

The Impact of the Internationalism in the Characters of "The Lowland"

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Abstract

In her complex novel *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri examines how globalisation influences the characters' personal histories, relationships, and emotional landscapes. The story, which takes place in both Rhode Island and Calcutta, highlights the global realities of upheaval, migration, and cultural negotiating. This research delves into the ways in which internationalism shapes the primary characters' identities, ideologies, and personal decisions, with a special focus on Subhash, Udayan, and Gauri. By placing characters' experiences within larger political and global frameworks—including the Naxalite Movement—the story connects local conflicts with ideological currents on a global scale. Udayan's revolutionary activity exemplifies resistance based on local but internationally impacted political ideals, whereas Subhash's departure to the US represents the quest of professional and intellectual prospects, reflecting a globalised perspective. In her journey through a foreign cultural milieu, Gauri negotiates intellectual independence and emotional detachment, further complicating the notion of internationalism. Lahiri uses these people to show how globalisation changes people's identities, memories, and relationships, not only as a matter of moving from one place to another. Roots and rootlessness, tradition and modernity, individual desire and societal duty are all themes that the book explores. This study contends that internationalism in *The Lowland* serves as a double-edged sword, bringing about freedom but also leading to isolation and disintegration. At the end of the day, the research shows that Lahiri's books add to diasporic literature since they shed light on the difficulties of living across cultures and the long-lasting effects of global connectivity on people's lives.

Keywords: *Internationalism; Character's; The Lowland*

1. Introduction

With its in-depth examination of migration, global interconnections, and identity, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* is a major addition to modern diasporic writing. The story takes place in two very different places, Calcutta and Rhode Island, and the characters are positioned within a transnational framework that echoes the larger issue of internationalism. Through its complex plot, Lahiri explores the ways in which people's relationships, sense of self, and cultural belonging are transformed as they traverse physical and psychological borders. In *The Lowland*, internationalism encompasses more than just physical migration; it also involves philosophical discussions, personal growth, and cultural compromises. The novel's historical setting, the Naxalite Movement, establishes a bridge between domestic political upheaval and international revolutionary ideology. Particularly in postcolonial cultures coping with inequality and transformation, this background emphasises how global currents of thinking impact individual acts and life trajectories. The influence of internationalism may be seen by looking at the lives of the protagonists—Subhash, Udayan, and Gauri. Udayan's participation in political upheaval represents the impact of transnational ideologies based on resistance, while Subhash's relocation to the US represents the ambitions linked with intellectual freedom and global mobility. The ins and outs of cultural adaptation and emotional solitude in a new country are laid bare by Gauri's trip, which is characterised by displacement and self-reflection. Because internationalism frequently places

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characters at the crossroads of several cultural and ideological currents, this research seeks to analyse how it influences their identities and choices. It delves into the conflicts of tradition vs modernisation, belonging versus alienation, and country versus diaspora. This paper's overarching goal is to show that Lahiri paints internationalism as a complex phenomena, one that may lead to personal development and new insights while also causing alienation and loneliness. The Lowland is essentially an enthralling account of how migrations across continents and interactions across cultures alter our understanding of ourselves. This introductory section lays the groundwork for a more in-depth analysis of the characters and how their identities change in a society that is becoming more interdependent.

2. Concept of Internationalism in *The Lowland*

Jhumpa Lahiri views globalisation in *The Lowland* as more than just moving to a new place; it is a complex and ever-changing process. Within this global context, it includes the flow of ideas, the mixing of cultures, and the alteration of individual identities. Intercutting between Rhode Island and Calcutta, the story shows how people take on the traits of many cultures. Internationalism, as Lahiri stresses, does not necessarily lead to harmony but rather creates conflicts between the familiar and the unfamiliar. It bridges vast distances and opens doors to new ideas and feelings, but it also breaks continuity and causes internal splits. Thus, globalisation is shown in the book as a force that shapes modern life, both in a way that brings people together and in a way that drives them apart.

Migration and Identity Transformation

Migration is a transformational event, and the character of Subhash serves as a fascinating illustration of this phenomenon. As a reflection of the opportunities that globalisation presents, his voyage to the United States is motivated by his aspirations to achieve academic success and his desire to better himself. On the other hand, this change is accompanied by significant difficulties on both an emotional and cultural level. As Subhash successfully navigates a new environment, he struggles to reconcile the standards of his Indian upbringing with those of the Western culture. This causes him to feel a sense of alienation. His identity continues to develop into a hybrid form, which is affected by both the surroundings of his history and his present. It is not migration that Lahiri presents as a straight march toward success; rather, it is migration that is shown as a continual negotiation of belonging. The internal struggles that Subhash experiences shed light on the fact that identity in a globalised society is elastic, frequently characterised by ambiguity and a need for rootedness.

Political Internationalism and Ideological Influence

Political internationalism is vividly expressed in Udayan, whose participation in the Naxalite Movement illustrates the penetration of global revolutionary ideas into local contexts. Udayan's engagement in the Naxalite Movement is a prime example of this phenomenon. As a result of his exposure to Marxist and Maoist philosophy, Udayan has aligned himself with a movement that is working to combat the injustices that are embedded in the system. Lahiri uses his persona to illustrate how individuals might be inspired to join in radical activity by understanding how international political currents can influence them. On the other hand, Udayan's dedication reveals the potentially catastrophic nature of ideological fanaticism with its implications. As a result of his acts, not only did he suffer terrible penalties for himself, but he also suffered consequences for his family, emphasising the human costs associated with political activity. Through the character of Udayan, the story highlights the dual nature of internationalism as a source of both empowerment and conflict with other nations.

Cultural Displacement and Emotional Alienation

Gauri exemplifies the psychological complications that come with living in a multicultural environment. The fact that she moved to the United States puts her in a position where she is free to express her thoughts, but it also makes her feel even more isolated. Gauri's emotional distance from her immediate surroundings and her disconnection from her history are two examples that highlight the alienating impacts of internationalism. Lahiri presents her as a character who is extremely introspective and who seeks meaning via philosophical and scholastic endeavours. Because of this,

she distances herself from the traditional social duties that are expected of her. This disconnection, on the other hand, comes at the expense of her personal connections, notably the connection she has with her husband and children. This experience demonstrates that cultural dislocation can result in a fractured sense of self, in which emotional attachments are broken in the quest of individual autonomy. Gauri's experience demonstrates this phenomenon.

Diasporic Experience and Hyphenated Identity

In *The Lowland*, the diasporic situation is characterised by the emergence of hyphenated identities that represent the presence of many cultural affinities. These identities are a reflection of the diasporic condition. Subhash and Gauri are examples of characters that live in a liminal area, which means that they are neither completely absorbed into American culture nor completely attached to their Indian roots. This dichotomy generates an ongoing conflict between the process of assimilation and the commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage. In this book, Lahiri investigates the ways in which persons who have experienced diaspora build identities that are malleable and flexible, but are frequently accompanied by feelings of incompleteness. Due to the fact that it is no longer associated with a specific geographical location, the concept of "home" has become unclear. Instead, it is now understood to be an emotional and psychological construct. Internationalism is proven to change traditional conceptions of belonging and identity when viewed through this perspective.

Internationalism as Opportunity and Burden

In conclusion, Jhumpa Lahiri portrays internationalism as a force that is contradictory in that it gives both opportunities and problems. On the one hand, it makes it possible to get access to education, intellectual development, and personal independence. This can be observed in the options that are accessible to Subhash and Gauri living in the United States. On the other side, it contributes to the development of emotional difficulties, such as feelings of isolation, alienation, and identity crises. The events that the protagonists go through provide the impression that internationalism is very subjective and is formed by the decisions and circumstances of each individual. Lahiri does not give an idealised version of globalisation; rather, she provides a realistic representation of the complexity of globalisation, highlighting the fact that the advantages of internationalism are sometimes accompanied by enormous human consequences. *The Lowland* offers a significant reflection on the human condition in a world that is becoming increasingly linked through the use of this balanced perspective.

3. Jhumpa Lahiri:

In a few of the study articles that have been published, the work of Jhumpa Lahiri has been taken into consideration while doing research. These are some of them, in order:

The individual known as Vijay Mishra. Routledge, 2007: *Indian Diaspora Literature: Theorising the Diasporic Imaginary*. The author differentiates between the "old Indian Diaspora" and the reasons they left the nation, and between the "new Indian Diaspora" and the reasons they choose to dwell in other countries. It is essential to consider the specific placement of both the "old" and the "new" inside nation states, as Mishra correctly says, in order to comprehend the Indian Diaspora in its entirety.

Agrawal, Malti. *Writings from the Indian diaspora in English literature*. (Agrawal) offers a helpful compilation of twenty-two research articles on the literary works of several distinguished diasporic writers in Atlantic Publishers & Distributors (P) Ltd.'s 2009 publication. Every one of them speaks for the oppressed people who are far from their homeland and who face prejudice because of their ethnicity, colour, or religion. Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee, A.K. Ramanujan, Robinton Mistry, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Uma Parameswaran are among the writers featured in this list. Vikram Seth is also on the list. Jhumpa was born in London in 1967 and is an Indian American of second generation. Both of her parents came to the United States from India's West Bengal state. One of the finest works of literature regarding immigration is her critically acclaimed 2004 book, *The Namesake*. Lahiri deftly weaves together a number of themes in this work, including the divide between the generations of immigrants, the clash of eastern and western ideologies, the upheaval of cultures, the longing for a bygone past, feelings of isolation

and hopelessness, and the loss of identity. Lahiri received acclaim for her 1999 book of short tales "Interpreter of Maladies," which won the Pulitzer Prize for literature. Both her debut book, "The Namesake," and her collections of short stories effectively show that the families she depicts are fundamentally unhappy. She was nominated for the Man Booker Prize for her novella "Low Land," which is about a blood bond that gets ruthlessly ruined by politics. Cultural collision and the search for one's own identity are major themes in Lahiri's work. That Lahiri, despite having been born and raised in a foreign land, never loses touch with her nativeness—a crucial aspect of Diaspora literature—is demonstrated brilliantly when she attempts, through her own eyes, to portray some authentic native characters residing in India. Both the first and second generations of migrant families tell their stories in Lahiri's fictions, which shed light on the challenges of assimilating into a new culture while also honouring the traditions of their ancestors. This is a significant way in which Lahiri has carved out a place for herself in Diaspora literature.

The following is an explanation provided by Shreejana Acharya in her February 2016 article "Dislocated Identities in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*":

While attempting to hold on to their emotional connections with one another, all of the characters fight for cultural identity in the face of modernization's pressures.

The Lowland: Specifications

The *Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri and Dr. Venkata Ramani's Cultural Alienation and Inner Conflict. According to Challa's study article, *The Lowland* is an energetic and all-encompassing narrative that follows one family over nearly half a century of Indian and American history, delving deeply into the intersection of politics and human experiences. This article provides a critical analysis of the book, focusing on the protagonist's struggles with cultural alienation and inner turmoil. In an ever-changing cultural landscape, it aspires to chart the cultural effluvium and second-generation moral problems. Throughout the narrative of immigrants, Jhumpa's themes of unrequited love, fate, impulses, displacement, and return resound strongly. An expertly crafted tale of destiny and free will, exile and redemption, this book is both riveting and intensely personal. Subhash and Udayan are inseparable brothers in this story. They share a love of radios, Morse code, and watching out for one another at school; they were raised in the Calcutta neighbourhood of Tollygunge. So many times Subhash and Udayan had travelled over the lowland—that is how it is depicted geographically. They would take this shorter route to a field outside of the area to play football. This quotation serves to explain the title of the work. The author Lahiri "Subhash was thirteen, older by fifteen months, and the two brothers were very close and related through cultural and psychophysical traits," the author writes. However, without Udayan, he had no identity. His sibling was always by his side, even in his earliest recollections. The number seven is from Lahiri.

Despite their distinctions, they shared enough social and cultural traits that others always assumed the other was calling their name. This made them both habitually answer the same way. Furthermore, since their voices were almost identical, it was occasionally unclear who had responded. He finds out about the violence that ensued as a result of the Naxalite Movement there. Udayan, Subhash's younger and more adventurous brother, joins the Maoist "Naxalite" political organization, which seeks to improve the lives of India's impoverished by a violent revolt. After marrying Gauri, Udayan becomes a member of the Naxalite Movement. At initially, Gauri shows no interest in Udayan after meeting him through her brother (Lahiri, 12). But as time goes on, they converse and share thoughts. Udayan reminisces on his time at CPI, while Gauri delves into philosophical topics. Plus, Gauri wasn't very invested in Udayan at first. "A car accident on a mountain road had killed them," Gauri continued to elucidate the psychophysical traits. Despite the terrible weather, they decided to take a scenic drive to a hill station. The age of Gauri was sixteen. No one ever came to see her or her family in that peaceful house after it was sold. It was devastating to lose them all at once, but she was even more devastated by the recent deaths of her grandparents. Subhash receives the devastating news of Udayan's death in a letter from his parents not long after he starts his third year of university. Referenced in Lahiri (68).

Both Udayan and Subhash find their ideals tested when they depart for university; Subhash goes to Rhode Island for graduate school in preparation for his job, while Udayan joins the Naxalite organization. When Subhash's sincere student activist flatmate Richard makes the naive comment "Naxalbari?," he realises that the press is completely

oblivious to the enormous carnage that the Naxalite Movement caused and is instead concentrating on the Vietnam War. How about that? When Subhash's first year in America comes to a close, he finds out that Udayan has married Gauri. The parents of Udayan were not happy with his marriage to Gauri, so they sent a letter to Subhash expressing their cultural views, which read: "We hope, when the time comes, you will trust us to settle your future, to choose your wife and to be present at your wedding." We are crossing our fingers that you won't be as irresponsible as your brother was. (Lahiri, 76 pages)

Subhash was a Rhode Island resident. Quotes like "He had not seen his family for a year and a half" illustrate Subhash's social and psychological traits. Not sat down with them, at the conclusion of the day, to share a meal. There was no landline for his family in Tollygunge. He had informed them of his arrival through a telegraph. He was getting used to the idea of receiving updates on them just through written word.

Along with his one pal Holly, he went on several adventures. "The kestrels glided over the bluff and out to sea, their wings motionless, their bodies seeming to drift backward when the wind was strong," is the topographical feature of the island that Holly and Subhash visited. Across the lake that day, Holly indicated Montauk, which lies near the tip of Long Island. According to Lahiri (97). Even while he felt an overwhelming sense of love for Holly, he also knew that his parents would never approve. "The fact that she was American was the least of it," is one example of a thought that reveals psychophysical, cultural, and social traits. The idea that she was formally married to another man, her age, her kid, and her predicament would be very unacceptable to his parents. "Those things would make them judge her."

The chapter concludes with a message from Udayan's family reporting his death. This year, none of his family's packages arrived, which is a representation of his psychophysical nature. Just a telegram. Laying still on the surface of the ocean were the two phrases that made up the message. Deceased is Udayan. Return if at all possible. According to Lahiri (100). Whenever Subhash attempted to talk to his parents, they seemed uninterested. Accordingly, these quotations demonstrate psychophysical character: He found it difficult to communicate with them. His father told him that work was the same as it usually been when he asked how his days were going at the workplace. According to Lahiri (113). She told him her eyes couldn't handle the strain anymore when he asked his mum how many orders there had been that year to embroider saris for the tailor business. When Subhash gets back to Calcutta, he discovers that Gauri is residing with his parents, who are rather rude to her. A kid will be born to Gauri and Udayan. The father and mother, Bijoli and Gauri, want to abandon Gauri in favour of taking the kid. Gauri is not wanted by Udayan's parents; they only desire a grandchild. This makes Subhash sad, and it is in this context that his psychophysical nature shines through. "They want you out of this house, Gauri," he informed Gauri in that scenario. No one cares about you enough to offer treatment. They prefer to spend time alone with their grandson. Even though Gauri first resisted telling him, she eventually gave up and told him what happened to Udayan. His parents still wouldn't tell him. The paramilitary police show up at his parents' house after he successfully evades them one night. If Udayan does not turn himself in, the police chief will kill his parents and Gauri, who he has ordered out onto the street. In the process of surrendering, Udayan, who is close in the water, is shot and murdered. Subhash begs Gauri to marry him and go to Rhode Island with him so that he can avoid having his parents take custody of their kid and so that he can show Udayan some respect (Lahiri, 143)

Even though she is still upset, Gauri accepts Subhash's proposal. Rhode Island was Gauri's destination after her marriage to Subhash. Following his arrival, he provided Gauri with the following statements about the area: To her, he said, this was Boston. Just to the south of here was Rhode Island. The city crumbled as they emerged from a tunnel that had submerged beneath a river and passed a harbour. Even on the narrow streets of Calcutta, he drove faster than she was accustomed to and with more consistency than a car could muster. It frightened her because there was constant motion. She had wished she could have been on the plane, far from Earth and the sensation of being still (Lahiri, 148)

But she diverts her attention by sneaking into philosophy classes at the local university. After that, Bela is born. Knowing that Subhash is not Bela's real father makes Gauri uncomfortable, yet he is an excellent dad to her. When Bela is five years old, Gauri starts graduate school, and Subhash promises to make time to watch her. After meeting professor Otto Weiss, who sees her potential, Gauri decides to get a Ph.D. When Gauri tells Subhash that she feels bad about keeping Bela in the dark about Udayan, he and she both agree that they would tell Bela the truth about

Udayan together. Even if Subhash's father passes away occasionally while he is in the United States, he cannot go to Calcutta to pay his respects till Bela is seven years old. Subhash writes a letter to his mother, advising her not to tell anybody about Udayan's relationship with Bela, and invites her along on their vacation. In his mind, Bijoli was transported back to the days when Dutch engineers were busy with pipe work. Also, the time when Udayan and Subhash first arrived in Tollygunge. It has occurred on a grand scale in the north, at Bidhannagar, which is one of the geographical features of Tollygunge. She had read in the news about how Dutch engineers were transforming water into land by sealing off lakes and building pipes to bring in silt from the Hooghly. In its stead, they had built Salt Lake, a planned metropolis. (Lahiri,215)

On the other hand, Bijoli begs Bela, "Where is my father?" while in a trance, and then she snaps out of it, nearly disclosing the truth. After seeing photos of Udayan, Bela approaches Subhash to find out more. His response is that he is her uncle Udayan, who has passed away. They buy presents for Bijoli and Gauri during their last days in Calcutta. Upon their arrival back in Rhode Island, they discover that Gauri has departed. After telling Subhash she has left for California and that he has been a good parent, she writes a message in Bengali advising him to raise her alone. Because, at first, it was the living, not the dead, who frightened Gauri in California, she discovered some psychophysical traits when she moved there for employment. Bela or Subhash may suddenly appear at a meeting or a lecture hall, and she would be terrified. Starting from her vantage point at the front of the classroom, she would glance around on the first day of each new class, partly hoping that someone would be sitting there. Bela requires the help of a psychotherapist as she approaches puberty since her mental health is deteriorating. After getting well, Bela is heavily involved in extracurriculars when she's a high school student. A liberal arts college in the Midwest is where she goes to university. After finishing college, Bela takes up nomadic living, touring the US to promote environmental protection. (Lahiri,279-280)

4. Conclusion

Jhumpa Lahiri delves deeply into the influence of internationalism on human lives in her multi-layered novel *The Lowland*. The story shows how global influences influence individuals identities, relationships, and life choices in complicated and sometimes conflicting ways via the intertwined experiences of Gauri, Subhash, and Udayan. This research shows that the novel's internationalism encompasses more than just physical movement; it also involves cultural discussions, ideological exchanges, and emotional transformations. Distance, both physical and mental, as well as cultural and psychological, are represented by the disparity between Rhode Island and Calcutta. As an example of adaptation and compromise, Subhash's migration is shown in Udayan's involvement with the Naxalite Movement. This shows how global political beliefs impact local reality. In contrast, Gauri's story shows how cultural dislocation and intellectual independence may hurt emotionally. Internationalism, according to Lahiri, is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it opens doors to new experiences, knowledge, and self-discovery; on the other, it causes people to feel isolated, broken, and unwelcome. The lives of the protagonists show how being globally linked does not ensure emotional fulfilment or stability; rather, it frequently forces people to constantly negotiate their location and identity. Finally, because it offers a complex and realistic view of internationalism, *The Lowland* makes a substantial contribution to diasporic literature. It stresses the fact that in today's more interconnected world, people are impacted by various factors that make their lives more interesting and challenging. Ultimately, Lahiri's writing stresses that, influenced greatly by globalisation, the quest for belonging and identity is a personal and continuous process.

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