-traumatic stress disorder found in the primary text, "Liwang 2006". Here, the story has been analyzed keeping traumatic aspects, which would, subsequently, help one understand personal trauma and its aftermath as well the conflict which badly affect the lives of people living in the hinterland of the nation. By bringing out the outcomes of the conflict and its bad results, this article centers on the common people's painful traumatic condition due the civil war and how those who remain alive are seen remembering those sorrowful terroristic life in past.*

**Keywords:** *conflict, cultural trauma, people's war, mental and physical hardships*

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## Introduction

In this article I have assessed psychological aspects of trauma propagated and brought as a literary theory by Cathy Caruth and others to bring out the very traumatic aspects of the people who had witnessed the ten years long civil war that caused the death of more fifteen thousand people and millions of others remain badly affected for a long time. For this, Rajkumar Dikpal's "Liwang 2006" has been analyzed and discussed applying trauma theory developed by Caruth and others to show different aspects of trauma in the lives of the characters in the story. The whole of the Nepali society as presented in the story was or has been badly affected by the consequences of the conflict. Common people were sandwiched between the rebels and the security forces. Many innocent people were targeted without any serious causes. Their life was in trauma from which they couldn't come out easily and remained in this pathetic condition for a long time as Caruth pointed out, "Psychic trauma involves intense suffering, but also involves the recognition of realities that most of us have not begun to face" (*Unclaimed* vii). Human being would always be in search of peaceful life when they are in trauma and going through a disturbed phase of their life, but still remain engulfed in the bog of painful reminiscences of traumatic past.

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Rajkumar Dikpal is a prolific Nepali writer who has contributed a lot of narratives by depicting the lifelike experiences of ordinary people bearing very painful traumatic suffering due to political ups and downs. His story “Liwang 2006” is one of those stories which illustrate the trauma of war-affected citizens who are experiencing various hardships. The consolation and suggestion given to him by his friends and relatives remain futile as he is seen mentally disturbed time and again and seen missing for a long time leaving his old mother alone. And it is a striking point for one to notice: in spite of the fact that many people were badly affected by the conflict, is the painful situation shown in the story related to trauma? If yes, then how and which aspect of trauma can be seen in the story? And I find the main characters in Rajkumar Dikpal’s story “Liwang 2006” who are trying to come out of his trauma, but remains encircled with mental hardships developed in his surrounding until they live their life.

## Methodology

This article has used the qualitative aspects to analyze the traumatic facts seen in the text that explores trauma in post-conflict narrative – Rajkumar Dikpal’s story “Liwang 2006” which has brought the deadly consequences of decade-long conflict between the state and the rebels which caused death and other casualty of many people. This article delineates the analysis of the text to bring out the events, dialogues and their consequences by applying trauma theory propagated by Cathy Caruth and other important theorists. For this, reviews on the text and its criticism would be taken as secondary sources to delineate pivotal argumentations.

## Traumatic Analysis

Now, the critics prefer to coin trauma as a theoretical tool to analyze the text written about war and conflict that must have caused dreadful consequences upon the ordinary people living in the affected areas. Craps in this case, states,

Amid persistent accusations that literary scholarship, particularly in its deconstructive, post-structuralist, or textualist guise, has become indifferent or oblivious to what goes on in the real world, trauma theory confidently announced itself as an essential apparatus for understanding the real world and even as a potential means for changing it for better. (52).

Trauma has thus, surpassed the boundary of only physical wounds and other scars.

Following the dictum of Fredric Jameson, history is what hurts as Caruth points out a psychoanalytical view of traumatic experience. Keeping these facts while bringing out the cultural aspect, it bears witness to traumatic past and helps it be possible to gain access to painful experiences that “defy understanding and representation” (*Trauma Exploration* 76). About the concept, she has further claimed “the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand a new mode of reading and listening” (77). It would help one access the situation and come out of the isolation that would be seen on both individuals and cultures with the help of traumatic experience.

People living at present moan of the past and roam around the pneumatic occurrences. Dixit in his much-acclaimed book *India-Pakistan War and Peace* argues how much it is appropriate to view the recent happenings through the prism of history to understand the painful events that happened in the past. He notes, "Such a larger view may indicate not a break from the past but perhaps continuity." (3) History, a chronological record of the past, may help one get what he or she has lost.

In the twenty first century, trauma and "its meanings, subject to ideological and fiduciary struggle" (Stevens, 2) as a term either in literary or medical field has been an important area for the analysis of the experience of violence and its aftermath. Marder adds to Steven's idea as, "Trauma has something of privileged and paradoxical relationship to interdisciplinary studies" (1). The metaphor of trauma has drawn the attention of various people in such a way that violence breaks one's bodies and minds "leaving indelible marks even after healing and recovery," (Kirmayer et al. 1). It covers various situations of extreme pain and suffering and the result as a socio-political event which can be a way to illuminate the physical and emotional aspects of human suffering.

The word 'trauma' came from Greek language meaning "wound" (Marder 1); however, on the basis of context and disciplines, its meaning differs as per the critics. But there is agreement on its usage - it is a different kind of wound which the survivors of horrific events i.e. great wars either real ones like the First and Second World War, Samuel Pepys' *Black Death, Great Fire of London* or the imagined ones like Homer's *Iliad* may suffer from ongoing stress (Wastell xv). The effects of such horrific events can be seen as a scar on people who remained victims with undeletable mental point in mind with deep, disturbing and debilitating psychological scars.

The effects of traumatic experience have been noticed through literature – flashbacks, dissociation, startle responses from the very ancient times. The references can be seen back to the Biblical tales i.e. account of the siege of Jericho, which is taken as an illustration of traumatic event. The three thousand years old Homer's *Iliad's* siege of Troy is another account of traumatic experience.

Later, Charles Dickens' description of train crashes, William Surtees' description of Napoleonic Wars, Reid, Sergeant-Major Smith, Major Henry Clifford's descriptions of Crimean wars, Oliver Wendell Holmes' book on 1860s' US Civil War, and many others illustrate various aspects of trauma. Similarly, poems written by war poets i.e. Rupert Brooks, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon etc, William Sargant, a wartime psychiatrist' *The Unquiet Mind* – his experience tackling war victims of the Second World War are some important works of arts to describe trauma of different times. Quoting Sargant, Hunt has described the scenario of the Second World War II as follows,

Men swarmed into the hospital, some raging mutinously against their officers for having deserted them in a panic and others swearing that they would never care to fight again. Many were suffering from acute hysteria, reactive depression, functional loss of memory or the use of their limbs, and a variety of other psychiatric symptoms, which one would never see in such abundance except during a war'. Sargant then describes a case where a soldier had hysterical dumbness, with hands shaking as though he had Parkinson's disease, and paralysis of the bladder, which was enlarged up to his navel. Sargant

administered an intravenous injection of sodium amytal – a sedative he kept for experimental use on air-raid casualties. (24)

The scars once remained in mind as undeletable mark would always encroach one to go back time and again, that ultimately results in post-traumatic stress disorder in one's life. His or her relevance on the present life would not be pleasant and satisfied, rather one would always be in dilemma and remain in unsure what to do and what not. The mentality would reshape his or her personality.

Such relevances of the traumatic experience are too unexpected to share with other as they can't be spoken out. The emphasis on unspeakability or unrepresentability on trauma always remain poignant to the readers or viewers. Unspeakability of the victims is figured out with silence as a "consequence of social censorship manifest in any number forms, explicit and implicit" (Kilbi 3). Even, this kind of silence is taken as the choice of most victims.

### **Trauma in 'Liwang 2006'**

Rajkumar Dikpal's story 'Liwang 2006' is written about those Rolpali people badly crippled on the pretext of the Maoist insurgency which got started from Rolpa, the very place where the Maoists made their base camp for the extension of their revolution. The place where this bloodshed revolution started is remembered as a "forgotten district of Nepal. It was the birthplace of the Nepalese Civil War (1996-2006), popularly known as Maoist Movement of Nepal" (Ghimire 101). As much as the conflict outraged with the span of time, the life of the people living there remained crippled in between two forces – the government forces and the rebels. The fundamental rights like education, health etc. remained denied to the people living there.

Both the forces: the Royal Army and the Maoists were found intensifying their control over the movement of people in their communities and beyond. As a result, "people got caught in cross fires. Many of them were forced to choose one or the other military force" (Rijal 3). The facts known from different sources show that the total number of people "killed by the state is six hundred and ten and there are nearly four hundred martyrs' family. The number of people abducted or killed by both forces is also high" (Ghimire 102). The characters in this story speak of this suffering of the people living in Rolpa. This ten year conflict has left many people living there mentally and physically injured and suffering from incurable diseases. Ghimire describes the situation here,

Rolpa has suffered a substantial loss of human lives, and this will have a serious and adverse impact on the lives and livelihoods of the district in the long-term. Moreover, ill health produced by violence and conflict has an enduring legacy beyond the number of deaths. Medical doctors working for the district hospital mentioned frequent army operations and a tensed wartime situation was a sufficient condition to create mental disorders such as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), erectile dysfunction (ED), hypochondrias, conversion disorder, mild and severe depression and psychosomatic problems with multiple complaints. (107)

Rolpa has been a place where rebels emerge from time to time against the regime for the rights, in turn, the denizen living there ought to be victimized.

Dikpal's "Liwang 2006", written on the context and references of the Moists' insurgency that caused the death and disappearance of thousands of Nepali people residing in various ares of the nation, shows a helpless mother, Dilsara Ghartimagar, "a forlorn mother" (Dikpal 137) and whose son, Purnman has been missing for a long time and who has a dream to make hare happy at any condition by earning more money. The story is a testimony witnessed by a traveler who has seen undergoing with her traumatic experience of how her son has gone missing for a long time, how she has still been hoping that one day he would come. Despite many mental and physical hardships, she is seen wandering different places looking for him and consoling her mind. But Dikpal has presented the issue from one side villainizing one group – here the security personnel who have kidnapped Purnaman and he has gone missing, while bringing the traumatic facts, which would ultimately not help the warring groups come to the table of peace and reconciliation.

Dikpal's story's main character Dilsara Ghartimagar, a sixty years old lady, Purnaman's mother, a traumatized patient whose son has been abducted by the security forces, is a victim of the conflict of the insurgency and compelled to live an isolated life. She is seen to be "staring at the distant Gwarpa Hill instead of relaxing in the sun" (131). Coming to Tundikhel every afternoon, she is waiting for her son muttering something which other people cannot understand and she "doesn't leave until the dim rays of the sun bid farewell to Dharampani highland" (131). She is a representative of all those mothers and wives who have only lost their children and other family members in every village in this district. In this context, Weyermann delineates,

The war has played out differently in each part of the district and in each village. In one settlement several people may have been killed or beaten, raped or disappeared. In another hamlet, a few hours walk away, only one family may have been directly affected. But what they all share is the experience of having been singled out by the perpetrators and as a result, set apart by society. (5)

As the conflict remains escalating for a long time with the death, kidnapping and other tortures, the relatives of these people get provoked with their strong reactions and anguish that would make the situation even worse.

Dilsara's anguish is related to her only son Purnaman who was about to go to the foreign country to earn more money to make her happy, but suddenly on the charge of giving refuge to the Maoist cadres, the security forces arrested him and made him one among many other missing. What happens after he was lost, her daughter Bainsamali says, "Many days passed since they took my brother but they never brought him back. As the days passed, mother also stopped crying. I have been taking care of her ever since. I took her with me from the village after her condition worsened" (Dikpal 137). The only son whom she had reared with many difficulties has been lost and her staring at the hill may signal that she has lost her hope as well as her aspiration to meet him again. She further adds, "Mother's condition worsened after her son, whom she had reared with difficulty and great care, did not return." (134) The people like her living in Liwang, the capital town of Rolpa have, been sandwiched between two forces and their life is not easy which can be seen from the extract below,

The life of Liwang burgeons day by day, but Dilsara Ghartimagar lives the same unchanged, hopeless life. She drowns in sorrow after the government gunman abducted her son, Purnaman, from their home in Iriwang, under the pretext of making an inquiry. Like the flowing water of Dhangsikhola, tears roll down her cheeks, but Purnaman's condition is as much unknown as the amount of water flowing downstream. (134)

The tragic event that she underwent has been a nuisance from which one can hardly escape and remains in painful condition for a long time.

The extreme suffering of Dilsara due to political violence has caused a serious drawback in her health, she has been traumatized due to fear, loss and then traumatic experiences she has been undergoing with. Barbara Weyermann's description of the event is given here, "The victimization sets in motion a traumatic process that often includes further impoverishment and economic deprivation, and sometimes a drastic change of family relations or displacement" (6). The pain has lost the close relatives that makes one suffer bitterly. The stories written about the pain and suffering of the common people living in the rural areas focus on traumatic experience of such people. Trauma seen in this story is what the people experience as "unsupportable, horrifying, or overwhelming" (Humburger 4), which would never leave anyone, but haunt time and again for a long time.

The trauma of Dilsara is psychological and social because she is not in the condition to identify whether the people she meets are her foes or friends and encountering any strangers "a doubt springs up to her mind" (Dikpal 134) and her mind would "fail to distinguish between reasons and causes" (Bloom 123). He would lose his mental strength and feel "the situation would be more menacing and her legs would shudder even at the thought of it" (Dikpal 134). His condition would be more pathetic and he "loses his appetite and sleep, and can't concentrate on anything. She would go as white as a sheet even at the sound of mice scuttling about in her house" (135). His traumatic experience seems "a distortion of reality" (Caruth, *Trauma* 5) which she would not help her identify whether the person she is meeting is friend or foe. Her meeting with the narrator whom she sees time and again is really painful traumatic experience "accompanying terror of death" (Fromm 71) which is an instance of "chronic pain syndrome and anxiety" (Krystal 76), because she is escaping from him supposing him a stranger who might hurt her. She could not "even reply his greeting and stood defeated and with the eyes welled with the tears of terror, she kept on staring at him" (Dikpal 149). She looks as if she has lost all mental strength to identify to whom she is encountering, which clearly indicates how much traumatized she has been and "the forlorn mother has not yet stopped staring at Gwarpa Hill" (137). Her running away from the terror is an escape from the self which would not help him soothe her tension.

The cause of her anguish and fear is definitely the sudden disappearance of her son in one side, on the other hand, the fear of further persecution and detention in the name of investigation of the case is another fact which makes the situation very worse for her. The old woman's mentality remains imbalanced with the prevailing consequences going on in the district with many casualties.

In short, "Liwang 2006", a post-conflict narrative about the People's War, shows a helpless mother's traumatic condition of how her son was abducted by the security personnel and remained unknown for a long time, and how her condition has been traumatized and how she

remains wandering here and there looking for him. The story clearly shows her trauma of how her life has become just like a hell. She is in such condition that neither she can live nor she can die. Even the person she is sharing her trauma, a traveler or the narrator seems to be helpless as he can't do anything except listening her traumatic testimony. But the writer is unable to bring her's trauma balancedly. He, by othering one group, here security personnel and idolizing the Maoist rebels, does not seem to be a neutral observer of the catastrophe, which would ultimately worsen the situation and would not help bring peace in society.

### **Conclusion, Pedagogical Implication and Suggestion**

This story is able to narrate one important event that might have happened somewhere in the hinterland of Nepal where law and order did not work, there was only arbitrary anarchical rule, which can be a better lesson for learning and teaching historical facts that every Nepali citizen had gone through. This story written about the Maoist conflict has portrayed a fearful and penetrating traumatic picture of a terai village and a struggle of a dutiful man to remain alive in spite of unfavorable circumstances until he must savagely have murdered somewhere which his family members hardly know. It was a bitter fact of this ten-year long insurgency which has become a historical fact and important lesson to those students who want to know how people were badly penetrated during the insurgency. The writer is able to show psychological trauma in the story because Dilsara Ghartimagar has gone through several traumatic situations. It also helps those students or other people know what trauma is and how it can be seen with the help of a literary text – a post-conflict narrative. With the span of time, people and their wounds have been changed along with the change in readers or viewers' concepts and mentality. For many aspiring students, the condition of Dilsara and her unbearable pain of losing her only son can be compared with Gangamay Adhikari whose only son was kidnapped and murdered brutally and this comparative study might be a good area of study further on trauma and its effects on affected individuals.

The ten-year insurgency that took the life of many people and millions of others badly remain affected for a long time has been fertile source for many people specially students and researchers to weave the plots of various forms of narratives. The trauma of these affected people has been a topic of writing and speaking even in classroom. But the writer is unable to bring this issue being neutrally rather villainizing one group and exacerbating the feud that would remain between the fighting groups for a long time. The writer does not seem to have concentrated on reconciliation and pacification of the aggravated enmity between the victims and the perpetrators, which can be a good source of doing research work for any aspiring people to go ahead.

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