

Cultural Trauma in Wagle's '*Palpasa Café*'

Achut Raj Kattel

Department of English, Mahendra Morang Adarsha Multiple Campus
Biratnagar, Nepal.

Email: achyut.kattel@mmamc.tu.edu.np

Abstract

This research article focuses in the area of Wagle's '*Palpasa Café*' in the background of Maoist's insurgency in Nepal. Such a study is significant in order to diagnose the society that faced dreadful events and envision the trouble and trauma people faced during the insurgency. The research method adopted in this article is cultural trauma defined by Jeffrey

C. Alexander. The major findings of the present article are characters face dreadful events in the novel '*Palpasa Café*' and it frightens them so much that they are anxious of their future identity and security. '*Palpasa Café*' has the setting of war, and it shows the terror felt both in city and village. The study's main conclusions are '*Palpasa Café*' is a novel of cultural trauma and it presents a large number of people affected by the horrendous event.

Keywords: Maoist's insurgency, cultural trauma, society, identity, trauma

Article Information

Manuscript received: May 9, 2023; Accepted: June 17, 2023

Introduction

Narayan Wagle's '*Palpasa Café*', published in 2005, has the setting of Maoist insurgency and it foregrounds the incidents begotten by the conflict between Maoist and Nepal government. Maoist insurgency, led by Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), took place from March, 1996 to November 2006. During

the insurgency period, 17000 people were killed, 1500 disappeared, 75000 injured and 250000 internally displaced (Acharya, 2011, p.80). The insurgency has inscribed innumerable wounds in the lives of Nepalese people whether in the village or the city. A large number of people and their community faced the challenges of life and the future during the insurgency. The novel explores

the situations how the community in general and people involved in the war in particular suffered during the insurgency period.

After writing regular column 'Coffeeguff' [Coffee Talk] in Kantipur daily newspaper, Narayan Wagle wrote *Palpasa Café* and reflected his experience of writing for print media. Wagle's thirteen years' working experience in Kantipur sharpened his writing and he also had the chance to watch the Maoist's insurgency very closely. In acknowledgement, Wagle admits, '*Sarbapratham Kantipur jasko harek charanmaa samlang bhayer maile terha barsadekhi anabarat desh ra desbahabar sodhikhoji gardai aafno dristi udhaarne ra kalam tikhaarna paaeko chhu...*' [First of all I have had chance to open my outlook and sharpen my pen by inquiring about the country and other nations involving in Kantipur's each stage for thirteen years].

The Maoist insurgency became the background for the creation of literary text and *Palpasa Café* is one of them. However, literary creation during the insurgency was less in number than it had to be. The insurgency and its reflection on literature catch the attention of the researcher and the article inspects the shadow of insurgency in Nepali literature.

Theoretical Tools

Defining trauma tends to be difficult as it is not possible to explain what exactly happens as someone faces traumatic event. However,

Jeffrey C. Alexander believes that the suffering of people in large scale which turns to be a social suffering turns into trauma. The suffering of society because of war, genocide, violence or various types of conflict and massacre creates cultural threat and sooner or later gives birth to cultural trauma. These tales of suffering are transferred into one generation or generations to generations and challenge the social identity. Alexander thinks traumas become collective when they are conceived as wound to social identity. It is related to culture and politics both. Alexander considers that events that threaten social identity and recognition are the concerns of intellectuals, politicians, social workers and artists. They make the narratives that soothe the wounds or generate new suffering (Alexander, 2004, p.70).

For Alexander, any event that threatens a large number of people's future identity becomes traumatic. Alexander states, "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander, 2004, p.83). He believes that people become anxious about their future because of dreadful event and its unforgettable mark on their group collectively give birth to cultural trauma. Many critics have expressed their views about trauma in general and cultural trauma in particular varyingly.

Schick explains trauma at three levels: general, acting out and working through. She thinks that trauma depends on individual, social and political level. She clarifies that an individual or a group of people can experience trauma or live with trauma at everyday life also. She believes, "Trauma is not only experienced in the aftermath of single, dramatic events; it can also be ongoing and structurally induced as, for example, in the case of extreme poverty or ongoing civil war, where day-to-day life is a struggle for security and survival" (Schick, 2011, p.1840). Schick focuses on natural disasters and political violence also that cause trauma in a large number of people. People live in terror because of natural disasters and political violence and the terror threatens the large group of people. These disasters and violence can't be understood fully but they are acknowledged and understood. Trauma takes birth and exists in one or many generations.

Eyerman (2013) differentiates individual, collective and cultural trauma by researching on Horkheimer and Adorno's Enlightenment, Freud's Moses and Monotheism and Bauman's Modernity and the Holocaust (p.43). Eyerman (2013) believes that cultural trauma is all about healing the wound collectively and fighting for the identity. The process may result in unrest also. Eyerman writes,

In this sense, cultural trauma is a contentious discursive dichotomy between perpetrator and victim which

is spurred by a powerful, unforgettable occurrence. What also characterizes cultural trauma as discourse is that an established collective identity is shaken and its foundations called into question. It is a discursive process where the emotions which are triggered by a traumatic occurrence are worked through and an attempt is made to heal the collective wound. (Eyerman, 2013, pp.43-44)

Eyerman regards cultural trauma as a fight for collective identity because of the danger of losing it. To heal the wound made by terrible event means to save the identity of the group of people.

Radstone (2007) believes that trauma theory owes a lot to Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub on the one hand and deconstruction, post structuralism and psychoanalysis on the other hand. She views that deconstruction has influenced the trauma theory the most. In her opinion, Trauma theory must not be the vehicle of dualism which is governing western politics. She does not find it much different from other theories. She writes, "Trauma criticism has no greater claim to ethical purity than any other critical practice. Like any other intellectual endeavour, it is driven by a complex interweaving of scholarly, academic, political and psychical imperatives" (Radstone, 2007, p.26). She still expects on trauma theory's need to check against the western cultural and political dualism.

Caruth writes, "The term trauma

is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind” (1991). She focuses on the injury in the mind rather than the physic, internal rather than external. The physical loss and violence has long term effect to the victims or the members of the community happened to hear about or face the terrible event. Caruth explains, “In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth, 1991, p.181). For Caruth, a person cannot experience the traumatic event fully. Although someone faces the terrible event, he or she cannot actually feel it or understand it. After the disaster takes place, a person begins to respond it and the response is illusive.

Balaev (2008) writes that trauma is about the people’s fright that their selves have been threatened and identity is at risk (P.150). However, the fright transferred generation to generation is itself their identity. A trauma novel represents the memory of victim and presents the interplay of memory, language, experience and place. A trauma novel breaks down the link between self and others and challenges the thoughts about moral values and social relationship. Balaev believes, “Trauma, in my analysis, refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates

society” (Balaev, 2008, p.150). He uses the term ‘emotional response’ to define trauma very straightforwardly. He further explains,

The term "trauma novel" refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels. A defining feature of the trauma novel is the transformation of the self-ignited by an external, often terrifying experience, which illuminates the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and world. (Balaev, 2008, p. 150)

Balaev points out that the trauma novel highlights the effect of external events in the self and covers the changes that come in the self.

Joseph and Murphy investigate that the concept of social work has been changed because of trauma theory. A unified concept is provided to the social work by traumatic stress. Social workers have to learn new areas that they have to serve for after the traumatic events. They write, “Other research has shown that trauma is associated with declines in health, an increase in the use of medical services and the development of a wide variety of physical health conditions, including tiredness, headaches, chest pains, gastrointestinal disorders, cardiovascular disorders, renal disorders, respiratory diseases and infectious diseases as well as impairments in the immune system” (Joseph and Murphy, 2014, p. 1105). These varieties of health

conditions are the after effects of traumatic events. Social workers have to learn how to address them now.

Onwuachi-Willig adds another cause that may also produce cultural trauma. According to her, it is commonly thought that cultural traumas happen when a group of people faces horrible event all of sudden and feel that it has challenged their future. However, the routine or expected event can also be the cause of cultural trauma. She writes, "Cultural trauma can emerge not only when normal routines are disrupted but also when common inequities in society repeat themselves-in other words, when no shocks occur-and, more so, when such inequities are reaffirmed by public or official government entities" (Onwuachi, 2016, p. 335). The routine harm with long history takes media's attention and becomes widespread. Then the government affirms the affected group's marginality and the group of people get defamed and insecure. It will create trauma in that group.

Cetinic (2010) thinks that trauma theory is important for reading narratives and finding the historical situation behind any event. Trauma represents the terrible event and the reasons of it. The representational mode of trauma theory makes it easier to find out why the event is important and how it occurred. Therefore, Cetinic views that trauma theory is important to study the history and historical narratives. She writes, "The concept of trauma as a rupture of history's

straightforward referentiality provides an interpretive methodology, positing that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in forms that are not directly linked with the event, but which bear some trace of their source within their mediations" (Cetinic, 2010, p.287).

Research Methods

Palpasa Café, Wagle's first published novel, narrates the story of Nepali people who endured the Maoist insurgency in Nepal for ten years. Drishya and Palpasa, the major characters of the novel, face the horrendous event themselves and find how the event has affected the lives of the people collectively including them. The researcher follows the cultural trauma theory explained basically by Jeffrey C. Alexander to investigate the novel as an example of cultural trauma. Alexander denotes that cultural trauma results when a large number of people faces very dreadful event and feel insecure. The event has unforgettable mark and shakes their future identity. Although cultural trauma is scientific in nature, it has also a strong bond with social and political activity. Because of cultural trauma's scientific nature, it suggests causal relationship between different events happened in the past. Cultural trauma brings people of one community, society, nation and sometimes global community together to fight against the threat that hazards their future identity. However, Alexander indicates that sometimes people suffering in one social group are

left alone to suffer in trauma by other societies untouched by it.

Research Problem

Wagle's *Pulpasa Café* narrates the story of people who have faced the ten years Maoist insurgency in the country. The present article inquires the following issues:

- a. How does the insurgency affect the characters of the novel?
- b. What do the characters whether major or minor feel and think about their present as well as future in the novel?

Objectives

Pulpasa Café needs research from varied outlook as it tells the story of both old and new generation, city people and village people and Maoist insurgents and army and police personnel. However, it is impossible to critique the novel's every aspect in the present article. The major objectives of the research are:

- a. To identify the effect of insurgency in the characters
- b. To explore the traces of cultural trauma in the novel.

Literature Review

Because of immense popularity, many researchers have critiqued *Palpasa Café* from different facets. Wagle's metafictional novel *Palpasa Café* is experimental. Commenting on the novel as printed on the cover page, Sanjib Upreti views that it is a successful experimental

Nepali novel that has powerful description and its subject has carried the interest of Nepali people. Not only Nepali people but also foreigners are interested to read the book because of their desire to know about Nepali literature that has the subject of the Maoist insurgency. Another critic Bishnu Sapkota admits that it is real what Wagle has written in mainstream newspaper and it is more real that he has written in the novel. *Palpasa café's* characters and events represent the people and incidents that happened in Nepal during the Maoist insurgency.

Kaur et al examines the novel as it is a metafictional representation of the situation of Nepal during the Maoist insurgency. They stress on the meaning of the war between Maoist and the government. They focus on the novel's metafictional quality, allegorical meaning and the narrative paradox. They write, "Here, allegorical paradox culminates in a contradiction when the narrator searches for stability in an unstable milieu..." (Kaur et. al, 2018, p.10). Kaur et al believes that the novel seeks peaceful and stable situation in the country. However the novel points out more powerful issue than these critics dig out. The novel highlights the horrendous event and its effects in the lives of all age group characters in the novel.

Panthi (2016) interprets *Palpasa Café* as a novel of trauma and biopolitics evolved from Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Panthi thinks, "The major trauma of the Maoist insurgency, in this sense,

is that the violence destroyed the pristine beauty of the Nepalese villages and it was done by kidnapping the youths and even the children and also by displacing people from their villages of origin and chasing them towards the urban, the lands of uncertainty” (Panthi, 2016, p. 942). Panthi relates trauma in the novel with violence and the unrest represented in the novel. Politics changes into biopolitics and the insurgency proceeds. Panthi does not consider on cultural trauma that has been resulted from Maoist insurgency. He discusses on trauma in general in the sense of fear and unrest. He does not show how the novel presents individual, collective and cultural trauma gradually.

Acharya applies George Gerbner’s communication model to study *Palpasa Café* as a trauma fiction. According to Acharya, “The traumatic experience of Wagle ensues from (a) his witnessing of traumatic experience as an editor of national daily, and (b) the impact of Drishya’s testimony over him after Siddhartha and Palpasa’s brutal murder” (Acharya, 2017, p.88). Acharya borrows the concept of Gerbner and says that analysis of trauma needs contextualization of it with the factors like traumatic events, their availability and selection. Traumatic events are experienced in a context and they are selected and presented. He claims that Wagle has been successful to experience the traumatic events by working as journalist in popular national daily newspaper of Nepal during Maoist insurgency.

Shekhar kharel, as published on the cover page of the novel, comments that the novel is postmodern as it can be read from any chapter. The beginning and end of the novel also prove that the writer experiments new style to write it. He gets a piece of paper from audience row in Birendra International Convention Hall in which it has been asked when his novel will come. It has been on the occasion of Deep Shrestha’s concert. The writer attends the concert, interacts with the friends, then goes to the office and compiles news including news about the major character of the novel. Kunda Dixit, on the same page, claims that the book can be called anti-war novel. Wagle’s anti-war message clearly appears through the main character Drishya and the thought expressed in the novel.

In book review in Nepali Times, Dixit reveals that Wagle used to travel far from Kathmandu to collect news about the neglected and indifferent beings from the government. Several traumatic events of the remote areas have not been brought to the public in the newspapers. Both Dixit and Wagle were writing about the conflict but being detached from the real feeling. Dixit writes, “In all countries in the throes of a messy conflict, facts are often more dramatic than fiction. 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” (Dixit, 2005). These tragic events have been affecting the family members and their neighbors during the

insurgency. Most of these event sound and look more fictional than fiction itself. It shakes Nepali society more than other as Nepali society has been peaceful and collective.

Dixit further admits, “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” (Dixit, 2005). Reporting and editing news on Maoist insurgency, both Wagle and Dixit had knowledge about the terrible events and suffering of people in different part of the country. However, the horrible events were only counted in numbers and put in format of news to sell in the market. Wagle moves ahead and tells the stories of sufferings in *Palpasa Café* to share the personal and collective feelings and emotions of victims in the Maoist insurgency. What Wagle could not write and express in the newspaper has been written and expressed in the novel. Wagle is very near and dear to the characters of the novel and he feels their emotion.

This article inquires the untouched till now but important aspect of the novel that is the novel as an example of cultural trauma. Alexander explains that individual trauma fuels the cultural construction of collective trauma. Cultural trauma passes through various forms of representations and has strong link to cultural identity. It works through the collective memory even though who memorize may not have been the victims. The traumatic event

can be memorized after many years also. Eyerman writes, “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” (Eyerman, 2013, p.2). The article investigates how the characters in the novel feel the loss of identity and what group of people gets affected by it.

Textual Analysis

The novel begins with terrible events reported to the writer, a journalist, and shows the condition of the country. Wagle was asked at Birendra International Convention Hall when his novel would be published. The writer admitted he began the novel when he was a regular column writer in newspaper as ‘*Coffeeguff*’ [Coffee Talk]. As he began writing the novel, the unrest also increased gradually and bothered him. Reality and imagination and illusion and truth were mingled slowly in the country. Wagle interacted with a waiter in café, communicateed with reporters and talked with the major character Drishya’s secretary in the beginning. Students organized referendum in the campus and declared the victory of republicans. Police entered soon after the referendum and assaulted them. The agitators scattered here and there and made rally. The novel reflected the terror people faced in life and uncertainty that went on in the society.

As a chief reporter Wagle collected only the incidents of war every day. He had been waiting Drishya, the major character of the novel with a manuscript of it, at café and getting reports also. One of the reporters informed Wagle that Maoists had robbed a bus and exploded bomb before fleeing to the forest. Another reporter communicated about the incident of joined security force ambushed and missing after getting in the electric ambush placed by Maoists. Drishya's secretary Fulan Chaudhary informed the writer that he had been taken away by five security personnel. Wagle thought that Drishya might had been kidnapped. Fulan also warned him that he had to be alert as the police had taken some documents including photographs in which he had also been appeared. It proved how difficult was the situation for the frontline reporters to work during the insurgency period. No one could say what would be possible the next.

The writer interacted with many characters in the end in *Palpasa Café* and found their fear of uncertainty. At the end of the novel, Wagle appeared again and explained how the novel had been possible. He regretted that he had never met Palpasa but he had written a lot about her getting information from Drishya. After Palpasa's death, Jemini, friend of Palpasa, asked the writer about her. The writer knew that the family of Palpasa had no information about her death. It showed how many Nepali families waited for their family members disappeared in war. Palpasa's parents had

been in America and her grandmother in Kathmandu. But they had been unknown that she had already been killed in a bomb explosion. Jemini was perplexed when the writer informed her about her death. He gave her the draft of *Palpasa Café* before departing. The novel showed the horrible scenes of people missing or disappearing during insurgency in Nepal.

The horror of war and its dark effect became even darker and more terrible by the contrastive picture of peaceful Goa and ghastly Nepal. Wagle began the novel with a prologue and informs the readers about the horror going on in the country. After prologue, he presented the peaceful and enjoying life of tourist in Goa. Drishya, the major character of the story, met Papasa in Goa and both had very affectionate relationship. They talked for long time and drank and enjoyed the life in one of the world's best tourist centers, lovely beach of Goa. Palpasa became the fan of Drishya's painting and got excited meeting him in Goa. Drishya also felt very near to her and even leaves the train to Kerala so that he could stay with her longer. Wagle shows very regular and common daily life of Drishya after he came in Nepal from Goa tour. He had an art gallery and regular and special visitors to watch paintings. He visited grandmother of Palpasa and inquired about her and impressed her. Palpasa's visit to art gallery and had party with Drishya and his invitees. Kishor sang a song soon after Palpasa disappeared from the party as she knew Drishya had been much influenced by a Dutch girl. From tenth chapter,

Wagle started to present the terrible incidents happening in Nepal during Maoist insurgency. The first among them was informed to Drishya by telephone at midnight, "*Rastra andhakkarmaya bhaisakyo, sabai khhatam bhaisakyo, timi ke sutiraako?*" [The nation has become dark, everything has been over, are you sleeping?'] (71).

As Alexander mentioned about horrendous event, the massacre of the members of royal family had been the most horrendous event that pushed the people in terror and uncertainty. Drishya found people from each home coming in the street in Kathmandu and taking part in mourning. Many youths had cut their hair fully and looked bald in mourning. Soon the event turned into a traumatic event and affected the mass collectively. BBC and CNN had covered news and Indian media also joined to communicate news about the massacre. Drishya explained the situation, "*Funga dhulo udejasto bhayo aakhaa agaadi. Kehi pani dekhiena kehiber. Ekkashi kehi bisphot bhayejhai tolbaasiko khailaabailaa suner ma baahir chowkmaa niskiye. Raajaaraani sabaiko hatyaa bhayesakeko rahechha.*" [It was like blowing dust around in front. Nothing was seen for some time. I came out in the chowk hearing the sound of the villagers like sudden explosion of something. King and queen all had been killed] (p. 71). The massacre of royal family made people feel uncertain about the future.

Maoist insurgent called Siddartha tried to justify the need of destruction in the

revolution. The belief in destruction for renovation was the strategy of Maoist movement as this discussion between Siddartha and Drishya clarifies:

'Dhyongsha ke kaa laagi?' usle bhanyo- 'nayaa rachanaakaa laagi. '

'Dhyongsha nagari naya kaam hudaina?'

'Ke ko dhyongsha bhanne kura aham hunchha,' usle bhanyo- 'yo jakadieko raajyalaai nayaa jivan dina yasko makkiyeko swarup maathi prahaar garnuparchha. Haami tyahi gardaichhau. '

[‘What is destruction for?’ He said-‘for new creation. ’

‘Can’t be new thing without destruction?’

‘It’s important for what destruction for’, he said-‘to give new life to this chained/obstructed nation, its weak structure should be hammered. We are doing that. ’] (p. 84)

Maoists had their own logic for their destructive and horrible activities but they were blind about its effect on the common people of the society.

During insurgency period, the reporters and news editors had to publish news mostly about traumatic events. In prologue, Wagle wrote they have to edit and published the same type of news every day. Published news had been about police personnel out of contact, electric ambush, bomb explosion,

murder in the name of informer, diarrhea and the death taking to the hospital on backpack. Wagle asked if they had been counting new dead body everyday in newspaper. News on deaths covered every day's newspapers and people wake up with new horrifying news. A reporter communicated Wagle, "*bihaan gastimaa gayeko samyukta surakchhya faauj sadarmukaam dekhi saat kos purba eutaa kholsaa ko adhyaaromaa maaobaadile thaapeko bidhyutiya dharaapmaa pari samparkabihin huna pugeko chha.*" [Joined police personnel's platoon gone on the morning rounding has become out of contact after being in the ambush placed by Maoists in the darkness near a river seven mile far from the district head quarter] (p. 5). This type of incident was very regular during the war as the novel shows.

In the novel, there were several incidents that threaten the life and identity of large number of people in the society. When Drishya reached the headquarter of his district, he faced the battle between Maoists and police personnel. He lived in a small lodge run by a woman living with a son. When the battle began, there had only been the sound of bullets and bombs. Maoists warned the security personnel, "*Haamile sadarmukaam kabjaa garekaa chhau', maaiksuninchha- 'turunt hatiyaar bujhaao ra aatmasamarparn gar.*" [We have captured the headquarter', announcement heard-'give your weapons and surrender] (p. 130). The women and child stayed at terror the whole night and lost the hope

that they could see the sunrise again.

Drishya faced the battle between Maoist insurgents and security personnel with the same fear as the villagers faced everywhere in Nepal for 10 years. The sound of bomb explosion, screaming of people, bullets, crying children and women and stones thrown from both sides frightened the common people the whole night. The lodge owner woman and her son began to cry when the battle started. Drishya narrates the details of the battle:

ferigolaa-baarudsuruhunchha. Pahiro khase jasto laagchha. Pachhadi katai gharharu khaslayaamkhuslum bhatke jasto hunchha. ghagharai maanisko chitkaar hwaatai badchha. Ustai ujyaalo, ustai aawaaj ani ek sekend ustai sannaataa. Feri chichyaahat, ferि maaiking,ferigolaa-baarud.Pachhaadi katai arko pahiro gaye jasto laagchha, garlyama dhalchha. Dhungai dhungaa pahiriye jasto. Khaat utikai halliraheko chha ra ma thaamna dhalki raheko chhu. 'baabaa ho, baabaa ho!' chitkaar badhiraheko chha. Sarirbhari pasinaa salalla bagchha. Ghari dubai kaan thunchhu, ghari dubai haathle khaat adhyaauuchhu.

[The bombs explosion begins again. It sounds like the landslide. It feels as if houses fall down somewhere behind. The screaming of people increases home to home. The same light, the same sound and the calmness for a second. Screaming again, miking again, bomb explosion again. It seems

to be another landslide behind, sounds bang. Like the fall of stones. The bed is shaking terribly and I am bending to hold it. ‘Oh father, oh father’, the sound is increasing. The sweats roll down the whole body. Sometimes I close both ears by hand and sometimes hold the bed tight with both hands.] (p. 130)

Drishya remembered many other incidents that frightened the people and mystified him. He asked himself whether he was in dream or real world. He narrated,

Suntalaa tipiraheki keti, mitini bhetna kera liyer hidiraheki baalika, chhora gumaaer udaas bhairahekaa budabudi, raatbhari aakramanko khailaabaailaale ranthaniyekaa lodgeki saahuni ra unko saano chhoro, bam padkeko dekhne chhimeki, skool jaan chhodekaa bachhabachhi, bistaarai hidnuhos bhaner arti dine gaaule, daauraako bhaarijhai bhita maa adhesiekaa ghaaiete prahari. Ma ringiraheko chhu, ma aafai almaliraheko chhu. Katai ma yeuta sapanako yaatraa baat ta farkiraheko chhaina?

[Girl picking orange, girl walking with carrying banana to meet friend, old aged people becoming sad by losing son, the lodge owner woman and her small son irritated by the night’s battle, the neighbor witness of the bomb explosion, children stopping to go to school, the villagers suggesting to go slowly, the wounded soldiers bending on the wall like a bundle of wood. I am in illusion, I am in dilemma myself. Am

not I returning from the journey of dream?] (p. 169)

Drishya found his bus in ambush and says, “*maathibaat ti masaaldhaarile bichhyaeko dharaapmaa haamrai bus parechha*” [Our bus has fallen in the ambush placed by those fire demonstrating people above.] (p. 186). The ambush had been aimed at the security personnel but because of the bus’s headlight they were saved. He was saying, “*ek secondle baachiyo’, maathi fairing gariraheko ek surakchhyakarmile arkosag bhaneko sune-‘busle headlight nabaaleko bhaye haami parne rahechhau.*” [‘Just lived by a second’, heard from a police firing above talking to another, ‘we would be in ambush if the bus has not lit the light’] (p. 187).

Palpasa’s death after the explosion of the bus in ambush in front of Drishya and the murder of his own friend by security personnel traumatized him personally. But the bus in ambush, death of child in bomb explosion, the battle between insurgents and police personnel at midnight, threat from both police and army and insurgents to the villagers and murders and violence in the villages traumatized all the characters collectively. They had no certainty of life and no guarantee of their secured future.

Conclusion

Palpasa Café presents Maoist insurgency as a dreadful event that causes violence, murder and dilemma in the society. All characters suffered due to the conflict between Maoist insurgents and

national security forces of government side. They have the feeling of uncertainty and the fear of unsecured future. The novel reflects the Nepalese society under the ten years' Maoist insurgency and highlights how the event leaves an unforgettable mark in the consciousness of the society. This horrendous event changes the future identity of Nepalese people in irrevocable way. Drishya lost his friend and Palpasa in front of the eyes and also faced threats in life time to time. During the battle between Maoist and police personnel, the whole society faced the insecurity. *Palpasa Café* is a novel of cultural trauma as all the characters as members of society collectively feel the effect of horrendous event which leaves permanent marks on their group consciousness. The novel can also be further researched from other theoretical aspects like deconstruction.

References

- Acharya, Khagendra, and Orla T. Muldoon. (2017). "Why "I" became a combatant: A study of memoirs written by Nepali Maoist combatants." *Terrorism and political violence*, 29(6), 1006-1025. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2015.1105797>
- Acharya, Khagendra. (2011). Trauma of Maoist insurgency in literature: Reading Palpasa Café, Forget Kathmandu and Chhapamar ko Chhoro - Khagendra Acharya. *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 5, 80. <https://www.academia.edu/3457753>
- Alexander, J. C., Eyerman, R., Giesen, B., Smelser, N.J., & Sztompka, P. (2004). *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Univ of California Press.
- Balaev, Michee. (2008). "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 41(2), 2008149-166. www.jstor.org/stable/stable/44029500
- Caruth, C. (1991). "Unclaimed experience: Trauma and the possibility of history." *Yale French Studies*, 79, 181-192. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2930251>
- Cetinic, Marija. (2010). Sympathetic Conditions: Toward a New Ontology of Trauma. *Discourse*, 32(3), 285–301. www.jstor.org/stable/41389853
- Dixit, Kunda. (2005). Fiction More Real than Fact. *Nepali Times*, 15 July 2005 to 21 July 2005. <https://archive.nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=572>
- Eyerman, Ron. (2013). Social Theory and Trauma. *Acta Sociologica*, 56(1), 41–53. www.jstor.org/stable/23525660
- Joseph, Stephen, and Murphy, David. (2014). Trauma: A Unifying Concept for Social Work. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 44 (5), 1094–1109. www.jstor.org/stable/43687716
- Kaur, Haredev, et al. (2018). "War Allegory in Narayan Wagle's Palpasa Café." *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 26(T),

-
- Pp. 1-12. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329360738>
- Onwuachi-Willig, Angela. (2016). "The Trauma of the Routine: Lessons on Cultural Trauma from the Emmett Till Verdict." *Sociological Theory*, 34(4), 335–357. www.jstor.org/stable/26382875
- Panthi, Dadhi Ram. (2016). "Biopolitics in *Palpasa Café* by Narayan Wagle." *Modern Research Studies*, 3(4), pp. 939-958. <https://www.academia.edu/30704988>
- Radstone, Susannah. (2007). "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics." *Paragraph*, 30(1), 9–29. www.jstor.org/stable/43152697
- Schick, Kate. (2011). "Acting out and Working through: Trauma and (in)Security." *Review of International Studies*, 37(4), 1837–1855. www.jstor.org/stable/23025578
- Shneiderman, Sara, et al. (2016). "Nepal's Ongoing Political Transformation: A review of post-2006 literature on conflict, the state, identities, and environments." *Modern Asian Studies*, 50(6), 2041-2114. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X16000202>
- Wagle, Narayan. *Pulpasa Café*. Nepalaya, 2005.