

## Narrative Tools and Strategies: Representation of Trauma in Bista's *The Andhi Khola*

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores the post-traumatic journey of the central character Gangi in the story *The Andhi Khola* by Daulat Bikram Bista. The aim of this study is to analyze Gangi's journey and investigate the deep effects of trauma on her psyche and experiences. The methodology is a close reading and textual analysis of Bista's work, examining key passages and themes related to Gangi's trauma. Through this analysis, the article uncovers the emotional trajectory of Gangi, highlighting themes of loss, separation, and longing, as well as the continuing impact of trauma on her sense of self and her hope for her lover's return. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative power of trauma and promote empathy for individuals who carry its burden. By revealing Gangi's narrative, this research highlights the need for sensitivity and support in addressing the psychological effects of trauma in individuals' lives.

**Keywords:** Trauma, narrative, psychological impact, loss, separation

### Introduction

During the Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16), brave young Nepalese soldiers impressed the British with their courage. The war started on November 1, 1814, when the East India Company declared war on Nepal. The British faced difficulties in Butwal, Parsa, and Jaithak, but they managed to win in Kumaon and Garhwal during the first part of the war. In the second part, Nepal lost in Hariharpur Gadhi and Makawanpur and had to sign the Sugauli Treaty. This war is called the Anglo-Nepal War in Nepal's military history. It had a permanent impact on Nepal's politics, economy, and society. It is important to understand how these changes occurred. As a result of the Sugauli Treaty, the British began recruiting Nepali youths into their own army. Throughout the 20th century, these soldiers served in different locations where the British Empire was involved in expanding or defending its territories. Even after India gained independence, the youths continued to be recruited not only in the British Army but also in the Indian Army, the Singapore Contingent, and the Brunei Reserve. (Republica, 2019).

Despite the tragic loss of nearly 45,000 Nepali soldiers during different wars, fighting in places like Flanders Field, Gallipoli, Monte Cassino, and the jungles of Burma, the aspiration to serve in the foreign military remained strong among young Nepali boys. After that, thousands of them apply at recruitment centers with dreams of joining the armed forces. After the British Afghan Campaign in 1848, when new recruits were sent to Lahore for training, those who joined the British Army became known as "Lahures" in their home country Nepal. These Lahures left their families and friends behind to work in a foreign land and fight for foreign powers. Their experiences of traveling, living independently, and engaging in numerous battles profoundly impacted these young men. In the villages, when they came from *Lahur*, the Lahures were seen as symbols of progress and were admired for their bravery. Additionally, the money they brought back home gave them a special position in their own society. Later on, "they were also called Gurkhas." In many parts of Nepal, Gurkha veterans played a pivotal role in driving development and progress (Aryal, 2023).

The legend of the Lahures has become deeply rooted in Nepali fiction, folklore, and songs, often portraying themes of love, longing, and the fleeting moments spent at home. In recent times, the term *Lahure* has expanded its meaning beyond the military context to encompass all Nepalese who leave their homeland to work abroad.

In the twenty-first century, trauma theory has become an important way to understand various modern events like wars and conflicts that have profoundly impacted societies. This theory looks at how literature helps people deal with painful experiences from the past. It also tries to analyze how traumatic events are shown, dealt with, talked

about, and expressed in many books and historical texts, which serve as evidence.

The story sets in the beautiful rural areas of Syangja district on the terrain of the Andhi Khola region. The story starts with the nostalgia of Gangi. It touches her psyche, bringing her back to the situation of twenty-five years ago. Gangi's narrative opens the dark sides of human experiences of conflict, displacement, and personal loss, while simultaneously highlighting the flexibility of the human spirit.

The story acknowledges the situation and the deeply inflicted traumatic impact on individuals and communities. According to Jean-Martin Charcot, a prominent figure in the field of psychology says, "Trauma can manifest itself in a variety of ways, disrupting an individual's sense of self and inducing a profound sense of helplessness and distress (Charcot, 1893)." Similarly, Cathy Caruth argues that traumatic experiences are often inexpressible and fragmentary, leading to a fragmented narrative structure in literary works. This fragmentation allows the author to depict the dissonance and confusion experienced by traumatized individuals, providing readers with a more authentic understanding of their psychological state. Drawing upon these scholarly perspectives, this research article aims to closely examine the traumatic state of Gangi's journey in the story *The Andhi Khola*. It also provides clear answers regarding how Bista portrays trauma through the character of Gangi. It will uncover valuable insights into the psychological and emotional effects of traumatic experiences as revealed through this portrayal.

### Objectives

The objectives of the research article are as follows:

- To examine the narrative tools and strategies used by Bista to depict the trauma and its aftermath experienced by Gangi in *The Andhi Khola*.
- To investigate how trauma shapes Gange's identity, memory, and relationships in the story *The Andhi Khola*.

### Research Questions

- What narrative tools and strategies does Bista use to represent the trauma and its aftermath experienced by Gangi in *The Andhi Khola*?
- How does trauma affect Gangi's sense of self, memory and relationships in the story and what narrative techniques does Bista employ to convey them?
- How does the story explore the themes of loss, separation and survival in relation to Gangi's trauma and its impact on her life?
- How does Gangi's narrative contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative power of trauma and the need for sensitivity in addressing its psychological effects?

### Methodology

This paper will adopt a qualitative approach to analyze the representation of trauma in the narrative of *The Andhi Khola*, focusing on the central character of Gange. The paper will conduct a close reading of the story and examine how Gange's psychological trauma is expressed through various narrative features, based on the framework of narrative theory.

The story vividly portrays Gangi's traumatic narrative which shows the complex web of emotions entangling her. This research aims to describe the transformative power of trauma, its deep effects on individual lives, and the resilience and vulnerability of those burdened by its weight. Exploring Gangi's story, it is hoped to deepen the understanding of the impact of trauma on the human psyche.

### Theoretical Implication

This study aims to explore how trauma is represented in Bista's *The Andhi Khola*, a Nepali short story that depicts the lives of villagers affected by a devastating flood. To do so, it employs narrative theory or narratology, which is the field of scholarship that examines and analyzes narratives, paying attention to their "form and functioning" (Prince 7). Narratology emerged as a distinct discipline with Todorov (1969), who coined the term "narratology" to refer to "a systematic study of narrative based on the Russian and Czech formalism of the early twentieth century and the French Structuralism and semiotics of the sixties" (O'Neill 12). The research approach employed in this study is "library research, involving an exploration of a wide range of books, journal articles, and other available resources within the library" (Rys et al. 2014). The textual analysis serves as the tool to examine *The Andhi Khola*, as this method focuses on the study of literary texts. Primary sources include Bista's *The Andhi Khola*,

translated by Michael James Hutt. Secondary sources consist of books and journal articles related to Bista's writings and psychoanalytic theory (Sinha 2015).

Trauma refers to an emotional or psychological response to an event or experience that is deeply distressing or disturbing, often involving a threat to one's physical or emotional well-being. Trauma can also cause a psychological process called dissociation, where an individual detaches or disconnects from their thoughts, emotions, sensations, or memories as a means of self-protection. Dissociation can serve as a temporary coping mechanism during and after traumatic events, allowing individuals to psychologically distance themselves from the overwhelming or painful aspects of their experiences. The examination of the relationship between trauma and literature has gathered increasing interest from theorists across various disciplines. Notably, Cathy Caruth, a prominent figure, says "Psychoanalysis and trauma argue that this interdisciplinary work can be traced back to the early days of psychoanalysis (Caruth 1995). Even Sigmund Freud himself turned to literature to elucidate the symptomatology observed in his patients. For Caruth, the fusion of psychoanalysis and literature is a natural fit, as she asserts: If Freud resorts to literature to articulate the experience of trauma, it is because both literature and psychoanalysis explore the intricate connections between knowing and not knowing. It is precisely at the juncture where knowledge and ignorance intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience converge. He says:

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It is important to mention that some scholars in the social sciences have criticized how other disciplines, particularly in the humanities, have misrepresented or oversimplified Freud's views on trauma. Sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander, for instance, singles out Caruth as a proponent of what he terms "lay trauma theory" (Alexander, 2004). Alexander argues that as humanities scholars explore Freud's theories on "trauma deeper", they often paid insufficient attention to his ideas and approached them with a selective focus (Alexander, 2004). Sociologists Michael Lambek and Paul Antze echo this sentiment:

Contemporary debates about memory cannot be addressed without reference to Freud. However, it is challenging to do so in a way that does justice to Freud or psychoanalytic thought. We must not allow popular misrepresentations of Freud to substitute for Freudian thought itself. (Lambek and Antze, 2016)

The main idea in the social sciences is that Freud, especially in his early writings, suggested that in order for a traumatic event to greatly affect a person in adulthood, they must have already suppressed and kept hidden an earlier sexual trauma from their childhood. However, as Neil J. Smelser points out, "[t]his formulation soon proved limited and inadequate for Freud himself [... and subsequently, he developed two separate models of trauma]". (Smelser, 2004)

Therefore, this study will use Caruth's framework of trauma theory to analyze how Bista's *The Andhi Khola* portrays the traumatic experiences of its characters and how they cope with them through narrative tools and strategies.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

*The Andhi Khola* as a typical village life representation story continues to hold the attention of scholars and researchers for describing *Laure* culture and tradition (Budhathoki, 2022). He exposed "*the pre-service, in-service and post-service conditions, thoughts and experiences of lahures, and unveils the psychological motives, intentions, and personality of lahure*" (Budhathoki, 2022). Researchers have explored its diverse themes. Researchers like Sharma (2015), Chidi (2019), Biswas (2016), Gurung (2015) and Shrestha, Pradhan, and Sakya (2002) have discussed how both the literary and non-literary elements of the graphic retellings of the surrounding of Andhi Khola area help represent its diverse themes.

The research reviewed has explored diverse socio-cultural and political issues of *The Andhi Khola*. However, the boundless dimensions of the story still invite serious research on its various unexplored aspects. Discussion of psychological trauma and its representation through the narrative of *The Andhi Khola* happens to be one such aspect that this paper attempts to explore.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF *THE ANDHI KHOLA*

This paper uses some of the narrative components and techniques mentioned above for the discussion of the representation of trauma in *The Andha Khola*. It will, amongst all, utilize components like plot (event) and character to examine how these components help portray the theme of trauma in the story. It will also use narrative techniques like flashbacks, flash-forward, frame story, events in a parallel, narrative shift, multi-perspectives, repetitive designation, epiphany, amplification, imagery, tone, use of repetitive sentence structure, hamartia, perpetual, eloquent long-expression, and comparison. It will examine how these components and techniques help represent the psychological trauma of the selected characters of Andha Khola. This paper will also discuss how both the components and techniques merge and function together for the task of communicating and representing trauma in the story. Specifically, we will examine how characters and events merge together to communicate the theme of trauma and how the representation of trauma is done through the character-event relationship.

In the story, the writer portrays the character of Gangi, a woman haunted by the memories of her past and the traumatic journey of her beloved Laures. The story offers an exploration of the traumatic experiences of the central character Gangi throughout her journey and the narrative techniques employed by the author to convey the trauma. It also explores the narrative elements and themes presented in the story, giving the picture of the hilly region typical women's emotional and psychological impact of Laures' departure for war on Gangi.

The story begins with Gangi observing a group of young men from the Andhi Khola region heading toward Gorakhpur for enlistment in the military. As she listens to their song "Mother, mother, do not weep so, My letters will come to you time after time, Just like the sentries patrolling." (Bista, 1968) memories of Laures resurface in her mind. The narrative switches between past and present, Gangi remembers the situation when her husband left her and his house to join the armies twenty-five years ago and the song is echoing from the past to the date.

Gangi's experiences in Daulat Bikram Bista's *The Andhi Khola* are marked by deep emotional pain and longing due to the departure of her love. As she watches a group of young men from Andhi Khola embark on a journey to join the war effort, their song resonates with her. The lyrics, "Mother, mother, do not weep so, My letters will come to you time after time, Just like the sentries patrolling," touches her heart and evokes memories of her past love. Despite the sadness, the song brings her some comfort and reassurance, reminding her of the connection she desires for. This theme of longing and the emotional journey depicted in the narrative reflects Gangi's traumatic state, highlighting the psychological and emotional impact of her experiences. (37)

Gangi's trauma is connected to the departure of her love, who left without bidding her farewell. The suddenness of his departure and the absence of closure leaves Gangi in a state of shock and despair "but at the moment she can't recall it. She gazes up at the mountain peak, which seems to be fixed to the clouds, but a strange uneasy feeling persists." The narrative portrays her enduring longing for him over the span of twenty-five years, as she watches the hillside where he disappeared. This relentless watching symbolizes her inability to move on and perpetuates her trauma, highlighting the profound impact of separation, loss, and unhealed emotional wounds. (38)

Gangi's gaze follows the diminishing figures of the young men climbing the hill, their shadows growing smaller, and she feels herself shrinking, becoming as small as a seven-year-old girl. Memories of their childhood pranks and quarrels flood her mind, and she vividly recalls "consoling him after their fight." These memories touched with a blue hue, make her stroke her cheek tenderly. With tears welling in her eyes, she looks towards the distant hills, wondering what lies beyond. Her heart aches as she remembers the evening he sat silently, weighed down by thoughts, and announced his decision to join the war. Gangi, desperately seeking to bring him solace, is gripped by fear and uncertainty. "Gangi did not understand at all. She simply laid her head on his chest and sobbed, choked with grief. She hugged him tightly as if she hoped that he would not go and desert his wife like" Gautam Buddha. She had a fear of losing him but does not lose him in her dream. As the river roars in the night, she falls asleep and dreams of water rising, submerging the places where they once played until she fears being consumed by the engulfing hills. (40)

Memories play a crucial role in Gangi's traumatic narrative. Flashbacks and recollections of joyful moments with her love are intertwined with the pain of his departure, intensifying her emotional wounds:

Next morning, she found that he was gone from her arms. Chilled, she rushed to open a window and look outside. The sun had already risen over the peaks beyond the river. She went out, still fastening her clothes, but she could not see him anywhere: not on the steps or in the yard. She ran to the village, but he was not there. Nor did she find

him beside the Andhi Khola. Standing by the resting place, she looked up at the mountainside. (41)

The narrative vividly depicts Gangi's attempts to remember a particular incident, reflecting the fragmented nature of traumatic memories and the haunting quality they possess. These memories contribute to Gangi's longing and serve as a source of both comfort and pain throughout her journey.

Gangi's regressive behavior serves as a coping mechanism in response to her trauma. She retreats into a state of vulnerability and helplessness, referring to herself as becoming as small as a seven-year-old girl. This regression reflects her desire to escape the harsh realities of her trauma and find consolation in memories of a simpler time. The narrative portrays the complex ways in which trauma can shape one's identity and coping mechanisms.

To sum up, the story effectively portrays the deep effects of trauma on the central character, Gange. It vividly depicts the consequences of loss, abandonment, and unresolved emotional wounds arising from traumatic experiences. The narrative also explores broader themes like sacrifice, socio-economic disparities, the enduring power of memory, and the profound impact of trauma on one's mental well-being. Gange's enduring longing, the repetitive cycle of trauma, the significance of memories, and her regressive behavior collectively offer a comprehensive portrayal of the psychological and emotional state caused by trauma. Through Gange's story, the narrative sheds light on universal themes of longing, suffering, and resilience when confronted with traumatic events. A thorough examination and analysis of this narrative would undoubtedly contribute to a greater understanding of trauma and its wide-ranging effects on individuals.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Bista's *The Andhi Khola* is a powerful narrative that portrays the representation of trauma in Nepali literature. The story uses various tools and strategies, such as symbolism, imagery, flashback, and repetition, to convey the emotional and psychological impact of war and migration on the characters and their relationships. The story also reflects the historical and cultural context of Nepal, where many young men enlist in foreign armies to escape poverty and debt, leaving behind their wives and families. The story challenges the glorification of war and heroism and exposes the harsh realities and consequences of violence and displacement. Bista's *The Andhi Khola* is a compelling example of how literature can capture and communicate the human experience of trauma in a nuanced and empathetic way.

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