

**PERSPECTIVE OF REVOLUTION, TRAGEDY AND LOVE IN JHUPA  
LAHIRI'S *THE LOWLAND***

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Jhupa Lahiri is an Indian American author. Her fiction is autobiographical and frequently draws upon her own experiences as well as those of her parents, friends, acquaintances, and others in the Bengali communities with which she is familiar. Her novel *The Lowland* has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and for Fiction. Her debut short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and her first novel, *The Namesake* (2003), was adapted into the popular film of the same name. She was born on July 11, 1967 in Nilanjana Sudeshna, the daughter of Indian immigrants from the state of West Bengal. Lahiri family moved to the United States when she was two; Lahiri considers herself an American, stating, "I wasn't born here, but I might as well have been."<sup>1</sup> Lahiri examines her characters' struggles, anxieties, and biases to chronicle the nuances and details of immigrant psychology and behavior.

Her novel "The Namesake" and short-story collections "Unaccustomed Earth" and the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Interpreter of Maladies" all concern first-generation Bengali Indian families trying to preserve old-country traditions while chasing after the middle-class American dream. Until *Unaccustomed Earth*, she focused mostly on first-generation Indian American immigrants and their struggle to raise a family in a country very different from theirs. "*The Lowland*" dwells in complex territory. A tragic novel--set in both India and America--that explores the price of idealism and a love that can last long past death. The novel focuses on Subhash and Udayan, brothers Growing up in Calcutta, born just fifteen months apart, come of age in post-World War II Calcutta. In first chapter in the beginning there is a portrait of the surroundings where both brothers used to live and the name of the novel emerged from there:

Once, within this enenclave, there were two ponds, oblong, side by side. Behind them was lowland spanning a few acres. After the Mansoon the ponds would rise so that the embankment build between them could not be seen .The lowland also filled with rain, there or four feet deep, the water remaining for a portion of the year..... So many times Subhash and Udayan had walked across the lowland .It was a shortcut to field on the outskirts of the neighborhood, where they went to play football. ( chap.I page1) 2

Both brothers have different Perspectives towards their life and aim. Shubash want to become a settled, sincere and a caring member of his family while Udayan has a revolutionary approach toward his life that is why Subhash feels uncomfortable with him. But they are also opposites, with gravely different futures ahead of them. Subhash is placid and obedient, while Udayan is impulsive and daring. From his childhood Subhash takes part in the house holds work while udhyan used to disappoint his mother by creating different –different Problems:

Since childhood Subhash had been cautious. His mother never had to run after him. He kept her company ,watching as she cooked at the coal stove, or embroidered saris and blouse pieces commissioned by a ladies' tailor the neighborhood. He helped his father plant the dahlias that he grow in pots in the courtyard. ....Udayan was disappearing : even in their two –room house ,when he was a boy, he hid compulsively, under the bed ,behind the doors,in the crate where winter quilts were stored. He played this game without announcing it, spontaneously vanishing sneaking into the back garden, climbing into a tree, forcing their mother, when she called and he did not answer, to stop what she was doing. As she looked for him, as she humorse him and called his name ,Subhash saw the momentary panic in her face, that perhaps she would not find him. ( chap1 page1)3

Lahiri discusses Naxalite problem through her novel in which the protagonist, being a college student takes active part in naxalite activities. It is the 1960s, when the Protagonist Udayan--charismatic and impulsive--finds himself drawn to the Naxalite movement, a rebellion waged to eradicate inequity and poverty. Udayan identifies with the Naxalite movement, a Maoist-inspired peasant insurgency that seeks to return land to the poor by engaging in guerrilla warfare against government forces. Actually, Naxal, Naxalite and Naksalvadi are generic terms used to refer to various militant Communist groups operating in different parts of India under different organizational envelopes. They are usually referred Maoists. The term 'Naxal' derives from the name of the village Naxalbari in West Bengal, where the movement had its origin:

In 1967, in the paper and on all India Radio, They started hearing about Naxalbari. It was a place they had never heard of before. It was one of string of villages in the Darjeeling District, a narrow corridor at the northern tip of West Bengal. Tucked into the foothills of the Himalayas, nearly four hundred miles from Calcutta, closer to Tibet than to Tollygunge. Most of the villagers were tribal peasants who worked on tea plantation and large estate for generations they'd lived under a feudal system that hadn't substantially changed.4

The Naxals are considered far-left radical communists, supportive of Maoist political sentiment and ideology. Circa 1971 the Naxalites gained a strong presence among the radical sections of the student movement in Calcutta. Students left school to join the Naxalites. Naxalites took over Jadavpur University and used the machine shop facilities to make pipe guns to attack the police. Their headquarters became Presidency College, Kolkata. The Naxalites found supporters among some of the educated elite, and Delhi's prestigious St. Stephen's College, alma mater of many contemporary Indian leaders and thinkers, became a hotbed of Naxalite activities. The main reason of Unity of all section was the manipulation of farmers from their lands by wealthy land lord and the authority didn't pay attention over the miseries of this section:

They were Manipulated by wealthy landowners. They were pushed off field they'd cultivated. denied revenue from crops they'd grown. They were preyed upon by moneylenders. Deprived of subsistence wages, some died from lack food.....That March ,when a sharecropper in Naxalbari tried to plough land from which he'd been illegally evicted,his landlord sent thugs to beat him .They took away his plough and bullock.The police had refused to intervene.....After this groups of sharecroppers began retaliating. They started burning deeds and records that cheated them.Forcibly occupying land. It was't the first instance of peasants in the Darjeeling District revolting. But this time their tactics were militant. Armed with primitive weapons, carrying red flags, shouting Long Live Mao Tse-tung. .(Chap Ip4)5

The tragic and active involvement of Protagonist in naxalite dominates the first half of the novel. The second half traces the aftershocks of its violence on the family. In the next Phase of the novel Subhash leaves India to pursue a doctorate in Rhode Island, while Udayan marries and devotes himself to the Naxalite revolution. Subhash's placid life changes forever when he learns that Udayan was murdered by police forces. Udayan's wife, Gauri, and his parents are traumatized because they witnessed the killing. When Subhash proposes marriage to Gauri, she agrees. It's a practical decision. Gauri is pregnant with Udayan's child, and needs to get away from her in-laws. In America, Gauri is a neglectful mother and an emotionally distant wife.

The novel moves back and forth in time and takes on different points of view, which allow readers to see how anger and betrayal redound through the generations. Gauri increasingly isolates herself, pouring her energy into a doctorate in philosophy. She specializes in the neo-Marxist social theory of the Frankfurt School. She doesn't take up arms against landholders; instead, she gives papers at academic conferences. The contrast is sharp:"Long ago she'd wanted her work to be in deference to Udayan, but by now it was a betrayal of everything he had believed in. All the ways he had influenced and inspired her, shrewdly cultivated for her own intellectual gain."6

Ironically, loss and anger pave the way for a rejection of radical politics. For Gauri: "anger was always mounted to her love for Udayan. Anger at him for dying when he might have lived. For bringing her happiness, and then taking it away. For trusting her, only to betray her. For believing in sacrifice, only to be so selfish in the end."7 Subhash also critiques Udayan's politics: "Udayan had given his life to a movement that had been misguided. ... The only thing he'd altered was what their family had been.8" In truth, deliberate, personal abandonment is worse than political risk. Gauri abandons Subhash and her daughter, Bela, who never gets over it. There's a sense of justice when Gauri realizes the damage she caused her daughter. "She understood now what it meant to walk away from her child. It had been her own act of killing. ... It was a crime worse than anything Udayan had committed."9 When Subhash learns what happened to his brother in the lowland outside their family's home, he comes back to India, hoping to pick up the pieces of a shattered family, and to heal the wounds Udayan left behind--including those seared in the heart of his brother's wife.

Jhumpa Lahiri's Perspectives on brotherly love, familial obligations and marital compromises, and the impact of history on individuals is really unbelievable. This masterly novel of fate and will, exile and return, is a tour de force and an instant classic. With the art and

insight that has made her one of today's most admired young writers. So *The Lowland* is unique and master piece of a Young writer.

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