

Causes and Effects of Trauma in Bhutanese Nepali Diasporic Poetry

Ramji Timalisina, PhD*

Abstract

This study aims to explore the causes and effects of trauma in Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry. It discusses the connection between the individual and collective trauma. Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry gives expression to centuries-long marginalization and sufferings of this community. The series of suffering started from the time the people of Nepali origin reached Bhutan for permanent settlement. It continued with their expulsion, life as refugees and finally in the resettled life in the West. Their experiences of suffering caused trauma on both the personal and collective levels. To explore how it is represented in their poetic creations, I have done this study with the use of constructivist trauma theory in the analysis of the six purposively selected poems that deal with causes and effects of trauma. Constructivist trauma theory deals with trauma as a social construct. The experiences of the people are traumatic, and the discourses on trauma make the individual and social trauma acute and understandable. The study has found that the history of sufferings and the consequent experiences are the causes of their trauma. As a result of trauma, their mentality has been badly affected. The speakers in the poems and the community at the level of representation have been fearful, purposeless and disoriented. The victims' vulnerable existential condition has been reflected in their alternative mode of living on, disability, helplessness and aloneness that has caused significant bearing on the construction of their identity. Their psychology has been filled with troubling past and unstable present mentality resulting into the feeling of being demeaned and diminished. At the same time, these poems have depicted the combination of personal and collective trauma. I believe that this study paves way to further studies on Bhutanese Nepali diasporic literature from the perspective of trauma theory.

Keywords: Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry, disturbed mentality, existential condition, trauma, vulnerability.

*Dr. Timalisina has done PhD from Tribhuvan University and has been working as Lecturer in English at the Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Introduction

Expulsion of more than one hundred thousand Nepali speaking people from Bhutan in the 1990s was the greatest ever historical shock for the Nepali Diaspora as people of Nepali origin were never evicted by a state in such a large number. This massive expulsion of the people on the cultural ground was the next form of genocide. Once they were out of the nation which they had thought their own, they were forced to stay as refugees in Nepal, the nation their forefathers had left to settle in Bhutan. Finally, most of them resettled in the West (Subba & Sinha, 2016). This historical reality is the generator of trauma in Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community. At the same time, this reality gave them a new identity, “historical traumatic experience is the source that marks and defines contemporary individual identity, as well as racial or cultural identity” (Balaev, 2008, p.152). There was also a form of collective trauma that “emerged and deepened gradually through an accumulation of distress and suffering” (Schonfelder, 2013, p. 318). Creative writers of the community have given expression to this collective shock.

Literature gives expression to the conditionality of life and existence; and it is practically true in case of the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic creations. AbhiSubedi (2014) argues that their condition of being a refugee gave birth to very original literary creations, full of high level human sensitivity. He observed that the creative writers of this community have given expression to the same in their writings (app.). Subedi further stresses that diasporic literature of this highly marginalized community happened to be primarily emotion oriented (p.10). In the same tone, some other critics have termed these creations as oppressed literature, too, because of the background reality of their composition. I. P. Adhikari (2010) claims that Bhutanese Nepali literature was a proof of the fact that “[e]ven the end of civilization cannot end the literature” (p. 1). This expression symbolizes the level/extent of torture these creators had to undergo in life: The emotions developed with the same experiences worked as the background to their creative works. Adhikari depicts the situation of their life: “The empty bellies, naked bodies and absence of a good platform ruled the society and thus squeezed the creative talents within huts to shut up their imaginations” (p. 3). These realities showcase the pain and difficulties they had to undergo. Such situations created trauma in community members and the same has been reflected in their creations.

Among all literary genres, it is poetry that represents the most intensive human emotions in a very short space. The titles of some of the poems by this expelled generation of the Bhutanese Nepali poets at the first sight capture the intensity of traumatic experiences and their consequences. Some of such titles are: Devi Subedi’s “Agonies of Being Exiled”, Prakash Dhamala’s “Standing on the No Man’s Land of Life”, Chakra Acharya’s “Horror of Living”, Dona Kafle’s “I am a Melancholy Night

Traveller”, Miro Heynik’s “I Cry When I Yawn”, and Rup Narayan Pokhrel’s “I’m Still Alive ...”. Similarly, there are some lines from poems that make a reader muse on the traumatic mentality of its creator. “Horror of Living” by Acharya (2010) contains the following lines:

Where is the extreme of wild dread and where is the bound of grotty drama?
 Where did we bypass the apostle like Dalai Lama?
 Where is the end of havoc and where is the end of killings?
 Where are the instruments of thought for humanity and heart of feelings?
 Where does humanity outflow?
 When lightless dark generosity dimly glows . . .! (ll. 9-14)

The poems mentioned above and such lines inside them raised my interest to take up the exploration of the impact of their trauma in the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poems to see how these poems represent the trauma they have undergone for long.

Methodology

This study has used constructivist trauma theory as a tool for the interpretation of the selected poems that are the primary data for analysis. The poems that represent causes and effects of the trauma of the Bhutanese Nepali Diaspora have been selected. Their poetic quality and the theme they deal with have been the bases of the selection of these six poems used in the analysis. The interpretative method of analysis has been used with the postcolonial constructivist trauma theory. In constructivist approach, trauma is taken as a political and emancipatory enterprise that deals with the lived experience of oppressed peoples. Jeffrey Prager (2011) explains why it is also called social or cultural trauma: it is caused by “the external world” that “can dramatically impinge on a given population’s ability to develop freely”. And it finally promotes “traumatic deformation”. This category has “now come to signify an extremely wide range of phenomena, e.g. war, genocide, racism, rape, enslavement, kidnapping, forced migration” (p. 431). The concept is further clarified by Olajide Oloyede (2009) who proposes that “collective trauma would imply, in a rather simple sense, trauma that affects a group.” He argues that trauma is perceived as a cultural trauma “when members with a sense of belonging to a collective such as state, ethnic or religious group feel they have been subjected to a fearful and painful event that leave marks upon their collective consciousness and memory” (p. 6). Angela Onwuachi-Willig (2016) specifies how collective trauma becomes the cultural one: “to become a cultural trauma, an event or situation must not only be disorienting, but must also get defined and narrated as trauma” (p. 339). Once narrated in the community, such a traumatic event or story (if it has taken a long time) takes the form of myth and affects the imagination of the whole community for many generations.

The case of the Bhutanese Nepali diasporans was that of collective eviction. Its consequent sufferings were the causes of the trauma of the community and its individuals. Thus, the constructivist approach is appropriate in the analysis of trauma represented in their poems. Based on the combination of theoretical inputs from Jeffrey Alexander, Kai Erikson, Michael Balaev, Negin Heidarizadeha, Roger Luckhurst, and Ron Eyerman, this study has argued that the selected poems have represented the collective trauma of the community.

Causes of Trauma the Poems Reflect

The poems “Agonies of Being Exiled” composed by Devi Subedi (2014) and “Standing on the No Man’s Land of Life” by Prakash Dhamala (2010) depict the causes of trauma in the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community. These poems show that the experiences of being expelled out from the nation are the basic causes of their trauma. The speaker in Subedi’s poem relates his childhood experience that caused his trauma. The poem reports that the bad time started when the speaker was four years in age. He was an innocent child and was “barely uttering the word of motherhood” (Subedi, 2014, l. 4). Heidarizadeha’s (2015) argument that “particularly childhood experiences” (p. 789) are the bases of trauma is noteworthy in this connection.

Real experiences of some severe shocks cause trauma of many kinds. The case of the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community is also the same. Erikson (1991) argues that a “constellation of life’s experience as well as . . . a discrete event” (p. 457) causes trauma. Subedi’s (2014) poem presents this reality. The monarch of Bhutan grew tyrannical with the slogan of “One country, one race” (l. 9); and “it declared Nepali-race people as anti-national” (l. 6). With this development in the politics of the nation, there started the torture upon the people of the Nepali origin. The first step was the action of “seizing the citizens of the speaker’s grandparents” (ll. 7-8) followed by the torture on the parents. The most severe time of suffering followed. The poem presents this in the following lines:

Kidnapping, raping and killing many young ladies,
thrown in the river many saplings and babies.
Our parents’ bank accounts were seized,
made penniless and treated as wild beast. (ll. 11-14)

This racial discrimination and the state-sponsored torture show how the diasporans are treated in some cases by the mainstream in the host land. The Bhutanese Nepali people could not bear all these injustices meted out to them from the government in which the people of the other races were in power. So they were compelled to leave Bhutan: “Ultimately we were levied to leave the country, /where our seven generations had their cemetery” (ll. 15-16). The land they had inhabited for seven generations could not be

theirs at that moment of history. Suddenly, they were made landless, homeless and finally the identity-less. It was the primary cause of the trauma of the community. The cause of trauma was intensified with the suffering they had to undergo after they left their homes. The poem presents the scene of the time they left the land: “Distressed countrymen sobbing and crying, /left the birthplace in dying” (ll. 17-18). This condition was the cause and the resultant mentality was surely traumatic. The series of suffering continued. The life in the refugee camps was not good and their attempts of repatriation were not successful. This situation added the severity of their trauma. In this condition, many people in the community were depressed. There was no way out for their good days ahead.

The above mentioned conditions show that such shocking occurrences profoundly affect individual’s life (Eyerman, 2013, p.41). The major causes were “discrimination, police brutality, and bullying” (Heidarizadeha, 2015, p.789). Such inhuman events were “something alien” that “[broke] into” an individual “smashing through whatever barrier” the individual’s mind “has set up as a line of defense” (Erikson, 1991, p.458). Such a shattering experience and its effects dismantle the individual and social mentality. Dhamala’s (2010) poem “Standing on the No Man’s Land of Life” presents a shattering memory of the speaker. Before presenting it, the longest and largest river of Bhutan namely the Manas is shown to be producing a “mourning cry” (l. 5). This disturbing atmosphere is set to announce a shattering experience of his life i.e. the killing of his daughter, “Where the rosy lips of my daughter/Haunted me once in every dusk” (ll. 7-8). This, though indirectly, refers to the indiscriminate killing the Bhutanese army unleashed upon innocent Nepali community in the late 1890s and the early 1990s. Such killing of innocent people haunts the speaker. At the symbolic level, it also refers to the killing of their dream of good future in the land. The first stanza (ll.1-8) of the poem thus symbolically presents the history of the Bhutanese Nepali community around the time of their expulsion from the land.

These two poems show the shattering of humanity by the rulers. Tuon (2015) argues that it so happens because “the individual’s humanity is erased during the moment of trauma” (p.607). Dhamala’s (2010) poem describes what the speaker and his community did once the rulers gave them “a cold shoulder” and their “passion of mankind was letdown” (ll. 10-11). The Bhutanese Nepali diasporic speaker with the people of his community raised the voice for equality. The result was that he was banned for such expressions; and he was “banned from dreaming/The world of life / The world of happiness” and the “world of liberty” (ll. 13-16). Those days were so troublesome for them that even the memory of the time troubles them. Oloyede (2009) discusses the basic characteristics of such disturbing events: “it is out of the ordinary,

directly experienced and perceived as a threat to survival and self-preservation” (p.5). These poems depict the same conditions.

Dhamala’s (2010) poem exhibits how a person undergoing trauma feels shattered. The first line of the poem is: “My dreams were shattered” (l. 1). Nothing in the world is good for him and the life is not worthy to live once the dreams are shattered. This first line is connected with the second that explains how the speaker’s dreams were shattered: “And I was expelled from the womb of my native land” (l.2). This line shows the speaker’s love and intimacy with his land of birth, Bhutan. The use of the word ‘womb’ is symbolic. It means that the land where he was born is equal to his mother. The land provided him the cozy luxury of the womb. So, to be expelled from this space is the cause of trauma.

In these poems the causes of an individual’s trauma are intertwined with the causes of the collective trauma. The poems show that all the causes of their trauma are the ruler’s inhuman treatment of the Nepali community and the consequent pitiable life they had to live as refugees in Nepal and diasporans in the West.

Effects of Trauma that the Poems Depict

The poems selected for this study and the poems in general that deal with the effects of trauma highly outnumber the poems that deal with the causes of trauma in Bhutanese Nepali diasporic literature. One of such poems is Chakra Acharya’s “Horror of Living” that presents an example of the expression of a traumatic mentality through poetry. It shows how a trauma inflicted subject thinks. Similarly, the next poem “Farewell, Oh New Year” composed by Yati Raj Ajnabee presents extreme negativity and a sense of terror trauma creates in one’s thinking. The third poem entitled “My Many Ways” shows the effects of trauma on the existence of the subject and consequently the Bhutanese Nepali community as a cultural and political collective. The portrayal of traumatic mentality is further shown by the fourth poem: “I am a Melancholy Night Traveller”. It balances the causes and effects of trauma. These poems exhibit two prominent aspects of the effects of trauma: victim’s vulnerable existential condition and the condition of victim’s psychology.

Trauma makes its victim’s existential condition vulnerable. Cloyed (2009) defines trauma as a condition in which the victim’s “basic assumption of him/herself and the world” (p. 5) has been shattered. So is the stand of Prager (2011) who takes trauma as “an event or series of events remembered as so dangerous as to be impossible to preserve an equilibrating belief in a world that presumes our presence” (p.429). Michael Rothberg (2008) adds the element of the victim’s life in these definitions and argues that “trauma implies some ‘other mode of living on’” (p.231). In the same line of thought Christa Schönfelder (2013) argues that trauma “involves a complex conjunction

of subjectivity and alterity.” This feature shows how trauma “exposes a basic but troubling fact of human condition—vulnerability” (p.321). The poems under this analysis exhibit this aspect of trauma inflicted people and their community.

Ajnabee’s (2009) “Farewell, Oh New Year!” displays how even good times and things at present remind a trauma victim of bad old experiences. Even a lovely tickle turns into terrible tease for him. Moreover, he is determined not to be creative at any cost because his seed of creativity may be sown on a wrong soil and it may cause the sower’s death. So, he wants to stay away from any creative collaboration. The poem shows that despise or hatred is his way to look at the world. This is the reason why he does not believe anybody in the world. Every man is an image of a carnivorous destroyer in his eyes. He believes that being away from the world is the single solution to the problems the world is undergoing these days. Rothberg’s (2008) argument has been supportive to this condition, “all traumas and individual experiences are particular— and ultimately disabling” (p. 229). It shows the idiosyncrasy of the experience and the damaging effect of trauma on the victim.

Siskin (2010) in his poem “My Many Ways” presents a troubled vision of life that combines rare hope and unbearable troubles of the existence. This is the vision created in the mind badly affected with trauma and its consequent existential effect on the community. The poem starts with the dim possibility, at the end of the tunnel, of their existence and ends at a very sad note reflected at the portrayal of a nightmare. Such a thought is the result of the feeling of ‘overwhelming helplessness or aloneness’ (Prager2011, p.428). Another such example is Acharya’s (2010) speaker who is a Bhutanese Nepali diasporan. He has undergone all the experiences of being chased away from the land of birth, living as a refugee back in the forefathers’ homeland and finally relocated in the third country that has no natural connection with him and his community. He is situated in such a condition as if he is a traveller stuck amid terror and experience of horror. His position is only that of the person who can just see and realize the situation, but cannot make any significant change in the existential condition. Siskin’s (2010) speaker muses, “my marrow sees light at the end of the tunnel” (l. 1). The personified image of the speaker’s marrow symbolizes the depth of the effects of trauma. To the deepest down of his bodily existence, he is convinced that the good days [“light”] are still far away in his journey of life. The journey is not very easy because it is the journey through the tunnel, not an overland travel. While walking through the tunnel, the walker is not seen: it refers to the hidden identity of the traveller. It connotes the condition of the lack of identity of the speaker and that of the Bhutanese Nepali community in total. One generally does not see the light at the next end of the tunnel. It is a mere imagination or the memory of the time once the speaker had seen the light at

that point of life in the past. This line, in total, indicates the possibility of long and troublesome journey of the identity-threatened Bhutanese Nepali community.

The last stanza presents the nightmare of the speaker with negative forces that a poet can put into the poem. Once he sleeps, he has a dream in which a wolf appears at the door. It is guttered and its limbs are even-tempered. Suddenly, he finds himself in a coffin of blue colour. He also finds himself in “the black rue of [his] light brown face” (l. 15). Looking at him, he is terrified and so finally yells: “What am I, a bare book, a wallet penniless!” (l. 16). This is the expression of his absence of identity and existential value. It is what the Bhutanese Nepali community mostly suffered from. This is the condition that caused their trauma and is also the result of trauma at the same time. As a result, there is a “significant bearing on the construction of identity” (Oloyede, 2009, p.5). All these conditions damage the victim’s ordinary life pattern. The most debilitating effect of trauma is seen on the subject’s psychology. It is the primary locale where the blow of an incident impacts on. Connecting trauma with such blows and its effect Negin Heidarizadeha (2015) defines trauma as “the state of mind which results from an injury.” Though it is a real state of mind, it has some elements of “fantasy which can be read as an articulation of trauma”, too. At the same time, it is “a devastating and damaging experience” that is “lived belatedly at the level of its unspeakable truth” (p.789). These definitions connect trauma with the victim’s troubling past and the unstable present mentality.

Acharya’s (2010) poem “Horror of Living” presents a bizarre thought of a traumatic mind. Developed with the help of bizarre images and their symbolic use, the poem is an example of the expression of a traumatic mentality. It displays the way a traumatic subject thinks about his/her past, present and future. The terror of the past experiences, the horror of the present living and hopelessness for the future are significant ingredients of a traumatic mind and its deliberation. This poem displays these conditions.

This idea is presented with the action of the greyhounds that attack the termites that live peacefully in their own beautiful garden. Here, the greyhounds symbolize the Bhutanese army that indiscriminately attacked the innocent people of the Nepali origin and their beautiful garden like country settlements. The villages that were the symbols of peace and harmony were then turned into the battlefield where one army attacked and killed the disarmed and innocent people. The bizarre scene is reflected with the meadows full of “heated wounds” (l. 4). The poem also presents the depressive rambling of the speaker with a bizarre mentality. The atmosphere the poem has portrayed is dim and gloomy. The scene of the destroyed garden is desolate and the attack of the carnivorous greyhounds on the innocent termites is horribly terrific. The

“pinching and piercing into the chest” (l. 5) of these innocent being and the hunters chasing the deer add the horror in the scene.

This poem is a practical example of what Erikson (1991) reports about the cause of trauma: “an assault from outside that breaks into the space one occupies as a person and damages the interior” (p.455). Such a psychology is troublesome and abnormal and it displays “aggression and self-destructiveness” along with the manifestation of “a desire for self-annihilation” at some times. It creates “serious long-term negative consequences” (Heidarizadeha, 2015, p.789). It is because the traumatic events “inflict fear and suffering, induce pain, anguish, fear, loss and grief and bring about the destruction of a ‘coherent and meaningful reality’ thus pushing the traumatized to the limit” (Oloyede, 2009, p.5). It leaves people “feeling demeaned, diminished, devalued” (Erikson, 1991, p.465). The speaker in Kafle’s (2009) “I am a Melancholy Night Traveller” is such an uncouth night traveller: “I am night traveller. An uncouth night traveller I am” (l. 1). He explains it in the second line: “A distressed traveller laden with the passé political aphorism” (l. 2). It connects the reason of the speaker being an uncouth night traveller. He does it because he is distressed and has been carrying some political aphorism that makes him different from the travellers in the day. He is somebody different from the people who belong to the mainstream and believe on it. The third and the fourth lines further explain the reason behind his condition: “Each midnight I wake up to wish a living/Each next day I am a living dead” (ll. 3-4). He feels that his existence is like that of a dead person. People treat him not as a commonly alive man, but as somebody that is an object, not a person. So, he feels he is a living dead.

Erikson (1991) explains the situations of trauma victims in length. Her study finds that trauma invades the victim(s), takes them over, and becomes “a dominating feature of [the victim’s] interior landscape” (p.458). These conditions are displayed in the poem “I am a Melancholy Night Traveller” that is full of negative imagery of killing and destruction. The contrast between the devastatingly devilish destroyers and the innocent victims highlights the theme of the text. Mixing negativity with destruction is next technique employed in this creation. The fourth line of the poem is an example: “I see nothingness in the hub of meadows, but the heated wounds” (l. 4). It shows that to put someone into traumatic condition means to put one under some troubles that “move to the center of one’s being, and in doing so give victims the feeling that they have been set apart and made special” (Erikson, 1991, p. 458). As a result, the victim views itself as marked, cursed.

The event that inflicted trauma on the whole community along with the subject (individual) happens to be a recurrent reference in the creations resulting from traumatic mentality. Pragerm (2011) reports his research finding that “at any moment, memory can be triggered and the past can reassert itself as if it were present” (p.429).

Heidarizadeha (2015) also asserts the same feature: “past trauma and traumatic memories affect the mind of the character [i.e. the person who is victimized]” (p.789). So is the finding of Erikson (1991) who reports that “trauma involves a continual reliving of the original experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances” (457-58). All these features connect trauma with the past event and its effect on the victim’s psychology at present. Almost each of the poems selected for this article has this quality.

Connecting Individual and Collective Dimensions

Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community underwent traumatic experiences that have affected every member of the community. Their individual trauma was, thus, personal and communal at the same time. Alexander (2012) discusses such a connection between collective and individual experiences of trauma. He argues that trauma primarily is the matter of a collective i.e. a community or a cultural group. Even the personal psychic sufferings are not merely personal; they are to some extent connected with the community in which the person lives as its member. So, trauma is personal and collective at the same time. Alexander takes mere individual suffering of any “extraordinary human, moral, and intellectual import” as a matter of “ethics and psychology”, but not the matter of trauma. He explains his position: “The cultural construction of collective trauma is fuelled by individual experiences of pain and suffering, but it is the threat to collective rather than individual identity that defines the suffering at stake” (p. 2). Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry gives voice to this condition of the community. He further explained the idea of collective trauma: They can become so if they are conceived as wounds to social identity. This is a matter of intense cultural and political work. Suffering collectivities – whether dyads, groups, societies, or civilizations – do not exist simply as material networks. They must be imagined into being. The pivotal question becomes not who did this to me, but what group did it to us? Intellectuals, political leaders, and symbol creators of all kinds make competing claims. They identify protagonists and antagonists and weave them into accusatory narratives projected to audiences of third parties. (p. 2) So, this theory projects trauma through symbols and discourse creations. Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community has gone through the same process and their poetic creations symbolize that historical reality.

Alexander (2012) further argues that “a social theory of collective trauma” explains “how collective agency develops, or fails to develop, in response to the experience of social suffering.” He discusses “religion, nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class – each of these dimensions” as media for “inflicting social pain” (p. 1). It is not

only what happened but also the narratives developed about them are equally the valid causes of collective trauma. Here trauma is related even to the “performative power” of the groups. It establishes that “The emotional experience of suffering, while critical, is not primordial” (p. 2). Thus, trauma is the sum total of real social or group experiences and the narratives including the narratives and imaginations related to those experiences. Seen in this light, it can be argued that Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry not only works as the means of expressing the traumatic mentality of the community, but it also makes the community realize that their history has caused trauma on them. So, these poems work as the means of creating the discourse on trauma.

In the constructivist perspective, trauma is not the matter of isolated individual case. It is a social case and a matter of collective concern because “When social groups do constitute events as gravely endangering, suffering becomes a matter of collective concern, cultural worry, social panic, gut-wrenching fear, catastrophic anxiety.” Unlike in the individual case that goes through “denial, repression, and working through”, the collective cases are the matters of “symbolic construction and framing, of creating stories and characters, and moving along from there” (Alexander, 2012, p. 3). As this quote clarifies, trauma is not merely experienced; but it is collectively constructed. So is the case of the trauma experienced by the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community. And their literary creations play the role in this direction. At this point, collective trauma takes a symbolic turn. When trauma scripts are “performed in the theatres of every day collective life” they become “reflections of neither individual suffering nor actual events, but symbolic renderings that reconstruct and imagine them.” So, rather than being “descriptions of what is,” they become “arguments about what must have been and what should be.” So, “[t]he truth of a cultural script depends not on its empirical accuracy, but on its symbolic power and enactment.” It further shows that “the trauma process is not rational”, but “it is intentional” because it is “people who make traumatic meanings, in circumstances they have not themselves created and which they do not fully comprehend” (Alexander, 2012, p.4). The poems that have been analysed above have exhibited how the expulsion of the Nepali speaking community from Bhutan caused trauma and how it exerted serious effects on the community. So, these poems have helped in the construction of politico-cultural discourse of the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community.

Like the poems discussed above in this study, “I am a Melancholy Night Traveller” by Kafle (2009) is an expression of the effect of trauma on an individual’s mentality that represents the mentality of the community in total. The poem has the balance between self-portrait and the depiction of the environment that caused the trauma. The content of the text is the mixture of the speaker’s thought about his life and

existential condition with the description of the fateful experience that caused the trauma.

Conclusion

Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry depicts the causes and effects of the poets' trauma that represents the trauma of the community. Their history of suffering from the time they left their homeland Nepal two centuries ago was cumulated up to the early 1990s when a large collective was expelled from Bhutan. The primary cause of the expulsion was their cultural difference from the ruling community. During the expulsion, the brutal suppression of the army left a deep psychological wound in the community as a whole. The life-threatening troubles they had to undergo as refugees in Nepal added the intensity of their trauma. Once the whole community was trauma inflicted one, its members experienced its effects even in personal levels. As a result, the major effects the poems exhibit are intellectual and emotional imbalances, threatened existence, depression, hauntingly recurrent bizarre imagery and nightmares. In total, the poems analyzed in this study show how collective and individual traumatic experiences are related to each other. It is possible that the study of Nepali diasporic literature in future can take this direction.

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