

Dislocated Identities in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

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Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri, portrays the immigrant experience, the clash of cultures, hybridity, diaspora, isolation, alienation, the tangled ties between generations in her novel *The Lowland*. Her primary characters are Indian immigrants in America. The novel captures the true emotions and feelings of immigrants. *The Lowland* takes the Mittal family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. The novel, through characters like Gauri, Bela, Subhash, Udayan attempts to portray the sufferings of the immigrants in the modern societies. All the characters struggle with their cultural identity and the forces of the modernization while trying to maintain their emotional connection to one another.

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I. Lahiri and the Issues of Identity

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* depicts the struggle and development of a middle class family during the insurgency that continues to this day, the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency of India. The present study explores the role of a mother in Diaspora, Gauri, and her American born daughter Bela from the perspective of Diaspora discourses.

Although the story contains two other major characters, Udayan and Subash, who are brothers in relation, this paper focuses on the struggle and transformation of Gauri and her daughter Bela as they battle to find their identity and self hood while migrating from their native land to a foreign country.

Migration discourses are not usually approached through feminist point of view. This thesis contributes towards female narratives of migration by exploring traditional (male) immigrant discourses of alienation and loss which can be positively can be positively subverted by women. It liberates them from familiar norms and allowing them the space to interrogate their roles and creates new individual identities.

The study analyzes how Gauri and Bela struggle in finding their identity through the process of alienation and adaptation. Immigration is the most crucial element behind the concept of diaspora. Not only the concept of diaspora first originated through the realm of immigration but also later it developed in the form of its other extensive discourses like post-colonialism, hybridity and multiculturalism.

As Manjit Indra Singh in *Between History and Culture Politics: Reflection on Punjabi Writing of the Diaspora* notes :

The meaning of the term “Diaspora”, if split into two, connotes dia (apart) and speirean (Greek, meaning to scatter or ‘to sow’, provides a full development. While in both ancient and modern thought the former has tended to dominate the latter meaning, with its promise of replanting, re-rooting, subsequent growth, may be gaining momentum. (106)

The above statement shows how the movement of people across the country gained momentum from ancient time and how the pattern has gained recognition in today’s world. Regarding the issue of Indian diaspora, Radhakrishnan says:

Diasporian Indians should not use distance as an excuse for ignoring happenings in India. Besides the male protagonist, the feeling of displacement and alienation and the way of adaptation has always been differently experienced and nurtured by the female protagonists (15).

In *The Lowland*, Gauri’s life becomes exemplary of this notion. Her subjectivization rendered her helpless in Calcutta of the 1980’s where as widowed young girl she had to follow the mandates of her mother-in-law and confine herself in the conservative circumference of the society. She faced the challenges to beat the conventional norms and seek shelter and new identification in United State of America, could be easily understood through the diasporic discourses.

Gauri and her daughter are diasporic female role models. Their struggle and urge to cope with their novel culture and lifestyle for struggle designs the main body of the whole text.

Jhumpa Lahiri, born in 1967 in London, is the daughter of the immigrant Bengali parents. Raised in South Kingstown by her own parents, Lahiri moved with her family to Rhode Island where she spent her adolescence. Lahiri went to attend Barnard College. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English from Barnard College, she kept on applying to various graduate English programme but was rejected by all of them. Eventually, Lahiri entered Boston University and received Master's Degree in English, Creative Writing and Comparative Studies in Literature and Arts. It was here she earned a Ph D in Renaissance Studies. Lahiri also worked for a short time teaching creative writing in Boston University and Rhode Island school of Design.

Jhumpa Lahiri has travelled extensively in India. She has closely observed the effects of colonialism there as well as the issues of diaspora. She has a feeling of strong tie to her ancestral homeland along with the United States and England. Growing up with ties to all three countries has created in Lahiri a sense of homelessness and an inability to feel accepted anywhere.

Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* has been nominated for The Man Booker Prize and National Book Award 2013. It is a story of middle class Bengali family in India and their individual struggle to exist in the heated Naxalite-Maoist insurgency in India. Some resort to stay in their native land and fight for the freedom of peasants while others move to foreign country hoping for better lives. The whole text basically revolves around the diasporic lives in United States of

America. Lahiri writes about the Indians who have settled abroad and feel themselves exiled. These people are unable to cut off completely from their ties with homeland that still bind them through culture and other identity processes.

Since the publication of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*, it has been responded in various ways. The novel *The Lowland* is about the Naxalite –Maoist insurgency of India. Maureen Corrigan reveals:

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* is a story that depicts the struggle and development of a middle class family during the insurgency that continues to this day, the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency of India. A postcolonial novel, based on post-independence India, the story basically expresses the role of Gauri and her American born daughter Bela through the eyes of diasporic notion. (25)

The Lowland by Lahiri reveals the story of a middle class family during the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency of India. The novel emphasizes the role of Gauri and her daughter Bela from diasporic point of view.

Similarly, Michiko Kakutani refers "A writer of uncommon elegance and poise Lahiri chronicles her character's lives with both objectivity and compassion" (15). Lahiri, as a historian, describes the lives of her characters objectively. Donna Seaman writes:

Lahiri examines the psychological nuances of conviction, guilt, grief and parenthood delicately but firmly dissects the moral conundrums inherent in violent revolution. Renowned for her exquisite prose and penetrating insights, Lahiri attains new heights

of artistry flawless transparency immersive intimacy with character's and place in her novel, a magnificent universal and indelible work of literature. (31)

Jhumpa Lahiri narrates the stories of psychological nuances, guilt, grief and revolution in a clear-cut manner. She has got an artistry to handle the events, characters and situations in a better manner, which is regarded as a tool for literature.

Shirkey Quanm writes :

The novel is about a family, about the relationship between siblings, parents and children, spouse and how their nativity pulls them back to their roots through the feelings for loss and alienation in a foreign country. (4)

The novel describes the family relationship between the parents and child. It describes the story of two brothers and two female characters who are alienated and isolated in America. Elsa Dixler says :

The whole text basically revolves around the diasporic lives who migrate to United States of America for settlement. Lahiri writes about the Indians who have settled abroad and feel themselves exiled, as they are in their consciousness unable to cut off completely from their umbilical cords that still bind them in the existential crisis.(8)

The novelist Jhumpa Lahiri writes about the Indians who have flown to abroad and felt exiled because of existential crisis. They are isolated and alienated in America. The Renowned critic Tamara Strauss comments:

The story reflects the alienation and loneliness and subsequently dislocation that the emigrants face in a foreign land. The marriage bond, which is still considered sacrosanct in India, is gradually slithering down under the pressure of new needs under a different background. Dislocation is a kind of process, which can be characterized as a never-ending process. It is of two types: physical and cultural. It includes psychological and personal dislocation resulting from cultural denigration as well as voluntarily chosen status. (39)

The novel narrates the story of isolation, dislocation and marriage bond which the Indian emigrants have to face in a foreign land. We find two types of dislocation : physical and cultural in the text.

The study implies the theoretical concepts of hybridity, diaspora, migration, identity crisis as discussed by Salman Rushdie, Homi K. Bhabha, Bill Ashcraft, Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak etc.

The concept of culture is central to cultural studies. Cultural studies today is a simmering stew of the ideas, voices, and lives of people all over the world. It's the thing we use and the people talk about it's life and life only. Cultural studies concerns itself with the meaning and practices of everyday life. Cultural practices

comprise the ways people do particular thing (such as watching TV or eating out) in a given culture. In *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Hall writes:

Cultural studies is interested in mapping the particular constellation of identities and hegemonic articulations at various social sites; it often focuses on dynamic tensions between main stream norms and marginalized groups ,studying how cultural materials are creatively resignified to the non standard purposes of such resistant groups. typical counter hegemonic materials might include as punk 'zine, women's shop\ floor gossip , romance novels and rap poetry .a typical cultural studies research project might examine the circuits of production distribution and consumption through which such "discourses" pass (189).

Cultural studies is extremely holistic combining social theory, political theory, history philosophy, literary theory , media theory film / video studies, communication studies, political economy , museum studies and art history /criticism to study cultural phenomena in various societies. Thus cultural studies seeks to understand the ways in which meaning is generated, disseminated, and produced through various practices, beliefs, institutions and political, economic, or social structures within a given culture. Despite its multiplicity of references, the culture here in this thesis will denote to historically transmitted pattern of meaning that is codified in symbols, is expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitude towards life. Culture is the fabric of meaning in experience and guide their action. Such actions then take the forms of social structure and then two different

abstractions form the same phenomena. The word 'culture' was derived from the Latin word 'cultura' as a noun of process connected to growing crops, that is cultivation . Subsequently, the idea of cultivation was broadened to encompass the human mind of 'spirit' giving rise to the idea of the cultivated or cultured person. Matthew Arnold, the 19th century English writer writes:

Culture is then properly described not as having its origin in the love of perfection. It is a study of perfection. It moves by the force not merely or primarily at the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good. (9)

Culture has undergone a massive change by the twentieth century. In this regarding writes: "culture there means the whole way of life at a society, its beliefs, attitudes and temper as expressed in all kinds of structures, rituals and gestures, as well as in the traditionally defined forms of arts" (62). Thus, the term 'culture' itself is dissonant. So to draw a single central culture rendering individual experience in coherent and meaningful way is almost impossible.

Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. So, culture has become the most contested space with the emergence of postcolonial criticism. Postcolonial perspectives emerge within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south from the colonial testimony of third world countries and the discourses of minorities. They formulate their critical revisions around the issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and

ambivalent moments within the rationalizations of modernity. According to Arif Dirlik:

Unlike other 'post' marked words postcolonial claims as its special provenance the terrain that in an earlier day used to go by the name of third world. it is intended, the force, to achieve an authentic globalization of cultural discourses by the extension globally of the intellectual concerns and orientations originating at the central sites of Euro-American cultural criticism and by the introduction into the latter of voices and subjective from the margins of earlier political and ideological colonialism that now demand a hearing at those every sites at the center. (329)

The postcolonial perspective resists attempt as holistic forms of social explanation. It forces recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres of first world and third world. It insists that cultural and political identities are constructed through a process of alterity. The postcolonial critic represents the incommensurability of cultural values and priorities.

Culture is inextricably bound up with the notion of identity. Associating culture with identity Chris Baker writes: "Fuelled by political struggles as well as by philosophical and linguistic concerns, 'identity' emerged as the central theme of cultural studies during the 1990s." (215) In this sense culture is a source of identity, and rather a combative theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another. Far from being a placid realm, culture can even be a battle ground for identity and survival.

One of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in postcolonial theory, hybridity commonly refers to that creation of new Trans cultural forms within the contact zone. To culminate the scientific definition and the different forms of hybridity, Ashcroft explains, "In horticulture, the terms refers to a cross breeding or cross pollination to form a third, hybrid species, hybridization takes many fortes: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc.. linguistic examples include pidgins and creoles languages' (119). Hybridity had frequently been used in postcolonial discourse to mean simply cross cultural exchange. But the term has been widely criticized because it neglects the imbalance and inequality of the power relations.

Ashcroft further views that "It is the in-between' space that carries the burden and meaning of culture, and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important" (119). By stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts on both the colonized and the colonizer, it has been regarded as replicating assimilations policies by masking or 'whitewashing' cultural differences. Robert Young suggests that the contributions of colonial discourse analysis, in which concepts such as a hybridity, have been couched as:

Provides a significant framework for that other work by emphasizing that all perspectives on colonialism share and have to deal with a common discursive medium which was also that of colonialism itself. Colonial discourse analysis can therefore look at the wide variety of texts of colonialism as something more than more documentation or evidence. (qtd. in Ashcroft 120)

Young notes the influence of the term hybridity in imperial and colonial discourse. Hybridity thus became, particularly at the turn of the century, part of a colonialist discourse of racism. This is, however, the way in which some proponents of decolonization and anti-colonialism have interpreted its current uses in colonial discourse theory. The idea of hybridity also underlies other attempts to stress the mutuality of cultures in the colonial and postcolonial process. It also involves the idea of an equal exchange. Hybridity is politicized so that it embarrasses the subversion and challenges the division and separation. It is similar to Bakhtin's formulation of hybridity. "sets different points of view against each other in a conflictual structure, which returns a certain elemental, organic energy and open-endedness" (qtd. in Ashcroft 120).

This twentieth century definition of hybridity emphasizes the concerns within a field rather than with an analysis of discrete objects, and the production of such relations. Ashcroft illustrates the occurrence of hybridity in postcolonial societies. He further remarks:

Hybridity occurs in postcolonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or 'assimilate' to new social patterns. It may also occur in later periods when patterns of immigration from the imperial areas of influence continue to produce complex cultural palimpsests with the postcolonized world. (87)

It is probably true to say that no postcolonial form has been able to avoid the impact of the shifts shadowed upon the postcolonial world. The term hybridity

has been sometimes misinterpreted as indicating the traditions which all postcolonial forms inevitably subscribe. The degree to which these forms became hybridized varies greatly across practices and between cultures.

The issue of identity that is related to the quest for origins is central to cultural studies. Cultural studies draws heavily on those approaches to the problem of identity that question what may be called orthodox accounts of identity.

The question of identity may be called orthodox accounts of identity. Orthodoxy assumes that the self is something autonomous. Cultural studies draws on those approaches that hold the identity in response to something external and different from it. Talking about this issue of identity as quoted in *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*, Hall suggests that "the self is a product of particular interactions, in so far as the individual's capacities, attitudes and ways of behaving changes as the people around him or her change" (185).

Identity is the meaning of self-concept that one gives to oneself or the meaning in general that human being gives to them. In other words, it is the sum totality of values attached to individuals by an age and a community, in terms of their class, caste, group or culture and institution of any kind. With the change in values, or the intellectual developments in human history, man's concept of self has always changed. It has sometimes only been modified and at other times radically changed.

Identity, which has become the central area of concern in cultural studies during the 1990s, is the process of describing ourselves to each other. Cultural studies explores how we come to be the kinds of people we are; how we produced

as subjects; how we identify with descriptions of ourselves as male or female, black or white, young or old, Asians or Europeans. Thus, in this sense, identities, which are constituted or made, work as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation.

Identity is not transparent or unproblematic. For critics like Stuart Hall, identity is a production, which is never complete and is always in process and always constituted within representation. There are according to Hall at least two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. The first position defines cultural identity in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective one true self which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Hall writes, "Within the terms of this definition our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes, which provide us, as one people with stable unchanging and continuous frames of references and meaning" (111).

In the above quote, Hall says that a conception of cultural identity has played a critical role in all the postcolonial struggles that have so profoundly reshaped our world. In the postcolonial situation, identity is shot through and through with difference and yet is direly needed. Postcolonial reality demands multiple, no synchronous narratives in place of a single master story. Like deconstruction, post colonialist is involved in the contradiction of a double writing. On the one hand, it organized itself as if nationalism was desirable, but on the other, it questions the very authority of the Euro-centrism inherent in nationalism. like deconstruction, it also looks for other and different options.

Cultural identity, which follows along the many points of similarity, has critical points of deep and significant difference that constitute what we really are, or rather what we have become. Hall writes about this notion of cultural identity:

Cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything, which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. (112)

In this sense, identity is subject to continuous play of history, cultural and power. Far from being grounded in a mere recovery of the past, waiting to be found, identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past. It is only from this second position of the identity position ourselves within the narratives of the post. It is only from this second position of the identity proposed by Hall that we can properly understand the traumatic character of the colonial experience out of which are constituted the identities such as Indian ness, Caribbean's, African ness and Blackness. Hall takes identity as, "Merely constructed, but (as one which) depends upon some other, opens up the theoretical space for marginal or oppressed groups to challenge and re-negotiate the identities that have been forced upon them inn the process of domination" (187).

Here Hall views identity as not self-construction; rather it is a social construction that is based on social milieu. Ethnic identities, gay and lesbian identities and female identities are thus brought into the process of political change. The dominate or superior culture has the power to influence or dominate the other. So, not only in Said's orientalist sense, the orient is constructed as the other within the categories of knowledge of the west. The oriental discourse of the west has the power to make us see and experience ourselves as other.

Different critics have interpreted the novel from different perspectives but the issue of identity has not been explored in the text. Moreover, no any type of research has been conducted in this department on Lahiri's *The Lowland*. Thus, the topic is a newer one and remains unfulfilled by the previous critics and researchers.

The dissertation has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter is introduction in nature which deals with the novelist and the issues of identity crisis. Similarly the second chapter deals with theoretical methodology of identity crisis and textual analysis. Finally, the fourth chapter presents a brief conclusion of the whole thesis.

II. Diaspora in Lahiri's *The Lowland*

Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* narrates the story of middle class Bengali family in India and their straggle towards the Naxalite Maoist insurgency in India. Some people live in India and fight for the freedom where as others migrated to foreign country for better lives. The text basically moves around the diasporic characters such as Gauri, Subhash, Udayan and Bela, who live in united states of America. They are isolated and alienated because they are facing identity crisis and cultural hybridity unable to cut off themselves completely from their link with India.

The title of the novel *The Lowland* refers to a marshy stretch of land between two ponds in a Calcutta neighbourhood where two very close brothers grow up. In monsoon season, the marsh floods and the ponds combine; in summer, the floodwater evaporates. The two ponds symbolize the two brothers at times separate; at other times inseparable. The two brothers are inseparable. They look so much alike that people often mistake them for twins, but their personalities are very different. Udayan is charismatic and adventurous. Subhash is more cautious the solid, dependable type.

Culture is inextricably bound up with the notion of identity. Associating culture with identity Chris Baker writes: "Because of political struggles and philosophical and linguistic concerns, 'identity' emerged as the central theme of Cultural Studies during the 1990s" (215). In this sense, culture is a source of identity, and rather a combative theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another. Culture is regarded as a battle ground for identity.

About the marriage of Subhash and Gauri, the novel reads:

Becoming a wife ?

She holds the comb still for a moment, glancing at his reflection in the mirror, unable to see his face clearly through the mosquito netting. No.

Becoming my wife?

She gets up and lifts the netting, sitting on the edge of the bed. She stretches out beside him,

No, she says once more.

They've arrested Sinha. (229)

Although Subhash and Udayan are married according to the Bengali custom, Subhash asks Gauri whether she is happy after her marriage with him. She doesn't answer and distorts the matter. She describes that Sinha has been arrested.

Imagining about her life, Gauri utters :

At this point she's lived nearly half her life apart from him. Eighteen years in Rhode Island, fifteen on her own. She'll be thirty-four on her next birthday. She craves a different pace sometimes, an alternative to what her life has come to be. But she doesn't know what else she might do. (259)

Gauri has lived half of her life apart from Udayan she has been leaving in Rhode Island since last 15 years. At Present, she has become 34 years old. She does not know what she has to do to lead her further life.

Months after his stay in US, nothing but regular studies and nothing like India where festivals never fail to bring people, the memory of Indian life hits Udayan every now and then. On his off days, when his roommate Richard is not around, he finds himself a seat at bar, drinks and watches American football on television. His isolation and de-attachment from his native homeland can be clearly noticed from his aloofness. He says "No procession that he knew of, no public festivity. Apart from a crowd that had gathered for football game on campus, there was nothing to observe." (49)

The intimacy between Subhash and Holly depicts the similar situation as his nativity does not fail to reflect his inner attachment with his native culture of India. He cannot deny the fact that his existence is deep rooted in Indian culture. The novelist says:

He did not belong, but perhaps it did not matter. He wanted to tell her that he had been waiting, all his life to find Rhode Island. That it was here, in this minute but majestic corner of the world, that he could breathe. (50)

Subhash says that, he was interested to come to America which is regarded as the majestic corner of the world. The passage further reveals :

"And you? She asked. Will you return to Calcutta when you finish?

If I can find work there.

For she was right, it was assumed, by his family, by himself, that his life here was temporary,

What do you miss about it?

It's where I was made. (51)

Although Subhash lives in America, He cannot deny the Indian culture. When Holly asked her if he returns to Calcutta, after finishing his study in US, he told that he missed his family members to much.

Udayan dies in the revolution. A letter informing about his death compels Subhash to s brother's death and to be a part of the final rites. Everything has changed. Human encroachments and building of houses had almost occupied the Lowland, where he grew up playing with his brother Udayan. His first personal meeting with Gauri and the realization of how his parents had been ill treating her, saddened Subhash. In an attempt to persuade her parents, Subhash asks her to leave to US with him and so he does in the end. About their relationship, the novelist says :

Though their marriage had not been a solution, it had taken her away from Tollygunge. He had brought her to America and then, like an animal briefly observed, briefly caged, released her. He had protected her, he had attempted to love her. Every time she had to open a new jar of jam, she resorted to the trick he'd taught her, of banging the edge of the lid three or four times with a spoon, to break the seal. (242)

Although Gauri and Subhash had married after the death of Udhayan, They were away from their motherland. After their marriage, they had been living in America. Subhash had only protected her. Dr. Grant reavels about Gauri:

He remembered first learning that Udayan had married Gauri, and feeling replaced by her. He felt replaced now a second time. It had been impossible, the one occasion he had seen Dr. Grant in person, to get a sense of her. A door opened, and he stood up to shake a woman's hand. She was younger than he expected, short, with a mop of unruly brown hair. A pale steady face, sheer black tights, plump calves, flat leather shoes. Like a teenager dressed up in her mother's clothes, the jacket a little too big for her, a little long, though through the open door of her office he saw the progression of framed degrees on her wall. How could a woman with such a confused appearance help Bela. (217)

Dr. Grant could not know whose wife Gauri was exactly. After sometime, he learnt that the place of her husband had been replaced by Subhash. She had a pale face and flat leather shoes. Even Bela could not recognize her.

Identity is a crucial issue in the contemporary study of culture. Cultural studies explores how we come to be the kinds of people we are and how we identify with descriptions of ourselves as male or female, black and white. Perceived within the domain of cultural studies, identities are not concrete things which exist there, have no essential or universal qualities. Rather, they are discursive constructions, the product of discourses or regulated ways of speaking about the world. In other words, identities are constituted, made rather than found, by representations notably language.

Identity crisis is the result of the psychological loss of identity when one is distanced and alienated from the motherland and is forced to live in the unknown

location, the identity crisis occurs. The people living in diaspora are constantly making an attempt to identify themselves with their home through the help of religious scriptures, through the memories of the forsaken land as well as through the hope of restoration and unification with the home. The state of loss of identity is vulnerable because of the spatial and spiritual dislocation from the native land or home. The given lines from the text clearly explains Subhash's state of being dislocated in a foreign land :

In the end this was what had motivated him. And yet the motivation had done nothing to spare him. Each day, in spite of its growing routine, felt uncertain, improvisational. Here, in this place surrounded by sea, he was drifting far from his point of origin. Here detached from Udayan, he was ignorant of so many things.

(42)

In these lines, the feeling of dislocation of identity in America is stated by Subhash. He came to America because of his motivation. He feels himself far from his motherland. The story reflects the alienation and loneliness, and subsequently dislocation that the migrants face in a foreign land. The marriage bond, which is still considered sacrosanct in India, is gradually slithering down under the pressure of new needs under a different background.

The characters of Jhumpa Lahiri are mostly haunted by the echoes as such, "who are we?", "where do we belong?", and "what is our identity?" These are all of the problems of cultural identity in which Lahiri's characters get confused while identifying themselves very often arriving to the feelings of

dislocated and alienated. The problem with them begins with the confusion of cultural belonging. They find difficulty to get into other's culture yet their sense of - keeps them in- between in the new land, neither in the new world nor in the previous home. Such will be the tangled ties of their familial identity. Such a torn consciousness arrives to the state of sense of loss that there has been a loss of traditional home of fixity and physical centeredness of absolute values, a unified reality. Bela asks Subhash :

All night they stayed up. Until it grew light again, he attempted to explain.

I'm not your father.

Who are you, then?

Your stepfather. Your uncle. Both those things.

She refused to believe him. She thought something had happened to him, that he'd lost his mind, that perhaps he'd suffered a stroke.

She knelt in front of him on the sofa, gripping him by the shoulders, inches from his face. (266)

There was a debate between Subhash and Bela, the daughter of Udayan. When Subhash revealed that he was not her father, Bela asked who he was and Subhash said that he was her step father, her Uncle. As a result, she didn't believed him. About the identity of Gauri, novelist says :

Impractically she had remained a citizen of her birthplace.

She was still a green-card holder, renewing her Indian passport when it expired. But she had never returned to India. It meant standing in separate lines when she travelled, it meant extra

questions these days, finger prints when she re-entered the United States from abroad. But she was always welcomed back, ushered through. (235)

Although Gauri was a citizen of India, she also had lived in America with Subhash. She frequently renewed her Indian passport. She had to give her finger prints on airport while entering to America. About the different role of Gauri, the novel expresses :

It was not unlike the way tier role had changed at so many other points in the past. From wife to widow, from sister-in-law to wife, from mother to childless woman. With the exception of losing Udayan, she had actively chosen to take these steps. She had married Subhash, she had abandoned Bela. She had generated alternative versions of herself, she had insisted at brutal cost on these conversions. Layering her life only to strip it bare, only to be alone in the end. (240)

Gauri changes her role according to the story of the novel. In the beginning, she was the wife of Udayan and sister –in- law of Subash and childless woman. After her husband's death she became a widow, and after sometime, she married Subash according to the Bengali Custom. After that she became the mother of Bela.

Hybridity appears as a convenient category at 'the edge' or contact point of diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diaspora meets the host in the seen

of migration. Bhabha uses hybridity as an 'in-between' term, referring to a 'third space', and to ambivalence and mimicry especially in the context of what might, uneasily, be called the colonial cultural interface. In the colonial discourse, Bhabha refers hybridity as "a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the affects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledge enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority, its rule of recognition" (114). The displacement of people in large numbers from their homelands and their migration to other world regions has cultural as well as social implications, for the migrants themselves and for the host societies in which they arrived. For migrant populations, there is the transnational experience of displacement, the lived experience of hybridity. Although hybridity straddles both the colonial centre and the colonized space, Bhabha believes that it is a position in which the hybridizes do not belong clearly to the world either the colonizer or the colonized. So hybridity becomes a cultural mix and create a new form of identity.

After he realizes that life without vehicle is impossible in US, Subhash learns to drive and start hanging out with other friends in bars and restaurants. Despite his alienation, he starts to adapt to individual and carefree American ways of life. His desperation even entails to commit first physical relationship with a married woman. Had he stayed in India, Subhash would have never tangled himself in such relationship society would have hardly tolerate.

It all begins when he meets Holly, a Massachusetts-born French Canadian nurse. At the beginning, he hesitates to mix with Holly. There is 10 years of gap between their ages, and he did not imagine a married life with her. But over time, he comes close to her and makes sexual relationship with her. The

novel reads :

Inside the room he was able to forget about what his parents would think, and the consequences of what he was about to do. He forgot about everything other than the body of woman in the bed with him, guiding his fingers to the hollow of her throat, over the ridge of collarbones down towards the softer skin of her breasts.

(43)

At this point of his life, Subash has managed to break free from his traditional norms and values, by now he has already liberated himself from the culture he was brought from. The human process of adaptation and assimilation in the confused world of diaspora kicks off from this point. His assimilation with American culture seems to complete when he dreams of being Narasimhan, to have children like him from an American wife. He thinks of Holly would continue her extra marital affair with her. But within time, Holly stops this relationship after she realizes that she will be returning to husband sooner or later. The thought of their age difference and the reality that she is rearing a child with her husband compels her to break the ongoing relationship with Subash.

During his short relationship with Holly, he does equate his state of alienation with her singlehood. A separated mother of a child, Holly becomes a source of happiness; a bonding both shares and loves without any restrictions.

The novel reveals:

"He remembered the short wave radio that he and Udayan had put

together, drawing information from all over the world to another isolated place. He realizes that in some sense Holly was more alone than he was. Her isolation, without a husband, without neighbor around her, seemed severe."(45)

After having relationship with Holly in America, Subhash feels himself isolated and alienated but Holly is more alienated than him. She is isolated as she is without her husband and without her neighbour. About the Isolation of Subhash, the novel reveals "The date of his departure was approaching : soon enough he would on the plane again. There was no one there for him in Rhode Island. He was tired of being alone. (115)" Subhash was about to fly for America. He thought about his isolation in America as he would be alone in Rhode Island. The novelist says :

The only way to prevent it was to take Gauri away. It was all he could do to help her, the only alternative he could provide. And the only way to take her was to marry her. To take his brother's place, to raise his child, to come to love Gauri as Udayan had. To follow him in a way that felt perverse, that felt ordained. That felt both right and wrong. (115)

After the death of Udayan, Gauri became a widow. She had only alternative to marry Subash, the younger brother of Udayan. It was also Subash's duty to marry her, take his brother's place and raise his child. Both of them did not know what was right and what was wrong.

Gauri, on the other hand, revolts to transform herself and become

something different she had never thought of becoming. In an attempt to adapt to the American society, she transforms herself both physically and mentally. Back in India, she wore ordinary cloths. She rarely wore ornaments, to the most she prefers wearing wristwatch and a simple chain. After marriage, she gets enmeshed in the situation as her in-laws introduces to plenty family obligations. Besides cooking food and cleaning the house, she abides by the norms of traditional Indian culture. Even, at the time when she leaves to US, She bends down before her in-laws and takes the dust from their feet. The gesture signifies respect to the elders in Hindu culture and it's taken seriously when it comes to daughter and in-laws relationships. Her decision at home back in India was always opposed by family. When it comes to making major decisions, her opinions were never allowed to make way, keeping her at bay. However, she did not have to face any such condition when she started to live in US. No one bothered other's business and everyone was free to do that they like without any obstructions.

Hybridity, one of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in the postcolonial theory, commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. Hybridity, as used in horticulture, the very term refers to the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, 'hybrid' species. Hybridization takes many forms: linguistics, cultural, political, racial, etc. linguistic examples include pidgin and creole language. Hybridity has something to do with the traumatic colonial experience, since it is the 'ambivalent relationship' of the colonizer and the colonized. Since the colonial settlers were displaced from their own point of

origin, they felt the necessity of establishing new identity in an alien land. A binary relationship between the peoples of two cultures, races and languages emerged in a colonized society producing a hybrid or cross-cultural society. Recently, with the domain of cultural studies, term hybridity has been associated with the analysis of the relationship between colonizers and colonized. It stresses on their inter dependence. So, it claims that the so called hierarchical purity of culture is untenable.

Matter of fact, getting assimilated towards this new culture directed Gauri change from head to toe was the only path that would allow her to follow her dreams of studying philosophy without any external restrictions. Her phase of adaptation eventually entails after the cultural estrangement, she goes through after landing in US. Getting to know her foreign friends, who now were her only companions, and their novel lifestyle troubled her a lot. The way she, dressed, mostly shorts and fancy apparels that were revealing her body parts and one ever commented on how they looked. Her conversation with Subhash regarding her looks clearly reflected her mood for transformation. She blatantly says :

I have nothing of common with them. But watching the girl walk away, Gauri felt ungainly. She began to want to look like the other women she noticed on the campus, like a woman Udayan had never seen. (53)

A woman with strong will power, she does not hesitate to change the way she looked. In a single clip of scissor, she cuts her long hair short. She replaces her loose clothing with body tight tops and legging that comfortably revealed the contortion of her breast and deep cut hips that had never been exposed before.

When Subhash enquires about the reason behind her action, the novel reads

:

Why did you cut off your hair ?

I was tired of it.

And your clothes?

I was tired of those, too. (55)

Her sense of belongingness towards this alien country deepens further as trying to adapt in the American culture accelerates without any effort now. Her move to leave Subhash, the reason why she had made her escape from India, clearly showed her transformed self, a woman who had learn to adapt to her desires regardless of its harsh consequences on others. She even does not refrain from committing a sexual relation with her female student. A tale of woman gripped in a diasporic situation to escape her past and reeling in pressure to adapt to new circumstances, the transition in the life of Gauri explains :

And yet sometimes he felt threatened, convinced that it was

Udayan's inspiration that Udayan's influence was greater.

Gauri had left them, and by now Subhash trusted her to stay

away. But there were times Subhash believed that Udayan

would come back, claiming his place, claiming Bela from

the grave as his own. (225)

After the death of Udayan, it was the social norm that made Subhash and Gauri marry. But Subhas belived that Udayan would come back from his grave and claim his place. Although Bela is the daughter of Gauri and Udayan, Subhash takes the responsibility to raise her. He does so willingly

even though Gauri leaves both of them to follow her career as a lecturer of philosophy. Bela is born in Rhode Island. She has totally been bred up on foreign language, foreign learning and foreign cultural ethos. Her parents never compel her to follow her native cultural ethos. Since her seventh grade, she has been learning Spanish language. With her coming of teenage, she makes her own world. Even Subhash, hesitates to intrude in her private life. Bela adapts her American dressing code. She has a tattoo like an open cut off right above her ankle. She has bleached a section of her hair and hangs a loose hoop on her nose. The novel reveals :

Like Udayan, Bela is nowhere. Her name in the search engine leads to nothing. No university, no company, no social media site yields any information. Ganri finds no image, no trace of her. It is a conscious choice on Bela's part.(277)

Gauri says that Bela does not have inherited any quality from her motherland of West Bengal. She isn't like her father any more. As she lives in America, She is leading her life according to western culture. When Bela is 21, she gets a job on a farm as an agricultural apprentice. She visits her father only during special occasions like Christmas or in emergencies. When she leaves her father, she never tells him when she would return back again or where she would go. Her chosen path is a 'rootless path.' However, Subhash learns to accept such type of her unconventional, independent life. He never face to face intervenes into her Americanized life. However, internally, he always worries of her for her future marriage. Her assimilation with American cultural ethos results in a fatherless daughter in her rootless, homeless and nomad life.

When Subhash informs her details of her factual paternity, she refers her

father by his name Udayan , like other American children who address their parents with names only. She does not acknowledge her mother's existence. She used to say to her friends that her mother has already died. Overtime, she accepts, Drew, a vegetable seller as her husband. Drew also does not have any fixed roots in US. Bela has always chosen rootless destiny in the United States.

At the beginning Subhash shows some cultural negotiations in -between' spaces and finally settles in global mileau of US. Gauri never looks back at her `home' culture and totally assimilates with California's cosmopolitan cultures. The second generation in *The Lowland*, Bela chooses to lead the western lifestyle of American people. Through these notes of assimilation in *The Lowland*, Lahiri's novel may be a pathfinder and guide for those people who are about to embark into overseas to assimilate themselves.

Diaspora is the study of race and ethnicity to describe a range of cultural affiliations connection other groups who have migrated across national boundaries. R Radhakrishnan in this regard says:

The diaspora has created rich possibilities of understanding different histories. And these histories have taught us that identities, selves, traditions, and natures do change with travel and that we can achieve such changes in identity intentionally. (210)

In the diasporic context, ethnicity is often forced to take on the discourse of authenticity just to protect and maintain its space and history. To live in diaspora is to experience the trauma of exile, migration, displacement, rootlessness and the life in a minority group haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to

look back. Diasporas need to be grasped as deterritorialized imagined communities which conceive of themselves, despite their dispersal, as sharing a collective past and common destiny, and hence also a simultaneity in time. Diaspora is not infertile space to occupy in spite of that diasporan people feel to be torn apart between root culture and adopt culture and the ground to be shifting and ambiguous.

The revelation of diasporic notions starts with Subhash as he begins to experience the American's way of life and culture in US. Strange it was for Udayan when he encounters the American way of life and the culture so alien to his native Indian culture. At University campus, he meets Narashimhan, a professor of economics from Madras. Narasimhan has married Kate, an American woman. In his first impression, he wonders what he was thinking but later realizes such culture of marital affair is common in America.

Diaspora has become a significant term in the study of postcolonial world. Diaspora is an experience living in two or more worlds sharing different cultures. Diaspora is a Greek term which means to 'disperse', a dispersion of a people from the original homeland and originally homogeneous entity such as a language or culture. Diaspora is therefore, the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland. The concept is concerned with the ideas of travel, migration, scattering, displacement, homes and borders. Earlier the word 'diaspora' was used to define only the Jews who dispersed due to the unfavorable circumstances of invasion.

The revelation of diasporic notion starts with Subhash as he begins to experience the American in of life and culture in US. It was the moment when he

observes a middle aged couple, old enough to his grandparent, the thought of his singlehood strikes him hard. The novel reads "For the first time, he thought of his own marriage. For the first time, perhaps because he Ways felt in Rhode Island that some part of him was missing, he desired a companion.' (40)

He wonders what woman would his parents chose for him and when it would be. It worries him because getting marries meant going back to which he did not want at any cost. His ration was the aftermath of his own choice. Whole heartedly wanting to escape the heated rebellion in India, he had landed in USA to follow his PhD in Oceanography.

Gauri is another strong character in the novel. A female iconoclast, another diasporic character in the novel, Gauri chooses to survive than get tangled in the conventional norms of Indian culture. Educated yet confined in the norms of social restriction, widow turned Gauri chooses to escape her traditional burden even if it meant marrying Udayan, her brother-in-law. Udayan's temporary returned to India turns out to be a portal of escape for Gauri. Her in-laws wanted her to lead an ascetic life after the death of Udayan. They wanted her to wear white clothes, refrain from eating meat and only get involved in household chores. However, all she wanted was to lead an individual and independent life, the key of which Gauri finds with Udayan,

However, such characters who are warped in cultural dilemma or the world of in-betweenness strive for acculturation and assimilation, the ultimate process of adaptation on how migrant people survive to new culture and lifestyle. Both Udayan and Gauri, throughout the story the characters have undergone this diasporic attribute and they have survived.

Nostalgia remains another thematic core of the story as such a real picture of household activities in India is presented in the story. The reconnaissance of their past days in their native lands has deeper impact on both the major characters. Subhash, at this point in this life, has already given up to the modernity of American culture, a society where there are no restriction and boundaries for liberal thoughts and human relations.

The date August 15 reminds Subash of his younger days in India, the day when he and his brother along with his friends celebrated their national independence day. For it was a night the entire country claimed to remember, and the recollection that was his had always been saturated by his parent's retelling. Udayan had been just two and Subash closer to four. The novel tells "He remembers the unfamiliar touch of a doctor's hand on his forehead, the slight slaps on his arms, on the soles of his feet, the weight of the quilts when chills overtook them." (47) Going back to the past, Subhash shares how their parents were grief stricken by their fragile ill state. He says:

My parents were worried that it was typhoid. They were worried, for a few days, that we might die, the way another young boy in our neighbourhood recently had. Even now, when they talked about it, they sounded afraid. As if they're still waiting for our fevers to break. (48)

The passage reveals about the nostalgic attitude of Subhash. He remembers about the day when he was suffering from typhoid. His parents were worried about his health. They were afraid and waiting for his betterment. The novel further reads:

Subhash remembered an afternoon playing football with Udayan and a few of the other neighborhood boys, in the field on the other side of the lowland. He'd twisted his ankle in the middle of the game. He'd told Udayan to keep playing, that he'd manage on his own, but Udayan had insisted on accompanying him. (93)

Subhash remembers his childhood days while living in America. He with his brother Udayan and his friends used to play football. He got hurt in his uncle and Udayan accompanied him. The novel describes about the weather of Lowland :

Long ago, when they had first come to Tollygunge, the water had been clean. Subhash and Udayan had cooled off in the Ponds on the hot days. Poor people had bathed. After the rains the floodwater turned the lowland into pretty place filled with wading birds, clear enough to reflect moonlight. (179)

These lines describe about the environment of Tollygunge, in Calcutta of West Bengal where Udayan and Subhash lived. At that time the water was clean where people used to bath. The place was filled with birds and animals. While remembering about the death of Udayan, Gauri says :

She returned to it now. At last the sand gave way, and she was able to pry out what was buried, to raise it from its enclosure. For a moment she felt its dimensions, its heft in her hands. She felt the strain it sent through her body, before hurling it once and for all into the sea. (269)

She feels sad about the death of Udayan her husband who was killed during the Naxalite movement in West Bengal. His final ritual was performed.

Gauri remembers :

She remembers standing on a balcony in North Calcutta, talking to Udayan. The library at Presidency where he would come to find her sometimes, sitting at a table barricaded with books, a giant fan rustling the papers. He'd stand behind her, saying nothing, waiting for her to turn around, to sense that he was there. (276)

Gauri remembers her former days in North Calcutta. She had been acquainted with Udayan while studying in University level. Sometimes Udayan would come to meet her in the library of Presidency. The novelist further says :

The week before going to America to be with Subhash, she went back to Jadavpur, to the neighborhood of the brother and sister she'd tutored. She hired a rickshaw. She wore a printed sari now that she was married again, looking as she had when she'd been Udayan's wife. (294)

Before going to America, She went to her brother's house. She was in a printed sari. She looked like she was married again. She was married again and had been Udayan's wife. The novel *The Lowland* says :

Scarcely two years of her life, begun as a wife, concluded as a widow, an expectant mother. An accomplice in a crime.

It had seemed reasonable, what Udayan had asked of her. What

he'd told her : that they wanted a policeman out of the way.

Depending on one's interpretation, it had not even been a

lie. (320)

Two years after her married life, Gauri became a widow after the death of Udayan. After some time, she married with Subhash and gave birth to Bela who was a daughter of her former husband.

III. Sense of Loss in *The Lowland*

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* is based on the effects of globalization specially on the immigrants who go to the developed countries in search of better life and education. The novel explores the trauma of being displaced, sense of loneliness, cultural dilemma of those immigrants, who try to balance themselves between 'home' and 'abroad'.

After the study of diaspora, their constant struggle to establish themselves as a citizen of the new world, and dealing with the theme of quest for home, the conclusion can be derived that the immigrants can neither be the citizen of their native country nor can be the pure citizen of the adopted country, so they suffer from identity crisis.

The novel has the issue of globalization and immigration where immigrants face the diasporic feelings like sense of loss, displacement, cultural dilemma etc. It is not only the story of a particular person, rather it is the plight of the diaspora everywhere. The globalization has brought the instability of home and identity of the people. The impact of imperialism especially upon the third world is a threat to the identity of its inhabitants, because the increasing migration and the growing number of diaspora in a way or other results in the crisis of identity being away from home and from familiar surroundings. The impact of migration compels second generation immigrants to wonder with more confused identity and creates the dilemma between two cultures and traditions. The identity becomes vulnerable to the second generation immigrants. The effects of their parental indigenous lives, cultures and social structures on their lives give birth to the hybrid cultures.

Lahiri herself being the second generation immigrant, takes the reader through the life of Gauri, Shubash, Bela and Udayan a second generation male US immigrant from India. She delineates with insight and empathy how two generations of the Mittal family come to terms with their very different lives and how, despite resistance and alienation, manages to build a bridge to each others.

Bela is afflicted from birth with a name and identity neither Indian nor American. In the beginning she tries to avoid his parental traditional and cultural life based on Indian heritages. She folds herself into the easy and elegant life of Americans, but even here she, can find no peace. She understands that he cannot totally abandon his origin. So she slowly tries to make his identity as American – Indian by following her parents. But again she finds difficult to lead such life after her unsuccessful marriage with the boy having the different origin. Like many second generation immigrants, she can never quite find her place in the world. She tries to achieve the definite identity for having the haunting sense of dislocation, fragmentation and crisis on identity but her struggle and quest for identity have been successfully quenched after a complete freedom she feels within herself at the end.

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