

Gauri's Lesbianist and Separatist Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

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Abstract

This paper explores the sexual identity of Gauri, a radical character in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*. Gauri's copulation with a woman named Lorna clarifies her lesbian self and her parting from her parents, in-law's house, husband, and even her own daughter, and finally, avoidance of traditional responsibilities of motherhood specifies her separatist status. Evidence of her sexual orientation implies her denial of patriarchal authoritativeness, avoidance of master's access, and finally, her rejection of patriarchal access to her own domain. She dissociates herself for the sake of liberty and self-dignity and not to announce herself as a parasite. She silently revolts against cultural confinement. This radical character is interpreted in the light of queer study, which elucidates Gauri's actions and detects her sexual identity. Previous researches illustrate *The Lowland's* diasporic, political, ecocritical, and ethical aspects, some of which question stereotypical responsibilities of women and therefore uphold new dimensions of looking at women, while this paper identifies Gauri's lesbianist and feminist separatist identity and interprets the reasons behind this type of representation applying Tyson's elaboration of lesbianism and Frye's concept of separatism.

Keywords: Lesbianism, Feminist Separatism, Freedom, Exclusion of Patriarchy

1. Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri challenges women's traditional roles in society—particularly those of a daughter-in-law, wife, and mother. More broadly, she questions what it means to be a woman within these socially constructed expectations. Lahiri questions the stereotypical behavior of women and deploys her ideas of breaking the socially constructed barriers with the representation of Gauri. The “role of women and female characters” in such a text “can be a fertile ground” (Mahmoudi, 2016, p. 270) for exploring identity and sexuality. While many women are subjected to outdated gender roles, some, like Gauri, resist these constraints and cultivate a more liberated identity. Gauri is represented by Lahiri as such a type of character who breaks the barriers. The novel centers on a lowland, at the Naxalite movement, and their impact on some people, especially on the Mitra family. This diasporic novel focuses on how an Indian Bengali migrates to the USA and settles there, as well as the inner and cultural conflicts they face. The book also sheds light on memory of the past and the tendency to flee from the hassle of memory. Jhumpa Lahiri, as she herself lives abroad, pictures the lifestyle people adopt, their coping with new identities, the identity crises they face, and the adaptation to the culture they do. *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri is interpreted from various perspectives in previous studies, but this study analyzes whether Gauri is presented as a lesbian or not. Another quest is on her separatist self. This paper intends to unearth the reasons why Gauri is portrayed as a lesbian and separatist. Lois Tyson

elaborates on the characteristics of a lesbian. She also discusses what factors compel women to be lesbians. Drawing on the feminist theories of Lois Tyson and Marilyn Frye, this study examines Gauri's portrayal as both a potential lesbian and a separatist figure. Tyson explores how societal pressures can shape female sexuality, while Frye discusses the motives behind female separatism and resistance to patriarchal loyalty.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies on *The Lowland* highlight how Jhumpa Lahiri interrogates traditional notions of motherhood and womanhood through the lens of Indian diasporic feminism, emphasizing women's autonomy amid cultural expectations. Priyadarshini (2016), in "Feminism, Womanhood and Motherhood in the Works of Jhumpa Lahiri," identifies "the aspects of Indian diasporic womanism in the selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri" (p. 51). This study defines Indian diasporic womanism as a composite of feminism, womanhood, and motherhood of immigrant Indian women. Putri (2016) and Kiczkowski (2018) discuss the myth of motherhood and the radical trend of motherhood as found in *The Lowland*. Kiczkowski (2018) writes, "Lahiri is expressing the need for women to make their own choices, even when their options generate strong tensions when confronted with other traditional roles socially assigned to women" (p. 95).

Some researchers explain Lahiri's eco-consciousness. Rani (2016) depicts Bela as a mouthpiece for environmental conservation and comments that Lahiri "highlights the need for sustainable development, the burning issue of the day in large-scale debates; by voicing her ecological consciousness" (p. 258). Another research explores Jhumpa Lahiri's eco-consciousness through an eco-critical study of *The Lowland* (Senior, 2015). This novel portrays Bela in such a way that it promotes Lahiri's understanding of ecology.

Besides, patriarchal power also plays a significant role in *The Lowland*. Arianto and Ambalegin (2018) analyze *The Lowland* with the indoctrination concept of Barbara Welter and comment that almost all aspects of Gauri's life are determined by men (p. 153). Their interpretation indicates the dominance of men in shaping women's lives and identity. However, this sort of male domination over women's lives is found in many literary pieces; specifically, Ullah and Moniruzzaman (2019) explore the patriarchal power practice of Bengali men over women in Waliullah's *Tree Without Roots* (p. 70). Another article by Ullah (2021) excavates "women's dependence on men and their submissiveness" in the folk songs of the wetland of Bangladesh (p. 69). In the works, Lahiri's *The Lowland*, Waliullah's *Tree without Roots*, and Bangladeshi wetland folk songs, the setting is clearly rooted in the geographical locations of the Indian subcontinent, where male domination remains a predominant theme in both literature and societal issues.

In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*, Gauri's experience illustrates how cultural, political, and gendered constraints shape and often restrict women's autonomy, even as she attempts to redefine herself through diasporic movement and feminist choices. In *The Lowland*, the space for Gauri's movement becomes limited due to indoctrination with the labels of religion, norms, customs, and tradition. "Diasporic Identity and Ethical Choice in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*" identifies the house where they lived as "a metaphor for marital confinement" and writes, "the house can be interpreted as a symbol of cultural confinement, especially from the native country" (Chen, 2015, p. 120). The study of Challa (2018) examines "the novel particularly in the context of the cultural estrangement and internal conflict faced by the protagonist" (p. 23).

Gauri's acceptance of American culture is portrayed in some studies. Ganvir (2015) writes, "Gouri in America declared herself different from other women and accepted the American feminist way in her outlook. But in another way, for her, this was her response to get rid of herself and her past, from her natural beauty which Udayan used to admire. This white feminist approach towards life leads her to economic and family freedom, in short independence" (Ganvir, 2025, p. 6).

A scholar named Dorji also examines the political relevance in *The Lowland*, emphasizing how Lahiri intricately weaves together the political and personal dimensions of her characters' lives. Dorji's research highlights "the political aspect of the novel by presenting the political and personal side by side and by analyzing how politics affects the personal lives of the characters" (p. 1258). This perspective draws attention to the ways in which historical and ideological forces—particularly the Naxalite movement in India—shape the trajectories of characters like Udayan, whose political involvement leads to profound consequences for his family. Through such analysis, Dorji reveals how Lahiri critiques the entanglement of political ideology with intimate human relationships, illustrating how the political is never separate from the personal.

The Lowland has been interpreted through various critical lenses, including womanhood, ecocriticism, patriarchal power-play, diasporic identity, cultural adaptation, and political relevance. However, no studies have addressed the sexual identity of Gauri, one of the novel's most enigmatic characters. A close reading of the text reveals that Lahiri subtly portrays elements of Gauri's homosexuality, particularly in her intimate relationship with another woman, Lorna. Gauri is also depicted as deliberately excluding men from her sexual and emotional life, satisfying her desires independently and distancing herself from traditional roles associated with wifehood and motherhood. Her decision to separate herself from her in-laws, her husband, and eventually her daughter reflects a deeper separatist impulse. This paper argues that Gauri's character can be understood through the intersecting frameworks of lesbian criticism and separatism. Drawing on Lois Tyson's elaboration of lesbian theory and Marilyn Frye's concept of separatism, the study examines how Gauri's rejection of patriarchal structures and pursuit of self-definition reflect a radical assertion of female autonomy and sexual identity.

3. Analysis

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*, her second novel, delves deeply into the complexities of identity, displacement, and familial ties within the framework of the Indian diaspora. While much critical attention has focused on themes such as political violence, migration, and cultural alienation, this section turns to a less commonly explored dimension: the sexual identity of Gauri, one of the novel's central characters. Drawing primarily on Lois Tyson's framework of lesbian criticism, this analysis identifies and interprets textual moments that suggest Gauri's lesbian identity—through her rejection of heterosexual norms, emotional detachment from male partners, and intimate connection with other women. Additionally, the section employs Marilyn Frye's theory of separatism to examine Gauri's deliberate withdrawal from traditional family structures, including her abandonment of marital and maternal roles. Together, these perspectives allow for a queer reading of *The Lowland* that frames Gauri as both a lesbian and a feminist separatist. The following analysis presents the key findings of this interpretive approach.

3.1. Gauri's Lesbianist Identity

Lesbian is a woman who is sexually attracted, instead of a man, to a woman. "A woman who is sexually attracted to other women" is a lesbian (Hornby, 2015, p. 892; Longman, 2009, p. 999). There are many debates on the criteria of a lesbian. Tyson (2006) shows the factors that led people to homosexuality. The object of copulation is socially constructed, but traditional beliefs of people compel them to behave heterosexually as most people live in heterosexual societies. Since literature texts are such great assets to study beliefs and their representations (Hamidzadeh, Mahmoudi, and Hamidzadeh, 2018, p. 34), Lahiri's radical character offers a great insight into self, identity, and sexuality. Women can be lesbian in two ways: one is biological, in other words, biologically fond of same-sex; on the contrary, the other one is a social construction. If one lives in a homosexual society, she can be influenced and become a lesbian. Homosexuality or heterosexuality are not always the products of biology but, instead, sometimes, products of social construction. As most people live in a society where heterosexuals live, they become heterosexual. There might be some who are biologically homosexual but cannot express their choice due to social practice. Even if they express themselves, they are marked as sick and pervert and, therefore, are discriminated against socially, economically, and in many other ways. Tyson (2006) mentions that lesbians "have experienced the gender oppression that all women, straight or gay, have experienced, while closeted gay men have had the opportunity to enjoy the patriarchal privileges extended to straight men" (p. 322). The gay, lesbian, and queer theory, which emerged in the 1990s, determines to examine "the psychological, social, economic, and political oppression fostered not only by patriarchal male privilege but by heterosexual privilege as well" (Tyson, 2006, p. 323).

The person's sexual desire defines one's sexual identity. If a woman never copulates with a woman but she desires a woman's body, she can be called a lesbian. Tyson (2006) says, "She is a woman whose sexual desire is directed toward women" (p. 324). She also argues that sometimes, a lesbian might be compelled to marry a man or live in a heterosexual society. A woman's body becomes a site of competing forces of body politics and investigations (Poorghorban & Ghaderi, 2022, p. 37). On the other hand, the female body and mind, particular homosexual ones, can resist and challenge oppressive forces that seek to marginalize them (Ghazaei & Ghaderi, 2022, p. 362). Moreover, if she sexually desires a woman, she can be told a lesbian. Even these intercourses might be indicated as "romantic friendships" between women. In any case, heterosexual oppression usually perpetuates "the patriarchal structures that oppress women" (Etedali Rezapoorian & Sanchez, 2024, p. 107), and this even makes female homosexuality a greater asset in studying identity in the context of body and sexual politics.

The intimacy with Lorna explicitly identifies Gauri's lesbian identity in *The Lowland*. Lorna, "a graduate student at UCLA...was willing to help Gauri with any research or grading in exchange for the privilege" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 237). In addition, Lorna informs Gauri that she reads Gauri's published books and papers. *The Lowland* presents Gauri's sensual feelings for Lorna. Lahiri writes, "Images of Lorna, fragments of their exchanges, began to distract her. When they met in person, she began to dress with care. She had no recollection of crossing a line that drove her to desire a woman's body. With Lorna, she found herself already on the other side of it" (p. 238). That Gauri was sexually distracted by Lorna's beauty clarifies her "desire [for] a woman's body."

Furthermore, Lorna and Gauri's close standing and shutting the door for celebration are also pictured by Lahiri. She writes, "Gauri stood up from her desk and shut the door, locking it, knowing it should have remained open. When she turned around Lorna was facing her, looking at her, standing too close" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 239). Lorna came with a bag containing "wrapped wedges of cheese, grapes, a box of crackers. Two paper cups, a bottle of wine" (p. 239). Nothing she brings indicates that only she approaches Gauri to have sex, but Gauri also traces the craving and feels sexual desire to Lorna, and hence, she shuts the door. After closing the door, Lorna stood "too close" to her, which was the start of intercourse. Lahiri describes the scene and writes, "She took Gauri's hand, putting it inside her T-shirt, on top of one of her breasts, beneath the pliant material of her bra. Gauri felt the nipple under the bra thickening, hardening, as her own were" (p. 239). She adds, "The softness of the kisses was new. The smell of her, the sculptural plainness of her body as the clothes were removed, as piles of papers were pushed aside to make room on the daybed behind the desk. The smoothness of her skin, the focused distribution of hair. The sensation of Lorna's mouth on her groin" (p. 239). This incident undoubtedly affirms Gauri's lesbian distinctiveness.

It is worth mentioning that the role played by Gauri in copulation was the role of a male. She placed her hand on the breast of Lorna, and Lorna placed her mouth on Gauri's groin. Gauri was the master of Lorna. Lorna came to Gauri for help with information and to be guided by Gauri, so even here, she practiced power and authoritativeness. Gauri denies the patriarchal role in sex but selects the role of control. She silently struggles for the power of access. Frye (1993) and Tyson (2006) mention

coitus as a means of practicing power. Frye (1993) clearly remarks that men practice power with access to and control of sex. So, Gauri refutes Subhash's access, establishes herself as independent, and now controls access to sex.

There is another incident in the novel that ensures not Gauri's lesbian self but her exclusion of men in coitus. She chases an old man who is following her. By tracing him, she came in front of a room where "she saw him walk to one of the sofas, lean over to kiss a woman who was waiting. Touch her knee" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 172). At that time, she feels like having sex and satisfies herself with her own fingers. Lahiri writes, "She was alone, there was no one in the neighboring stalls, and she could not help herself, she pushed her hand up her shirt, to her breast, caressing it, another hand unzipping her jeans, hooking her fingers over the ridge of bone, her forehead against the cold metal of the door. It took only a moment to calm herself, to put an end to it. She washed her hands at the sink, smoothed her hair, saw the color that had risen to her face" (p. 172-3). This incident shows that she can meet her physical demands by herself; she need not depend upon a man for sexual desire. Though this incident does not indicate Gauri's lesbian identity, it refers to her ideas of separatism. Thus, Gauri epitomizes lesbianism and excludes access to patriarchy by meeting her sexual demands with her own fingers.

3.2. Gauri's separatist Identity

Separatism discusses women's status and sexual-political stance. Separatism means to be apart from the partner. "If two people who are married or have been living together separate, they start to live apart" is called to be separate (Longman, 2009). According to Hornby (2015), the word "separate" is used to refer to "end a relationship with" somebody. So, separatism indicates when one couple gets apart, whether married or not. The idea of separatism was extensively elaborated on by Marilyn Frye, who delivered a lecture in 1977 at a meeting of the Society for Women in Philosophy, Eastern Division. Later, she published the article in *Sinister Wisdom* 6, Summer, 1978, and compiled it in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (1993). In this article, Frye describes different notions of separatism and the factors that lead women to be separated. Frye mainly sheds light on women's separatism, i.e., the willing separation of women from their own part. This type of segregation is feminist separation. According to Frye (1993), "feminist separation is, of course, separation of various sorts or modes from men and from institutions, relationships, roles, and activities which are male-defined, male-dominated, and operating for the benefit of males and the maintenance of male privilege- this separation being initiated or maintained, at will, by women" (p. 92). Women separate themselves willingly to get released from male domination and male-defined institutions. She also argues about various modes or forms of feminist separation. Frye (1993) opines that women's separation might happen in many forms. The forms are as follows: "Breaking up or avoiding close relationships or working relationships; forbidding someone to enter your house; excluding someone from your company, or from your meeting; withdrawal from participation in some activity or institution, or avoidance of participation; avoidance of communications and influence from certain quarters (not listening to music with sexist lyrics, not watching tv); withholding commitment or support; rejection of or rudeness toward obnoxious individuals. Some separations are subtle realignments of identification, priorities, and commitments, or working with agendas which only incidentally coincide with the agendas of the institution one works in" (Frye, 1993, p. 92). She further writes, "ceasing to be loyal to something or someone is a separation; and ceasing to love" (p. 92). These forms are taken by women when they adopt any mode of separation. Gauri's separatist identity can be explained by Frye's notions about woman's separation: a feminist separatist usually avoids a close relationship with her husband and someone's entrance to her house, excludes someone's company, avoids active participation, prioritizes other things than maintaining a relationship and finally stops being loyal to someone.

Firstly, Gauri's avoidance of close relationships indicates her separatist consciousness. Gauri avoids close relationships not only with Subhash but also with Bela, her daughter. In the novel, Gauri dissociates herself from everyone around her from the beginning of her life. When she was a child, she separated herself from her parents for her studies and started to live in the city with her grandparents, though the text gives no emotional attachment of Gauri to the family, but only to her brother Manash. She separated herself again from her uncles, eloped with Udayan, and married him, but Udayan's family finally accepted the marriage, which allowed them to live in Udayan's father's house. After the death of Udayan, she again separated herself from her in-law's family by marrying Subhash, the brother of Udayan. Then, she left Calcutta for Rhode Island to enjoy a conjugal life with Subhash. She was bearing the child of Udayan in her womb at that time. Subhash offered her marriage and the opportunity to study. She went there, gave birth to Bela, began to study, pursued her degree, and finally separated herself from this family. She went to California to do her teaching job. Another important example is that Gauri maintained a balanced distance from Bela. Lahiri writes, "Rarely did Subhash see her smiling when she looked into Bela's face. Rarely did he see Gauri's kissing Bela spontaneously. Instead, from the beginning, it was as if she'd reversed their roles, as Bela were a relative's child and not her own" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 159). Thus, she avoided close relationships, ran after her dreams, and became a separatist.

Secondly, Gauri limited the entrance of Subhash and Bela to her room while she was working on her thesis. Even when she left Rhode Island and started to live in California, she did not welcome Subhash to her house. While leaving the family, she did not inform them, which hampered Bela's mentality to a great extent. Before the birth of Bela, Gauri and Subhash lived in separate rooms; after her birth, he was allowed in her room to have sex, but she was not interested in taking a baby of Subhash in her womb. All these indicate that Gauri wanted separation from her past, from any type of bondage and relationship. While leaving the house of Subhash, Gauri wrote in a letter, "I have not made this decision in haste. If anything, I have been thinking about it for too many years" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 211). So, her decision to limit Subhash's entrance is a pre-planned issue that fuels her to get separated.

Thirdly, the exclusion of Subhash from Gauri's company also signposts separation. Rarely is Gauri seen visiting any place with Subhash. "Subhash and Gauri had never gone on vacation together, with Bela" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 159). At a time, Gauri found "a woman's hair elastic, a malleable red ring flecked with gold" in the car and became sure about a woman's presence in his life. Lahiri writes, "A woman who'd once occupied the seat she was in now" (p. 135). She validates her distance as "it justified the distance she continued to maintain from her new husband" (p. 136).

Finally, priority is a question that settles almost all doubts about separation. Gauri's priority was not to nurture their daughter or to live a life as a mere wife; rather, her priority was to study. Lahiri (2013) writes, "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" (p. 162). Gauri's consciousness is depicted here, which clarifies that study is her priority. It can be seen in the later part that she managed to pursue a degree and got a teaching job in California. "She had published three books in her life" (p. 234). So, everything clarifies Gauri's priority. So, she separates herself easily to prioritize her plan of spending her life in study.

Another issue is that "ceasing to be loyal and to love" also contributes to separation, as seen in Gauri's case. Gauri stops to be loyal to Subhash. She was loyal to Subhash as he rescued her from the apathy of her in-law's family, gave her monetary support to study, and finally, took her abroad to help her escape from the torturing past. She was thinking about loving him in the future to show gratitude. Lahiri (2013) pens, "In the back of her mind she told herself she could come one day to love him, out of gratitude if nothing else" (p. 127). But she finds a reason to maintain distance when she discovers "a woman's hair elastic" in the car. Lahiri writes, "It suggested that maybe she didn't have to love him, after all" (p. 136). In addition, their marriage became "a forced arrangement day after day" (p. 212). They stopped loving and being loyal to each other and did not care for formal segregation. Lahiri (2013) comments, "They had no bothered to obtain a divorce. Gauri had not asked for one, and Subhash had not cared" (p. 222). For the final settlement at the end of the novel, Subhash writes to Gauri to sign a paper that marks their divorce. Thus, these textual incidents confirm Gauri's feminist separatist identity.

3.3. Why Gauri Is Lesbian and Separatist

Lesbianism and separatism are almost same in terms of practice. Separatism is "undeniably connected with Lesbianism" (Frye, 1993, p. 91). A lesbian separates herself from the males and the male-dominated society. Now, the matter of discussion is why Gauri is represented in *The Lowland* as a lesbian and separatist. This point can be described with the references to Tyson (2006) and Frye (1993). Tyson (2006) writes, "Lesbians deny patriarchy one of its powerful tools" (p. 325). Frye indicates to exclude the master, to declare not as inferior or parasite and to control power. At the end of her article, she articulates to get rid of being "outlawed, suppressed, harassed, ridiculed, and punished", women become separatists. She (1993) adds that women separate them from men "for the sake of something else like independence, liberty, growth, invention, sisterhood, safety, health, or the practice of novel or heretical customs" (p. 92).

Gauri became lesbian and separated from Subhash to exclude the authoritativeness of males, to enjoy full-fledged freedom of her own, to deny the myth of motherhood as mentioned by Putri (2016) and Kiczkowski (2018), to break social construction, and finally to establish her own entity of freedom, and life. Lahiri (2013) writes that Gauri was "disoriented by the sense of freedom" (p. 174). She did everything to achieve her freedom.

Dependence of men upon women and women upon men is termed as parasitism by Marilyn Frye. Initially, Gauri depends upon Subhash for economic reasons; hence, she is a parasite. When she leaves the house and becomes dependent on her own salary, she announces herself as not a parasite. To declare her independent identity, she separates herself. Unwillingness to give birth to a child is another sign of separatism as lesbians and separatists consider a child as a parasite and everything given by men, even it might be the fetus. In *The Lowland*, Gauri prevents the conception of one child of Subhash. Frye (1993) writes, "The woman who is free to see the fetus as a parasite might be free to see the man as a parasite" (p. 94). Frye uses the idea of Caroline Whitbeck, which suggests that women's rejection of the fetus is even more directly a rejection of the male. Gauri also rejects the fetus of Subhash, and thus, she excludes the male authority. Lahiri (2013) writes, "He'd hoped that by now Gauri would be ready to have a child with him, and to give Bela a companion. He'd gone so far as to suggest it one day, saying he did not want to deny Bela a sibling... She told him she would think about it in another year or two... in the medicine cabinet was a new packet of birth-control pills" (p. 160). Lahiri adds, "Becoming a mother was the one thing in her life she was determined to prevent from happening" (p. 161). In short, Gauri consciously avoids parasitism on patriarchy and establishes her separatist self.

Separatism also discusses male parasitism, which means "males must have access to women." Frye focuses on the idea of access and exercise of power. She (1993) writes, "Access is one of the faces of Power. Female denial of male access to females substantially cuts off a flow of benefits, but it has also the form and full portent of assumption of power" (p. 95). She adds, "The slave who excludes the master from her hut thereby declares herself not a slave" (p. 96). She further opines, "When women separate (withdraw, break out, regroup, transcend, shove aside, step outside, migrate, say no), we are simultaneously controlling access and defining" (p. 97). When women reject male access, therefore they deny the controlling power of the male. Gauri is very rigid in giving sexual access to Subhash. After living under the same roof when Bela was born, "at first she expressed no obvious desire, only a willingness" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 174). Gauri shows no explicit sexual desire for Subhash and thus limits his access to her life intentionally, which eliminates the patriarchal exercise of power, which functions through generating contradictions to claim supremacy (Etedali Rezapoorian, 2024, p. 121).

Gauri pursues her dream, and hence, she is seen to publish three books of her own in philosophy. She had "to understand things" from the beginning till the end of the novel. She understands the myth of traditional motherhood and rejects it. To break the barriers, she separates herself from everything that fetters her and enjoys life. If Gauri is analyzed from traditional

perspectives, she cannot be justified; instead, she will be proved as a failed mother, unsuccessful wife, and too much materialistic being, but if Gauri is interpreted as a chain breaker and as a change maker, she can be justified, and she could do so being a separatist.

Her lesbian status is not her only sexual identity, but she feels the sexual intercourse too profoundly, and she senses Lorna. Her feelings and sense of lesbianism indicate her denial of the patriarchal role. Both lesbianism and separatism voice for the exclusion of the master, for the denial of the oppressive authoritativeness of patriarchy, and for enjoying full-fledged freedom. Noted that Gauri's hatred against Subhash is not seen in *The Lowland*; rather, she wants liberty from all sorts of captivity.

While Gauri was living with Subhash, she had to look after Bela. She could not concentrate on her studies, though she kept the door of her room closed so that Bela could grow up herself and need not depend upon her mother. Gauri intentionally never grows any emotional attachment with Bela or Subhash. She was preparing herself to separate from the beginning. When Bela visited the country of her father with Subhash, Gauri took a job at a farfetched land and left the house with a letter. She taught Philosophy there for many years. She became what she wanted to be. Lahiri might want to show how Gauri radically leaves the responsibilities imposed upon any Indian woman traditionally. Some women are very loyal to these traditional responsibilities; separatists even get separated from these loyalists. In *The Lowland*, Gauri left the family of in-laws as her mother-in-law was a part of the loyalists who did not raise any questions about the existing traditional duty of a mother. Gauri left her second husband's house as she did not play the role of a traditional mother; instead, she broke the myth of motherhood.

4. Conclusion

Gauri is a radical character in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*. She epitomizes the thirst for women's liberty, freedom, and a life of their own. She separates herself from the male-dominated society and male-designed institutions to achieve this goal. Even giving sexual access to men resembles giving them access to control and domination. Hence, she separates herself from the male society and chooses homosexuality. Even when Gauri finds loyalists to patriarchy as her mother-in-law was, she leaves them. Gauri segregates herself and becomes a lesbian to free herself from the grip of patriarchy. It is worth mentioning that she is not a pure lesbian; rather, there are elements of lesbianism in her. Gauri silently stands against cultural confinement, which limits her freedom. This paper finds out the elements that prove Gauri is a lesbian and a feminist separatist. The research does not cease by just sorting out the elements but instead discusses the reasons why Gauri chooses to be lesbian and separatist.

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