

## The Duplexing Mentality And Psychosocial Behaviour Of Gauri In Jhumpa Lahiri's The Lowland

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### Abstract:

Jhumpa Lahiri's characters are always the representation of real life characters and experiences. She delves deep into the characters' psyche, how they fight to come out of the culture for which they are accustomed with and how to get into the culture that is extremely different from their mother culture. In her characters Gauri has a strong mentality who willfully takes her own decisions leaving her past widowhood and tries to get rid of that mental sickness by adapting herself to the new culture. Though taking decisions are cakewalk, she suffers from confused state of mind for she cannot take decisions without doubting, being always correct in her decisions. This study entirely deals with Gauri's dual mentality and her predicament of being a young widow and it's consequences with respect to situation in detail.

**Key words:** abominable, steadfast, responsibilities, mourning, melancholy, introvert, psychosocial.

The psychosocial aspect targets religious and constant interrelation of social factors, individual thought and behaviour. As Lahiri's works always deal with human psyche, she traces both the mental and physical agony as well as the merriment of her characters by revealing the factors which affect their lives. Her characters are capable of taking any sort of decisions which reflect their strong personalities. Almost all of her characters choose to have a inner conflict which is constant throughout their lives for they cannot avoid it even if they really want to

Freud's book *The Interpretation of Dreams* says that human mind is always in constant communication with the outer world. His words as follows: "The external stimuli as well as the internal stimuli always work as instrumental factors behind the psychological development of an individual. Social acceptance and rejection constructs one's psychology towards oneself as well as the people around".(60)

The inexorable psychosocial conflicts and the natural processes of the mind occur when individuals perceive their thoughts, views, attitudes, goals, and interests. Jhumpa Lahiri through *The Lowland*

portrays her character Gauri in a different perspective and also shares her views as a commoner, for Gauri had been widowed and once again she has to remarry a man who is her husband's brother. In this narration, Lahiri portrays Gauri as a daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, mother and also a working woman. She was an abandoned child during her childhood days which forbids her from being a dutiful wife and caring mother. She grew as a introvert for she did not interact with her neighbours and she was interested into books and philosophy. She, unlike other children of her age, wanted to concentrate on education and also intended to be an independent woman rather than to accept the so called orthodoxal responsibilities of a traditional Indian woman.

There are three instances where her character remains odd from the reality which she ought to be and those are

1. Her maturity towards life which doesn't make her get attached to the other characters of this novel.
2. She has a kind of psychosocial disorder which she possesses after the demise of her husband.

3. She, being an introvert, suffers from depression and also does not have any idea of mingling with people for she becomes a machine after the death of Udayan Mitra, her husband.

Gauri and her life's detailed view:

Gauri belongs to a small village in the West of Calcutta, and she and her brother Manash were sent to her grandparents' house along with their cousins in their early age. The attachment towards family members has always been absent especially towards her parents which is also reflected in her later life for she always detaches herself from her family members even towards her daughter. She was not reluctant to her stay at grandparents' house instead she took it as an opportunity to flaunt her skills. Lahiri's says " She didn't think she resented her parents for not raising her. It was the way of many large families, and considering the circumstances, it was not so strange. Really, she appreciated them letting her go her own way (68)". Since her childhood, she was forced to live an independent life even though not financially but mentally. She was detached from her parents to the extent that even after the news of their demise doesn't affect her than her grandfather's death, for he had backed her in studies. She had no privacy but was able to study in balcony which was adjacent to a bustling street. " She loved to be in that place without protection of walls and ceilings." (65) She always enjoyed her own company than being with others to nestle with. Basically, Gauri sought attention from people which she failed to acquire, where Udayan gave the attention, which in turn made her get rid of her inferiority complex. The inhibition she had, was broken by Udayan and so she agreed to marry him. But Udayan had priorities and he was more into Naxalbari than to start a life with Gauri and extending a family. Gauri had given her heart, soul and trust to Udayan and so she did give him a hand in all his Naxal activities. His Naxal activities bore him death, which Gauri didn't want to happen. His sudden demise made an indelible mark throughout her life.

Gauri, not fully recovered from the sudden demise of Udayan Mitra, being a young widow is subjected to various criticisms and comments by the society in which she lives that has certain ideologies, even though these orthodoxical legacies are now being challenged by the women of the present generation. The trauma she undergoes has been well mentioned, for losing someone loved, ends up with mourning and melancholy. Alongside she had to face responsibilities and her cunning in-laws who wanted to take charge of the unborn baby in her womb.

Therefore when Subash proposed her, though she was initially not for it, she accepted after a while for he promised her an independent life to lead in America. The idea of this social detachment made up

her mind and she broke away all her constraints to become free after marriage with Subash. The mental disorder she has, is because of Udayan's death and so she started behaving like a cranky and quirky woman. This sort of attitude is shown towards her daughter also. She being in isolation since her childhood, comforts herself in isolation rather than being with an uncomfortable company. This instance is clearly explained in Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* as:

The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a listing of self regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self - reproaches and self - revilings and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment. (244)

Gauri was selfish in her approach for she made use of Subash for getting independence from her widowhood. She cannot even show her gratitude towards Subash for she cannot get rid off Udayan from her mind. She fails to be Subash's wife and engage in sex for she thinks having sex is being disloyal towards Udayan. Thus, she cannot be a foreign cultured woman of the new culture, and also cannot get rid of her old Indian culture which she got accustomed with.

Raj Gaurav Verma also in one of his articles, says about female protagonists and describes about Gauri which we also analyse that if we go inside her mind by analysing her feelings, we get to know that Udayan's love towards her had a great impact rather than her own love itself. Hence Udayan's death was traumatic for Gauri and her family members to overcome, for she always keep him in memory wherever she goes.

The birth of Bela, daughter of Gauri and Udayan created an abominable fear inside Gauri, thinking that in order to upbringing Bela, she perhaps have to join hands with Subash, which she always felt to be peculiar. Eventually, this fear instead of dragging her towards Subash, repulsed her by keeping herself away from her daughter also and hence Gauri was under trauma for she cannot stick to a relationship with Subash and also cannot join hands with him to raise Bela.

This very attitude of Gauri with Subash made her have a kind of detachment automatically and unknowingly towards her child, which she didn't want to happen. The fear of Gauri not only made her get out a healthy relationship with Bela, her child, but have depression which in turn resulting in change of her personality traits.

This change in her personality is for both the good and as well as bad since she had knit a

phenomenal strong character which made her emotionally strong for she did not get disturbed by anything that affects her mental peace unlike other people. Though she made her character strong, she had made herself a machine which cannot be affected by any means whereas that perhaps affect her physically in the long run. Her desires always remain unfulfilled for she never wanted it nor denied it. This instance is well explained in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, "Unconscious wishes are always active and ready for expression whenever they find an opportunity to unite themselves with an emotion from conscious life".(173)

To conclude with, Gauri after getting herself away from her relations, she was able to finish her studies and get a successful career but in real life she had almost lost all of her relationships with her own daughter and also with her so called husband Subash, who gave her helping hand when she was left all alone. But she seems to be not regretting, for she wanted only freedom all throughout her life after the

death of Udayan. Jhumpa Lahiri in this way was able to create an outline of woman's life of Indian culture most specifically the plight of a widowed woman who feels desolated after the demise of her husband and also portrays the basic ideologies of a woman of a society which has stereotyped conventions, gender inequalities. This portrayal of Gauri's character shows her duplexing mentality that how being in isolation affects a human's psyche especially for a woman, that too being in male dominant society.

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