

ISSN 2454-4006

EduReflector

(A peer-reviewed / Refereed Multi-disciplinary Journal)



Volume : 1

Number : 3

January - June 2017

(A sponsored Journal of Voice of Teachers)

Haunting Histories: Ever Colonised Psyche in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

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Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri, a well-known writer writing in Indian Writing in English, renders the awful side of the colonised psyche. As an immigrant writer brings out the torn minds of the loved ones in the lime light of incident in India during her visit. Two young men's political involvement put a tragic end and was executed. As they were killed, the family was forced to watch the frightful happening.

Keywords: Immigrant, Naxalbari, ideology, Maoist

Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian American author. Lahiri's 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 Nilanjana Sudeshna but goes by her nickname Jhumpa. *The Lowland*, third novel of Lahiri focuses a new mode of political and historical citations which happened in the life of two brothers and how it affects the family. The novel begins with the description of the place, lowland – a marshy land.

East of the Tolly Club, after Deshapram Sashmal splits in two, there is a small mosque. A turn leads to a quite enclave. A warren of narrow lanes and modest middle-class homes. Once within the enclave, there were two ponds, oblong, side by side. Behind them was the lowland spanning a few acres.(3)

Lowland is the geography which refers to the marshy land between two ponds, which later decides the destiny of Udayan. The Lowland sets in motion in the 1950s and 60s stretches the story from Calcutta to Rhode Island. It is mainly the story of two brothers, the characters are middle class. These brothers are poles different, Subash focused on thick books and Udayan lost himself in transistor radios. As the boys grow their interests take diverse paths, widens from Calcutta to Rhode Island. "Subhash was thirteen, older by fifteen months. But he had no sense of himself without Udayan. From his early memories; at every point, his brother was there." (6) Subash is a dutiful son dedicated to his

parents, on the other side Udayan is angry, impulsive, protesting for corruption, easy going, detached and hassled.

"Subhash wondered if his placid nature was regarded as a lack of inventiveness, perhaps even a failing, in his parents' eyes. His parents did not have to worry about him and yet they did not favour him. It became his mission to obey them, given that it wasn't possible to surprise or impress them. That was what Udayan did" (11)

Both the boys entered the college life, Subash is research oriented, but Udayan wanted more News of the world.

Udayan started hearing about Naxalbari. Most of the villages were tribal peasants lived under the feudal system and were manipulated by the landowners. Naxalbari tried to plough the land from which he had been illegally evicted, his landlord sent thugs to beat him up and loot his belongings. The police have refused to intervene. "They started burning deeds and records that cheated them. Forcibly occupying land." (20) Both the brothers were speechless and shocked. Udayan propelled by social consciousness connected into the Naxalite movement to eradicate the inequality and poverty. "People are starving and this is their solution, he eventually said. They turn victims into criminals. They aim guns at people who can't shoot back... This could only be the beginning of ... Something bigger. Something else." (23)

The father sensed the danger and warned Udayan's emotional involvement. "I've already lived through change in this country, ... I know

...that it takes for one system to replace another. Not
 But Udayan Persisted. He started challenging
 their father..." (23) He started reading the pamphlets
 by Charu Majumdar. "The reactionary government
 of India had adopted the tactics of killing the
 masses; they are killing them through starvation,
 with bullets." (24) A new ideology of Naxalbari
 movement and life takes place in Udayan's life. He
 feels that India is a semi-colonial country the proof
 is Tolly club.

After the studies Subash decides to
 continue his research in United States. But
 Udayan's reaction is "How can you walk away
 from what's happening? There, of all places?" (30)
 Udayan turns to radical politics, to give voice for
 the voiceless. He finds the right time to
 acknowledge the presence of social ethics. On
 Lenin's birthday, April 22, 1969, a third communist
 party named the Communist Party of India,
 Marxist-Leninist was launched in Calcutta with
 Charu Majumdar as the general secretary, and Kanu
 Sanyal, the party chairman. The members called
 themselves Naxalites, in honour of what had
 happened at Naxalbari. "The chief task of the new
 party was to organise the peasantry. The tactic
 would be guerrilla warfare. The enemy was the
 Indian state." (33)

Udayan wrote a letter to Subash,

The days are dull without you. And
 although I refuse to forgive you for not
 supporting a movement that will only
 improve the lives of millions of people, I
 hope you can forgive me for giving you a
 hard time. Will you hurry up with whatever
 you are doing? An embrace from your
 brother (42)

His second letter informs his marriage to Gauri
 against the wish of the family. Subash thought that
 Gauri will replace his political activity. But in
 unexpected situation Subash received a telegram
 "Udayan killed, Come back if you can" (83)
 Subash reached India. He could see only the
 stone marker inscribed with Udayan's name years
 of his birth and death, 1945-1971. The parents and
 Gauri were made to witness the death of his brother.
 "she and his parents had watched Udayan die". (113)
 The body was not returned to their parents. They
 had been shamed before the neighbours. From
 Gauri, Subash understands that she is expecting
 Udayan's child.

Lahiri's melancholic tale, tells the story of a
 family and its disaster. Maoist ideology and
 Marxist and Leninist politics which attracter the
 youngsters, to eradicate the inequality and poverty
 is considered as a crime in the society. Fighting for
 their rights is a crime in the political scenario.
 Happiness is intertwined with agony and ecstasy,
 still a complex structure. Lahiri quotes "Remember
 that the revolution is the important thing, and that
 each one of us alone is worth nothing" (334).
 Though it is a resolute revolutionary sentence, there
 is a plea for the readers. Revolutionary action are
 the results of disparity and pain. The Naxalbari
 movement is described to depict the reality of
 everyday life especially of the peasants. Human
 suffering is to some extent tied with activities of
 the government. The Lowland is the timeless tale of
 emotions and struggles.

Work Cited

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