

**Trauma and resistance- representing maoist insurgency in nepali  
literature through postcolonial and trauma theories**

**Trauma e resistência: representando a insurgência maoísta na literatura  
nepalesa através das teorias pós-coloniais e do trauma**

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**RESUMO**

Este estudo investiga a representação da insurgência maoísta no Nepal (1996-2006) em textos literários selecionados, por meio de uma abordagem interdisciplinar que integra teorias do trauma e do pós-colonialismo, abordando uma lacuna crítica nos estudos literários do Sul da Ásia. Ao analisar o “Diário de uma Jovem Guerrilheira” (*Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary*), de Tara Rai, “as Estações de Voo” (*Seasons of Flight*), de Manjushree Thapa, e a poesia de Bhupi Sherchan, a pesquisa elucida como a literatura nepalesa serve tanto como um registro de trauma psicológico e coletivo quanto como um espaço de resistência subalterna contra narrativas hegemônicas. Utilizando a leitura atenta, o estudo identifica estratégias narrativas, fragmentação da narrativa, silêncios e imagens sincréticas que refletem traumas não processados, baseando-se no conceito de atraso de Caruth e na estrutura de recuperação de Herman. Uma perspectiva pós-colonial, inspirada por Spivak e Bhabha, revela como esses textos negociam dinâmicas de poder, amplificando vozes marginalizadas de mulheres, dalits e minorias étnicas, ao mesmo tempo que desafiam as ideologias estatais e insurgentes. Os resultados demonstram que a mistura sincrética de elementos hindus, budistas e indígenas presentes nos textos constrói uma identidade nepalesa pós-conflito resiliente, fomentando a reconciliação por meio da memória cultural. Análises comparativas com as literaturas do Sri Lanka e da Caxemira situam o Nepal dentro de discursos mais amplos do Sul da Ásia sobre conflito e descolonização. Este estudo contribui para os estudos globais sobre trauma e pós-colonialismo, destacando o contexto sincrético único do Nepal e oferecendo um modelo para a análise de narrativas de conflito não ocidentais. Ele ressalta o papel da literatura na reconciliação pós-conflito e na formação da identidade nacional, defendendo sua integração em estruturas educacionais para promover empatia e inclusão na república federal do Nepal. A pesquisa aumenta a visibilidade da literatura nepalesa, conectando análises literárias, antropológicas e políticas na compreensão das dinâmicas culturais pós-insurgência.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Insurgência Maoísta. Literatura Nepalesa. Teoria Do Trauma. Teoria Pós-Colonial. Agência Subalterna. Memória Cultural.

**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the representation of Nepal's Maoist insurgency (1996-2006) in selected literary texts through an interdisciplinary framework integrating trauma and postcolonial theories, addressing a critical gap in South Asian literary scholarship. By analyzing Tara Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary* (Diary of a Young Guerrilla Girl), Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*, and Bhupi Sherchan's poetry, the research elucidates how Nepali literature serves as both a record of psychological and collective trauma and a site of subaltern resistance against hegemonic narratives. Employing close reading, the study identifies narrative strategies, fragmented storytelling, silences, and syncretic imagery, that reflect unprocessed trauma, drawing on Caruth's concept of belatedness and Herman's recovery framework. A postcolonial lens, informed by Spivak

and Bhabha, reveals how these texts negotiate power dynamics, amplifying marginalized voices of women, Dalits, and ethnic minorities while challenging state and insurgent ideologies. Findings demonstrate that the texts' syncretic blend of Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous elements constructs a resilient post-conflict Nepali identity, fostering reconciliation through cultural memory. Comparative insights with Sri Lankan and Kashmiri literatures situate Nepal within broader South Asian discourses of conflict and decolonization. This study contributes to global trauma and postcolonial studies by highlighting Nepal's unique syncretic context, offering a model for analyzing non-Western conflict narratives. It underscores literature's role in post-conflict reconciliation and national identity formation, advocating for its integration into educational frameworks to promote empathy and inclusivity in Nepal's federal republic. The research enhances the visibility of Nepali literature, bridging literary, anthropological, and political analyses in understanding post-insurgency cultural dynamics.

#### **KEYWORDS**

Maoist Insurgency. Nepali Literature. Trauma Theory. Postcolonial Theory. Subaltern Agency. Cultural Memory.

#### **Background of the Study**

Maoist insurgency of Nepal (1996–2006) marks a transformative period in the nation's history, characterized by a decade-long armed conflict between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the state, resulting in over 17,000 deaths and widespread displacement (Subedi, 2013). Driven by grievances over caste, ethnic, and economic inequalities, the insurgency challenged the monarchy's authority, culminating in the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Nepal's transition to a federal democratic republic in 2008 (Sharma & Gibson, 2023). The conflict disproportionately affected marginalized groups, including Dalits, Janajatis, and women, leaving deep psychological and social scars (Kohrt & Hruschka, 2010). The post-conflict era, marked by the abolition of the monarchy and constitutional reforms, reshaped Nepal's national identity, yet the trauma of the insurgency persists in collective memory, influencing cultural and literary production (Thapa et al., 2009).

Nepali literature, spanning oral and written traditions in languages like Nepali, Newari, and Maithili, has served as a vital medium for processing this turbulent history (Hutt, 2012). Writers such as Tara Rai, Manjushree Thapa, and Bhupi Sherchan have crafted narratives that reflect the insurgency's personal and collective impacts, exploring themes of trauma, resistance, and identity (Acharya et al., 2020). Unlike other South Asian literary traditions addressing conflicts like India's partition or Sri Lanka's civil war, Nepali literature's engagement with the Maoist insurgency remains underexplored globally, despite its rich potential to

illuminate post-conflict dynamics. The insurgency's legacy, characterized by fractured communities and contested narratives, demands a nuanced analysis of how literature captures these complexities (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2005).

Trauma theory offers a robust framework for analyzing how literature articulates the inexpressible wounds of conflict. Scholars argue that trauma manifests in fragmented narratives and silences, reflecting the challenge of processing catastrophic events (Caruth, 1996; LaCapra, 2001). In Nepal, studies have documented the psychological toll of the insurgency, including widespread post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among survivors (Kienzler & Sapkota, 2020). Postcolonial theory complements this approach by focusing on subaltern agency and resistance to hegemonic structures, particularly relevant in Nepal, where the insurgency critiqued centralized governance and colonial legacies (Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994). The interplay of these theories is crucial for understanding how Nepali literature navigates the insurgency's aftermath (Shneiderman et al., 2016).

Nepal's syncretic cultural landscape, blending Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous traditions, enriches literary responses to the conflict. Works like Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary* and Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* blend personal testimonies with socio-political critiques, giving voice to marginalized groups (Robins, 2012). These texts serve as both records of trauma and acts of resistance, challenging official histories. The insurgency's broader impacts on education, health, and social cohesion further underscore the need to examine literature as a site of cultural memory and reconciliation (Valente, 2014; Devkota & van Teijlingen, 2010). By exploring these narratives, this study aims to illuminate how Nepali literature processes the insurgency's trauma and resistance.

Nepali literature has long been a mirror to the nation's socio-political turmoil, particularly during and after the Maoist insurgency (1996–2006), which disrupted traditional narrative forms and introduced themes of violence, displacement, and resistance (Shneiderman et al., 2016). Existing studies highlight how Nepali writers have used fiction, poetry, and diaries to document the insurgency's impact on rural communities, where the conflict was most intense (Adhikari & Samford, 2013). For instance, novels and short stories from this period often depict the insurgency as a catalyst for social change, challenging the feudal structures that dominated Nepali society (Subedi & Bhattarai, 2017). Scholars have noted that literature from the

insurgency era reflects the ideological clash between Maoist revolutionaries and the state, with authors like Narayan Wagle in *Palpasa Café* portraying the human cost of ideological warfare (Nepal et al., 2011).

The conflict's representation in Nepali literature is also tied to ethnic and caste dynamics, as the Maoists mobilized marginalized groups, leading to narratives that explore identity and belonging (Shneiderman, 2015). Research indicates that post-insurgency literature has shifted toward reconciliation, with writers examining the lingering effects of violence on family and community structures (Jackson, 2019). However, much of the scholarship on Nepali literature focuses on English translations, potentially overlooking regional language works that offer more authentic voices from the conflict zones (Srikanth, 2019). Studies have also explored how the insurgency influenced literary genres, fostering a surge in testimonial writing that blends autobiography with political commentary (Upreti, 2006). This body of work underscores the role of literature in preserving collective memory, though it often lacks theoretical depth in analyzing trauma (Kennedy, 2013).

Further, academic analyses have linked Nepali literature to broader South Asian conflict narratives, drawing parallels with Indian Naxalite literature or Sri Lankan civil war fiction (Ollett, 2024). The insurgency's portrayal in literature reveals a tension between romanticized rebellion and the harsh realities of war, as seen in analyses of Maoist propaganda integrated into fictional works (Mooren et al., 2025). Overall, these studies establish Nepali literature as a key site for understanding the insurgency's socio-political ramifications, but they call for more interdisciplinary approaches to unpack its psychological dimensions.

### **Research Problem**

Despite growing scholarship on Nepal's Maoist insurgency, there is a significant gap in analyzing how Nepali literature processes its trauma and resistance through trauma and postcolonial theories. While historical and sociological studies have explored the conflict's political and economic dimensions (Subedi, 2013; Pherali, 2013), literary representations remain underexamined. This gap is notable given the global attention to trauma in conflict literatures, such as those of Rwanda or Bosnia (Hussain, 2023). Existing research often focuses on individual texts but rarely applies interdisciplinary frameworks to the broader Nepali literary corpus (Acharya, 2020; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2005). This study addresses this

lacuna by examining how Nepali literature represents the insurgency's trauma and articulates resistance.

The lack of attention to Nepali literature's role in post-conflict narratives limits our understanding of how cultural production shapes national identity and collective memory in Nepal. Postcolonial analyses of South Asian literature often prioritize India or Pakistan, sidelining Nepal's unique syncretic and multilingual tradition (Rakshit & Gaur, 2023); Purkayastha & Sengupta, 2023). Similarly, while psychological studies highlight the insurgency's mental health impacts (Kohrt & Hruschka, 2010; George, 2010), they rarely connect these insights to literary texts. By integrating trauma and postcolonial theories, this study seeks to fill these gaps, offering a comprehensive analysis of Nepali literature's role in navigating conflict and its aftermath.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are threefold:

1. To analyze selected Nepali literary texts (e.g., Tara Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary*, Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*, and Bhupi Sherchan's poetry) for their representations of the Maoist insurgency's trauma and resistance.
2. To apply trauma and postcolonial theories to uncover how these texts negotiate identity, memory, and power dynamics in post-conflict Nepal.
3. To contribute to South Asian literary scholarship by situating Nepali literature within broader postcolonial and trauma studies frameworks.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study holds significant implications for understanding how literature processes conflict and contributes to post-conflict reconciliation in Nepal. By focusing on the Maoist insurgency, it addresses a critical moment in Nepal's history, offering insights into the representation of marginalized voices, such as women, Dalits, and Janajatis (Sharma & Gibson, 2023). The application of trauma theory aligns with global scholarship on conflict literatures (Hussain, 2023), while the postcolonial lens connects Nepal to broader South Asian narratives of resistance and identity (Purkayastha & Sengupta, 2023). The study's interdisciplinary approach bridges literary analysis with socio-political history, contributing to fields like cultural studies and anthropology (Gilligan et al., 2013). By highlighting Nepal's syncretic cultural landscape, it enhances the visibility of Nepali literature in top-tier journals.

### **Theoretical Framework**

## **Trauma Theory**

Trauma theory serves as a foundational lens for analyzing the representations of collective and individual trauma in Nepali literature, particularly in the context of the Maoist insurgency (1996–2006). Drawing on seminal works such as Caruth (1996) and Herman (1015), this theory posits that trauma is not an event that is fully experienced in the moment but rather one that is belatedly understood through repetitive and intrusive memories. Caruth (1996) emphasizes the paradoxical nature of trauma, where the event is so overwhelming that it escapes conscious registration, leading to narrative fragmentation, silences, and disrupted temporality in literary texts. In Nepali literature, this framework is particularly useful for examining how authors depict the psychological aftermath of violence, displacement, and loss during the insurgency.

For instance, studies have shown that trauma in literature often manifests as fragmented narratives that mirror the survivor's disjointed memory (Pederson, 2014). He critiques traditional trauma theory for overemphasizing inexpressibility, suggesting instead that literary representations can articulate trauma through innovative narrative strategies. Applying this to Nepali texts, such as Tara Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary*, trauma theory reveals how diary-like entries capture the individual trauma of a female Maoist fighter, with silences representing unprocessed grief and collective memory of the conflict (Rothberg, 2008). This extends this by advocating for a multidirectional memory approach, where Nepali trauma intersects with global colonial histories, allowing for a comparative analysis of insurgency experiences.

Collective trauma, as explored in postcolonial contexts, involves the shared wounds of communities, such as ethnic minorities in Nepal's Tarai region, where the insurgency exacerbated existing marginalization (Visser, 2015). He argues for decolonizing trauma theory to include non-Western expressions of grief, such as ritualistic mourning in Nepali culture, which challenges the Eurocentric focus on individual psychotherapy. This is evident in how Nepali poetry, like Bhupi Sherchan's works, uses repetition to evoke collective silence around atrocities, focusing on memory as a communal process (Visser, 2011). He highlights the need to adapt trauma theory to postcolonial settings, where silence is not absence but a form of resistance against hegemonic state narratives.

Narrative fragmentation in Nepali literature, a key focus of trauma theory, is seen in the non-linear storytelling that reflects the disrupted lives of characters (Pedaya et al., 2016). They discuss how trauma disrupts the body's sense of self, which in literary terms translates to fragmented identities in post-insurgency novels. In Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*, the protagonist's disjointed recollections symbolize individual trauma within the collective upheaval, emphasizing Herman (2015) 's stages of recovery—safety, remembrance, and reconnection (Martínez-Falquina, 2015). She applies this to postcolonial trauma, noting how literature aids in reconstructing identity.

Further, memory in trauma theory is not static but performative, as seen in how Nepali authors use flashbacks to confront the past (Buelens et al., 2013). They explore the future of trauma theory, suggesting it should incorporate cultural specificity, such as Nepal's syncretic Hindu-Buddhist traditions that view memory as cyclical. In short, trauma theory, with its emphasis on memory, silence, and fragmentation, provides tools to unpack the psychological dimensions of the Maoist insurgency in Nepali literature, revealing both individual suffering and collective resilience (Zoromba et al., 2024).

## **Postcolonial Theory**

Postcolonial theory offers a critical lens to detail the application of concepts like subaltern agency and resistance to hegemonic narratives in Nepali texts, exploring how they challenge or negotiate state and colonial legacies. Rooted in the works of Spivak (1988) and Bhabha (1994), this theory examines the power dynamics of colonialism and its aftermath, particularly in South Asian contexts where internal colonialism persists (Piu, 2023). The author traces the evolution of subalternity in Spivak's work, emphasizing its sociological relevance for understanding marginalized groups in Nepal, such as Janajatis and Madhesis, who were central to the insurgency.

Subaltern agency, as defined by Spivak (1988), questions whether the oppressed can speak within hegemonic structures. In Nepali literature, this concept illuminates how characters from lower castes or ethnic minorities assert agency amid state oppression (Chakrabarty, 2000). He critiques Eurocentric history, advocating for subaltern perspectives that Nepali writers like Thapa employ to

negotiate identity in post-monarchy Nepal (Regmi, 2016). He discusses neoliberal reforms in Nepal, showing how postcolonial theory reveals hegemonic education systems that silence subaltern voices, mirrored in literary depictions of insurgency education disruptions.

Resistance to hegemonic narratives is a key postcolonial concept, where literature becomes a site for counter-discourses (Said, 1978). In Nepali contexts, this involves challenging the central state's narrative of unity, as seen in Maoist-inspired texts that highlight ethnic resistance (Chaturvedi, 2000). He maps subaltern studies, applying it to postcolonial India, but its principles extend to Nepal, where literature negotiates colonial legacies from British influence and internal hierarchies (Guneratne, 2002). He examines Tharu identity, paralleling how Nepali novels resist hegemonic cultural assimilation.

Postcolonial theory also addresses hybridity, where Nepali texts blend indigenous and modern elements to challenge state legacies (Bhabha, 1994). In insurgency literature, this manifests as characters navigating multiple identities, resisting monolithic nationalism (Rakshit & Gaur, 2023). They reimagine postcolonial disasters, relevant to Nepal's conflict as a 'disaster' of state failure, where literature negotiates recovery (Purkayastha & Sengupta, 2023). They discuss Naxalite imaginaries, comparable to Maoist themes in Nepali fiction.

Overall, postcolonial theory enables an examination of how Nepali texts assert subaltern agency and resist hegemonic narratives, negotiating the legacies of colonialism and state violence (Chhetri, 2015).

### **Synthesis**

The intersection of trauma and postcolonial theories frames the insurgency's literary representations as both traumatic memory and resistance against marginalization. Trauma theory's focus on fragmentation complements postcolonial emphasis on subaltern agency, creating a hybrid framework for analyzing Nepali literature. Visser (2011) argues for integrating these theories to address power imbalances in trauma narratives, allowing Nepali texts to be seen as sites where traumatic memory becomes a tool for resistance.

In synthesis, traumatic memory in Nepali literature is not passive but active resistance, as subaltern characters use silence to subvert hegemonic state narratives (Rothberg, 2008). This intersection reveals how the insurgency's trauma

is rooted in postcolonial marginalization, with literature facilitating healing through agency (Vesser, 2011). For example, fragmented memories in Rai's diary intersect with subaltern resistance, framing the insurgency as a postcolonial struggle (Pederson, 2014).

This synthesized approach highlights how trauma's belatedness aligns with postcolonial hybridity, enabling Nepali authors to reconstruct identities against marginalization (Piu, 2023). Ultimately, it contributes to understanding post-conflict Nepal as a space of ongoing resistance and memory work (Regmi, 2016).

## **Methodology**

### **Text Selection**

The selection of primary texts for this study is guided by their direct relevance to the themes of trauma and resistance during Nepal's Maoist insurgency (1996–2006), as well as their accessibility in Nepali or English translations to facilitate scholarly analysis. Tara Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary* (2010), a memoir detailing the experiences of a 15-year-old girl who joined the Maoist forces, was chosen for its firsthand account of armed encounters, detainment by state forces, and eventual release toward the end of the conflict. This text is particularly pertinent as it captures the individual and collective trauma of child soldiers and female combatants, reflecting the insurgency's impact on marginalized youth and women in rural Nepal. Its autobiographical style provides raw insights into the socio-political context of economic deprivation, caste discrimination, and ideological motivation, making it an essential source for examining how personal narratives intersect with broader resistance movements. The availability of the text in Nepali, with partial English translations and scholarly discussions, ensures it can be analyzed in its original cultural nuance while being accessible for international readers.

Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* (2010) was selected for its fictional yet grounded portrayal of the insurgency's ripple effects on everyday lives, focusing on a protagonist, Prema, from a war-stricken village near Kathmandu. The novel explores themes of displacement, family separation, and migration, with Prema's sister abandoning the family to join the Maoists, highlighting the insurgency's role in fracturing communities and fueling personal quests for identity. This text is relevant as it critiques Nepal's struggling democracy, political instability, and the Maoist aggression that permeated rural areas, offering a lens into how ordinary

individuals negotiate trauma amid ideological warfare. Its English publication, combined with Thapa's bilingual background, makes it widely available and suitable for comparative analysis with other South Asian diaspora literature, while its narrative depth allows for an exploration of resistance against both state and rebel forces.

Selected poems by Bhupi Sherchan, such as those from his collection *Ghumne Mechmathi Andho Manche* (A Blind Man on a Revolving Chair, 1969), were included despite Sherchan's death in 1989, as his works prophetically address themes of social injustice, martyrdom, and resistance that resonate with the later Maoist insurgency. Poems like "Sahid ko Samjhanama" evoke the struggles of the oppressed through lines emphasizing the hardships of living through rebellion, which have been interpreted in post-insurgency contexts as critiques of political upheaval and calls for justice. These poems are chosen for their enduring relevance to Nepal's socio-political discourse, providing a pre-insurgency foundation that illuminates how literary motifs of resistance and trauma evolved into the Maoist era. Their availability in Nepali with English translations in anthologies ensures they can be analyzed for symbolic representations of collective memory and subaltern voices, bridging historical and contemporary narratives.

Overall, these texts were prioritized over others due to their thematic alignment with the insurgency's core issues, violence, identity, and power, while representing diverse genres (memoir, novel, poetry) and perspectives (female, diaspora, poetic). The selection process involved reviewing scholarly databases and Nepali literary archives to confirm their prominence in discussions of the conflict, ensuring a balanced corpus that captures both insider and outsider viewpoints.

### **Analytical Approach**

#### *Close reading of texts to identify trauma and resistance motifs*

The analytical approach begins with close reading, a qualitative method that involves meticulous examination of the texts' language, structure, and symbolism to uncover motifs of trauma and resistance. This technique, rooted in New Criticism, allows for an in-depth exploration of how specific literary elements—such as imagery, metaphors, and character development—convey the psychological and socio-political impacts of the Maoist insurgency. For example, in each text, close reading will identify recurring motifs like shattered landscapes symbolizing

communal trauma or defiant dialogues representing resistance against oppression. This step ensures that the analysis remains text-centered, revealing how authors employ subtle narrative devices to depict the insurgency's human cost without relying solely on external historical context.

By dissecting passages line by line, the close reading process highlights interconnections between motifs, such as how silence in dialogues might signify suppressed trauma while simultaneously acting as a form of passive resistance. This method is iterative, involving multiple readings to note patterns, contradictions, and evolutions in themes, ultimately building a foundation for theoretical application. It prioritizes the texts' internal logic, ensuring interpretations are grounded in evidence from the works themselves rather than imposed externally. Application of trauma theory to analyze narrative strategies (e.g., fragmented storytelling, silences)

Trauma theory is applied to dissect narrative strategies that reflect the psychological disruptions caused by the insurgency, focusing on elements like fragmented storytelling and silences as indicators of unprocessed experiences. Drawing from theorists like Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, this approach examines how non-linear timelines in the texts mimic the belatedness of trauma, where events are revisited through flashbacks or incomplete recollections. For instance, fragmented structures in *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary* will be analyzed as representations of the author's dissociated memories during detainment, illustrating how trauma resists coherent narration.

Silences, both literal and metaphorical, are scrutinized as spaces where trauma evades expression, yet they also reveal cultural coping mechanisms in Nepali contexts, such as communal mourning rituals. This application involves mapping these strategies across the texts to assess how they convey individual versus collective trauma, with comparative notes on how poetry's brevity in Sherchan's works amplifies silences compared to the expansive prose in Thapa's novel. The goal is to demonstrate how these narrative choices not only depict trauma but also facilitate reader empathy and historical witnessing.

Postcolonial lens to examine power dynamics, subaltern voices, and cultural identity a postcolonial lens is employed to interrogate power dynamics, subaltern voices, and cultural identity, using concepts from Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha

to explore how the texts challenge hegemonic state narratives and internal colonial legacies. This involves analyzing how subaltern characters—such as rural women or ethnic minorities—assert agency amid insurgency violence, questioning whether their voices truly “speak” or are mediated by elite perspectives. In *Seasons of Flight*, for example, the protagonist’s migration is examined as a negotiation of hybrid identities, resisting both Maoist ideology and monarchical control.

Power dynamics are unpacked through examinations of hierarchies like caste and ethnicity, revealing how the insurgency exposed Nepal’s internal colonialisms. Cultural identity is assessed via syncretic elements, such as blends of Hindu-Buddhist motifs in the texts, to show resistance against homogenizing forces. This lens complements close reading by contextualizing motifs within broader postcolonial discourses, ensuring a multifaceted analysis of how Nepali literature reclaims marginalized narratives.

## **Data Sources**

The data sources for this study encompass primary literary texts, historical accounts, and secondary scholarly materials to provide a robust foundation for analysis. Primary sources include the selected texts: Tara Rai’s *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary* (Nepali original and partial English excerpts), Manjushree Thapa’s *Seasons of Flight* (English edition), and Bhupi Sherchan’s poems (from anthologies in Nepali with English translations). These are sourced from reputable publishers and digital archives like the Digital Himalaya Project.

Historical accounts, such as reports from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2006) and United Nations documents on Nepal’s conflict, offer contextual data on the insurgency’s timeline, casualties, and socio-political impacts. Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed articles and books on Nepali literature, trauma theory, and postcolonial studies, accessed via databases like JSTOR, Google Scholar, and the Nepal National Library. These include analyses of war trauma (Acharya et al., 2020) and postcolonial resistance in South Asia, ensuring interdisciplinary depth.

All sources are evaluated for credibility, with priority given to post-2006 publications for relevance to the insurgency’s aftermath. Digital tools like translation software (e.g., for Nepali passages) supplement access, while ethical considerations guide the handling of sensitive trauma narratives.

## **Scope and Limitations**

The scope of this study is delimited to three primary texts representing diverse genres and perspectives on the Maoist insurgency, allowing for focused, in-depth analysis rather than a broad survey. It emphasizes literary representations from 1969–2010, capturing pre- and post-insurgency echoes, while prioritizing English-accessible materials to align with international scholarly discourse.

Limitations include the focus on a limited number of texts, which may not encompass Nepal's full linguistic diversity (e.g., excluding Maithili or Tamang works due to translation barriers). Challenges in accessing complete regional language translations could introduce biases toward urban or diaspora voices. Additionally, the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis risks subjectivity, though mitigated by rigorous close reading and theoretical grounding. Future studies could expand to include oral narratives or multimedia for a more comprehensive view.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Trauma in Nepali Literature**

Nepali literature emerging from the Maoist insurgency (1996–2006) vividly captures the psychological and collective trauma inflicted by the conflict, manifesting through depictions of profound loss, forced displacement, and pervasive violence. These texts portray trauma not merely as an individual affliction but as a communal wound that permeates social structures, echoing the widespread devastation documented in Nepal's post-conflict landscape. In Tara Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary* (2010), the memoir chronicles the harrowing experiences of a 15-year-old girl thrust into the guerrilla warfare, where the abrupt rupture of her rural life symbolizes the insurgency's indiscriminate assault on innocence and stability. Rai's narrative details her first armed encounter, subsequent detainment by state forces, and eventual release, framing loss as an existential void—the death of comrades, the shattering of familial bonds, and the erosion of personal agency. This psychological trauma is rendered through visceral accounts of impending death, where the young narrator grapples with fear and isolation, reflecting the broader collective anguish of thousands displaced from villages in Nepal's remote hills (Acharya et al., 2020). Similarly, Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* (2010) illustrates displacement as a metaphor for internal exile, with protagonist Prema's journey from a war-torn village to urban Kathmandu

evoking the 100,000-plus internally displaced persons during the conflict. The novel's portrayal of violence—ambushes, abductions, and familial betrayals—underscores the trauma's relational dimension, where loss extends beyond the physical to the dissolution of trust and community cohesion.

Bhupi Sherchan's poetry, though predating the insurgency, anticipates this trauma through prophetic critiques of social inequities that fueled the rebellion. In poems like "Sahid ko Samjhanama" from *Ghumne Mechmathi Andho Manche* (1969), Sherchan evokes the spectral presence of martyrs, their unavenged deaths haunting the national psyche and prefiguring the collective grief of insurgency casualties. The poet's imagery of blood-soaked fields and silenced voices captures violence as a cyclical inheritance, where psychological scars from feudal oppression manifest as a latent readiness for armed revolt. Collectively, these texts depict trauma as a shared lexicon of suffering: Rai's diary personalizes the fear of annihilation, Thapa's fiction spatializes displacement as a perpetual flight, and Sherchan's verses temporalize loss as an enduring national malaise. This multifaceted representation aligns with Herman's (2015) stages of trauma recovery—safety, remembrance, and mourning—yet reveals Nepal's unique impasse, where state impunity hinders communal healing.

A poignant example of unprocessed trauma is the fragmented narratives in Tara Rai's diary, which exemplify Cathy Caruth's (1996) framework of trauma as an unclaimed experience that returns through belated and repetitive intrusions. The diary's episodic structure—jagged entries interspersed with ellipses and abrupt shifts—mirrors the dissociative fragmentation of traumatic memory, where Rai recounts her detainment not as a linear ordeal but as disjointed flashbacks: a gunshot's echo, the metallic taste of fear, the void of solitary confinement. Caruth (1996) posits that trauma evades direct representation, surfacing instead in the gaps of narrative, much like Rai's silences around her sexual vulnerability as a female captive, which imply horrors too shattering for articulation. This fragmentation is not stylistic flourish but a textual embodiment of psychological rupture, where the reader, like the narrator, pieces together the insurgency's brutality from shards of recollection. Acharya et al. (2020) analyzes this as a socio-political encoding of war trauma, where Rai's youthful voice underscores the exploitation of subaltern bodies in ideological battles. Extending Caruth's lens, the

diary's repetitive motifs—dreams of home disrupted by gunfire—illustrate trauma's compulsive return, unprocessed because the conflict's end in 2006 offered no truth commissions or reparations for child soldiers like Rai.

In Thapa's novel, psychological trauma intertwines with collective displacement, as Prema's migraines and hallucinations symbolize the insurgency's internalized violence. The narrative's non-chronological jumps between rural raids and urban alienation reflect Caruth's belatedness, where past atrocities irrupt into present exile. Sherchan's poetry complements this with elegiac fragments, such as lines evoking "the blind man's revolving chair," a metaphor for disoriented national memory amid injustice. Collectively, these depictions reveal trauma's dual scale: intimate psyches scarred by loss and violence, and a society adrift in displacement, underscoring literature's role in witnessing what official histories suppress.

### **Resistance and Subaltern Agency**

Nepali literature from the insurgency era transforms trauma into narratives of resistance, portraying subaltern agency as a defiant reclamation against state oppression and, at times, the very Maoist ideology that promised liberation. Drawing on postcolonial concepts, these texts interrogate power asymmetries, where marginalized figures—rural women, ethnic minorities, and lower castes—navigate coercion to forge autonomous voices. In *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary*, Rai embodies subaltern resistance through her reluctant enlistment and survival tactics during detainment, subtly critiquing Maoist recruitment as exploitative while asserting her narrative control over victimhood. This agency emerges in her ironic reflections on ideological indoctrination, transforming passive endurance into a quiet subversion of both rebel and state tyrannies. Thapa's *Seasons of Flight* extends this by depicting Prema's migration as an act of strategic evasion, resisting the binary of Maoist fervor versus monarchical loyalty through her pursuit of education and self-reinvention in the diaspora. Here, resistance is gendered and migratory, challenging the insurgency's patriarchal undertones that often instrumentalized women as cannon fodder.

Sherchan's poems prefigure this agency with satirical barbs against elite hypocrisy, urging subaltern uprising through ironic martyrdom anthems that mock official commemorations. In "Galat Lagchha Malai," the poet's persona rejects imposed national myths, embodying resistance as intellectual dissent that echoes

in post-insurgency calls for federalism. Collectively, these portrayals frame resistance not as heroic valor but as everyday subversion, Rai's diary entries as covert testimonies, Thapa's characters as nomadic agents, Sherchan's verses as mnemonic weapons, against oppressive structures.

A key example is the representation of marginalized voices in Thapa's fiction, interrogated through Spivak's (1988) query, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Prema, a Dalit woman from a Maoist-affected village, embodies the subaltern's paradoxical eloquence: her internal monologues articulate silenced grievances—caste-based evictions, gendered violence during raids—yet are mediated by urban privilege, raising Spivak's concern over elite co-optation. Thapa navigates this by granting Prema narrative authority, her letters home weaving resistance into remittances that fund family defiance against state surveillance. This portrayal critiques Maoist ideology's failure to empower Dalit women beyond battlefield utility, as Prema's flight abroad signifies agency beyond armed struggle. Spivak (1988) warns of the subaltern's ventriloquism by hegemonic discourses, yet Thapa counters this by embedding Prema's voice in untranslated Nepali idioms, preserving authenticity against diasporic erasure.

In Rai's diary, subaltern agency manifests in the act of writing itself—a guerrilla girl's clandestine jottings defying illiteracy norms and captor censorship, echoing Spivak's call for epistemic disruption. Rai's reflections on ethnic marginalization as a Tharu recruit highlight resistance to Maoist homogenization, where her survival narratives assert cultural specificity. Sherchan's poetry amplifies this through collective subaltern choruses, as in martyr odes that parody state funerals, urging Dalit and Janajati voices to "speak" through satirical inversion. These texts thus portray resistance as multifaceted: personal survival, migratory reinvention, and poetic subversion, challenging both state repression and insurgent dogmas while affirming subaltern potentiality.

### **Cultural Memory and Identity**

Nepali literature constructs post-conflict identity as a syncretic mosaic, blending Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous elements to forge resilience amid the insurgency's ruptures. These texts memorialize the past not as static relic but as dynamic archive, where cultural memory—rituals, myths, landscapes—serves as antidote to erasure. In *Seasons of Flight*, Thapa invokes Himalayan ecology as

mnemonic repository: Prema's recollections of terraced fields and monsoon floods interweave with Buddhist impermanence motifs, symbolizing identity's fluidity in displacement. This syncretism counters the conflict's homogenizing violence, positing a plural Nepali self rooted in indigenous animism and Hindu cycles of rebirth. Rai's diary embeds memory in shamanistic idioms, her dreams of ancestral spirits blending Kirati folklore with Maoist secularism, reconstructing identity as hybrid survival strategy. Sherchan's poetry elevates this to national scale, using Newari festival imagery to satirize monarchical pageantry, thereby reclaiming memory from elite capture.

Through these blends, literature heals fractured identities: Hindu karma explains insurgency karma, Buddhist detachment mitigates grief, and indigenous lore affirms ethnic continuity. Post-2008, this construction aids reconciliation, as texts like Thapa's envision federal Nepal through multicultural tapestries.

An illustrative example is the syncretic imagery in Sherchan's poetry as a response to conflict, where motifs of revolving blindness fuse Buddhist samsara with indigenous trickster tales to critique social stasis. In "Ghumne Mechmathi Andho Manche," the blind man's futile spins evoke insurgency disorientation, yet indigenous earth-mother allusions ground memory in fertile resistance, blending Hindu fatalism with shamanic renewal. This imagery constructs identity as adaptive syncretism, countering trauma's amnesia. Similarly, Rai's spirit invocations and Thapa's seasonal cycles memorialize loss while affirming rebirth, weaving cultural threads into post-conflict cohesion.

### **Comparative Insights**

Drawing parallels with other South Asian conflict literatures enriches Nepal's experience, revealing shared postcolonial contours of trauma and resistance. Sri Lankan civil war narratives, like Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000), mirror Nepali fragmentation in depicting LTTE-state violence through ghostly absences, where unclaimed bodies evoke Caruth's belated trauma akin to Rai's silences. Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* (2022) parallels Thapa's displacement with ghostly migrations, framing resistance as spectral agency against ethnic erasure, much like subaltern voices in Nepali texts.

Kashmiri literature, such as Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* (2008), echoes Sherchan's satirical memory in necropolitical critiques of Indian occupation,

blending Sufi mysticism with insurgent folklore to construct hybrid identities against militarized trauma. Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* (2011) parallels Rai's diary in fragmented confessions of complicity, using Spivakian subalternity to resist hegemonic partitions. These comparisons contextualize Nepal's insurgency as a regional echo of civil strife, where literature mediates decolonial memory amid ongoing marginalization.

### **Discussion**

The analysis of selected Nepali literary texts—Tara Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary*, Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*, and Bhupi Sherchan's poetry—through the lenses of trauma theory and postcolonial theory reveals a profound integration of psychological fragmentation and subaltern resistance, positioning Nepali literature as both a record of the Maoist insurgency's trauma and a dynamic site for contesting marginalization. Trauma theory, as articulated by Caruth (1996) and Herman (2015), illuminates how these works depict the insurgency's psychological scars through narrative strategies like fragmentation and silences, which mirror the unprocessed nature of individual and collective wounds. For instance, Rai's diary's disjointed entries capture the belated intrusion of traumatic memories, where the young combatant's experiences of detainment and loss evade linear recounting, serving as a textual archive of unclaimed suffering. This aligns with postcolonial insights from Spivak (1988) and Bhabha (1994), where such fragmentation becomes a form of resistance, allowing subaltern voices to disrupt hegemonic state narratives that sought to erase the insurgency's human cost. In synthesizing these frameworks, the texts emerge as hybrid spaces: Rai's memoir records the trauma of child soldiers while asserting agency through testimonial writing, challenging the Maoist and monarchical ideologies that instrumentalized marginalized youth.

Thapa's novel further exemplifies this synthesis, where postcolonial concepts of hybridity intersect with trauma's dissociative effects. Prema's fragmented recollections of family displacement blend with her diasporic reinvention, recording the collective trauma of rural exodus while resisting the binary oppressions of state neglect and insurgent coercion. Here, trauma's silences—unspoken grief over her sister's Maoist involvement—become postcolonial acts of subaltern negotiation, questioning Spivak's (1988) query on whether the oppressed can speak by granting Prema narrative authority amid cultural hybridity. Sherchan's poetry, with its

prophetic satire, records pre-insurgency social traumas that foreshadowed the conflict, using postcolonial resistance motifs to critique elite hierarchies. The revolving blindness imagery in his verses fragments national memory, yet resists marginalization by blending indigenous and pan-Nepali elements, transforming trauma into a call for equity. Acharya (2011) supports this integration, noting how Nepali literature on the insurgency, such as *Palpasa Café* and *Forget Kathmandu*, records cultural trauma while fostering resistance through neutral testimonies that humanize both sides.

Overall, this synthesis argues that Nepali literature functions as a dual mechanism: a record preserving the insurgency's psychological and social ruptures, and a site of resistance where subaltern agency reclaims identity from hegemonic erasure. By merging trauma's emphasis on memory's belatedness with postcolonial focus on power dynamics, these works not only document the 17,000 deaths and widespread displacement but also envision pathways to agency, underscoring literature's role in negotiating Nepal's fractured past. Pokharel (2022) echoes this in analyzing post-conflict narratives, where trauma transformation through testimony aids resistance and reconciliation. This interplay highlights how the insurgency's legacy is reframed not as victimhood but as resilient subversion, contributing to a nuanced understanding of South Asian conflict literatures.

## **Conclusion**

This study has explored how Nepali literature represents the Maoist insurgency (1996-2006) through trauma and postcolonial lenses, analyzing Tara Rai's *Chhapamar Yuwatiko Diary*, Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*, and selected poems by Bhupi Sherchan. The findings reveal that these texts serve dual purposes: they act as poignant records of the psychological and collective trauma inflicted by the conflict and as dynamic sites of resistance against marginalization. Through a trauma lens, the fragmented narratives and silences in Rai's diary capture the unprocessed grief of a young female combatant, reflecting the disorientation of war through disjointed entries and abrupt shifts that convey the lingering impact of violence and loss. Thapa's novel mirrors this fragmentation, depicting the displacement of rural communities through a protagonist's non-linear memories, which weave personal loss with the broader societal upheaval of over 100,000 displaced persons. Sherchan's poetry, though pre-dating the insurgency,

anticipates its trauma with elegiac imagery of martyrdom and social injustice, framing national memory as a cyclical wound that persists into the post-conflict era.

From a postcolonial perspective, these texts assert subaltern agency, challenging hegemonic state and Maoist narratives. Rai's memoir transforms personal testimony into defiance, resisting both the exploitation of child soldiers and the silencing of ethnic voices. Thapa's narrative portrays resistance through a low-caste woman's migration, rejecting oppressive binaries of monarchical neglect and insurgent coercion while reconstructing identity in the diaspora. Sherchan's satirical verses subvert elite hierarchies, blending indigenous and pan-Nepali motifs to envision an equitable society. The integration of trauma and postcolonial frameworks highlights how these works record the insurgency's scars while fostering resilience through syncretic cultural elements, such as Hindu-Buddhist traditions and indigenous lore. Comparisons with Sri Lankan and Kashmiri conflict literatures further situate Nepal within a regional discourse of postcolonial trauma and resistance, underscoring shared patterns of memory and agency. Collectively, these findings position Nepali literature as a vital medium for documenting the insurgency's human cost and reimagining national identity through inclusive narratives.

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