

I. Introduction to *The Lowland* and Subaltern Theory

Gauri is the central female character of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* (2013). Jhumpa Lahiri is a Pulitzer prize winner. She is the first Indo-American novelist for winning this prize. That might be the cause her novel *The Lowland* is set both in Calcutta, India and Rhode Island of United States. Gauri is the product of Indian patriarchal culture. Despite her vigorous attempt to defy the male chauvinism in India, she is made the victim of female stereotypes. She is an educated figure but her education does not turn out to be fruitful to change the centuries long traditional patriarchal mind set. Gauri is a complex character yet beautiful of a modern times with gender inequality. Indian and American setting has been made her a subaltern figure without any voice to assert, her complete identity.

The novel is about the tragic situation faced by two brothers; Subhash and Udayan. Both of them are inspirable. They go to school together, listen radios and learn more codes. When they leave home for the university studies, they are changed. Udayan starts to follow Naxalite movement whereas Subhash is more interested for advanced education and prepares for his graduate studies to Rhode Island, United States. On the other hand, Gauri is more interested in philosophy. Gauri, who meets Udayan through her brother Manash, is at first apathetic to him. As the time goes on they talk and share ideas. Udayan proves his love for Gauri. Shortly after beginning his third year, Subhash learns from his parents in a letter that Udayan has been killed.

When Gauri became a widow, after the death of Udayan, Subash learnt what happened to his brother in the lowland outside their family's home. He came back to India hoping to pick up the pieces of a shattered family, and to heal the wounds Udayan left behind including those scared in the heart of his brother's wife Gauri, who was treated disdainfully. Gauri was pregnant with Udayan's child. Subhash asked

Guari to marry him to come and live with him in Rhode Island for the sake of unborn child. Gauri accepted. She has to keep physical relation with Subhash, who tries to convince her to have another child from him for the sake of Bela, Gauri's first child. Gauri was not convinced fully. After some years Gauri left Subhash and Bela and went to California. Then Subash and Gauri were separated physically. In later years Bela knew the reality of her parents and Subhash requested Gauri to give divorce paper through email. Finally, Gauri walked out of Subhash, Bela and her daughter Meghana. Final chapter of the novel revisits the day Udayan was killed. He is no longer an angel but a murder. Despite so, he feels regret, feeling that if he had met Gauri a little sooner, he would have saved himself from such a life. While dying, Udayan thinks fondly of Guari.

Here, Gauri is a subaltern woman who cannot defy all the patriarchal stereotypes. Male dominated Indian society "is male centered and controlled and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains; familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic" (Abrams and Harpham 122). Women in general are dominated by the males. The condition of women in post-colonial countries like India is really pathetic. They are doubly suppressed. On the one hand, the women are subjugated by western mindset, which was taught during and aftermath of colonization. On the other hand, the Indian women like Gauri are dominated by traditional elitists of the society. Though Subhash seems very fond of Gauri, his attempt to save her was an apt example of Indian elitism when he says, "their (parents') treatment of Gauri was deliberate, intended to drive her out. He thought of her becoming a mother, only to lose control of the child. He thought of the child being raised in a joyless house" (15). Gauri's husband Udayan Mitra is caught up in the banned Naxalite movement and eventually is killed by the

police in stark view of his parents and wife. This earth shattering event permanently scars in his young wife Gauri. Subhash, the elder brother returns to India to mourn the younger brother's death. On seeing the discrimination meted out to Gauri and the police and investigation agencies still harassing her with questions concerning her dead husband and his comrades in crime. After seeing such brutality, Subhash decides to give her a means to escape.

Subhash marries and takes her to America against his parents' wishes. He does not see any other means but marriage to save Gauri from the impending danger as he narrates:

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 away 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. The date of his departure was approaching; soon enough he would be on the plane again. There was no one there for him in Rhode Island. He was tired of being alone. (115)

In this statement it is clear that Subhash does not marry her for Gauri's sake only but for himself too. In order to find partner in Rhode Island, Subhash marries her. The noteworthy point is that Subhash thinks about only the society and relatives who are severely treating her but he does not think about Gauri and her desires. She is compelled to follow Subhash because she is "infused with masculine assumptions, interests, and ways of reasoning" (Abrams and Harpham 123). Here, the interest of Subhash is primary whereas the desire of Gauri is secondary. It is the traditional cultural construct. Here Abrams and Harpham are worthy to quote again as they say,

"By this cultural process, the masculine in our culture has come to be widely identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative, the feminine , by systematic opposition to such traits, has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional" (122). As this statement clarifies, the female are passive recipient of patriarchy.

Gauri is bound to follow Subhash to Rhode Island. She gives birth to a daughter Bela, but soon begins to feel suffocated in both marriage as well as in her role as a mother. She continues to be haunted by the memories of her first husband, the real father of her daughter Bela and "Even now, part of Gauri continued to expect some news from Udayan. For him to acknowledge Bela and the family they might have been. At the very least to acknowledge that their lives, aware of him, unaware of him, had gone on" (154).

When Bela turns five, Gauri is desperate to get out, to find time for herself after years of almost continuously staying at home and looking after the baby. But Subhash refuses saying that on principle, he did not want his daughter to be looked after by baby-sitters while Gauri joined classes at the university. Here Subhash's rejection is motivated by his patriarchal mind set. He wants to confine Gauri within the four walls of the house. He wants "to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political and social power" (Tyson 86). It is nothing more than male domination upon her. Tyson further clarifies "That is patriarchy treats women, whatever their role like objects, women exist, according to patriarchy to be used without consideration of their own perspectives, feelings or opinions" (91). Gauri's opinions are disregarded by Subhash. She begins to resent Subash for this. She takes it as a betrayal of what he has said

when he had asked her to marry him. Guari is not satisfied with him for his controlling nature:

Though he had encouraged her to visit the library in her sphere time, to attended lectures now and again, she realized that he did not consider this important work. Though he'd told her when he asked her to marry him that she could go on with her studies in America, how he told her that her priority should be Bella. She is not your child, she wanted to say. To remind him of the truth. (162)

As this narrative claims Subhash is not following his commitment. This resentment of Guari continues to grow with Subhash finally having to make peace and allowing her to attend classes. Gauri begins to cherish the time spent away from her daughter and her husband. She feels 'depleted' doing the same relentless chores daily. Caught up in an unpretending surge of emotions, she also begins to grudge Subash's absence when he is away at work. "She resented him for going away for two or three days, to attend oceanography conferences or to conduct research at sea. Due to no fault of his own, when he did appear, sometimes she was barely able to stand the sight of him" (163).

In *Towards a New Psychology of Women* Jean Baker Miller recognizes that women are seen as nurturers and caregivers and that their "selves were almost totally determined by what the dominant culture believed it needed from women" (17).

Thus, the so called feminine virtues are cherished in women like Gauri. If they want to break free, they are branded as failed mothers and wives.

Gauri continues to feel alienated in her own home. She escapes into her world of classes at the university and library. She locks herself in her own room and becomes busy in course work. She is actually aware of her shortcomings as both of wife and a mother, but chooses to continue on this path. Women have also

"traditionally built a sense of self-worth on activities that they can manage to define as taking care of and giving to others" (Miller 53). So, Guari feels inadequate when she is unable to 'feel' like a mother ought to be. While she is grateful to Subhash for taking her away from Tollygunage, she resents him for what he is not Udayan. Everyone can see that Guari has already seen so much in life that she is unable to believe in the institutions of marriage or motherland any more.

The final chasm in the marriage between Gauri and Subhash takes place when unexpectedly coming home early one day, Subhash finds Bela abandoned by her mother. Subhash punished her by not speaking to her for a week. "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" (75). But, for the sake of their daughter both Gauri and Subhash continue to live under the same roof. She continues to pursue her further studies travelling to Boston for a Doctoral programme. On his father's death Subhash visits Calcutta with his daughter Bela. On returning to America, they find that Gauri has finally broken free. She has accepted a job, teaching at a university. All she leaves behind is a letter in Bengali, leaving Bela to Subhash. On the face of it, the father and the daughter have succeeded in picking up the pieces and moving on but the fissures run deep. Bela's grades suffer and she is seen wandering alone in different parts of the area. Although Subhash resists it at first, he is forced by the school counselor to take Bela to visit a psychologist. Gauri's sudden departure has left a permanent scar on the twelve years old Bela.

Gauri, the central character in the novel, refuses to toe the line and fit into the framework of the role of the traditional Indian-Bengali immigrant wife. She rebels against the traditional gender roles thrust upon her. Although it is difficult to empathize with a mother who abandons her child and husband. Especially when her

husband is the very person who gives her a means of escape from the life of a widow and an unwanted daughter-in-law. Gauri can be seen as an iconoclast, who shatters the preconceived notions of what she should and must do. The cutting of her hair and her saris are the first signs of this rebellion. "In one corner of the follow, all of her saris and her petticoats and blouses, were lying in ribbons and scraps of various shapes and sizes, as if an animal had shredded the fabric with its teeth and teeth and claws. He opened her drawers and saw they were empty. She had destroyed everything" (141). This appears at the surface level, to be a deliberate rebellion and selfish attitude on Gauri's part but it won't be a hard to state that it can also be attributed to the overt conflict and pain that results in such an overt display of her seething emotions of pain, separation in her childhood that amounts to abandoning in some way, then separation of her husband, his brutal killing, negation by her in-laws- that her second husband failed to solve and gradually creates a place for himself by replacing the past memories with love and affection, rendering, emotional succor. Gauri was not an uneducated woman. She was a graduate of philosophy from Calcutta's prestigious Presidency College.

Gauri's constant companies are her books and some of the first few conversations she has with Udayan are about books and philosophy. Breaking traditonal norms, she elopes with Udayan and marries him. None of her family members are informed about the wedding. "She didn't care what her aunts and uncles, her sisters, would think of what she was doing" (287). Gauri spent most of her childhood with her maternal grandparents, away from her parents. Her sisters were much older to her, almost belonging to another generation and she felt close only to her brother Manash, who was also sent to be raised by the grandparents. Although Gauri never resented her parents for sending her away and actually appropriated them

for the autonomy they had inadvertently given to her. She never received her mother's love and nurturance, the way a child does. Her abandoning of her own daughter for very different reasons, therefore is less surprising. It seems she did not know a mother's tender love and did not know how to reciprocate it either. Throughout the novel, we see Guari haunted by the memories of her first love, her first husband.

When Udyan is being rounded up by the police, before he is shot, he manages to look at her face. "He knew that she was not hero to her. He had lied to her and used her. And now he was going to abandon her. Or was it she abandoning him? For she looked at him as she'd never looked before. It was a look of disillusion. A revision of everything they'd once shared" (71). Thus, Gauri's final abandonment of her family comes as no surprise. She has herself seen abandonment both at the hands of her parents and then at the hands of her husbands. Betrayed by the man she genuinely loved, betrayed into being a party to a policeman's murder. She loses faith in ties and the bounds of love. The study shows that by engaging her feminine self, she does not find peace or self fulfillment. She is definitely a successful professional but ends up as a lonely individual. She is made alienated because of the social treatment of the time.

The social treatment of Gauri as a subjugated figure is no more than the colonial mindset in India. The postcolonial feminists are not ready to accept that the women in the postcolonial societies are akin to west. They say that women in formerly colonized countries like India are doubly colonized. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin are worthy to quote here:

These critics (Third World Feminists) argue that colonialism operated very differently for women and for men, and the 'double colonization' that resulted when women were subject both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and specific discrimination as women need to be

taken into account in any analysis of colonial oppression. Every post-independence practices of anti-colonial nationalism are not free from this kind of gender bias, and contractions of the traditional or pre-colonial are often heavily inflected by a contemporary masculinity bias that falsely represents 'native' women as quietist and subordinate.

(104)

As this statement claims, the women are doubly dominated. The masculine mind sets are same in postcolonial societies too as in the pre-colonial societies. The impact of colonization is severe upon the female but the traditional patriarchal stereotypes are still functioning.

This novel *The Lowland* is more than an explosive canvas of a revolution against class and community. It is also an intimate narration of what happens when pitiless hindsight sets in when specially in old age, with nothing in particular to accomplish and he/she has all the time in the world to go down the memory lane and deeply troubled by the crisis caused in no solace to the troubled soul. Yet the introspection is worthy of it. Jhumpa Lahiri, the Pulitzer prize winner opts once again to portray the young Indian immigrants both, first, second and third generation from the Indian traditional, conservative Kolkata of 1960s troubled by Naxalbury movement to the technically advanced super rational society of USA to the present day.

In the lifetime of Gauri, there are many roles to do; daughter, wife, daughter-in-law and finally a mother. Each role has its merits and demerits. While analyzing Guari's situation, she played no role well as the traditional society demands. She did not have any close relation with them. As a daughter she always preferred to live detached from the family. In the form of wife too, she fails to reciprocate Subhash's

love. Barring a few flexing physical attractions of young age, there's no love. Such kind of ideal love and strong bond is lacking between Gauri and Subhash. Gauri is completely failed, in fact deplorable when it comes to the role of a mother. The sanctity of motherhood failed to rouse the natural basic instincts in her. Even animals are driven by tender feelings and take good care of their progeny. For instant, Gauri abandoned Bela at a very early age depriving her of motherly love and protection, proving her mother-in-law's prophecy that Gauri is "too withdrawn, too aloof to be a mother" (72).

The mother is an epitome of love, patience, tolerance and sacrifice and the impact of mother's love or molding the child's personality is immense and indispensable. if a man is half circle, woman is a full circle. Father's role ends with superb contribution and financial support but mother's role knows no limits. She is the mainstay, a pillar of support, nucleus of the family. What went amiss with those instincts in Gauri is a big question. The sense of establishing her own identity might be overpowering her to the extent of neglecting her own blood. It also appears as through she was not able to come out of Udayan's memories. "Even now part of Gauri continued to expect some news from Udyan for him to acknowledge Bela, and the family they might have been. At the least to acknowledge that their lives, aware of him, unaware of him had gone out" (286). She is either involved in her own or too offended by his betrayal.

The hold of the past, in the present and the dead on the living gripped her and rendered her helpless. It appears as if she were seeking revenge against Udyan for betrayal of her trust. That might be the cause Gauri clamors for space to ponder her own problems and difficulties, to fulfill her dreams. From the beginning Gauri was "a person most at ease with books" (59) but not with familiar bonds and commitments,

which would rather suffocate her. The important point to be analyzed is those aspects, which made Guari as such. Towards the end of the novel Gauri regrets her insensitive behavior but the damage done is irreparable and she can't be forgiven for the injustice she had done to both father and daughter. Behind her failure to find the right path of life is the society itself. Gauri remains too faithful while living in India, her own home country. Her behavior is completely changed when she goes to Rhode Island of USA.

Casting the light on the same issue Bill Ashcroft and others further say:

A sense of displacement, of the lack of 'fit' between language and place may be experienced by both those who possess English as a mother tongue and those who speak it as a second language. In both cases, the sense of dislocation from a historical 'homeland' and that created by the dissonance between language, the experience of 'displacement' generates a creative tension within the language. Place is thus the concomitant of difference, the continual reminder of the separation, and yet of the hybrid interpenetration of the colonizer and colonized.

(123)

As this statement asserts displacement also generates tension within an individual, who is migrated from home country to target country. Gauri was brought up in India and she was faithful for Udayan while living in India. The behavioral change is seen when she goes to America. Along with her journey, her behavior is also changed. That is because of her sense of dislocation too. Her migration has been the sole cause of that changeability in her nature.

Migration has been an important aspect of present socio-cultural sphere.

"Hence, migrants have become emblematic figures of the present cultural space, where globalization and postcolonial resistance cohabit, generating a surge of

descriptive terms in order to identity our modernity at large" (Appadurai 10). Such as transnational, transculturation, hybridity realization and diaspora, alongside the technological and electronic transformations, human migrations are part of modern cultural dynamics, where tension between local and global tends to be seen. Indeed the present multifaceted and fluid society is constantly affected by travelling and accommodating to foreign cultures. In depicting human dispersal, unsuccessful, assimilations, frictions, and conflicts in migration, literature reflects a liquid modernity where circulation and transplantation of migrant subjects erode the myth of cultural unity. In such a disjuncture Gauri falls apart. She neither can return back to Indian culture nor can be fully assimilated in new American culture. That's why Gauri's behavior is changed due to the sense of dislocation.

Lahiri's novel *The Lowland*, we find Gauri the central character, as complex one. Yet beautiful portrayal of a modern woman with problems that are relevant in the modern times where gender inequality as well as displacement and dislocation due to globalization are prevalent phenomena. Symbolically named, because of the Indian mythical connection of Guari being the synonym for the Goddess of power, Gauri becomes a powerful character in whom we see three kinds of struggle of self, gender and nation, which get highlighted as she tries to escape stereotypes. She identifies with neither and is in a constant quest to find her own self which she feels is suppressed. Her escapist nature never seems to blend in, which is in fact her desire.

The creation of Gauri as a rebellious subaltern figure is one of the high points of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*. The entire process of subjectivization analyzes not only the diasporic problem of assimilation and alienation but also analyzes the struggle of a woman in a patriarchal world and also of a character who is trying to shed her identity as a wallflower and come in the forefront. Here, Guari appears to be

a well rounded character, who struggles to create an identity for herself in three different fronts-personal, gender and nation. Lahiri applauds Gauri's inner strength, which enables her to break free from the accepted norms that would have otherwise caged her and subjugated her. This is very apparent from the name she chooses for this character Guair. Gauri is a Sanskrit word meaning fair. Thus in naming this character fair, Lahiri is may be latently commenting on the fact that Guari's actions were indeed fair or rather acceptable. Gauri is also the other manifestations of the Hindu goddesses Durga and Kali, who are worshipped as the manifestations of Shakti, power, strength or force.

Thus, if this aspect is considered, it then becomes inevitable that a character with such a name will have in her a strength or force that will free her from the Shackles that were trying her down. So, when it does eventually happen, obstacles she does try and eventually succeeds in breaking free, the character at Guari becomes more believable, more real and in effect more emblematic of being the embodiment of power. She can be then viewed as someone who was trying to prepare a foothold for herself in a world that was making her existence constrained, that was trying to cage her and stop her from flowering.

Gauri was born in the 1960s, had gained adulthood and thrived in the 1980s. That date marked the backdrop of the Naxalite movement of Bengal. At that time there was a social pressure for women to conform to traditional roles of being home makers or models of attractiveness and this was espoused by media representations of women as conforming to that. From the beginning of itself, we see that Guari despite being brought up to conform the societal norms, was different. "She was compelling without being pretty. Nothing like the demure girls that his mother used to point out to Udayan and Subhash at wedding, when they were in college" (Lahiri 46). Gauri was

not exceptionally beautiful or she was not the epitome of feminine beauty. She was intelligent and desired to pursue higher studies. This itself was what that had attracted Udayan to her. This was the very factor that was alienating her from the rest of the society. In fact for Guari this alienation happens once more when she treads foreign shores and tries to carve for herself in the Indian Diaspora abroad. Darwin in his *On the Origin of Species* spoke of a natural selection whereby the fittest survive in the constant struggle for existence. I feel this holds true for most migrants who leave their native land behind and tread new shores in the new land, their existence becomes one of a struggle to assimilate, to acculturate where assimilation and acculturation render them fit enough to survive, or not. In *The Lowland* Guari's life becomes exemplary of this notion.

Gauri's subjectivization rendered her helpless in Calcutta of the 1980s, where as a widowed young pregnant girl, she had to follow the mandate her mother-in-law set whatever be it wearing the traditional white sari, muted clothing or even turning to be a vegetarian. Jacques Rancier defines the process of subjectivization as "the formation of one that is not a self but is the relation of a self to another (60). Her identity throughout is seen in relation to another relative of hers. Whether be it as Manash's sister, Udayan's wife, daughter-in-law of the Mitra family, wife of Subhash or Bela's mother- she had to act accordingly. She had no options so to say. It was within these very boundaries that her life had to be lead.

When Subhash came into her life like a breath of fresh air, and took her away to America she realized that she could actively make her own choices, imaginable- back home. She eventually forsakes her family to create her career. She sheds off her sari for tights and tunic and she cuts off her hair. She also gets involved with a woman. She lives alone and makes both professional and personal choices. The contrast

between the lack of options at her homeland and those at present in America, is a metaphysical space, the uncharacterized territory. Despite, Guari repents for her wrong doings in her old age, she regrets what she had done during her youth. Finally she falls victim of the same patriarchal society.

Despite her attempt to cross the personal, gender and national territory, Gauri fails to achieve what she wanted to get. Her failure, the rejection from her own child, divorce from Subhash make her a pathetic character in the end of the novel. Her own individual attempt to make her own identity has been dispersed and she has regretted. She had committed blunders during her youth-hood in the final section of the novel. So, Gauri as a subaltern figure finally falls into the tragic situation. Guari has been an example of subaltern figure, who tries to cross the boundary of the traditional stereotypical role but fails to reach to the destination. So, Gauri comes under the pathetic condition of alienation and dislocation with the loss of everything in life despite having an attempt to defy it.

The present research project entitled "Gauri as a subaltern female character in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* casts the light on the formation of Gauri as a subaltern female figure, who shatters in the end because of her own cause. The first part of this dissertation deals with the "Introduction to *The Lowland* and Subaltern Theory". Both novel and subaltern study are analyzed in this section. The second unit is the textual analysis with the application of subaltern theory entitled as "Gauri as a subaltern Female Character in Lahiri's *The Lowland*." The textual evidences are filtered through the subaltern study. The final chapter "Failure of subaltern figure's attempt to get own identity" restate the main points dealt in the previous chapters as the conclusion of this research project.

II. Garui as a Subaltern Female Character in Lahiri's *The Lowland*

This research project tries to analyze the main female character Gauri a subaltern figure attempting to make an identity in India and America, in Jhumpa Lahiri's second novel *The Lowland*. Lahiri's Gauri is a complex creation in the novel. She travels from India to America in order to pursue her dream. Gauri becomes successful to reach to the USA but loses everything in life except material prosperity. She moves from Indian traditional culture to American multicultural society. She is an educated female from Third world origin and moves to the world of material prosperity. Gauri is a diasporic figure in Rhode Island, USA. Gauri loses her first husband and almost all the familial ties in India. She loses her second husband and daughter also when she migrates to Rhode Island of USA. Gauri as a subaltern character loses everything in life despite her attempt to defy the traditional societal norms and values.

Gauri is named after the Hindu mythical connection. According to Hindu myth Gauri symbolically refers to the goddess of power with the same vain Gauri is also a powerful character in the novel *The Lowland* although she fails to be successful. For that she regrets in the ending part of the novel. Gauri's failure of achieving the destination lies in her migration from India to America too. Her diasporic situation and displacement might be another cause of Gauri's failure to be adjusted with familial ties. In the USA, Gauri finds herself nowhere. Neither she can be fully American nor can return back to Indian culture. Gauri, a traditional woman from Indian culture, gets modern education and goes to super-rational society of America, where she finds herself in the in-between-space from where she can make nowhere,

Along with aforementioned causes, the roles of her in-laws are also no less important to make Gauri as an alienated and dispersal figure. The role of her socio-

political scenario is another factor to make Gauri as a subaltern figure. The novel also tells the story of studious Subhash and his mercurial younger brother Udayan raised in Calcutta in the years immediately following Indian independence. Udayan, caught up in the Naxalite revolutions of the 1960s and the communist movement that took over Calcutta, tries to persuade his cautious and bookish brother Subhash that the cause of history outweighs immediate familial obligations. Subhash's resistance sets up the tension that underscores subsequent events:

When if the police came to the house? What if you get arrested? What would Ma and Baba think? There's more to life than what they think. What's happened to you, Udayan? They're the people who raised you, who continue to feed and clothe you. You'd amount to nothing, if it weren't for them. (57)

The personal and the political, the nuclear family and the national family versions of these well-worn conflicts shape the novel, framed by the ideologies of Mao and Che as well as the Philosophies of Marx and Marcuse. And while Lahiri makes Udayan's political fervor magnetic, drawing us into his impassioned conviction that a "war will bring the revolution, revolution will stop the war" (58). Lahiri nevertheless fails to convey the desperate scale of poverty in post-independence India, the unmet needs of millions for whom communism promised liberation and dignity. As a result, the early pages of the novel oscillate between stunning, intimate family scenes and impersonal textbook descriptions of historical change, and awkward collision of the writer's realistic impulse.

Subhash leaves India to pursue a Ph.D. in Rhode Island, USA. Udayan remains in Calcutta, growing increasingly militant until he is captured and executed in front of his parents and his pregnant wife, Gauri. When Subhash returns for Udayan's

death ceremony, he marries Gauri in order to protect his brother's legacy. Promising her a new beginning in Rhode Island, "If she went with him to America [...] it would all cease to matter" (113). Gauri builds a tentative, melancholy life with her new life with her new husband, but following the birth of Udayan's baby- a daughter named Bela who grows up believing that Subhash is her father. Gauri abruptly abandons child and spouse to become a professor of Philosophy in California.

Despite the horror of Gauri's betrayal, Subhash and Bela develop a tender, convincing bond that is pushed to its utmost limits when Bela, by the novel's end a grownup woman, pregnant with a child of her own, learns that Udayan was her biological father. Among the novel's concluding reconciliations and remarriages, Lahiri reveals that Gauri has for decades been haunted by her inadvertent complicity in a 1960s political assassination in Calcutta. Gauri's inescapable awareness of "the loss that would never be replaced" (112) dwarfs the revolutionary accomplishments of the past, suggesting that the private world of the family endures wounds more painfully than the public narrative history can describe.

The memory of 1960s assassination haunts Gauri too much. On the other hand her new place in Rhode Island is no less strange for her. After few years of Bela's birth Gauri decides to leave Subhash and Bela and writes a letter to him. That very letter also discloses the uncertainty of Gauri's situation as she writes:

My address is uncertain, but you can reach me care of the university. I will not ask anything else of you: the money they offer will be enough. You are no doubt furious with me. I will understand if you do not wish to communicate. I hope that in time my absence will make things easier, not harder, for you and for Bela. I think it will. Good luck

Subhash and good bye. In exchange for all you have done for me. I
leave Bela to you. (189)

This ending part of the latter clarifies Gauri's departure from home in Rhode Island because she can't get solace there too. Gauri's departure from home leaving her husband and daughter shows her restlessness. Gauri is a woman whose cruelty is quietly domestic. She is bad wife and a bad mother. It is Udayan, by contrast, who has all the makings of the perfect modern villain: the revolutionary, who spins out of control, in-thrall to ever more optimistic ideology, ready to compromise intimates and kills innocents. But Lahiri seems to suggest that Gauri is if anything the more troubling menace. She may be a less explosive example of immigrant dislocation, but her rootless loneliness more than Udayan's radical zeal is the scariest brand of extremism in this novel.

Of all Lahiri's Characters, Gauri is the best at getting away-actually rescaling the kind of desolation that others merely endure. She does not take transition nostalgically between her various homes in Calcutta and providence and San Francisco, she makes terrifyingly clean breaks. Gauri does not assimilate with anything. She does not gravitate to the Indian American diaspora either and she certainly never calls home to Calcutta. Her rugged individualism is so complete it is chilling. She was a "Subaltern (who) is complicated by the imperialist project" (Spivak 13) when she is in America. Lahiri grants Gauri a fresh chapter of life in California, at first seemingly unencumbered by connections to her old life. But zooming out just a little, it's obvious that Gauri is the linchpin of every story that Lahiri tells in this novel. She is the only link between Subhash and his non-quite daughter. And she is the essential catalyst in the climatic story, the secret from the past that Lahiri reveals in her final pages.

On the other hand, Gauri's struggle, even if it was heartless and unsuitable for a mother and wife to leave the house, can be taken as a struggle for identity. Whatever the unfriendly activities Gauri shows are the outcome of her loss of identity because identity is associated with desire i.e. desire for recognition, association and protection over time and space. Identities are constructed under circumstances which are not chosen deliberately. In other words, identities are perceived within the domain of cultural circumstances and are not things which exist, they have not essential or universal qualities. They are constructed rather than found by representation. In Elieen Balibar's words, "identity is never a peaceful acquisition; it is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by another identity or by an erasing of identities" (186).

The question of identity for diaspora like Gauri in the novel, is not a doubt, a question of the self. Cultural factors are very important in the quest for the identity and the self, especially for immigrants. Gauri is an immigrant and is in quest of her own identity. As Jola Skulj notes in her "Comparative Literature and cultural identity" and says, "the problem of cultural identity involves the question of the self and of culture. In other words this means reflecting on the essence of culture itself and the implication there is a reasonable motive of self questioning" (2). The 'self' reflects upon an autonomous subject or the subjectivity of every human being as Gauri does not depend on anybody else for the formation of her own identity. That might be the cause, she leaves her own daughter and husband. Jola Skulj is again worthy to quote as she says:

Understanding of identity was a result of the romantic interpretation of the self as the inner reality of a given subject. It revealed in itself the concept of the subject as an absolute and autonomous being and denied

any decisive or obligatory references outside itself. It denied transcendence outside oneself and identified itself only with its immanent reality or with its own immanent validity. (2)

The existence of the 'self' inevitably suggests the existence of an opposing factor known as the 'other', which also strengthens the comprehensibility of the self as Mikhail Bakhtin says, "the self is the gift of the other" (quoted in Skulj. As Skulj writes, "No cultural identity can be identified or analyzed only on its national ground ...," Otherness is irrevocably a cultural reality. The other does not necessarily endanger. It's selfness or it's principles of identity" (2). Regarding this, the Indian immigrants involved in an internal dialogue and/or opposition between their ethnic culture and the culture of the country in which they abide: America. For the children of the immigrants who were born in America, the site of the confusion is their household or parental home in America where the Indian culture and customs still exist even if in diluted form. As Natalie Friedman writes about the children of immigrants, "they can only define home as the place, where their two cultures merge the literal and metaphysical location is the their parents' house ... Their behavior is akin to that of tourists in their home countries" (115). Moreover, American culture is a blend of different cultures, and being American adds to the confusion of diaspora. The clash happened inside having the 'other' interchangeably replaced sometimes by the Indian and sometimes by the American side of their identities. Realization of and coming into terms with their new and unique identities as cosmopolites take time and sometimes it never occurs. Describing the Indian family culture, Alferiso Forero writes:

The distinction between the material and the spiritual in the domain of culture is essential to how nationalism attempts to resolve the women's

question ... The division between *ghar*- the home, and inherently spiritual and female space and *bahir* – the outside world, which is inherently male and dominated by material pursuits-determines not only the division of labour in terms of how the Indian home is run, but more importantly it positions women as the guardians and propagators of Indian culture. In this manner Indian nationalism elevates the condition of the middle-class woman to a goddess like statue. (853-54)

The expression of identity is inextricably bound up with the notion of culture. At the basis of ethnic and national identity there exists a common culture. Ross Poole also believes that "in almost all cases the emergence of a sense of national identity coincided with a flourishing of national culture" (27). A nation is primarily a cultural community and the national culture provides the national community with its feel of continuity, which is an important factor in every type of identity. Hence, it is reasonable to discuss every type of identity in relation to cultural affiliation. Stuart Hall argues that there are 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. In particular, he uses true language of 'purity' and 'cultural origin' to characterize this view of cultural identity.

Stuart Hall further argues, "our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provides, as one people, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning beneath the shifting divisional and vicissitudes of our actual history" (Cultural Identity and Diaspora 293). Hall's model of identity is relevant to Anderson, who seems to believe in the existence of such origins as the basis of nationalism. However, Hall rejects the

essentialist notion of cultural identity in favour of a view of identity as “a production, something negotiated and imagined” (392). Along with the points of similarity, cultural identity also has the “critical points of deep and significant difference, which constitutes what we really are or rather what we have become” (394). One can’t speak for very long, with any exactness, about one experience one identity, without acknowledging its other side. Such is the second notion of cultural, identity Hall favours:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of becoming as well as being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is 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. (394)

Hall's argument clarifies that far from being eternally fixed is some essentialism past identities are subject to the continuous play of history, culture, and power. Cultural transformation is a process specifically that takes place among immigrants. In fact, immigration itself is a phenomenon, which takes place in a global context. The connections between immigrants and their home countries, as well as the political status of both home and host countries, affect the ways in which they adjust to a new location. The interaction and engagement in turns cultural conversation between the host or dominant cultural groups and immigrant groups slowly opens up the new site for transformation. As such cultural transformation characterizes the in-between as a third element, an amalgam of two cultural entities that create a third identity after the original two have been altered. In this context, cultural transformation is related to Basch, Schiller and Blanc's concept of 'social fields' and Bhabha's notion of third

space. To address the notion of identity, Bhabha claims that “third space” is characterized by “discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have not primordial unity or fixing, even the same signs can be appropriated, translated and rehistoricized a new” (37). Therefore ‘third space’ is a place where we negotiate between different identities.

Negotiation becomes a process where people of different cultures accept and blend their cultures in a society without one culture dominating the other. This co-existence of different cultures ultimately produces hybrid culture which Bhabha posits as “the inter-the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between-space-that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (38). For Bhabha “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the third space, which enables other positions to emerge” avoted in RotheFord 211). The term hybridity, that for a long time carried a negative connotation of impurity, which is most associated with people mixed bloods, has found itself liberated from taints of rejection in postcolonial debates. For Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, hybridity is a phenomenon of ‘cross culturality’, hence the delineation of the term ‘syncreticism’ that suggest the coming together of various cultures, talents or ideas.

Hybridity is a dual culture and also implies a syncretic view of the world in which the notion of fixity or essentiality of identity is continually contested. The concept of hybridity dismantles the notion of heterogeneity difference, and inevitable hodge podge. In other words, hybridity opens the door for cultural emergence. Thus, hybridity is not just any given mixing of cultural materials, backgrounds or identities. Rather, hybridity is related to a zone where people can meet exchange ideas and form fluid identity and to Bhabha’s interest where “the inter subjectivities and collective

experiences of nattyiness, community interest, or cultural values are negotiated” (2) without “an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (4). And by exploring this third space, “we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of over selves” (8). The hybridized nature of cultures steers us away from the problematic binaries that have until now framed our notions of culture.

Nowadays along with the technological development and excessive mobility of people that have intensified and changed the cultural exchange, the Third Space has considerable implications for reinventing of a new United States, for example, threat reconcile and overcome the embeddedness of any existing hierarchies, categorization, and discrimination. Therefore, the contemporary immigrant writer's work that this research project is attempting to create an alternative space to locate and stabilize their characters in the new land of settlement. Lahiri goes back to post-colonial India but draws attention to the poverty that determined young and idealist intellectuals envision violence against wealthy landowners and then self-sacrifice as the only possible solutions to change the system. The fictional canvas stretches for nearly four decades in time and moves from India to America and is witnessed with a handful of fictional characters connected by blood relation but separated by volition.

Gauri, the central character in the novel *The Lowland* is the key example of such character, who is linked by blood but separated because of volition. Along with Gauri, the story of dead Udayan and his elder brother Subhash, who though look alike are of opposing characteristics. Udayan, dynamic and pushing while Subhash withdrawn and different have attachment for each other which tragically results in unforeseen disharmony in Subhash's family life. In their childhood, they used to play in the open space in Tollygaunge, the memories of which haunt Subhash long after his brother's death. In the spring of 1967, they started hearing about peasants revolting in

Naxalbari, a village in the Darjeeling District at the northern tip of west Bengal.

Located at the foothills of the Himalayas, nearly four hundred miles away from Calcutta, Naxalbari is closer to Tibet than to Tollygaunge.

Gauri's former husband Udayan is impressed by the injustice of ruthless landowners against hardworking villagers in that faraway region. Still living in a feudal system, they are denied revenue from the crops they grow, some of them starving for lack of food. In 1967, in the papers and on All India Radio, they started hearing about Naxalbari. It was a place they had never heard of before. It was one of a string of villages in the Darjeeling District, a narrow corridor at the northern tip of west Bengal. Most of the villagers were tribal peasants who worked on tea plantations and large estates. For generations they had lived under a feudal system that had not substantially changed. They were manipulated by wealthy landowners. They were pushed off fields. They had cultivated but denied revenue from the crops they had grown. They were pried upon by money lenders. "Deprived of subsistence wages, some died from lack of food" (Lahiri 13). Bengali communists help to organize the uprising in Naxalbari, while several demonstrations took place in Calcutta in support of the peasants' cause. For a few months there are fights with the police, some peasants lose their lives, and a few landowners are also abducted and killed.

In July, the rebellion is brought to its heels but for Udayan it represents an inspiration, an impetus for change. He is outraged that the government has turned victims into criminals. Ironically, this is what will happen to him also. From a young intellectual genuinely concerned with the wellbeing of poorer country men, he imperceptibly changes into an accomplice to terrorist acts. "It wasn't the first instant of peasants in the Darjeeling District revolting. But this time their tactics were

militant. Armed with primitive weapons, carrying red flags, shouting live long Mao Tse-tung" (Lahiri 13). But on the other hand central government announced that:

There were reports of banditry and looting. Peasants setting up parallel administrations. Landowners were being abducted and killed. Central government banned the carrying of bows and arrows in Naxalbari. The same week authorized by the west Bengal cabinet five hundred officers and men raided the region. They searched the mud huts of the poorest villagers. They captured unarmed insurgents, killing them if they refused to surrender. Ruthlessly, systematically, they brought the rebellion to its heels. (14)

As this statement claims, the subalterns are always in search of their own identity but the government and other institutions always try to defy their searches. The peasants are also the subaltern figures, who are not allowed to speak against the system, which is always dominating. In the same condition the supporters Subhash is more cautious and wonders, "What good are bows and arrows against a modern state?" (Lahiri 21). Even after attending a Naxalite meeting with his brother and helping him paint slogans on neighborhood walls he still is not convinced that the Maoist ideology can solve India's problems. Their father, a government employees, also dismisses the movement saying his generation has built a nation and there's no need for further upheavals. "we are independent. The country is ours" (23). Udayan is arguing to his father, which seems to be a type of inter-generational conflict and started challenging his father, the way he used to challenge their teachers at school. People are reacting and Naxalbari is an inspiration, an impetus for change. The Naxalite party is formed, and on May Day 1969, ten thousand people march to the center of Calcutta in support of the movement.

Udayan is too much excited and says "The revolutionary situation was ripe both at home and abroad. . . A high tide of revolution was sweeping through the work" (33). He Joins the guerrilla warfare against the Indian state, while Subhash starts applying for PhD in the United States. His younger brother senses that once he leaves, he will not come back. He accuses Subhash of being selfish, of not wanting to jeopardize his career and personal future for their country's prosperity. All their lives they had been one but now their paths are parting:

But he was no longer in Tollygunge. He had stepped out of it as he had stepped so many mornings out of his dreams, its reality and its particular logic rendered meaningless in the light of day. The difference was so extreme that he could not accommodate the two places together in his mind. In this enormous new country, there seemed to be nowhere for the old to reside. There was nothing to link them; he was the sole link. Here life ceased to obstruct or assault him. Here was a place, where humanity was not always pushing rushing, running as if with a fire at its back. (23)

Udayan becomes more and more involved in Naxalite activities; he even loses the figures from the hand in the explosion of a bomb he placed it in a safe house. By 1970 the Naxalites are operating underground carrying out attacks and ransacking schools, blasting cinemas and banks. They are responsible for "sadistic and gruesome" (87) killings of unarmed traffic constables, affluent businessman, members of rival parties and even educators. They take control of certain neighbourhoods, including Tollygunge. Udayan and Gauri get married in secret, without celebrations. His parents find out after the civil registration and they are outraged to have been excluded. Not only did they not arrange his marriage, but they actually had not idea of he was seeing

someone. Gauri loves her husband so much that she helps him plan the assassination of a police officer. While tutoring two students in Sanskrit, she observes from the window a policeman's time table. The comrades need him out of the way, and she tells Udayan the fact that his day off is Thursday. On this day the officer is unarmed and he always takes his soon home from school. That is when they attack and murder him. Udayan is more radical than Subhash. He is driven by a sense of equality and justice, joins the Naxalite movement in the 1960s. Udayan is eventually executed by the police in the lowland behind his parental house when he been has caught in the midst of the communist movement taking place in west Bengal.

In youth the brothers parted their ways. Udayan drawn towards reform and revolution and becomes active in the Naxal movement. Subhash, on the other hand, leaves for America for education much to the chagrin of his brother. The narration is shifted to American to describe the experience and exploit of Subhash. His aim was to complete his research and return to Bengal as it is "only a matter of a few years" (30). He has been brought up in Bengali cultural space and had deep respect for his parents and affection for his brother. He also had a sense of responsibility for his parents. His word to Udayan reveals the deep sense of parental responsibility, "They're the people who raised. Who continued to feed you and clothe you? You'd amount to nothing if it were not for them" (31). Like a typical Bengali, he believed in the arranged marriage system and wondered what type of woman his parents would select for him.

In America he was totally shocked after watching Narashimha, an Indian married to an American woman. At that time he was also fully aware of the great chasms that separated the Indian cultural space from the American one. But after staying some days in American cultural space, he also hesitated even in conversing with women, but his stay in host land brought about a radical change in his attitude as

he began to spend weekends with a married woman, Holly. "Subhash was surprised, also troubled, that she could speak to him calmly, without acrimony. The person on the other end of the line remained deeply familiar to her. He saw that because of Joshua, in spite of their separation, their lives were permanently tied" (50). He even thought of breaking all his ties with his parents and settling down in America with Holly. In America pre-marital sex is a very common matter but this is a taboo in India. This pre-marital relationship is therefore Subhash's "transgression of Indian cultural ethos and involvement in the American cultural space. But unlike the Indians the American do not feel any emotion bond in these relations" (Hall 393). As a result, when Holly, after some days of her relation with Subhash, told him that:

I want us to end this nicely, she continued. I think we can. He heard her say that she had been speaking with Joshua's father, and that they were going to try to work things out between them. He left you. He wants to come back. I've known him for twelve years, Subhash. He's Joshua's father. I'm thirty six years old. Why did we come here together, if you do not want to see me again? I thought you might like it. You never expected this to go anywhere, did you? You and me? I like Joshua. You are young. You are going to want to have your own children someday. In a few years you will go back to India, live with your family. You've said so yourself. She had caught him in his own need, telling him what he already knew. (81)

Subhash was totally shocked. Even after five years of this, Subhash remained emotionally attached to Holly. Due to this when he found her in the company of her husband, he became jealous of her. Alferiso describes struggle for ethnic or regional identity as a "struggle over the monopoly of the power to make people see and

believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impasse the legitimate definition of the division of the social world and thereby to make and unmake groups” (221). Social institutions are the level of authority in whose power there’s a possibility of knowledge installation and means of self-perception, an authority in identity formation. He learns about Udayan’s marriage and his parents’ welfare through the occasional letters he received from his brother. His first visit back home follows his brother’s elimination by the police in a brutal open encounter. His heart goes out for the widow of his brother who is looked down upon by his parents as necessary outside.

Subhash shows sympathy for Gauri as he describes “she was thin without a trace of life she was carrying. She wore glasses a detail withheld from the photograph. When she looked up at him, he saw in spite of the glasses another thing of photo had not fully conveyed. The frank beauty of her eyes” (59). His sympathy for her plight and his affection for his brother coupled with his dislike of his parents’ behavior compels him to take the decision of marrying pregnant Gauri and of taking her with him to America. His stay in the American cultural space made him liberal minded. For this reason he even had not hesitated to marry Gauri after the death of Udayan. Earlier he assured his father and mother that his marriage was up to them to arrange, but now he took his radical step. As a result of his stay in America, he came to know how women outside India lead their lives being free from all kinds of restraint and confinement. But returning to India, when he found that Gauri, after the murder of Udayan, was forced to lead her life like an Indian widow, he was terribly shocked. So, he questioned his mother “why she is leading the life of widow?” (100). Moreover, at the time he was also overwhelmed by the hospitality of the Indians, which he missed totally in America. Actually, his stay in the American cultural space made him a critic

of home as well as host culture. In fact, at that time he lived in a cultural space of 'in-betweenness'. It was not a decision taken impulsively and despite the heartless ungrateful behaviours of Gauri in later years he never regretted his action. He takes Gauri to Rhode Island with him, although she is pregnant with his brother's baby. The pathetic condition of Gauri is further seen in the following extract:

Her in-laws had accused Gauri, as she knew they would, of disgracing their family. Her mother-in-law had lashed out, telling her. She'd never been worthy of Udayan. That perhaps he would still believe, if he'd married another sort of girls. They had accused Subhash also of wrongly taking Udayan's place. But in the end, after denouncing both of them, they had not forbidden it. They had not said no. Perhaps they appreciated, as Gauri did, that they would not longer have to be responsible for her, that they would be free from one another. And so, though in one way, she'd burrowed even more deeply into their family, in another way she'd secured her release. (82)

As this statement claims Gauri is made subaltern figure within her own family too. She is taken as a curse for the family. Before leaving for America, already five months pregnant, Gauri goes back to the Jadavpur neighbourhood and briefly intersects with the policeman's widow and their body. At twenty-three, Gauri is in a similar situation: already a widow, who is about to become a mother too. The story of Subhash and Gauri in America moves rapidly as Gauri delivers Bela. Jhumpa Lahiri appears to have been on the side of Subhash, the male rather than on Gauri, the mother.

Gauri's character delineation is harsh and is projected as a child bearing and not as a child rearing mother. It was Subhash who ungrudgingly and affectionately

brings up the child either for his love for his dead brother or for facilitating Gauri to indulge in her studies. Gauri uncharacteristically keeps herself aloof from Bela as if Subhash's bounden duty was to take care of Bela. Subhash's initial interest in Gauri has no ulterior motives and is born of human consideration for Gauri and Bela. It is Gauri who behaved in strange manner after her child's birth and the reader gets no clue to the detached behaviour of Gauri. As the narration moves forward and backward in a clumsy manner we discern the tentative relationship of Gauri with Udayan. Their togetherness as wife and husband was the outcome of youthful attraction and not caused by sharing ideologies and tastes the indifferent attitude of Gauri to her daughter widens the hiatus between mother and child. The uneasy relationship of Subhash and Gauri after Bela's birth culminated in their parting of ways.

Gauri the Indian born woman overwhelmed by the freedom offered by Subhash and the new environment is now transformed into the modern outgoing female of independent thinking. Her first husband Udayan, who lives in her memory as the narrator mentions in the course of narration has no impact on her not the mild natures Subhash evokes soft feelings in her. The personality of the main female character Gauri is complex and confused as we read her journey of life. Even the walking away from her house was shrouded in mystery though the fissures in the family appear before Subash and Bela visit India after the death of Subhash's father. The disappearance of Gauri was unexpected and unwarranted and then the daughter Bela begins to detest the lady who abandoned them. Gauri's life now takes course which was not intended and planned by either Subhash or Gauri.

Gauri makes an academic progress and lives a life of freedom and it shows that she has no emotional attachment with either Udayan or Subhash and no bonding with her child. The minor incidents in her life in the far off country do not contribute

fresh insights into her character except that she takes advantage of the moment at hand and has no qualms. She is in a way can be described as an abnormal woman of unfulfilled desires. The two avoidable contacts she had with a former student and a researcher at the campus show her in poor light. The novelist has succeeded in portraying the female protagonist as a dashing lady and her counterpart as a man of compromise and attention. The following narrative might be worthy to quote to cast the light on the same issue:

That wilderness was her only freedom. She was locked inside her home, taken out once each day. Deepa would prevent her from endangering herself, from embarrassing herself, from making further scenes. But Gauri's mind had saved her. It had enabled her to stand upright. It had cleared a path for her. It had prepared her to walk away.

(212-13)

Gauri tries to enjoy her freedom but loses the relational bonds. Her nature seems diverse as Spivak calls "Subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous" (14). The incident rouses pity for Gauri as her heart swells with motherly love and Bela ruthlessly spurns her. The daughter more than the mother realized the injustice done to Subhash. Bela accuses her mother of taking advantage of Subhash and of abandoning her. It was a touching scene with Gauri trying to befriend Meghna and Bela purposely sending the girl out as if she does not want even the shadow of Gauri to fall on her daughter. She heartlessly "asks her mother to leave the house" (221) as if the house would be polluted by her presence. Unfortunate Gauri leaves her consent papers for divorce. Her stay in Rhode Island for the last is wrought with suspense which was built adroitly and sustained meticulously. It's publicized and the author too stated that the novel was inspired by an incident of encounter during Naxalbari

movement. Notwithstanding the public statement of the novelist, the movement is alluded to and has little to do with Gauri's actions.

Gauri was never directly involved in the movement and Udayan did not take her into confidence in as far as the activities of Naxalbari movements are concerned. The impact of the movement in the story is confined to the husband of Gauri, brother of Subhash and father of unborn Meghna being involved in it. An ironical incident in the novel is that of the policeman who once let of the brothers in the childhood became the victim of the uprising revolution. Gauri too unwittingly becomes an accomplice in the murder of the policeman. She acted as an emissary at the behest of her husband to exchange secret letters between Udayan and a tailor woman. It was Meghna, the daughter who imbibed some qualities of Udayan. Meghna in spite of the upbringing determined to live the life of a nomad and did odd jobs to help the folk.

If the upliftment of the oppressed is at the centre of Udayan's movement, to a certain extent Meghna fits the bill as his successor. Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* reveals how desperately people ran from the specter of Naxalite resistance that haunted Calcutta in 1960s. In the final failed confrontation between Subhash and Gauri shows the disturbed mind of Gauri and it was an anti-climax as she unexpectedly sees her daughter in isles. We cannot deny the vacuum that is immeasurably there in the hearts of Lahiri's character because most of the characters are uprooted from their cultural roots. They struggle to settle down on a land that they feel is alien to them. They are not strong enough to give a tough fight to the hostile circumstances, instead they fall an easy victim to the circumstances because the distance from their roots has made them vulnerable. The most pitiable condition is the that of Gauri. So she is an isolated subaltern figure, who tries to find out her own

identity in India and America. She has a melancholia but it is of different degree more than accepting her nostalgia. She rejects it. Though Gauri had always been a little aloof in nature different from the family she could never reject the family when she was in India. America gave her a new found sense of freedom where she did whatever she could. Jacques Rancier could help her out of her confused state with her observation.

Within the context of US society, the values of separation, independence and autonomy are so historically grounded, so reinforced by waves of immigration, and so deeply rooted in the nature rights that they are often taken as facts that the people are by nature independent from one another and self-governing:

To call these "facts" into question seeming to question the value of freedom. And yet this is not at all the case. The questioning of separation has to do with questioning freedom but rather with seeing and speaking about relationship. (Rancier xiv-xv)

Relationships which ultimately govern the life of Gauri lesser importance and loss of them is what governs her psyche. The problem with diaspora, as it is with any marginalized community within the preview of a dominant community is caused by a difference that is generated due to the ethnocentric attitudes of each culturally different group.

Finally, it can be said that the identity of marginalized people is under the dominant group. Whatever this is of Naxalbari farmers' or Gauri's or of Subhash in America. All of those subaltern people are in search of their own identity. The searching for identity may lose life, relation and even nation too. The Naxalbari farmers had to sacrifice for their identity. Udayan was helping those farmers and he had to sacrifice his life for his faith. Gauri had to leave India and go to America. In

the name of getting her identity, Gauri had to lose her familial relationship. So the subaltern figures' search for identity may lose many other things.

III. Failure of Subaltern Figure's Attempt to get Own Identity

Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* exposes the bitter reality of subaltern people in seeking their identity have to lose many other bonds. The novel traces the tragic situations faced by Gauri, Udayan, Subhash and Naxalite farmers. The close relation between Udayan and Subhash is broken off because of their different views towards Naxalbari movement in India. Udayan is more interested in the farmers' uprising where as Subhash is more interested in his advanced education and goes to Rhode Island USA. On the other hand Gauri is interested in philosophy. Despite having different interests Udayan proves his love for Gauri and marries her. In her marriage too Gauri seems meek and weak.

Udayan, the a permanent dweller of Calcutta, is impressed by Naxalbari movement. He is helping Naxalbari famers to get their identity as they were dominated by their landowners. While subjugated farmers were fighting for their own rights, as they were subaltern figures, they were killed for their new consciousness because their new knowledge is dangerous for the governemnt. On the other hand, Gauri is another subaltern figure because of being a woman and a widow suffer the death of Udayan, her husband. Her condition in in-law's house seems really pathetic. That's why Subhash decided to marry her to take away Guari from the suicidal quacks and in India Guari seems subjugated and weak figure but she is presented as a bold figure after going to Rohde Island America. That's why she goes against of traditional definition of a woman. There in the new culture, Guari gets new awareness. So, she leaves her husband Subhash and Bela, her daughter to pursue new identity.

Guari, a subaltern figure tries to get on identity but the sorrowful thing is that she has to lose familial relations. Bela, after few years learns about her real father and mother. She hates her mother Gauri. The family detachment is sole cause for an

individual to be alienated. If there is no support from the family members, the person can not reach to the destination. Gauri totally loses her familial ties because of her attempt to find the identity in America. There she does not find her root culture but haunted by it. The memory of Udayan in India tortures her as the treatment of her in-laws was no less torturing for her. She was taken as a bad omen there in India. Her condition both in India and America is as a subaltern figure. From the relatives, she is not respected anywhere.

Gauri, Subhash, Bela and later Meghana are migrants. All of them do have sense of displacement. They do not find themselves fitting in the language and place of new land. The sense of displacement creates a tension within an individual who is migrated from the home country to target country. That might be the cause Gauri avoids family members and goes to California leaving her child and helping hand Subhash. Her journey from Indian traditional culture to American super rational country is helping to change in her behaviour too. Her sense of dislocation is the main cause for this changeability in her nature. Subhash and Bela return to India time and again. This returning to the home country signifies the desire of home country. Bela the girl of second generation of migrants has been inclined to root culture. They are also affected by the sense of dislocation and trying to search identity in Rhode Island of the USA.

On the other hand Meghana the daughter of Bela also turns out to be nomad in real sense. Another important aspect of Meghana's birth is that Bela does not have any husband to deliver Meghana. The diasporic nature is evident in all of them. Along with the technological and electronic transformations, their migrations have been the part of modern cultural dynamics, where the tension between local and global tends to

be seen. The present society is regularly affected by travelling and accommodating to foreign culture. All of those migrants have been fallen apart in America.

Gauri, more than other subaltern figures in the novel, is rebellious figure. She is not suffering from diasporic experiences only but from traditional patriarchal concept too. She appears to be a well-rounded character, who constantly struggles to create an identity for herself in three different fronts- personal, gender and national. Gauri, unlike other has aloof manner since the beginning. That very aloof nature makes her alienated. Despite her attempt to cross the personal, gender and national territory, Gauri fails to achieve what she wanted to get. Her failure to be readjusted in the family, rejection from her own child Bela, divorce from Subhash make her a pathetic character in the end of the novel. Gauri finally regrets for the loss but it was too late. The people of 'in-between space' cannot reach where they want to be. The same case is applied in Gauri too. Her attempt for negotiation fails in the end.

As the hypotehsis of this study claims, the subalterns are always in search of their identity but the dominating class always tries to shut their mouth. The powerless subaltern farmers have been blamed as terrorists and they are ruthlessly killed for demanding their identity. The subaltern figure, Udayan is ruthlessly killed because he was supporting the subaltern farmers. Gauri had to be tragic figure because she was trying to find her own identity. She is failed in the end. Bela and Subhash are hanging between root and foot culture and Megha becomes a nomad. So, my research project has found that despite having subalterns' attempt to seek their identity, they fail to get it in proper sense as they desire. No one is successful in their mission because of being subaltern. So, my claim Gauri as a subaltern character ultimately reaches nowhere but becomes an alienated, pathetic and tragic figure in the novel *The Lowland*.

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