

Tribhuban University

Gender Trauma in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

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Letter of Recommendation

Kalyani Sunuwar has completed her thesis entitled “Gender Trauma in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from July 2015 to November 2016. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Approval Letter

The thesis entitled “Gender Trakuma in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*”, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuban University by Kalyani Sunuwar has been approved by the undersigned members of research committee.

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Abstract

This research explores the gender trauma evoking the tormented state of the female character Gauri in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013). Taking idea from Urvashi Bhutalia's *The Other Side of Silence* and Kamala Bhasin's *Inception of Trauma and Gender Role*, the notion of gender trauma, this work analyzes the experiences of being widow in Indian-Bengali traditional society and also analyzes the traumatic situation of a woman in patriarchal society. The significance of this study is to show how the supreme ideology of male is deeply rooted and affects the psychology of female character and how she try to cope with the situation. Hence, the researcher concludes how Gauri succeeds in forgetting her traumatic sufferings through different creative works.

Gender Trauma in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

This research deals with the gender trauma endured by the female protagonist Gauri in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013). Throughout her struggles, Gauri goes through the long period of traumatic sufferings. Her husband Udayan's death in encounter in Naxalite Movement and her sufferings in patriarchal society causes long traumatic agonies. Gauri's expectation of being free from the clutch of her in-laws by marrying Subash does not come true because she is still traumatized by various subordinating practice like the harsh treatment by her in-laws, her husband's sudden death in encounter, the compulsion to marrying with her dead husband's brother. Her traumatic lacerations like anxiety attack, premonition of assault, nightmarish experiences are increased by her inability to adapt to the new foreign atmosphere and husband Subash's headstrong temperament as well as her impulsive disposition increase. As she got a golden chance to explore new life, she could not help going back to the flash in the solitary mood.

Gauri recollects her past and analyzes the present. She is still haunted by the death of her husband Udayan. In the initial phase of her adaptation, she constantly compares life in Calcutta and life in Rhode Island. She asks herself question how and why so many upheavals break out in her life. Sequentially, she ponders on her elopement with Udayan, her nonchalance at Udayan's radicalism, her marriage with Subash and her struggles in Rhode Island. The material intimacy and attachment between Subash and Gauri collapses completely. Though they live in the same apartment their relation seems to be purely formal and mechanical. In Rhode Island, America, Gauri chooses to go against the dictation and demand of her second husband, Subash. Her attempt to assert individual freedom makes her faithless to her

husband. How can she hope to maintain the loyalty and harmony of a true relation if she is haunted by nostalgia and enchancement?

The major thrust of this research is to examine how Gauri's traumatic agony is caused by patriarchal domination, and various other practices. This study highlights the fear, tensions, haunting memories and sorrowful situation of Gauri and her traumatic experiences her inability to understand the influence of foreign land and Subash's compromising stand cause traumatic agony. This research also tries to find out the real situation of an Indian Bengali women and how she is treated after the demise of her husband. Not only this, this research work will help the readers to get clarity on the issues which are related to the cause of gender trauma.

Gauri, lived her childhood with her grandparents and brother Manash in Calcutta. She faced the death of her parents at the early age of sixteen. After that she met Udayan in her college life and married with him in 1970. Udayan's parents were shocked and not happy with their marriage but they accepted because their one son was in America and they wanted their next son with them at home. Gauri was happy with Udayan. So, she was not worried about the daily chores because Udayan was supportive. But Udayan's involvement in Naxalite Movement and his sudden death changes Gauri's life. Gauri turned to be devastated, isolated and depressed and she is never happy after that. It causes long suffering and traumatic agony in her life time. Considering the consequences after Gauri's marriage with Udayan and his sudden death, Gauri for her in-laws was a burden. They wanted to overload but they could not as Gauri was carrying Udayan's child. Gauri's in-laws began to avoid her. They stop talking with her and considered her as responsible for Udayan's death. Beyond getting their sympathy and support she was forced to wear white sari, to eat vegetarian food,

living dejected life of widow and questioned by policeman every now. Because of all of this she was traumatized psychologically.

To get rid from the clutch of her in-laws, Gauri accepted the marriage proposal of Subash, her dead husband's brother and became ready to move to America.

Though she had a second chance to move on in her life but still she was haunted by her past. Gauri's increasing fascination to the American culture take the form of divided identity. No matter how strange the Rhode Island seems to her, Gauri begins to love it. Life in apartment seems to be pretty thrilling to her. It does not take her much time to get adapted to the aura of strangeness. In the initial phase of her adaptation, she constantly compares life in Calcutta and life in Rhode Island. As time passes by, she does not hesitate to acquire new things related to socio-cultural life in America.

Gauri gives birth to a daughter Bela but soon begins to feel suffocated in both marriage as well as her role of a mother. She still is haunted by the memories of her first husband, the real father of her daughter and even now, part of Gauri continued to expect some news from Udayan. She also resisted reading the letter arrived from Manash and still in her heart she was secretly waiting for news from Udayan so that she could acknowledge him of Bela. Her constant attachment with past made her ignore Bela and in guilt of hiding the truth from Bela that Subash is not her original father but a uncle or a step-father was hallucinating her more. Day by day she tried to engage herself with study. This work used to keep her away from her maternal duties which she intentionally wanted to. But Subash refuses saying that her priority is Bela, not study. Though he had told her to marry him that she could go on with her studies in America, now he told her priority should be Bela. This all made her faithless upon her husband and she chooses to go against the demand of her husband. She registered

for her PhD and tried to keep her more than more busy in her studies because she did not want to go to her bitter flashback and wished to recover herself.

When Subash and Bela moved to India, she decided to leave Rhode Island, her daughter, her husband and live a single life in California. She began to work as a lecturer in University of California. Even though she was trying to keep herself away from Bela, she used to search her on internet sites. Throughout her life Gauri paid the price for going after her dreams and at the end was left alone regretting her mistakes and still suffering by her bygone days. Though she chooses her freedom over her family, her wounds still could not recover.

Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the most popular diasporic writers who writes on the subjects of immigrants. She has closely examined the pathos and pride of Indian immigrants in America. Drawing on her own personal life experiences, she writes on various metropolitan cities of America. Cultural clash, social disharmony, the tussle between an individual and society are some of the burgeoning themes which Lahiri handles with tact and prudence. *The Lowland* has received with significant critical receptions since its publication in 2013. Many scholars have contributed their opinions regarding the issues of *The Lowland*. TK Pius makes the following remarks:

Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland*, traces the fate of tender fraternal bonds torn asunder by violent politics. Lahiri's delineation of the narrative events purports to show how the absence of loved one becomes covertly a parent haunting presence within the subconscious mind of the affected characters directing their overt actions to their own consequential ways of life through which they are goaded on. When their respective paths crisscross, Lahiri proves herself to be

adept at depicting the unhappiness at the core of intricate inter personal relations that materializes. (1)

Here, Pius appreciates literary talent of Lahari. According to him, Lahari is skillful in portraying various aspects of immigrants' perception and ground reality. Most of immigrants are unable to realize truth. There is a big difference between the dream they have and the reality they are exposed to. As an author, Lahari does not hesitate to give epic dimension to the narration she builds up.

Similarly, Corinna Lothar, a writer and critic of *The Washington Post*, finds the difference in ideology of two intimate brothers is central issue of the novel. She explains:

Central to the story is the close childhood relationship between Subash and his younger brother, Udayan, born in Tollygunge. The bond is broken when Udayan becomes enmeshed in the Naxalite revolutionary movement. (Naxalbari is a village in west Bengal that became famous for being the site of a left-wing peasant's uprising in 1967.) Although "sat beside Udayan [in political meetings], he felt invisible. He wasn't convinced that an imported ideology could solve India's problems. He wondered if it was a lack of courage, or of immigration, that prevented him from believing in it." (n.pag)

Corinna Lothar claims that the central progeny is the difference of ideology between two siblings and their partition. She argues that Subash could not believe and join Naxalite insurgency because of the lack of courage and on the other hand it is because of his believe that imported ideology could not solve India's problem, here Lothar's argument seems contradictory.

Another scholar, Raj Kumar Mishra traces the issue of acculturation in Lahari's *The Lowland*. He is of the opinion that immigration and diasporic settlement create the vast possibility of acculturation. Mishra produces the following judgmental stand:

Jhumpa Lahari in the novel *The Lowland* breathlessly recounts the diasporic lives. She, in the novel in fact made us accept the view that alienation-isolation as the necessary qualification for Diasporas. Her women manage the diasporic settings differently compared to that of their partners. Their acculturation looks slightly painful. All Diaspora's share and carry a common history of unfinished shifting and setting. In most of her writings, she seems to be obsessed with the questions of identity, alienation, and isolation. (2)

Mishra criticizes that immigrants often suffer causes even their children to feel a similar sense of alienation to isolation. Her characters' sole problem is to make a balance between internal and external mental conflicts that the host setting brewed up. They are partly successful in this attempt. They have to pass through the period of triumph and tragedy. But their spirit remains intact and undamaged.

Jennifer A. Marquadt raises the issue of cultural concern in Lahari's *The Lowland*. Hybrid aspect of culture is clearly manifested in the novel. Two different aspects of cultural binaries are dramatized in the novel. Marquadt gives her concise view in the following excerpt:

Jhumpa Lahari's work has long been subjected to cultural criticism first (articles examining hybrid abound) and literary criticism second, an issue she seems conscious of in her latest novel, *The Lowland*. The title itself refers to a literal hybrid object: the strip of land separating

two ponds- or the productive space between two binaries. Likewise, the opening scene positions two twin boys scaling a wall separating a rural town on the outskirts of Calcutta. (12)

Marquadt has taken this book as the issue of cultural transgression is manifested in the novel. As claimed by Marquadt, when two different aspects of cultural polarities stand face to face with each other, hybrid culture reveals the maximum potentiality too comes out. In the novel, the twins are punished for this transgression into the colonizer's territory. In fact, it would be easy to argue that the entire novel is about trespassing into the colonizer's territory and getting punished for it.

Moreover, Siddhartha Dev moves from familial to political issue in his analysis of the novel. In his "Sins of the Brothers: Jhumpa Lahari's *The Lowland*" published in The New York Times, he observes:

Lahari's prose hums along as efficiently as a well-tuned engine, the melancholy beauty of coastal New England; the surreal perceptions of an immigrant and the tension between generations, from the sense of abandonment and vulnerability felt by Bela to the terror of pretending, with its visions of failure and forbidding, faced by Subash and Gauri.
(n. pg.)

According to Dev, the novel talks about the tension between generations that the new generation in India is inclined towards the west. At the same time, he talks about the negative consequences of going abroad.

Likewise, Sujeet Rajan in an article on Jhumpa Lahari's novel, *The Lowland*, published in New York Times, writes:

The Lowland, steeped in the violent and outlawed Naxlite Movement of the 60s, revolves around the lives of brothers Subash and Udayan, in

Kolkata, and the enigmatic Gauri, the women destined to become the wife of both of them. First, to the charismatic revolutionary younger brother Udayan, whom she loves, and then when pregnant with his child, marries the sedate and moderate scholar Subash, who studies and lives in Rhode Island, after Udayan is shot by the police. His death, though, remains a mystery that hovers like a jack in the Naxalite threatens to startle the reader at any turn of the page throughout the book.(2)

Rajan criticizes that this novel revolves around to the effect of Naxalite Insurgency, in two brothers. They are facing problems after insurgency, ups and downs in their lives.

Many scholars have contributed their scholarship regarding the issues of the Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*. Some of the critics consider it as a political novel which carries the theme of tragedy and Naxalite insurgence. Others have pointed out the pain and sufferings of the immigrants in America. But none of them have mentioned the issue of gender trauma. On the basis of pertinent textual evidences, the researcher wants to show that *The Lowland* foregrounds the issue of gender trauma. Gender trauma is a kind of condition of people having exposure to two different patriarchal ideologies are in as state of perpetual non-belongings. Gauri's husband Udayan's death in encounter, her in-laws unfavorable behavior upon her, her compulsion to marry with dead husband's elder brother Subash, the plight and struggles of Subash and Gauri to find out who they are in the foreign land show the traumatized Gauri due to her divided identity, and her compulsion of living with Subash for the sake of her child.

The researcher makes use of the theoretical concept of gender trauma to analyze the text. The word trauma derived from the Greek word, which indicates the

‘server wound’ or ‘injury’ that creates long lasting damage to the psychological development of a person often leading neurosis. The issue of trauma comes in the literature with the fragmented memory, which appears as the form of the writing psychological categories of the stories and the novel. In gender studies, we get complete information about human development, sexual differences, origin of discrimination and oppression on women and like that. Both gender and feminism are closely connected.

The text *The Other Side of Silence* by Urvashi Bhutalia, furnishes the essential ideas of gender trauma. She says “to begin with, many people have deeply submerged memories they would rather forget. Some have a lot to hide and to loss by publicly recounting what happened to them” (42). In a moment of catastrophe tens of thousands of “women were abducted at the time, and forcibly married into households of men belonging to another faith. Some women were later returned in a rather poorly- conceived fashion through an agreement between two governments” (21). But many converted and then proceeded to conceal their former identities. The prospect of digging up this past is not one that people jump into willingly.

Like Bhutaila, Kamala Bhasin explains “women encountered several men who had been involved in various kinds of atrocities, including some who had murdered sisters, wives, and mothers in the interest of protecting them from violence by the other side” (87). The violence against women is in actuality unforgiveable. Similarly, Ritu Menon says that women are prone to various “harsh forces like sexual molestation, harassment, exclusion and subjugation. Men who sexually abuse children are also virtually immune from prosecution” (75). Prosecution of abusive men is difficult or impossible without corroborating evidence.

Moreover, Kali Tal's insight into the traumatization of women in the patriarchal society serves as the main methodological basis. Women are to various harsh forces like sexual molestation, harassment, exposure to these hazards and pitfalls traumatize them. In *A World of The Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma*, Tal extensively concentrates on this aspect of women's traumatization. Men who sexually abuse children are also virtually immune from prosecution. A significant part of the psychological establishment believes that young female children fantasize sexual interactions with their fathers or stepfathers. Such fantasies are part of normal development. Prosecution of abusive men is difficult or impossible without corroborating evidences. The motives of "wives or girlfriends who accuse their partners of sexually abusing their children are often questioned by civil courts, and their charges are looked upon with suspicion" (Kali Tal 87). Incest is so rarely reported, and prosecution is so rarely effective. Pornography obsessively focuses on "rape as a pleasurable experience for the male rapist, and often casts female children in the role of the seducers" (76). These views of Kali Tal are keeps to the constitution of the methodological basis of this thesis.

This research assumes that the issue of gender trauma is noticeable in Lahiri's *The Lowland*. It highlights upon the Naxlite movement in India and its impact upon different characters especially, the hardships, trouble, pathos, misery and hurdles faced by Gauri after the demise of her husband Udayan in encounter. It also focuses on the sufferings of Gauri in male supremacy society and her struggles and dislocation in Rhode Island, America. The researcher mainly focuses on traumatic agonies of the female character Gauri's painful description and traumatic effects of various traumatic situations which arise in patriarchal society. Lahiri, being as an Indian-American writer, this text mainly focuses on the sufferings of females in

Indian society as well as identity crisis of immigrants in a foreign land. She represents Gauri as an example of traumatic sufferings, feelings and the real condition of all Indian females facing by the harsh torture and authorities of the Indian patriarchal society. She even highlights the immigrant's sufferings and the real situation in the foreign land.

The miserable and directionless life of Gauri, Lahiri enables the researcher to make uses of the theory of the gender trauma. When a subversion woman is compelled to assume traditional gender role and forced to make retreat from new modernist role, conflict and crisis arises. In their search for new experiences and freedom, women have to encounter several factors which drag their progressive pace and push them ahead on the way to transformation. As a result, they are disturbed and disappointed by the conflicting attitude.

The victims of the trauma demonstrate classic symptoms. They are miserably haunted by depressive inclination, identity problem, guilt and shame. Their existences are insecure and exposed to unpredictable forces. Urvashi Bhutalia defines trauma in the following way:

Trauma refers to both the experiences of being harmed by an external agent as well as the response to that experience. Youth who experience trauma may also experience emotional harm or psychic trauma which, if left untreated, can have a significant impact. Trauma typically exists along a spectrum which ranges from global, when an event may affect many individuals to individuals, when the trauma impacts only that individual. (13)

The depthless trauma is characterized by repeated traumatic events occurring over a period of time. Simple trauma usually refers to a single event, such as a rape or a

shooting. But gender trauma is caused by other forces which are quite noticeable in society. Simple trauma is more likely to lead to post traumatic stress disorder. Post-traumatic stress disorder refers to the sporadic outburst of hidden traumatic trace. Complex trauma leads to a deeper and more pervasive set of changes. Those changes involve emotional deregulation, distorted thinking, and behavioral dysfunction. It also consists of patterns of dysfunctional interpersonal relationships.

Prior this incident, when Udayan is killed in Naxalite Movement, his family considers Gauri as responsible for his death. Gauri is treated harshly which reflects the traumatization of female facing due to patriarchal society. The given lines show the traumatization effect of Gauri facing by the male supremacy society: “After the mourning period ended, her in-laws began to eat fish and meat again, but not Gauri. She was given white saris and to wear in place of coloured ones, so that she resembled the other widows in the family. Women three times her age”(130). After the death of Udayan, the family members treated her as unknown person. She recalls the traumatic events of Udayan’s death in encounter and the treatment upon her by his family which hinders her psychic. She memorizes the traumatic agonies given by her in-laws. After the funeral process of Udayan, Gauri’s in-laws began to show the indifference behavior upon her. “The treatment of Gauri was deliberate, intended to drive her out (138)”, shows that after the death of Udayan, his parents wanted Gauri out of their house. They treated her like animal. They did not allow her to eat meat, fish and was compelled to wear white saris. All these activities affect her mind badly and leads on traumatic situation is her early ages.

Kamla Bhasin suggests for the modified and upgraded version of all the traditional means to handle the traumatic injuries of women. Bhasin marks out those new challenges towards women have cropped up dramatically in the contemporary

society. Although old troubles and setbacks have disappeared, new challenges have equally appeared threatening women to relinquish their hard earned freedom and privilege. Bhasin maintains that even the derogatory remarks and the horror of sexual abuse inflict injury which can take the form of trauma. The following lines represent Bhasin's view:

Sensitivity to ant-woman issue is a necessary part of the landscape for providing effective therapeutic support to women abuse survivors with post-traumatic stress. Many traditional psychiatrics and psychological categories and approaches are not gender sensitive and do not account for or address the way in which abuse and trauma factor into women's lives and shape women's mental health issues. Many trauma survivors who have sought mental health services have been given multiple diagnoses such as bipolar disorder; schizophrenia, paranoid type, and border line personality disorder. (61)

Kamla Bhasin does not directly hold the rigid of social structure and harsh social practices as the responsible parts for the beginning of traumatic injury. Bhasin is in favor of taking proper cautionary measures to check the outbreak of dreadful symptoms of gender trauma. Moreover, Bhasin asserts that any psychic torture and trauma undergone by women reveals its harmful effects in their bodies. By nature women are not inclined to share their inner most agony. Except repression they do not have other means to cope with such traumatic jolt. That is why it is necessary to heal their traumatic laceration in early phase.

Before the death of Udayan, Gauri seems as a member of Udayan's family. Udayan's family could not go against Gauri though they did not like her because Udayan was the companion to support Gauri in any faces. But later after the death of

Udayan, they began to show the cruel behavior upon her which is deeply rooted in her psychology. The given lines clearly show the cruelty behavior of Udayan's family upon Gauri.

It was Gauri who served tea. But she never joined them. After helping his mother with the morning chores she kept her own room on the second floor of the house. He noticed that his parents did not talk to her; that they scarcely acknowledged her presence when she comes into view (113)".

After Udayan passes away Gauri is isolated. Her in-laws stop talking to her because they considered her responsible for Udayan's death but in fact she was not. Her in-laws don't like her appearance in front of them and even they don't want to talk to her. Though, she does all household works, she isolated herself in her room and never joined with their companionship. Her loneliness makes her remember her past traumatic events and she could not escape out from the terrible memories.

Furthermore, when Udayan was killed, his elder brother, Subash was in Rhode Island, America. He returns to mourn the younger brother Udayan's death and consoles his family. There he notices how his parents treated Gauri and the policemen's unnecessary inquiry upon her. "An intelligent girl. This is what he told us after he married you. And yet, incapable of understanding simple things" shows their treatment upon Gauri was insulting (131). Their treatment of Gauri was deliberate, intended to drive her out. Subash thought of her situation remaining with parents and living by their rules. On seeing discrimination meted out to Gauri and the police and the investigation teams still harassing her with questions concerning her dead husband and his friends, he decides to give her a way to escape. He thought of her becoming a mother. Going against his parents Subash decides to help Gauri to get free from the

clutch of his parents, and marries with Gauri and takes her to America. But for Gauri it was just a compulsion and compromise to marry her dead husband's brother to get rid from the harsh treatment of her in-laws. For her, he was nothing because she is mourning for Udayan, carrying his child. The given sentences represents how she is traumatized by sudden death of her husband even she got second marriage with Subash.

She felt as if she contained a ghost, as Udayan was. The child was a version of him in that it was both present and absent. Both within her and remote (she regarded it with a sort of disbelief, just as she still did not really believe that Udayan was gone, missing now not only from Calcutta but from every part of the earth she'd just flown across.

She is traumatized psychologically that the death of Udayan was unbelievable. "She regarded it just as she still did not really believe that Udayan was gone . . . (149).

Gauri gets her unborn child as the version of Udayan. On the one hand, in the absence of Udayan, inside her, she considered it as the ghost of Udayan. Though she got married with Subash to get rid from the traumatic death of Udayan but she could not. She has the unborn child as emblem of their (Udayan and Gauri) love which makes her remember Udayan time and again. She replaces her location Calcutta to forget her traumatic memory of Udayan's death. She could not escape out from it; she has cuddle with Udayan's baby which was the main cause of remembrance of Udayan every moment. Wherever she goes; the shadow of her dead husband is with her. This leads her towards the traumatic sufferings more.

According to Helen Moglen, gender trauma is a literary device or a theory that is concerned in the mental illness which is caused by the opposite sex and gender discrimination. Moglen's overall theory is that the 'bimodel narrative form'. Helen

Moglen is theorization of gender trauma that who is repressed or dominated and subdued by the males in the novel. Helen Moglen, in her book *The Trauma of Gender*, writes how the women are historically subordinated till now. She states:

No longer understand to be a variant of the males, as it had been since the work of Galen in the second century, a woman's body was perceived as a fundamentally different from a man's. Nowhere was that essentialized difference, more remarkable than in the redefined areas of her sexual and reproductive functioning. Although female sexuality has been thought throughout the renaissance not only to have mirrored man's but to have been more intense than his more subject to the self-discipline of a female character that was naturally mature and morally developed(19).

Helen Moglen claims that women's reproductive role makes them biologically and naturally predisposed to rearing children and taking care of the domestic sphere. In case of women's subordination, biology, instead of gender, is used to explain social difference between men and women.

The novel *The Lowland* extremely expresses the traumatic figure of females whereas Gauri is suffered mentally in the patriarchal norms and values. Before Subash married to Gauri, he said to her that she can continue her study in Rhode Island. If she married to him he will support her in every situation of her life. But when Gauri gives birth to a daughter, Bela, her dream could not come true. Soon she feels suffocated because she continues to be haunted by the memories of her first husband, the real father of her daughter. Following lines quoted from *The Lowland* to justify this point:

She asked Subash if they could hire somebody, to give her time to take a survey of German philosophy that met twice a week. Though Bela was five now, in kindergarten, she still attended school for only half the day. Gauri said that this was a reasonable solution, given that Subash was busy, given that they knew no one else who could help. He told her no. not for the money it would cost but on principal, not vanity to pay a stranger to care for Bela.

Its common here, he said you're with here, Gauri. Though he had encouraged her to visit the library in her spare time, to attend lectures now and again, she realized that he didn't consider this her work. Though he'd told her, when he asked her to marry him that she could go on with her studies in America. Now he told her that her priority should be Bela. (194)

Above mentioned lines clearly sketch the outlines of traumatic environment which indicates how Gauri has gone under traumatic sufferings due to her repressed life and husband's treatment upon her. When Bela turns five, Gauri is desperate to get out, finding time herself after years of almost continuously living at home and taking care of her baby. But Subash refuses, telling her that on principal, he did not want Bela to be cared by babysitters while Gauri joined classes. At the beginning he has inspired her to visit library and attended the lecture. Before married he had also promised her to give a chance to continue her study in Rhode Island. But now he asked her to give a priority to daughter than her career which makes Gauri unhappy and she takes it as a betrayal of what he had said when he had asked her to marry with him. The decision of Subash makes her totally heartbroken and leads her towards a suffocated life.

Patriarchal insensitivity is one of the most important factor for women's agony which is doubtless traumatic in nature. The same is the case of Gauri. Subash knows that Gauri is passing through many upheavals in her life. She is badly affected by her first husband's death in encounter and her reason to marry him. Similarly it was difficult for Gauri to adjust in a new place with new husband. She needs care, affection and love. Subash should have known that the task on the top of the priority is his family. But Subash becomes always busy in his work and he does not try to understand what Gauri wanted to do. Gauri wanted to forget her past memories. But while Subash has gone to work and Bela at kindergarten she becomes alone and she has nothing to do.

Day by day she passes through with her bad memories of life. She wanted to keep herself busy but Subash refused. "Subash and Gauri shared a bed at night; they had a child in common. Almost five years ago they had begun their journey as husband and wife, but he was still waiting to arrive somewhere with her" (190), shows that though they had shared same bed since five years there is nothing like a relationship that would be in a husband wife, neither they have love between them nor they are separated. It clarifies that their marriage was just an agreement for them. It is also a huge reason which leads Gauri towards traumatic sufferings because this distance between Subash and Gauri makes her to go her flashback memories. She could not forget her first husband. Lahari further explains that "she slept with him because it had become more of an effort not to. She wanted to terminate the expectation she'd to begun to sense him. Also to extinguish Udayan's ghost. To smoother what haunted her (190)."

Similarly, one of the leading trauma theorists Cathy Caurth's famous ideas of latency argues that trauma as it first takes place in uncertain but that the survivor's

uncertainty is not a simple amnesia. According to her, the person who experiences unbearable pain the psychological defense of dissolution allows life to go on but at a greater cost. Her ideas reinforce the fact that trauma cannot be forgotten. It always comes in the form of memory. Giving a general definition of trauma in her essay entitled “*Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma and The possibility of History*” Caurth notes:

Trauma describes over whelming experiences of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations of the soldier faced with an massive death around him, for example, who suffer this sight in a numbed state only to relieve it later on in repeated nightmares is a central and recurring images of trauma in our century. (181)

This definition of Caurth presents the catastrophic events that evoke the trauma in a person who are suffered from horror and terror that events are frequently repeated in the human mind. As Caurth argues that the effects of Lahiri in *The Lowland*, Gauri is a girl who lost her husband in a terrible encounter in Naxalite movement and married with her dead husband’s elder brother. But their marital life becomes failed. Her desires and aspirations are crushed before fulfilling her dreams. Her husband’s death in encounter is unforgettable event which always haunted to Gauri and she is traumatized character. As she wanted to tell the truth of Udayan to Bela but Subash denied her telling the truth. She wants Bela to know the truth of Udayan but because of Subash she could not tell her and that makes her suffer more and also made her rude with her daughter. She began to focus on her study because she wanted to forget her painful past and present unsatisfactory life so she also abandoned her daughter.

Here the readers are forced to judge Gauri for the cruelty of her act, if not her intentions. The truth of Udayan that she wanted to tell Bela becomes unsuccessful because of Subash which makes her more suffers and leads towards traumatization.

I want to tell her about Udayan.

Subash stared at her. She saw fear in his eyes. She remembered when Udayan was hidden behind the water hyacinth, and the gun was at her throat. She realized the weapon was in her hands now. Everything that mattered to him, she could take away.

It's the truth, she continued.

He shook his head. His expression had changed. He stood up to face her.

She deserves to know Subash.

She is too young. She is only six.

When then?

When she is ready. Now it would only do more harm than good (205).

The above cited part clearly shows that Gauri wanted to tell the bitter truth to Bela that Subash is not her real father rather he is her uncle or step-father. But Subash stops from telling the truth. Gauri realizes that Subash does not want to make Bela to know the truth because he fears of losing her. At the same time this incident makes Gauri to remember her dead husband, Udayan and the incidents before his encounter. She could not forget the past nor accept the present. The fear in the eyes of Subash reflects the fear that used to be in the eyes of Udayan which recalls the moment spends with Udayan. Gauri could not escape from the memory of her first husband though she wants to forget. Subash takes a promise from Gauri not to tell the truth. "She promised, but she felt the weight of it, sinking down inside her. It was the

weight of maintaining the illusion that he was Bela's father" (206), this bitter truth which she is hiding from her daughter makes her guilty and suffers from her inner psychology. Here, somehow Subash seems selfish that he does not want to lose Bela whom he loves very much though he makes Gauri accept his saying that if Bela knows the truth about her original father, she would be hinder psychologically. Lahiri further explains, "She realized it was the only thing he continued to need from her" (206). So, she could not say the reality to Bela thinking that she will be psychologically tortured by that event which she is acting out.

According to Kali Tal, "Even after an abuse experiences ends, experiences of violations and fear are often present for women throughout their lives, by virtue of living in a society in which violence against women and children is persuasive" (175). Judith Herman, in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, describes "coercive control as a major cause of complex post-traumatic stress. She asserts that prolonged, repeated trauma typically occurs in families and in other relationships in which the women is unable to flee because she is under the control of the perpetrator" (176). Total escape from the traumatizing experiences is a Herculean task for women.

In this novel, Gauri is gradually afflicted with traumatic jolt due to her husband indifference. After Gauri marries to Subash, her dream does not come true. They had never a good husband- wife relationship between them. Their relation was just a compromise. At the beginning, Subash used to show some sympathy upon Gauri but gradually the care and love towards Gauri becomes less. Subash stops talking her for a long day and questioned upon her motherhood, too. Even her daughter does not like to talk to her. Here, we can say that Gauri is totally isolated because there was no body except Subash and Bela whom she is quite close. She was haunted by anxiety, psychic disorder and purposelessness. As a result Gauri becomes

more frustrated and heart broken and that made her go through traumatic state. The following lines show; how Subash behaves with a masculine pride though he is an intellectual and well educated.

At first he had said nothing to reproach her. For a week his only punishment was in refusing to speak, refusing to acknowledge her, just as her in-laws had ignored her after Udayan was killed. Living with her in the apartment as if she were invisible, as if only Bela were there, his fury contained. The day he broke his silence he said,
My mother was right. You don't deserve to be a parent.

The privilege was wasted on you. (211)

Subash represents patriarchy and Gauri is the prey to the patriarchy. It is Gauri who lost her husband. She is married again with Subash in the hope that her further life would be better than the contemporary situation thinking to come out of traumatic situation of her husband's death as well as cruel behavior of the patriarchal society towards widows. But it does not come true. Her dreams become failure. The above mentions lines clarify that Subash is all guided by patriarchal society.

The patriarchal thinking is still in rooted in the mind of Subash. "Unexpectedly coming home early one day, Subash finds Bela abandoned by her mother in the house" (211), Subash punishes her by not speaking to her for a week and when he talks to her, he questioned over her motherhood saying that "my mother was right. You don't deserve to be a parent". Here, Subash's behavior towards Gauri shows the glimpse of patriarchal society. Subash is considered as just only the frame of patriarchal society representing the whole male living in that doggy patriarchal society which shows the thought cannot be changed. Subash considered Gauri as an irresponsible mother and even punishes her in a small mistake. He took that nurturing

and caring the children is only responsibility of a mother/woman. A rhetorical question arises is nurturing and caring the child is only a responsibility of a mother/woman? Isn't a male has duty towards their child?

The final chasm of their marriage takes place when all this happens between them. As they share same flat, same bed, they used to live as strangers. But for the sake of their daughter both Gauri and Subash continue to live under the same roof. "While continuing to live in the same house he turned away from her..." (211), shows that whether Gauri is with him or not it does not affect him. He does not care about her. He does not show love and affection towards her. "He no longer wanted to touch her" (211), makes us know that their relation is no longer good. Their marital life got failed.

In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*, LaCapra's notion of working through of trauma is clearly seen through the character Gauri. The socio-cultural events like; backbiting by in-laws, neighbors as being widow, mistreatment by in-laws upon her, no nutritious food during the period of Udayan's death ceremony, unsuccessful marital life with Subash also makes her traumatized psychologically as well as physically. Ultimately she decided to give up all these traumatic events and live independent free life. She get success in working through of trauma, some act it out. Dominick LaCapra, in his book, *Writing History, Working Trauma* talks about trauma and its symptomatic aftermath that creates problems in historical representation and understanding. He also talks about the crucial role of post-traumatic testimonies. He gives his idea about the theoretical and historical elucidation of problems related to trauma and makes his readers clear about the importance of working through by giving many examples of historical events. He further argues:

Since working-through is itself an articulatory practice that counteracts the compulsive effects of past-traumatic symptoms without pretending to achieve full mastery or total conscious dissolution of past traumas, it is vitally bound up with social and political action in the present, including the attempt to create intuitional conditions and norms that further desirable forms of social bonding, the viable binding of anxiety, and the integration of affect and knowledge, including empathic or compassionate relations to others.(15)

Dominick LaCapra is trying to emphasize that 'working through' is an articulatory practice or the traumatic situation. It counteracts for the resolution of the past trauma. If, somebody is traumatic by the some events s/he through the medium of working through tries to lessen the past trauma. Working through is related with social and political action at the present. If somebody is traumatized, s/he through the medium of social and political action tries to console the past events. In 'working through' the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem to be able to distinguish between past, present and future. In this sense 'working through, includes institutional condition and norms that forms social bonding; the bonding of anxiety and the integration of affect and knowledge. It includes emphatic or compassionate relations to others. Overall, working through is an effective manner or practice that is used in order to reduce the psychological condition or overcome the traumatic condition of each individual.

Finally she decides to come out of suffocated marital life and planned to begin the new journey of life with pursue her future studies, travelling to Boston for a Doctoral programme it. Later, when Subash and Bela visit to India in his father's death, Gauri has finally left the apartment where they were living and chooses her

freedom. She has accepted a job teaching at a University in California. It was not unlike the way her 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 of remarriage with Subash. But ultimately her remarriage became failure, decided to leave Subash, and abandoned Bela. She 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.

This research highlights the notion of acting out and working through of trauma propounded by Dominick LaCapra. For him a sufferer acts out of trauma the victims unable to forget his past memories; experiences are repeated as I were fully exacted and indulge in through victims' life. Though the victim exit in present as s/he is fully in the past where the event held. For him, in working through trauma, the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem to be able to distinguish between past, present and future and had to move forward and keep faith with it. In the text, Lahiri presents the individual trauma of the female character Gauri to represent the traumatic situations facing by all Bengali women in patriarchal society. Lahiri presents Gauri is somehow acting out when she still unable to forget her past traumatic situation. She recalls the death of Udayan in Naxtite movement when she sees the news about Naxitile movement. The fear in the eyes of Subash also flashes the same fear of Udayan from which she wants to come out of it. Somehow here Gauri seems to be acting out but there are instances where she is able to work through trauma.

Here in the text Gauri is able to go against the male supremacy society and got remarriage with Subash. At the beginning, the new married life with Subash seems

successful but gradually it turns out to be ruin. The conjugal life failed which she had expected. Here, Subash shows the masculine behavior that the looking after the child is responsibility of only the female when she is unable to give more attention to Bela. Slowly, Subash gives up giving love and affection to Gauri. Though Gauri was innerly tortured by such mistreatment of Subash, a saddening moment of being widow, the backbiting of members of in-laws home and societies, she fought with bravery to begin new life with Subash. But her effort of remarriage flops like the effort flops like a just-caught fish inside her. The life between them was worst; they compromise to live together for the sake of their children Bela. Finally she decided to come out of all the illusion bounded by the patriarchal society about being married, looking after in-laws, giving birth to baby, sacrificing whole life being bondage of husband. She came out of it, left her husband, abandoned her daughter Bela and started new journey. She completed her incomplete study and began the career of lecture in University. Though she is traumatized, she finally succeeds to come out of it.

It can be thus said that the character Gauri become the victim of gender bias male supremacy society. She gets success working through trauma while in some cases the character just acts out at past. The writer presents Gauri as a Bengali women as a bold, energetic, rebellious woman who chooses independent free life fighting against the traditional conservative thought and rituals to encourage all the women to raise the voice against the domination as well the change for new society.

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