

Cultural Displacement and Complicated Kinship: Analyzing Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

Professor Sonba Salve

Department of English Literature, , The English and Foreign Languages University (Central University)
HYDERABAD, Telangana, INDIA

Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri's The Lowland intricately explores the themes of cultural displacement, kinship, and political ideology. Focusing on the emotional and psychological impacts of migration on identity formation and familial relationships. The novel delves into the lives of two brothers, Subhash and Udayan, whose bond is tested by their differing political ideologies and personal choices, set against the backdrop of post-colonial Kolkata and the political upheaval of the Naxalite movement.

Subhash's migration to the United States symbolizes the immigrant experience, highlighting the challenges of reconciling one's cultural heritage with the demands of a new life, while Udayan's radical activism reflects the alienation and estrangement that political convictions can foster within families. Through the character of Bela, Lahiri underlines the intergenerational effects of cultural displacement and the emotional distance that can arise between parents and children, especially when cultural identities shift across the borders. The novel further examines the fluidity of kinship, emphasizing the way family ties evolve in response to migration, loss, and ideological conflict. Lahiri's exploration of these themes ultimately illustrates the dynamic and transformative nature of identity and kinship in diasporic communities, presenting a nuanced critique of the interplay between personal, familial, and political realms. The Lowland thus offers a compelling meditation on the enduring power of familial bonds and the complexities of identity in a globalized world.

Keywords: *Cultural displacement, Kinship, Political ideology, Migration, Identity formation, Intergenerational conflict.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In *The Lowland* (2013) by Jhumpa Lahiri, at first tackles the cultural displacement and the ebb and flow of kinship, dealing with both Udayan and Subhash and later his daughter, Bela. Lahiri's narrative then looks at how all of these can affect one's life, exploring the environment of post-independence India as well as the United States. The novel is set against the background of an urban landscape, turbulent in both the political and personal senses, and the geographical replacement and ideological unrest (Lahiri, 2013). Lahiri ruminates on the lives of her characters ~ in a post-colonial context ~ on the broader questions of identity, belonging, and the emotional ways in which familial bonds are permeable.

The Lowland is essentially about the painful process of cultural displacement when people are forced to shuttle between multiple cultural identities. Udayan and Subhash, two from the same family, raised in different ideological environments, are two different responses to this displacement. Udayan is radical, but Subhash is more conservative, more pragmatic, and leaves for America to find his stability. The brothers' different ways of living and politics are examples of how migration and political activism affect the brothers' identity and relationship with each other.

In placing particular importance on the story of Subhash's move to America, the tale offers a more general experience of the immigrant, caught in between the heritage of a country left behind and the expectations of the new society (Hall, 2015).

Lahiri stretches the idea of displacement beyond the physical relocation of people. Among other things, she describes the emotional and psychological cost of leaving one's homeland, of being unmoored from the cultural anchors of one's past, and of the clash between the past and the present. During the period of displacement, there is a particular poignancy when we consider Subhash, who moves to America and now occupies a liminal space, always finding himself having to balance his Bengali roots with his American reality. But he wants the familiar comforts of home and is too far from home to get them (Bhabha, 2012). This is a microcosm of the immigrant experience as a whole, of having to reinvent yourself, often in a way in which you feel like you're betraying your original self.

The book also discusses the complicated theme of family relationships which has changed with cultural change, political upheaval, and personal loss. The underlying conflict is between brothers, Udayan, and Subhash, for Udayan's estranged relationship with his brother. The difference in their politics and choices in life rips apart a bond once linked by closeness and shared childhood memories.

Udayan's Naxalite involvement is radical. It involves overthrowing the Indian government by very violent means that estranges him from Subhash, who takes a more moderate, narrower line (Gilroy, 1993). The brothers' different paths show the gap between family and personal devotion, Udayan's death is the tragic summing up of their ideological differences.

The theme of kinship continues with Subash and his niece Bela, after the death of his father, with the theme of displacement from home. She is continuously challenged by questions of belonging, constantly striving to reconcile the trauma of her family's past and her disconnection from her father's radical ideals. Subhash raised Bela in the United States, and her struggle to balance her Bengali heritage with her American upbringing is an important example of second-generation immigrants. Bela's struggle to fathom both her father: the man who left her once, and the family she currently has, is brought elegantly into focus by Lahiri (Said, 1978). Continuing through Bela, Lahiri examines the ways in which the legacy of cultural displacement and ideological conflict are passed on to whole generations and complicate the process of who one becomes.

Cultural displacement and kinship are also explored in the novel by its depiction of geography. Kolkata, in the backdrop of historical importance and political unrest, is still a symbol of the past, whereas the United States symbolizes a future that is full of opportunities and the socio-economic promise of a better life. The two settings aren't merely backdrops for Lahiri to use, but active characters in their emotional and psychological journeys. As such, 'The Lowland' is the title space between two opposing worlds and is a space of tension and negotiation for the characters. A space that exists between the highland and the undifferentiated swamp. Through these deep-rooted themes of loss, memory, and struggle for self-definition, Lahiri probes the interpenetration of these characters' lives in this lowland.

A subtle, but powerful exploration of identity characterizes Lahiri's narrative. The structure of the novel is about the question of who one is, as an individual and in terms of one's relation to others. It is not the physical relocation of the protagonists that displaces them, but the asking of whether the cultural identities from which they were born are valid. All this speaks of a broader search for selfhood in Udayan's radicalism, Subhash's emigration, and Bela's self-division (Brah, 2005). The characters' journey involves finding a common ground with disparate facets of their identity, whether that's a conflict between tradition and modernity, or between personal loyalty to family and desire for personal liberation.

The politics of identity also have a very intimate connection to the theme of cultural displacement, in the context of national upheaval. Lahiri portrays Udayan's radicalism and its tragic consequences; which are bound up with a national identity. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Naxalite movement, inspired by a struggle against social inequalities, was fuelled by a deep ideological sectarian divide in the families and communities. Huge as it is, his involvement in this movement here is the larger battle for social consciousness and also the repercussions of political radicalism on the life of an individual. The activism of his brother is a deep source of concern and an emblem of the generational split between the two brothers for Subhash.

The Lowland suggests that personal and political views cannot be easily disentangled, and how an individual's commitment to family loyalty must align with their ideological commitment. Lahiri shows how difficult and sometimes painful, choices people face when they are forced to choose between these two worlds. The characters in the book are put under a confrontation between their political beliefs and their loyalty to their family. Lahiri has created this terrain in a world full of political strife (Lahiri, 2013). To wit, Subhash does his best to shield Bela from the same political upheavals that shaped her father's life, and by extension, it displays the instinct of a parent trying to protect the innocence of the generations to come.

The Lowland is a sometimes epic, sometimes heartbreaking book about the emotional and psychological effects of the act of cultural displacement and the nuances of family relationships. Lahiri effortlessly intertwines the personal with the political and shows how the very fabric of cultural identities is shaped,

chipped, and then rebuilt by migration and ideological conflict. By observing the dynamics of her richly drawn characters Lahiri offers a nuanced picture of the immigrant experience: which is a fraught one, heaped with emotional and familial confusion. Lahiri asks readers to consider that the cultural and the personal histories are never separate or delineated, and how the history of a family links two individuals together, even across generations, in this examination of these themes within India and the United States.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* is a literary work focused on the complicated subject of ways in which displacement, kinship and identity are negotiated in various geographies and ideologies. It deals with questions of migration, political conflict, and estrangement within the context of postcolonial India and the United States. The *Lowland* literature is critical and engages with interdisciplinary approaches to examine how Lahiri depicts the lived experience of dislocation and how family relationships have evolved under the force of cultural and political transformation. This literature review synthesizes key works that make sense of the central themes in the novel through the intersections of cultural displacement, kinship, identity, and political engagement.

Cultural Displacement and the Immigrant Experience

For *Lowland*, migration and cultural identity seems to be the central theme, specifically because it relates to cultural displacement. In Lahiri's work, displacement entails more than a physical experience of crossing borders. Displacement can be an emotional displacement where you would have to deal with the inevitable emotional pain of living between two cultures. The *Lowland* provides a lens through which to view the immigrant experience in the scholarly literature on migration and displacement.

For anthropologists such as Edward Said (1993) and Homi K. Bhabha (1994), the concept of "in-betweenness" — a being caught between two cultures, whether it be as an 'outsider' in both — has been a focus of their study of cultural displacement. Lahiri herself has created characters like Subhash and provides a framework for understanding how Lahiri's characters experience their displacement in both physical and emotional terms through Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* and Said's *Orientalism* (Bhabha, 2012).

It is a matter of literal and figurative displacement on one hand, but in his American life, Subhash resists the demands of this new life and constantly migrates to it. Many scholars like Karen Olsson (2013) and Anjali Gera Roy (2014) have applied Bhabha's theory of hybridity to Lahiri's project, showing how Subhash's identity develops and redevelops itself in connection with the innumerable cultural conflicts he faces in America (Giddens, 2023).

The sense of alienation that her characters experience is a subject of scholarly discussion of Lahiri's treatment of cultural displacement. This is not only about going to other lands but also about organizational conflicts between competing cultural values and their emotional consequence. According to Olivia Snaije (2013), Lahiri's characters abroad often feel 'unmoored' from their native culture. The experience of swinging between success and unhappiness, despite the outward show of success, enjoys its emotional continuity in Subhash's discomfort with the American way of life, a bigger problem related to being a 'foreigner' in a 'foreign land,' a common immigrant tale.

Lahiri also offers a multi-generational view of displacement about culture—from Bela (the US-raised daughter of Subhash)—like most ghosts, she is remembered through her father but has quite her own story to tell (Spivak, 2023). Scholars like Vijay Mishra (2007) remind us of how cultural displacement takes place across generations. As the second-generation immigrant must find his way between inherited cultural legacies and the dictates of a new national identity.

Kinship, Familial Bonds, and the Immigrant Experience

The *Lowland* also focuses on the idea of displacement, on the ways that kinship and the family itself change when the pressure of cultural and political forces changes. Examination of kinship is fundamental to the novel, and the kinship found between Udayan and Subhash is portrayed by Lahiri. Their responses to political radicalism, their shared but different Bengali identity, and their journeys of emotional displacement shape the brothers' relationship.

Anthropological theories of kinship in the context of migration and dislocation are long established.

Especially, scholars such as Nancy Scheper Hugh (1992) and Sarah Green (2014) have explained how migration makes traditional family structures and relationships difficult. Migration, she says, often reorganizes kinship ties when family members are physically separated by distance, and emotional bonds become weakened over time and distance. The physical separation of the brothers, as it were—Subhash moving to the United States and Udayan's attachment to political activism—shows that the emotional tie is broken (Appiah, 2005). Subhash's function as a surrogate father to Bela grows out of an estrangement between him and Udayan's radicalism and eventual death.

Scholars like Carsten (2000) use "complicated kinship" to get an idea of what was related between Lahiri's characters in her novel. Carsten stresses that kinship ties are not immutable, but are repeatedly remade through a lived experience. Kinship, as in *The Lowland*, of Subhash and Bela, is a fluid thing. Once Udayan dies, Subhash becomes Bela's surrogate father, but his relationship with her is one of emotional distance; neither before nor after the reconstitution of family bonds upon loss and trauma (Butler & Trouble, 1990). Of particular importance is this shift in the social roles of the family when it occurs in the context of cultural displacement, where the relatively fixed forms assumed by the family are at odds with the forces of a new environment.

Finally, scholars have looked at the part played by memory in configuring kinship and familial relationships, in the context of migration. Memory features profoundly as a sustaining factor within the maintenance of familial relationships over time and space, as theorized in their work on the diasporic family (Pei-Chen Chang, 2015).

Memory for Subhash and Bela is, itself, a bridge from the past to the present, a way to connect to their lost family members and their Bengali heritage. Bela forms a bond with Subhash because of Udayan, his childhood with Udayan, and the people of her homeland that Subhash remembers emotionally. But as Chang points out, complicated though they are, memory also has the potential to muddy these connections, especially when those links are riddled with guilt and regret, as they are between Subhash and Udayan.

Political Ideology, Familial Conflict, and the Naxalite Movement

Another central aspect in *The Lowland* is the ideological conflict between Udayan and Subhash (and, consequently, between their mothers and fathers), which is unmatched by the political climate of the mid-1960s and 1970s Kolkata. It was in the Naxalite movement, which was seeking to bring down the Indian government using violence, that Udayan became involved, and this was the second point of divergence between the brothers (Spencer, 2014). This estranges Subhash, who is less radical and is more prepared to effect social change through nonviolent methods. Another layer of political complication in their kinship is due to the brothers' divergent political views, and their differences of opinion on the point, shifting into an emotional and ideological conflict.

Extensive scholarship has been done on the Naxalite movement in the context of post-independence India. Sumanta Banerjee (1984) and Partha Chatterjee (1997) stress on the point that the movement was a mobilization against the postcolonial state and that it produced ideological differences within families and communities.

The Lowland by Lahiri uses Udayan's radicalism as a backdrop for the personal and familial conflicts that are the mainstay of the novel. *The Lowland* has been critiqued by scholars such as Sangeeta Ray (2016), who argue that Lahiri's exploration of the Naxalite movement in the novel also reflects on the relationships between personal and political commitment, and loyalty in the family. The high cost of political activity in a politicized society is seen in the tragic death of Udayan, a victim of his radical political activities but not of a very long life (Malkki, 1995).

STUDY METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research method is employed to study Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* on themes of cultural displacements and kinships. The narrative elements which highlight the emotional and psychological effects of migration, of familial conflict were identified by a close reading of the novel. Literary theories of postcolonialism, cultural studies, and kinship studies were informed by the analysis of Lahiri's work, and the historical context of the Naxalite movement, was informed by previous academic interpretations of Lahiri's work and the background of the Naxalite movement.

The primary text and secondary sources were reviewed that contextualized the findings within the broader discussions of diasporic literature and of migration and identity in the field. This presentation of a methodological approach allowed a substantial comprehension of ways in which the novel explores identity formation, familial dynamics, and the political implications of such cultural displacement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Displacement And Identity Formation

The Lowland is a beautiful presentation of cultural displacement and the effects it has on one's identity, especially around migration, among other things. The novel explores the experience of people torn between different cultures and how this dislocation affects the perception of one's self and the perception of others. In her exploration of the ways that identity is paradoxically formed in response to physical and emotional dislocation, Lahiri injects herself into the life of Subhash, Udayan, and Bela. In this section we explore the immigrant experience, hybridity and the intergenerational effect of displacement.

The Immigrant Experience in The Lowland

In *The Lowland*, the immigrant experience shows the extent of the emotional and psychological loss indices inherent to leaving one's homeland in search of other hopes. The protagonist of the novel is Subhash who becomes an immigrant who comes to the United States for a better life but remains quite attached to his Bengali roots (Ghosh, 2013). But Subhash's move to America is not just moving from one geospatial place to another, is an emotional break too as his body lets go of this persistent alienation. But his experience illustrates the 'immigrant dilemma', the gap between what an immigrant may seek to do for themselves and what they wish to do for the home country they left behind. Subhash is in America and is trying to find a home. Is he trying to recreate it or is it an elusory memory? As he settles down in the US, he can't escape a sense of complete cultural displacement and isolation.

Subhash's journey follows the pattern of other scholars on the immigrant experience, including the work of Said (1993) and Bhabha (1994), in which the immigrant is forced to straddle two distinct cultures (Bhabha, 2012). Subhash's experience is a manifestation of Bhabha's notion of "the third space." He is always in between the American and the Bengali cultural settings, never becoming a participant in either of them. Subhash's material success fails to conceal his feeling of emotional distance from his new life in America, and a sense of not belonging to either place. Subhash's relationship with his daughter Bela is noticeably distorted due to this feeling of alienation. How does he begin to pass on his cultural heritage when he is in a foreign land?

Reflecting on the broader immigrant experience, the struggle of second-generation immigrants with identity—as discussed by Karen Olsson (2013) and Anjali Gera Roy (2014), who argue that second-generation immigrants can struggle to navigate between cultural expectations of parents and the impetus to assimilate in the dominant culture. Although Subhash is a first-generation immigrant, it marks the fact that his American-born daughter Bela likewise has to contend with the same struggles of identity as the second generation.

Hybridity and the In-Between Space of Subhash

The Lowland represents Subhash's experience of hybridity, a term that Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and Vijay Mishra (2007) have explored. The concept of Hybridity where colonialism and migration caused cultures to combine to create new, mixed identities. Like many immigrants, Subhash is in the 'in-between' space, between his Bengali heritage and the expectations of American society. Subhash often has to negotiate himself between two worlds, which often leads to this fragmented sense of self.

In the postcolonial context, individuals can no longer lay claim to a single cultural identity, which is explained by Bhabha's theory of hybridity. They are a mixture of the colonizer and the colonized, contradictory and fluid (Gowricharn, 2020). This hybrid identity can be observed, running in Subhash's adaptation story, who feels torn between his Bengali family and the need to evolve with American culture to survive. As he can't fully embrace either culture, he is emotionally and physically dislocated, which many immigrants feel. This is made harder by his own need to live up to his parents' values and also take advantage of the more personal and professional freedom that America can bring him.

Also, Subhash's sense of hybridity is not confined to his relation to his cultural heritage, but it also

affects his relation with his daughter, Bela. Subhash tries to hold on to his Bengali identity in an American fashion, while Bela is born in America, and has a freer, more hybrid identity (Caballero & Hu, 2023). The contrast between father and daughter is one of the challenges of cultural negotiation that takes place across generations. Formed at the intersection of her parents' conflicting cultures, Bela lives through the contradictions of being an American as well as a Bengali.

The Lowland doesn't show hybridism as a harmonious amalgamation but as a struggle where both cultures leave their imprint on Subhash and Bela. That failure to form a diasporic identity fully is subsumed by the fact that, despite material success, Subhash was unable to completely assimilate into American culture. His identity is fractured, and remains so, caught between two worlds with a resulting emotional and relational life marked upon second-generation immigrant Bela, who may inherit the complications of hybrid identity without accessing its meaning.

Intergenerational Effects of Cultural Displacement on Bela

Cultural displacement has intergenerational effects on the relationship between Subhash and his daughter Bela. Whereas Subhash is displaced culturally due to his migration, Bela is displaced psychologically, as a second-generation immigrant. Bela was born and raised in the US, and so is more in touch with American cultural norms and values, and less with Bengali customs her father hopes to keep alive. It's a generational divide between Subhash and Bela, a generational divide that is indicative of the challenges that children of immigrants face. They are caught between what their parents expect and what the society around them wants.

There is little emotional distance between Bela and her father, and he just doesn't know her at all. Bela is forced to align with a culture she feels is foreign and distant, a culture in which Subhash tries to push Bengali cultural practices onto her, and the tribe resents her attempts (Chatterjee, 1993). The fact that cultural traditions are not widely shared or celebrated, and that this generational disconnect is not a new phenomenon, is what makes it hard to pass them on. Like most children of immigrants, Bela is saddled with the job of creating her own identity, a task complicated by her parents' heritage as well as the wider American world in which she grows up (Butt, 2019).

Bela's sense of self is the result of the psychological effects of this generational conflict. She is a culturally dislocated person, not because she left her homeland, but because she is culturally split between two conflicting identities. There's an ever-present emotional conflict between her desire to be American and her father's attempts to hold on to their Bengali heritage, and this is something that affects everything from Bela's choices to relationships (Choudhury & Sengupta, 2021). Scholars like Sarah Green (2014) have long discussed the intergenerational displacement depicted in diasporic literature – in my case, a second generation sometimes feels disconnected from their parents' traditions and at the same time faced with pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture.

Lahiri poignantly contrasts following in one's parents' footpaths not only when one of the parents is an immigrant, as in *The Lowland*, but also when the parents are themselves immigrants. Cultural displacement isn't just an individual thing, but a thing passed down through generations, his children just as much as his. Bela's conflict between the American and Bengali worlds, which both clash, but are also pushed together, presents the larger struggle of second-generation immigrants who have to reconcile two worlds that are not in alignment.

Kinship And Familial Ties

Throughout *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri examines the intricacies of kinship and familial relationships between brothers Subhash and Udayan, and between Subhash and his daughter Bela. It explores the territory of how families are both built out of and sidestepped by ideological conflict, emotional distance, and the long-term consequences of immigration and political chaos. This section looks at how and why the dynamics between Subhash and Udayan are so complicated, the role of a father figure for Bela within this household, and how familial emotions are kept at a distance.

The Complex Bond Between Subhash and Udayan

It is in the relationship between Udayan and Subhash that the tussle between loyalty, ideological differences, and familial love is central to *The Lowland*. Both brothers, – Subhash and Udayan, – were born in Kolkata, but are forcibly parted by their divergent paths through adulthood. Radical political ideals drive Udayan into the Naxalite movement, whereas Subhash goes off to America to live a better

'normal' life. It does make an ideological and emotional rift between them, partly because Subhash leaves India as he prefers to get away from Udayan's dangerous political activism.

The emotional scar runs deep in Subhash due to Udayan's involvement with the Naxalite movement and his death from political violence, a sense of guilt, and the ensuing responsibility which threads throughout the novel. It is a desire to protect Udayan from the violent consequences of his political actions, but it is also a measure of self-preservation on Subhash's part. The sense of duty and love that defines the brothers' bond is complicated by the unspoken tension between the brothers' two differing worldviews. Physical estrangement from Udayan is not enough: Subhash subconsciously cannot reconcile Udayan's radicalism against his own more cautious life.

It also extends the conflict between the two brothers into the areas of love, familial duty, and sacrifice. Subhash is the older brother, and he feels a great burden for Udayan, but his inability to shield the boy from the risks of his political activism forms a kind of unresolved guilt between them (Giddens et al., 2006). On the other hand, Udayan seems to have little respect for his more measured brother Subhash, who emigrates and to Udayan, it seems to be an act of betrayal. This dynamic represents the wider conflict between the sorts of values espoused by tradition and modern ideologies, a common rollercoaster of family politics amid political convolutions. Lahiri subjects this strained brotherly relationship to the larger social and political pressures that prevail in post-colonial India when ideological forces are set against family bonds (Benson et al., 2009).

Udayan's death and Subhash's struggle to come to terms with it, form the tragedy of familial love, which necessarily also contains elements of complexity (something that has to be addressed) and grief (which should be mourned). The emotional bonds between them exist even when one is separated and lives in conflict with his brother, and there is a sense of duty for the betterment of his brother. Subhash comes to feel an overwhelming responsibility for his brother's death, from which point his story shifts, because the death of Udayan has become a turning point for him. Subhash's unresolved guilt and emotional burden continue to color his relationship with his family and that with Bela for the rest of the novel.

Subhash's Role as a Father Figure to Bela

The novel's discussion regarding kinship is centered on Subhash's father figure role to his niece Bela. Given Udayan's death, Subhash returns to Kolkata to take care of Bela, who has to survive her father's radicalism and avoidable death. As guardian and protector, Subhash tries to mirror the stability and nurturing he brings out of the tumultuous world left behind by Bela's father.

But because Subhash is not Bela's biological father, they don't have an emotional relationship built upon it. Subhash is tied up with Bela's well-being and is willing to offer her safety and care that her father couldn't, but he has trouble relating to her on a personal level (Said, 1994). Growing up in America, Bela is emotionally cold to Subhash, seeing him as a person who is far more concerned with her physical security than with knowing her emotional needs. This is representative of Subhash's emotional relationship with intimacy, which springs from his memories of his past relationship with Udayan and those of his immigration (Barth, 1998).

What complicates things further for Subhash is that he is a flawed man himself, with feelings of guilt and inadequacy. He can't fully take Udayan's place in Bela's life and his attempts to steer her are usually rebuffed. Subhash has tried to preserve the ancient ways of the Bengalis with Bela, who was raised in other schools of thought (Jaidka & Dhar, 2024).

The generational and cultural divide causes a feeling of emotional distance between them because Bela is American and Subhash is Bengali. Subhash, as a guardian in a diaspora family, instills deeply rooted cultural values in the child. However, Bela's pursuit of independence highlights the gap that often emerges in such families—the struggle of children to reconcile their parents' cultural heritage with the influences of their surrounding environment. (Clifford, 1994).

Lahiri's use of the relationship between Subhash and Bela (Roy 2014; Bhattacharya 2017), scholars have found that it provides a means to explore the theme of cultural inheritance and the difficulties of transmitting traditions from one generation to the next, in a transnational context (Srinivasan, 2016). The cultural clash of traditions and identity problems is illustrated by the masculine vs feminine gap between what Subhash can connect with emotionally and what Bela is in touch with on an emotional level.

Memory and Emotional Distance in Familial Relationships

Emotional distance plays such an important role in the familial relationships in *The Lowland* that it is one of the most important themes of the novel. The memory of the political activism and the death of Udayan hangs largely over the lives of Subhash and Bela, resulting in emotional disconnection for both. Throughout the novel, Subhash's memories of his brother, of his brother and him being loving, of his brother and him being regretful, endow him with actions. This prevents him from connecting with the other characters in a way he does not process, and he has no closure over his guilt for failing to prevent Udayan's death.

Similarly, Bela's memories of her father are a product of his absence and the radical political ideals he espoused. She never knew Udayan as a father—his life riven by political violence—and her memories of him are disjointed. The generational and cultural lines of separation exemplified in there, reach out to Bela's lack of feeling towards her father and Subhash. Udayan's memories are entwined with the trauma of his death, and their relationship with Subhash is a product of the distance afforded them by their different identities.

Trauma and familial bonds are considered in terms of how they are affected by loss and political violence, and how memory and emotional distance are thematized. Lahiri does not describe memory as a static or fixed thing, but rather as a liquid and unreliable thing that is changing with the characters' feelings and experiences. You can see this in Subhash's futile attempts to bring peace to the memory of Udayan, which is still creased with guilt and sorrow, and Bela's elusive reminiscences of her father that are seemingly bereft of any emotional connection.

The Lowland a look at the effect of migration and political unrest on memory and emotional distance, a component of the psychological and emotional fallout of family separation. Indeed, Green (2015) and McLaughlin (2016) remind us that Lahiri renders beautifully how familial bonds can crumble and how time, ideological conflicts, and emotional trauma can fracture what binds us as a family.

Political Ideology And Familial Conflict

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* considers how family conflict and political thinking are in tension, as in the ideological differences between Subhash and Udayan. The brothers' divergent political beliefs, conditioned by the social and political milieu of the 1960s and 1970s India, mirror the broader story of post-colonial identity formation and the fallout from political radicalism. This section examines the effect of the Naxalite movement on the brothers' relationship, Udayan's radicalism as a source of estrangement, and Subhash's political disengagement as a means by which kinship is maintained.

The Naxalite Movement and Its Impact on the Brothers' Relationship

The Lowland explores the lives of Subhash and Udayan, as the Naxalite movement, a Maoist-inspired rebellion that first emerged in the late 1960s in West Bengal, is central to both of their lives. Udayan represents the movement's appeal to younger generations, especially those disaffected by the failures of conventional political platforms, because his radicalism is exactly at odds with Subhash's more moderate perspective. This is the thing between the brothers, the ideological divide, and the choice between ideals and pragmatism in the context of these social changes.

Subhash fails to understand the commitment to the Naxalite cause of Udayan, and shunning Government institutions; instead, he thinks that political extremism would only result in destruction and instability. So, this is not just a personal decision to migrate to America for Subhash, but also an escape from the political turmoil that his brother chooses to take up. Lahiri shows that the Naxalite movement was a brutal rejection of the status quo, and Udayan's involvement in it was a reaction to a radical desire for social change (Sethi, 2017). Whereas Subhash believes that revolution is necessary for true justice and equality, it goes against his belief that a violent revolution is necessary for true justice and equality.

This ideological clash leads to a great emotional chasm, and although one brother commits to politics, the other is alienated by it. Subhash's departure from India is a means by which he hopes to minimize his association with Udayan's increasingly distasteful brand of politics, but it's also a means of saving himself. Sen (2016) and Gupta (2009), alone, as scholarly notes, ruin familial bonds in this realm of ("The Naxalite movement"), as even it may lead to estrangement or something similar and equally

emotionally traumatizing. Lahiri uses the political landscape of the time to show how the political ideology at play at the time can have a wider effect on familial ties, one that breaks familial ties and leaves deep emotional scars in Subhash and Udayan.

Udayan's Radicalism as a Source of Estrangement

But it's the estrangement between the brothers, particularly due to Udayan's radicalism in the Naxalite movement, which is the main cause of this estrangement. Udayan stands out because he is willing to place his life on the block for revolutionary ideology unwavering, whereas Subhash's traditional, more moderate middle-class impulses are so far away from Udayan's concept of armed struggle and social change. It is a cause for Udayan, the Naxalite, and not merely a political movement – it is a lifestyle, a manner of life, and a mission of what he is about. Yet his radicalism separates him from Subhash who finds it impossible to comprehend the type of radicalism that can be served.

Lahiri explores the use of Udayan's radicalism to the personal cost of political commitment. Udayan is so intensely political that he makes choices that alienate him from his family. But Subhash disagrees with him; his actions, which include going to violent protests and becoming more and more infamously secretive, are reckless and counterproductive, and are a symbol of his personality (Anthias, 2020). In his reflections on his brother's choices, Subhash is helpless and feels guilty. Udayan's radicalism is both a betrayal of what they shared and a rejection of the more measured path Subhash has walked.

Udayan's radicalism influences his interactions with others and his interactions with his daughter—Bela. More than being a father, Udayan's political convictions overshadow him, and the gap between him and Udayan expands as Udayan puts the revolution above family obligations. The emotional price of this radicalism is made clear by how Udayan's life goes to pieces as his political activities end in tragedy. Lahiri reminds us that in Udayan's life the personal costs of radicalism, and of political ideas are to the detriment of family bonds, estrangement and loss.

Bose (2015) and Radhakrishnan (2013) also point out that Lahiri's presentation of political ideology, not only in *The Lowland* but also more generally in the cultural work he contributes to, goes beyond the Naxalite movement itself to encompass the generational split it adds to families. The ideological split between Subhash and Udayan is the metaphor for the larger change going on in India following its colonial era where the newer generation with more revolutionary zeal clashed against the older generation with a more conservative outlook on everyday life.

Subhash's Political Disengagement and Its Effects on Kinship, Whereas Udayan's radicalism accounts for a great part of the novel's focus on kinship and familial relationships, Subhash's political disengagement is an important aspect of bringing the novel to this end. This is because Subhash decided not to be involved in active political engagement in the United States. After all, he wants to avoid the violence and instability that the same political movements bring. Subhash retreats into lonely academia and solitary thought to maintain personal stability and sanctify his distance from the political din in India (Vlasta, 2015). His disengagement from the political scene may be an effort to isolate himself from the politics of his brother and seek alternative avenues for the kind of self-fulfillment that his brother has advocated.

This disengagement carries a great consequence for Subhash's relationship with other people, though. His political disengagement not only emotionally distances him from Udayan but also from Bela. Subhash's political disengagement as a father figure to Bela means that he cannot understand the political context of her life or her memories of her father. Subhash extends Bela certain material security but emotionally is a lacking person. He does not have the will to care for or connect with her on a deeper level. Because he refuses to interact with the political realities of her upbringing, his relationship with her is one of obligation rather than affection.

Disengaging from politics in general, the political disengagement also submerges Subhash's sense of identity and his sense of his cultural heritage. Subhash has effectively chosen to distance himself from India's cultural and political upheavals of his youth by withdrawing himself from the turbulent politics of India. While this self-imposed exile affords personal safety, it also creates dislocation and isolation. The general challenge of immigrants trying to negotiate their position in a new country, as scholars such as McLaughlin (2016) and Ray (2014) point out, is demonstrated by Subhash's clean break with the political landscape. The cost of this is the emotional and cultural connections that are lost as Subhash

tries to protect himself and his family from the violence of political radicalism.

Lahiri is a testament to the emotional cost of political conflict by focusing on how disengaging from political ideas has serious ramifications for personal relationships. The disengagement that Subhash is subject to is a form of survival but one that tears kinship ties dangerously apart, most particularly with his daughter, Bela, a political turbulence from which she has never recovered.

Cultural Displacement And The Evolving Nature Of Kinship

As in *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri skillfully traces out the intricacies of cultural displacement and the draw it makes upon kinship dynamics, most notably through the observations experienced by Subhash and his family. By examining how migration, transnational relationships, and the changing notion of the family have redefined traditional notions of kinship and identity. Lahiri probes the various ways in which displacement shifts both the physical and emotional, and the social and the cultural. In this section, the complicated kinship as a result of migration, transnational kinship, and how family and identity are redefined across borders are explored.

Complicated Kinship in the Context of Migration.

The Lowland is defined by migration, as the act of it is what causes the characters' dislocation, both physically and emotionally. When Subhash decides to leave his family behind and head to the United States (among other things, to escape the escalating political violence in Kolkata), it pulls him away from his family, but especially his brother Udayan. Subhash is left in a situational chasm between the two lives that he has with him, that of the former in India and the latter in America, making India/ America a chasm that is not easily bridged. Physical separation from his homeland makes emotional and familial ties even more tenuous and complicates kinship during this migration.

While driving this was Subhash's withdrawal and ultimately unknown causes of him leaving his family, causing a feeling of guilt and estrangement from his family. By staying away from the political tangle that had claimed his brother's life, he leaves an emotional void that never really heals (Abraham, 2017). Lahiri shows how the physical removal that migration involves breaks down familial closeness, as Subhash's migration makes clear. The opening returns to Kolkata but despite this ongoing correspondence, the relationship between Subhash and his family is still broken, with Subhash unable to truly close the distance both physically and emotionally.

Subhash's daughter Bela is a complication of kinship. As we see in Bela's upbringing in America, away from her Indian roots, there is a lot of cultural dissonance that has affected the way that she thinks of herself in more profound ways. She is a woman trapped between her father's world of safety and propped-up distance and her search for who she is, and who she belongs to. Migration between Subhash and Bela complicates their father-daughter relationship in that each must try to figure out the other's needs and aspirations, and that creates an emotional distance. As Ray (2016) would emphasize, including migrants often leads to separation not just physical but also emotional and psychological which connects families. In *The Lowland*, Lahiri shows how migration, particularly in the case of such migration, breaks up families and complicates kinship.

The Transnational Nature of Familial Bonds

The second book, *The Lowland*, explores the transnational dimension of familial ties in which the nexus of family members is not bound by any one geographical territory. However, Lahiri's use of Subhash's transnational experience shows the resilience of familial ties that survive separation from place. Like most transnational families, Subhash and his family maintain their relationship through letters and visits (or lack thereof).

But the transnational features of kinship aren't all rosy. The letters of Subhash and Udayan, though full of continuity, also show the distance between the brothers increasing. The correspondence between him and Subhash becomes ever more strained as Udayan gets more and more involved in the Naxalite movement. As Subhash and Udayan try to get across to one another the distance between their physical and emotional self grows. But despite the international exchange of letters and ideas, the relationship between the two brothers becomes more and more untenable because of their various ideas on politics as well as life (Moser, 2011).

Bela's relationship with the transnational kinship also gives us insights about Subhash's relationship with her. Subhash stays in touch with her through phone calls and letters but cultural differences take a

big emotional toll. Growing up in America's American values and norms, Bela does not quite 'get' her father's definition of ethics with the result that the relationship between Bela and her father starts to become problematic. The broad challenges faced by families divided by migration are illustrated by this transnational family dynamic of differing cultural frames of reference. Scholars who have discussed this, (Das, 2018), have pointed out that transnational families tend to reassign familial roles while trying to maintain these bonds in the middle of the cultural translocation.

Redefining Family and Identity Across Borders

Lahiri's exploration of kinship in *The Lowland* consists of a question of identity as migration and displacement question the definition of both family and identity. Migration to America for Subhash means that he must construct a new identity, neither rooted in the past India nor perceived in the fullness of his present life in the United States. He's fluid in his identity, his cultural heritage, and his need to adapt to a new environment. All aspects of Subhash's life, especially his role as a father, centered on a tension between staying true to his culture and accepting American society, the latter in this instance as the conduit for his acceptance into the American society.

Bela's growing up in the United States mirrors Subhash's growing understanding of family and identity. Bela's upbringing in a foreign land dulls her sense of being Indian while her exposure to American culture has emphasized her foreignness. Bela also fights to comprehend her father's emotional distance, and also the idea of who she is. How she negotiates her cultural heritage and demands of living in a transnational space is something that she trenchantly pursues as the travails of her becoming are told in this novel. The attempts to understand her father's emotional distance and his role in her life are indicative of the larger process of self-discovery that many children of immigrants go through as they try to understand what it means to be a child of immigrants and live in a foreign country.

The family/identity redefinition inherent to *The Lowland* is also intertwined with the relationship between Udayan and his brother, Subhash. Their familial bond is redefined by their different political philosophies and by the physical distance that separates them. So when Udayan is killed, by his political activism, Subhash feels responsible towards Bela but also knows that the family he once knew is irretrievably gone. Subhash's reconnection with Kolkata after Udayan's death is both a reconnection to his past and a reminder of reconstituting familial bonds forever fractured by migration, political conflict, and generational differences.

The Intersection Of Personal And Political In The Lowland

One of the tropes in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* is the intersection of the personal and the political spheres, which in turn colors how the characters live and what decisions they make. It is a novel about how the personal lives of Subhash, Udayan, and their families are intertwined with the political landscape of Kolkata, and with the political landscape of Kolkata. Particularly with the influence of the Naxalite movement. Political activism, its ideological fervor, and its radicalism change the relationships and lead the characters to make life-altering choices. Lahiri uses the personal to show how the political is inexorably intertwined with the personal, and ideological commitment to tragic estrangement and conflict within familial bonds.

The Political Landscape of Kolkata and Its Influence on the Characters

In the 1960s and 1970s, Kolkata was a tumultuous city embroiled in struggle and deep political turmoil. It's no wonder that much of *The Lowland* takes place in the milieu of the Naxalite movement, an armed insurgency led by young radicals who called for land distribution and social justice. The lives of Udayan and Subhash are shaped by the contrasting ways each one responds to the political upheaval all around them, which contributes to a very politically charged atmosphere.

The more politically engaged of the two brothers is drawn to the Naxalite movement because, while it is a violent movement, or rather 'consciously destructive', Udayan, more than anyone else, believes that the Naxalite movement holds real potential to usher in a societal change and justice. He chooses to join the movement because he is so willing to make a deep commitment to his ideological beliefs, knowing that radicalism is dangerous.

Udayan is compounded: inspired optimism and disillusionment are intertwined, just as they were for many young revolutionaries in that period. Udayan has no time for Subhash, who is more judicious and fearful of aggressive mobilization. On the other hand, Subhash is the counterpoint to Udayan's

radicalism (Bera, 2022). When he decided to leave India for the US, it was because, like all the good citizens do, he was searching for a place to be free from the politically charged environment and a more stable life free from the chaos and violence in Kolkata.

This view of the political texture of Kolkata is overlaid with the personal and the political being welded closely together in the lives of the characters. The city is not only Udayan's home but also the field, so to speak, for his ideological vocation that brings him into the Naxalite movement. The real reflection of the broader tendency of the 1960s and 1970s, in which many people saw political activism as a way to fulfill themselves and change society, is that his identity is inseparable from the political cause for which he stands. The novel is framed in terms of a city, a city with a history of political activism that influences the characters' fates, especially those of Udayan and Subhash.

The Role of Political Activism in Shaping Character Decisions and Relationships

The characters' relationships with one another—and with the decisions they make—are in no small part dependent on political activism. Udayan's radical involvement in the Naxalite movement has consequences for his brother Subhash and the rest of his family for a long time to come. With Udayan growing more radicalized, Subhash begins to hate his brother who can not reconcile the dialectics of their beliefs. Subhash's refusal to accompany Udayan to join his political cause or to leave Kolkata is a major break in their relationship. Subhash's move to the United States is his pulling back from the politics of Kolkata, as he sees it as an unstable and personally dangerous place.

The reason Subhash decides to separate himself from Udayan's political activism is that he wants to save his skin and create a life of peace from political chaos. It is both pragmatic and betrays Subhash's emotional remoteness from Udayan, and his sense of guilt too. Fear is the reason why Subhash moved to the United States, along with a sense of responsibility for his well-being, the latter of which becomes clear after Udayan's death. Lahiri shows how political activism doesn't just break up personal relationships, but also creates great emotional schisms between family members. Udayan's ideological commitment leads to a very direct result, that of his brother separating from him, and through that a lack of communication between the siblings due to the force of radicalism.

Subhash's disengagement from politics demonstrates his inner struggle; ashamed and regretful, his distancing from his brother is agonizing. This balance of personal safety and familial duty, a clash that is central to the novel as well, relates to a broader but not completely resolved tension between active political participation and personal sacrifice. The phrasing of the essay recounts Subhash's return to Kolkata after Udayan's death because of his efforts to bridge his conflicting desires (to mourn his brother and yet keep some distance from the very politics that killed Udayan).

Subhash's family relationships are affected by political activism, and his relationship with his daughter, Bela participates in this political activism. Raised in the United States, Bela is cut off from the political fallout from her father's and uncle's lives. The ideological commitment certainly affects family dynamics, as between Bela and her father there is a huge generational gap. The scars of those political protests still haunt personal relationships, and Bela's inability to grasp why her father was emotionally distant and wouldn't reveal what he got up to in the past. Lahiri draws attention to that disconnection between generations, when the younger generation is detached from the political movements that formed the older generation's experience through alienation from Bela's father.

The Tragic Consequences of Ideological Commitment and Familial Estrangement

According to *The Lowland*, this is one of the most tragic things because the commitment to an ideology leads to estrangement in the family, and in the end, it is the loss that is irreversible. It is the devotion to the Naxalite caused by Udayan that isolates him from Subhash, his family, and finally his own life. Udayan's radicalism takes him down the road of violence and isolation, and then to his death. He is so committed to political activism, that he becomes busy with it, it seeps into his primary responsibilities as a family man and rots his relationships with those who care for him.

On the other hand, Subhash has to bear the heavy price for Udayan's ideological commitment. It is a source of lasting guilt because he is unable to reconcile with Udayan, especially before his brother's death. Lahiri brings out the emotional cost of political estrangement, how Udayan's radicalism ends in his death, and in Subhash's emotional isolation. Compounding this guilt is the fact that Subhash decides to leave Kolkata, and escape from the violence and political instability or in his words, a severance of his

familial ties. This emotional core of the novel is the tension between responsibility to one's family and political commitment, which results in tragic consequences for the personal relationships that one forms. It is the ideological conflict between the brothers that carries irreversible consequences. His return to Kolkata to look after Udayan's widow and daughter, Bela, is an attempt to heal the political wounds caused by their differences. But this gesture is spoiled by the knowledge that Udayan's death was an outcome of the very political movement he had taken part in. This tragic resolution serves as a vehicle by which Lahiri demonstrates both the terrible, personal cost of political commitment and the stark impossibility of separating such personal and political concerns.

Concluding Insights: Identity, Displacement, and Kinship in *The Lowland*

The Lowland is a masterful demonstration by Jhumpa Lahiri of these themes; identity, cultural displacement, and kinship, as we contend with the complications of human relationships across borders and different places and eras. The novel entangles the lives of Subhash and Udayan, and through these intertwined narratives provides deep insight into the intersection of political commitment, migration, and family relationships and how each of these factors form personal identity. Lahiri uses the story of two brothers who have separate, opposite ideologies and life choices to act as a lens through which to critique other societal and familial structures. This synthesizes the work of the novel on these themes and the impact it creates of Lahiri's rendering of cultural displacement, the modification of kinship, and the political aspects of the conflict between the individual and the family.

The Broader Implications of Lahiri's Depiction of Cultural Displacement

In *The Lowland*, the theme of cultural displacement extends beyond being a key theme in itself, but rather, is a metaphor for the character's struggle to both identify with themselves and to belong as a person. Subhash, who has left Kolkata for the United States, is an exploration by Lahiri of the emotional and psychological cost of uprooting, and a search for rebuilding one's life in a country far removed from the political chaos that consumes one's home. It's not just a house move; his move is a great emotional journey from one place to another, full of feelings of loss, isolation, and distance from the past. To parallel Subhash's physical displacement, his psychological displacement as he struggles to reconcile his inability to completely break in with American society while feeling alienated from his cultural roots in Kolkata is reflected.

Bela's experience, being brought up in the US, is just the same, feeling as alienated from her Bengali heritage as she is. Lahiri poignantly captures the contradictions that Bela must deal with the clash between the expectations she has of her father and her father's against his own generation. The fact that she does not understand Udayan's estrangement from Subhash is a testimony to the emotional distance that migration has created and then fueled by the increasing fluidity of cultural identity in the diaspora. Bela, whose fragmented identity is common among culturally displaced, that Lahiri illustrates so well, is distanced from the political, social, and familial histories of their parents.

Udayan's political radicalism is linked to his feelings of displacement. It is also a reaction to his disillusionment with the traditional structure of society and to his feeling of alienation from within it; hence his decision to join the Naxalite movement to bring about social change. Udayan's radicalism is a way of claiming agency in a world that seems to have nothing else to offer Udayan. Lahiri shows how this ultimate discontent that Udayan embodies has political precursors, often about a discontent that arises out of cultural and social displacement, that causes people to turn to ideologies more than to their familial or national ties. From this angle, Lahiri considers the world ramifications of cultural dislocation and discusses the emotional, psychological and moral ramifications that this dislocation entails in the formation of one's identity.

Kinship as a Dynamic and Fluid Concept in Diasporic Narratives

In *The Lowland*, the authors show kinship as a shifting concept based on migration and displacement. It rethinks what family and home are— and how relationships can change and evolve to accommodate the new reality. For example, the bond between Subhash and Udayan is tormented by their political divergence, and the gap created by politics is never truly bridged even in the middle of it all (Cohen & Fischer, 2019). It is a tribute to the conflict between personal loyalties and ideological commitments, which stands as estrangement between the two brothers.

It is not just an individual decision for Subhash to distance himself from Udayan's radicalism; it also

reflects the wider problems the diasporic community is facing in trying to negotiate their relationships with family that are still embedded in their homeland. His treatment of kinship does not only include biology, it includes chosen family. When he comes back to caring for Bela after Udayan's death, it marks a paternity of sorts in Subhash's relationship within the family. This is a marker of a prototypical role transition in familial relations as a consequence of loss and displacement. The diaspora learns to move beyond the emotional baggage of the life they left behind and enter into a kinship with those they only just met, like Subhash with Bela. Lahiri rearticulates the conventional meaning of "family" as an organization that is constantly and symbiotically changing its configurations and identities.

The novel also considers the concept of kinship in political exile. Udayan's radicalism spurs estrangement on both the political and emotional plane from his family, but not until Udayan's death does Subhash start to recast familial relationships in a new but painful way. Subhash takes care of Udayan's widow and daughter, and it brings a new kind of kinship because of it. His relationship with his brother changes despite the political and ideological intransigence. Lahiri expounds on the potency of kinship for regeneration, even asserting its power to commute amid displacement, personal and political strife, and maps the potential of family ties for renewal.

The Political Dimensions of Personal and Familial Conflict in Lahiri's Work

The story of *The Lowland* is about the political dimensions of personal and familial conflict. Looking at political ideologies, the Naxalite movement is shown to catalyze personal transformation, but at the same time also works against familial bonds. Lahiri so successfully interweaves the political and personal that she shows what ideological commitments can produce: estrangement, guilt, and loss. For example, Udayan was not simply acting out what he believed was best for himself, his radicalism is also how he responded to the political climate of Kolkata in the 1960s and 1970s. The political actions distance him from his family, most allows him to disassociate himself from the Naxalite ideology. It's clear this broad societal polarization between the brothers, where ideological divisions too often resulted in tears between families and communities, mirrored this political rift between them.

The political and chaotic situation in his country was probably the reason Subhash left Kolkata and immigrated to the United States. But there are personal consequences for that choice, too. Subhash's separation from Udayan is a rift that dogged him throughout the novel, as Udayan becomes embroiled in the political conflict, at the heart of it (Merriman & Pearce, 2017) (Merriman & Pearce, 2017). The return of his father to Kolkata after Udayan's death is a signal of the novel's attempt to see how political conflict can damage family ties beyond repair. Lahiri's narrative also needs to be seen as personal, and the political cannot be separated. Political ideologies have very real effects not just on the individual, but on the family unit.

Lahiri shows how political ideologies live on after their proponents are dead. Udayan's death is not the end of the political conflict between Subhash and his family. The family's emotional and psychological landscape is shaped by his memory and the ideological commitments that led to his tragic death. Such continued political dimensions to familial conflict are demonstrated by the political activism and ideological commitment that persistently influence and often break apart personal and familial relationships.

CONCLUSION

In *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri describes the alienating, sometimes violent cultural displacement, often within family ties, sometimes in political ideology, that is the subject of the immigrant experience. Lahiri shows this in the lives of Subhash, Udayan, and Bela by showing how migration can be deeply emotional and psychological and how cultural dislocation can affect identity and break apart familial bonds.

As a diasporan story, Subhash's journey is the journey of how one can hold on to one's roots, while Udayan's tragic adherence to radical proto-political ideologies shows that political movements have no place for reconciliation or embrace in families. The sad truth of the novel is that displacement is either a continual process or a singular event with great consequences for your sense of self and the way you relate to others. Lahiri's study of kinship pushes at its fluid and often changing form, especially regarding migration and generational gaps.

Once there was such a deep, familial loyalty between Subhash and Udayan, but ideology pulls them

apart. This shows how personal conviction can reshape the depths of family relationships, or at the very least fail to stitch them back together. Lahiri also points to the possibility of renewal in kinship. The capacity of Subhash to play the role of father for Bela, after Udayan's death, is presented through which transformation includes the effect of family ties, which even brings a loss or estrangement, still the family can rethink and revitalize. In *The Lowland*, it is the political dimensions of personal conflict that enhance the complexity of identity formation and the understanding of familial relations in the diasporic space. This is a story of how ideological commitments, fiercely personal, can have a wide-ranging impact on family dynamics, as seen in the case of Udayan and Subhash.

The kind of political convictions born out of a need to change, sometimes even compelling someone to leave behind their loved ones, can also cause big emotional scars, which last long after the political winds change. And ultimately, the political and personal get assimilated into familial in Lahiri's *The Lowland*. A rich work of weaving – along the themes of displacement, identity, and kinship – Lahiri offers up a deeply personal and uncannily universal tale of how migration and political conflict undermine and fracture human relationships. With a rich and nuanced storytelling, Lahiri brings to the readers a wonderful, transformative, portrait of familial bonds and the complexities of the immigrant experience.

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