



Diasporic Identity and Politics in Jhumpa Lahiri’s “The Lowland”

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Abstract

The paper aims to analyze the diasporic paradox and sensitivity depicted throughout “The Lowland” by Jhumpa Lahiri, within the three distinguished elements which are sense of belonging and identity, family relations and conflicts, and political perspective. To achieve the objective, this paper is divided into several sections. The next section focuses on a comprehensive explanation on the themes depicted in this short story and past studies that have previously analyzed the story based on the elements stated above. Following that, detailed elaboration on the post-colonial theory that is used as the framework of the analysis of the story is laid out and how this theory is used to analyze the story is justified. Analysis of the correlation between post-colonial theory, and the concept of identity and sense of belonging, family relations and conflicts, and political perspective within the story is laid out in the succeeding section.

Key words: Diaspora; Identity; Lahiri; Politics; Post-colonialism; “The Lowland”

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the release of her newest book titled *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri as yet again established her literary value

as an influential postcolonial novelist. The book analyzes the livelihoods of white collar class taught Bengali settlers or coming to America to look for advanced brought or education by destiny. These migrants are fixated by their inclination, dejection and the blame of evaporated associations with family and darlings in their local nation. Notwithstanding these notable topics of Jhumpa Lahiri, an incredible anecdote about a genuine political revolt occurred in certain pieces of India in 1960 and which known as Naxalite development can be vividly observed in the initial segment of “The Lowland”. The second piece of the narration features it is broad consequences for the one family.

It tends to be seen that the story is a blend of political and authentic occasion of history with individual and Mitra family. Depending on this foundation, Jhumpa Lahiri centres the diasporic predicament of her characters whose lives revolves on the differences of living in India and the United States throughout fifty years. The story manages the subject of displacement and acculturation with endeavors made to build network between the characters. It can be distinguished that the story spotlights on people and their wealth instead of centering on aggregate component in the diaspora. Although *The Lowland* cannot be perceived in its complete and usual colloquial sense as a diasporic literature, one can undoubtedly pinpoint out the diasporic paradox whereby the characters linked to multiple social interactions strike a deal with their individual choices and fates. Thus, this study tries to analyze the diasporic paradox and sensitivity depicted in “The Lowland” by Jhumpa Lahiri.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sense of Belonging and Identity

Identity includes the matter of oneself and the way one present himself in the interaction with the society (Abu

Jweid, 2016: 530). This deduces deliberation regarding the involvement of self-questioning and the community which one lives in. In a paper written by Skulj (2000), the concept of one's identity is viewed as a composition of how one defines himself around the society he was brought up in and the one he is currently residing in. On the other hand, the idea of belonging can be defined in three intangible notions which are who we actually are, who we are as to what we think of ourselves, and who we are as to what the society around us presume. This is due to the fact that the concept of identity encompasses the sense of desire and aversion (Abu Jweid, 2020: 10). Meer (2014) in her study stated that belonging centres on the ideas of social class, ethnic roots, gender, and religion. According to Chaix (2014), both identity and sense of belonging are correlated to each other when social interactions get involved.

The concept of identity and sense of belonging is no longer foreign in literary studies (Abu Jweid, 2022: 6). In the modern age, the existential conundrum of belonging and identity has plagued many in the literary world (Hussain, 2013). It carries multiple issues circulated around exegesis of ethnicity, religion, gender, and race. As claimed by Shahid (2016), literature work as equipment to conduct an interpretation since it addresses the issues of diaspora and identity. It also allows the stories of identity crisis and the feeling of not fitting in the community to be told.

2.2 Family Relations and Conflicts

Individuals need to rely on others for their survival and life while they exist in communities. Relation is a social association which arises from engagement between different individuals. Relationships are the societal cultural representations and portray themselves in different ways. They can always be categorized generally into external and internal. To illustrate further, the relationships of an external nature are friendship, fellowship, companionship while internal relationships like those among siblings and their parents which can be inherited. As stated by Ebertz (2014), novels have flourished as a dominant living entity discourse over the past several decades, and they are literature which is profoundly composed and exposes family relationships

Family clashes are identified with love among individuals, and literature is about emotions, and how people react, likewise love and sentiment. That is the motivation behind why the two components are related in the aggregate unaware of the number of inhabitants in all occasions. Literature revolves around predicaments, dilemmas, and conflicts, not only within us but also with other people. According to Azcona (2019), in spite of the fact that the contention itself is not entirely negative, its tranquil goals are a basic to proceed with the serene family congruity. Sharma (1997) claimed that contemporary literature includes bits and pieces grappling with the expectations of meaningful interrelation, and

thus represents the adjustment particularly in family interactions taking place in modern society.

2.3 Political Perspectives

As any piece of literature could be said to represent objectively the political landscape of its time of creation, the nature of politics in the modern literature seems to create a far more explicitly challenging and eloquently legalistic sense of purpose and implicit incentive. In a paper written by Omohundro (2006), he stated that in some context, the modern trend towards the "political novel" could be seen as an entirely apparent effort on account of the writer to support his particular conception of the role of government. Conolly and Haydar (2008) highlighted that literature shows prominent link to the political related discourse. Stephen (2007) also implied that alternatively, literature can be deemed as an impact of liberal causes, implying that some political ecosystems lend credence to some forms of literature, and thus clarifying certain elements of literary occurrences in political backgrounds.

Instability and discourse in politics are not breakthroughs of the millennium. Over the ages, literature has tried to comprehend the intricacies of that evasive and omnipresent political power. Marks (2012) in his book claimed that in an effort to apprehend the meaning of power and how it functions, political novelists have also succeeded at pressuring, confronting and challenging, bludgeoning inequality and injustice, and surmising about the prospects, whether better or worse. Whitebrook (1995) asserted that traditionally, relations have been rendered in literature as an outline or analogy to politics, or as a type of education that involves ethics, and this leads to certain alternatives for political studies which are political anthropology of literature or literature as a major etymology. This further supported by Philips (2013) as she affirmed that literary allusions are often used in the advancement of political beliefs.

2.4 Past Analysis

In a critical analysis done by Pius (2014), he concluded that *The Lowland* is an immortal story of feelings, individuals' convictions, their vulnerabilities, their needs and battles all woven together and enlivened by the effortlessness of articulation, a liquid pace of account and multi-dimensional viewpoints. With everything taken into account, this goal-oriented book warrants a genuine perusing, considering the economy of itemizing that has been placed into the story. The wealth of the enthusiastic complexities included make for a compensating understanding encounter. With a general, addictive plot, *The Lowland* still strips bare the personalities sibling, darling, father, and mother, frequently with only a little, basic motion. It challenges the governmental issues of nationality with both despicable edginess and progressive energy. It makes you need and expectation

and hopelessness with crushing accounts of enthusiasm and lack of interest. Lahiri's feeling of history and its results is as savvy as her grip of the human heart. She weaves her story with a definite hand around the strings of the two sibling's meeting lives, moving quickly to and fro from one mainland to the next and extending over the seven decades from Subhash's introduction to the world in 1943 to the present day. It sounds epic in clear, particularly when joined with the loaded, strong topics, the entwining of legislative issues and sexuality, the closing up of enthusiastic injuries also, complaints, and the redundancy of spots and characters. In spite of the fact that it plays with insider facts and passionate defining moments (regardless of whether Bela will get some answers concerning her organic dad, whether Udayan was a casualty of police mercilessness or a cheated, savage man), it appears to have no solitary direction and no prevailing thought past that of generational float.

In another analysis done by Ganvir (2015), she deduced that Gouri in America pronounced herself not quite the same as other Indian lady and acknowledged the American feministic way in her viewpoint. In any case, in other path for her this was her reaction to dispose of herself and her past, from her characteristic excellence which Udayan used to respect. This white feministic approach towards life drives her to monetary and family opportunity, in short freedom. She wanted to think about in light of the fact that her granddad passed on with a book on his chest who was a Professor of Sanskrit. She needed to study and encourage reasoning with the goal that she could fathom the riddle of time. It appears that from youth she was a puzzle to herself and that may be the explanation she could get a handle on the way of thinking so effectively. Her voyaging to new places, her divided presence or more the entirety of her uncommon choice made her a lady with different sides in her life in California, a legitimate educator and an untrustworthy spouse and mother. She used to achieve gatherings to look after perceivability what's more, status, a phony status. It is said like in affection nothing can be demolished perpetually and for Gouri's situation implosion was her vengeance to Udayan whom she cherished beyond all doubt. So despite the fact that she was attempting to get herself far from Bela she used to search her on web destinations. All and all Gouri for an amazing duration took care of pursuing her fantasies and toward the end taken off alone lamenting for her mix-ups. Lahiri encircled Gouri and every one of her characters in such manner to show her liable for a strange happenings in a long voyage of a white collar class glad family.

3. METHODOLOGY

This exploration falls into subjective inquire about explicitly with content investigation technique. It is

helpful for the scientist who expects to comprehend characters' encounters and the marvel depicted in the content. The essential wellspring of the information of this exploration was acquired from a novel composed by Jhumpa Lahiri in 2013 entitled *The Lowland*. The information taken from Lahiri's *The Lowland* are in the types of words, sentences and sections identified with the subjects. In gathering the information of the examination, two stages are utilized by the analyst. The initial step is perusing and rehashing the message altogether so as to get a profound comprehension of the content and produce a profundity elucidation of the wonder under dialog. The subsequent advance is recording and gathering the information taken from the content.

In breaking down the information, a few stages are followed:

- Conducting a nearby perusing the content and re-try it once more
- Recording the information identified with the topics by denoting the book with pen and compose the information in the notes
- Arranging furthermore, gathering the pertinent information dependent on the classifications expected to answer the examination questions
- Examining and translating the information
- Separating the information so as to produce post-imperialism elucidation.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – POST COLONIALISM

Based on a study done by Al-Saidi (2014), post-colonialism initially highlighted on the written literature in formerly or presently occupied countries. He continues to claim that this theory addresses people and their individual experiences in the aspects of marginalization and displacement from the point of view of either the people who colonized or was colonized. Post-colonialism theory in literature brings up the issues that engage in someone's gender, identity, race, culture, and ethnicity. Diyazi (2015) affirmed that post-colonial literature accentuate on the effects of colonization on culture for the people who colonized and the people who were colonized. Eaglton (1996) further stated that post-colonialism is resulted from the multiculturalism, decolonization, and shifts in nationalism.

According to Kehinde (2006), post-colonial literature engage the readers with the aspect both parties which are the superior and the inferior. The postcolonial experience and especially the diasporic experience is often characterized by a co-existence of opposites which is a feature of consciousness, which exists along with other co-existence of silence and dynamism, singularity and multiplicity, manifest and unmanifest (Grace, 2007). Shands (2008) asserted that postcolonial literature is

significant in English since it allows everyone to pay attention and engage in a cross-cultural and multi-voiced discourse.

Presenting new stylish standards and methods of examination and testing ideas of English selectiveness, postcolonial authors are revealing suppressed chronicles, bringing ethnic and minority interests decent varieties to the front line, and reconfiguring social structures and lifestyles recently consigned to the outskirts. Albeit English is presently the most widely used language of the globalized republic of the favored, having been embraced by ground-breaking vested parties inside the broad communications, mainstream society, promoting, and data innovation, postcolonial writing may well grow the extent of English and transform it into a less imperialistic worldwide most widely used language by grasping and reacting to abstract commitments from socially assorted territories.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Sense of Belonging

“The Lowland” is not quite the same as different works of Jhumpa as relocation and estrangement of characters isn’t caused distinctly by their diasporic issue, yet it likewise originates from the decisions, activities of the characters. The experience of characters disengagement and estrangement originates from culture of American in the underlying days after their appearance. When preoccupied in his initial research work, Subhash begins to feel a meaning of isolation, solitude, like illustrated in this text.

“Sailing even slightly east reminded Subhash of how far away he was from his family. He thought of the time it took to cross even a tiny portion of the earth’s surface. Isolated on the ship with the scientists and other students and crew, he felt doubly alone. Unable to fathom his future, severed from his past.” (Page 50)

Lack of family life back in Tollygunge contributes to Subhash’s alienation like the text reveals.

“For a year and a half, he had not seen his family. Not sat down with them, at the end of the day, to share a meal. In Tollygunge, his family did not have a phone line. He’d sent a telegram to let them know he’d arrived. He was learning to live without hearing their voices, to receive news of them only in writing.” (Page 50)

Subhash depression escalates as he celebrates India’s Independence Day and correlates it to his current circumstances like the text explains.

“The following day was August 15, Indian Independence. A holiday in the country, lights on government buildings, flag hoisting, and parades. An ordinary day here.” (Page 61)

After awful passing of his sibling, Subhash’s choose to wed Gauri, also get her America to spare her from the widowhood hardship. In spite of the truth that he discovers his life accomplice in Bela’s educator he feels

the aches of depression of mature age in an outsider land as the content uncovers.

“But he had lost that confidence, that intrepid sense of direction. He felt only aware now that he was alone, that he was over sixty years old, and that he did not know where he stood.” (Page 172)

It ought to likewise be noticed that Gauri, Bela, Subhash are similarly disengaged in Calcutta and Tollygunge, where everyone is aware of Udayan and his fate. In America no one recognizes what occurred with Mitra family in Calcutta that could give a fundamental space to Subhash and Gauri to begin another life. Nonetheless, their inward aggravation and mystery of Bela’s parenthood frequented their lives, and they become mentally dislodged in the diasporic condition. Gauri is a lady who can’t overlook her past, and that authorizes her into a sort of lack of approachability and distance from the present, yet in addition from her little girl Bela. She trims her hair as indicated by American style, discards her saris and endeavors to lose herself in the investigation of theory. Amusingly, sentiment of confinement comforts her as the content portrays.

“Isolation offered its own form of companionship: the reliable silence of her rooms, the steadfast tranquility of the evenings.” (Page 165)

She cannot decide between two people sticks to the memory of the Udayan demises and the mystery that she covers up. The mystery make her incapable to adjust in wherever as she was an outsider in her parents in law’s home, and she is a similarly more interesting in life of Subhash, however she prefers the secrecy that American scholarly world offers her. He generally stays under risk of police division like the novel entails.

“He had trouble hearing, asking Gauri to repeat herself. There had been damage to one of his eardrums from the explosion. He complained of dizziness, a high-pitched sound that would not go away. He said he could not hear the shortwave when she could hear it perfectly well.

He worried that he might not be able to hear the buzzer, if it rang, or the approach of a military jeep. He complained of feeling alone even though they were together. Feeling isolated in the most basic way.” (Page 78)

Gauri receives the American idea of freedom highlighting on singular autonomy and individual headway. At the focal point of the narration is Gauri’s lethargy like a mother. Before long, Gauri’s self-retained that she’s thinkabout neither her better half nor her little girl Bela. Gauri’s got engrossed with reasoning, a control that is profoundly connected with issues of life, love, fate, God, etc. The basic fixation on reasoning causes her to estrange and indifferent towards genuine human life, family holding, and love. She increasingly more and more separates herself, emptying her vitality into a doctorate in the theory.

5.2 Identity

After a beginning time, Gauri started to change in life of American. Gauri's get much required freedom in America to build up her philosophical comprehension. Dismissing the conventional personality of spouse and mother, she turned out with her new character in a diasporic problem. The significance given to singular opportunity by culture of American demonstrates accommodating to Gauri to follow her scholarly energy even at the expense of family and obligations. Diasporic of Gauri's scrape causes her to build up new personality. Gauri gets away from the weights of family obligations and connects with herself in the investigation of reasoning. She drenches herself in the hypotheses of Hegel and Einstein, which appear to rehash her fixated sentiment of temporariness. America frees her into scholarly certainty and scholarly popularity, yet then again she gets unequipped for maternal inclination towards her girl.

While making scholastic progress, Gauri additionally appreciates free and forthcoming sexual coexistence in America like she's keep up a lesbian association with Lorna. In the wake of voyaging such a great amount without anyone else picked scholastic way in America and assuming different jobs throughout everyday life, Gauri's get herself alone and confounded about her actual self and character. For her situation, the analogy alludes Gauri's to inadequacy to escape the past and 'convey' a totally new self in the United States. The content suitably depicts her situation.

““It was not unlike the way her role had changed at so many other points in the past,,,,. From wife to widow, from sister-in-law to wife, from mother to childless woman.,,, With the exception of losing Udayan, she had actively chosen to take these steps.,,,, She had married Subhash, she had abandoned Bela. She had generated alternative versions of herself, she had insisted at brutal cost on these conversions.,,,, Layering her life only to strip it bare, only to be alone in the end.... (Page 168)””

5.3 Family Relations and Crisis

The Lowland portrays the narrative of Udayan Mitra and Subhash. Regardless of their forcefully unique characters, both of them are so close. Udayan is daring and obstinate, Subhash is unmistakably increasingly alarm and progressively keen on bearing family obligations. Udayan includes in Naxalite development, the Maoist political association that cleared India during the 1960, like a youngster, resolved to develop the situation of India poor. Subhash's move to Rhode Island in order to get a doctorate, to make a profession in marine science. Anyway when Udayan met demise by police, Subhash's return to India and persuades his sibling's widow, Guari, pregnant with Bela (Udayan's kid), to wed him and move to the America. The choice and decision made and taken by characters upsets their lives and personalities. The mystery of Bela's parenthood makes Gauri and Subhash outsider to one another.

After the initial segment of the political development, the second piece of The Lowland arrangements with increased family show brought about a kind of split character and personality emergency of some fundamental characters. Udayan's marriage to Gauri and his unexpected pass turns into a starting point from which the characters of Subhash, Gauri, and Bela begin to bargain with each other. Subhash and Gauri feel isolated from Bela due to the secret of her parents, who they fear will reveal to her. The weight of the past made blame the secret of parenting a kind of vacancy and distance in their relationship..

Gauri turns out to be exceptionally capricious and uncommon character. She disposes of her parents and begins to live with freedom and freed life that is absolutely against with her local culture. Through Gauri, Jhumpa has demonstrated understanding into the internal clash of a lady who picks her scholarly life over the requests of parenthood. Despite giving birth, she never truly turns into a mother. This radical, clearly unexplainable act performed by Indian mother, can be translated like a willful discipline for being Udayan co-schemer in his fear based oppressor acts, at that point deceiving him and wedding his sibling, and for unscrupulous to Bela about her dad's character.

Subhash's not able to set up any important association with Bela and Gauri. Subhash devotes his time and vitality in raising Bela like a minding father. The information that her dad was Subhash dead sibling unites them. She grasps Subhash confidence in the real power of profound devotion and obligation that in the long run join them in affection. This likewise expels Gauri out of their life until the end of time.

5.4 Political Perspectives

The political viewpoint of the story revolves around the two siblings Subhash and Udayan Mitra and Gauri, the spouse of Udayan first and afterward of Subhash. Also, however Subhash, more seasoned by fifteen months, had no feeling of himself without Udayan, the creator cautiously and perseveringly depicts the contrasts between the two.

In the initial scarcely any pages of the novel, the writer cautiously outlines the political situation by method for authorial account to set up the peruser for the last fiasco in Udayan's life and clearly exhibits the broke any desires for adolescents like Udayan about the foundation of a legislature of laborers and workers to nullify huge scale land possessions which were guaranteed at the hour of arrangement of the left wing alliance government after a completion of almost many years of Congress administration.

Albeit, the two siblings were stunned by the news, to Udayan to whom even the golf encapsulated comprador bourgeoisie, it resembled an individual and physical blow. The Cuban Revolution, Vietnam War and approach the home, the Naxalbari uprising-all shook Udayan's

psyche horrendously and at last he got engaged with the Naxalite development drove by CharuMajumdar and KanuSanyal. Mao Zedong gave ideological authority to the development which pushed the toppling of the legislature and high societies by power and the uprising got fierce. The creator, notwithstanding, doesn't shroud her dispositions towards these progressives and proceeds to portray their strategies and dim practices in subtleties.

Exactly when the readers will be set up to dig profound into the Naxalite governmental issues, its belief system, sway or the achievement and disappointment, a mind-blowing fiasco comes to them as a message to Subhash that Udayan was assassinated. Ultimately, we have been educated through the portrayal of Gauri that Udayan had been shot and executed by the paramilitary before his relatives. The writer gives the scene much hesitance.

"There was the clean sound of the shots, followed by the sound of crows, coarsely calling, scattering."(Page 105)

6. CONCLUSION

In "The Lowland", JhumpaLahiri joined both history and beneficial encounters, to draw out a wonderful fiction saturated with segregation and blame to her heroes, connecting for compromise through familial connectedness. Jhumpahas been effective in her mental investigation of her characters, testing profound into the stun experienced by each character, making them live in disconnection and blame. That while exploring the elements of diaspora and culture with regards to characters from the group of Bengali people, Lahiri has effectively given them a widespread intrigue – making them represent the quandary of each man in each age, independent of ethnicity and culture.

With Lahiri basic, engrossing and clear portrayal, the fictionist investigates intensely familial ties and passionate connections. Her complicated exchanges with itemized perception render the story incredible and engaging. The author can let the readers go into the hearts of the characters and has effectively contacted the brains of her readers with the misfortunes and vulnerabilities looked by the characters. The Lowland rotates around minute perception of existence with incredible tension pages after pages. Indeed, Jhumpa Lahiri has demonstrated her most elevated abstract aptitude and quality as an engrossing story teller.

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