

Cosmopolitan Outlook of the Characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

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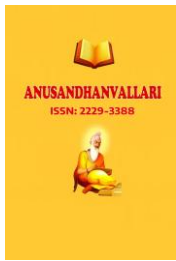
Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013) presents a compelling narrative of transnational identities, displacement, and the negotiation between rootedness and global citizenship. Through interwoven personal histories spanning India and the United States, Lahiri articulates how her central characters embody cosmopolitan outlooks shaped by political upheaval, migration and cultural hybridity. This paper examines how Udayan, Subhash, Gauri, and other characters negotiate cosmopolitan orientations in relation to national belonging, ethical responsibility, affective ties, and cross-cultural encounters. By positioning cosmopolitanism as both a philosophical stance and lived practice, this study argues that Lahiri's novel traverses the limits of nationalist paradigms, foregrounding a cosmopolitan ethos grounded in empathy, ethical pluralism and transnational mobility.

Keywords - Fiction, Indian English literature, novel, diaspora, cosmopolitan, migration, cultural hybridity.

Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* offers a profound literary meditation on belonging, displacement, ethical responsibility, and the formation of identity across political and geographical borders. While the novel is frequently read through the lens of diaspora, migration, and family trauma, it also invites a sustained engagement with the concept of cosmopolitanism as a lived and contested orientation toward the world. The intertwined lives of Udayan, Subhash, and Gauri unfold across the charged historical terrain of the Naxalite movement in Calcutta and the transnational spaces of the United States, creating a narrative architecture in which questions of justice, attachment, mobility, and selfhood are constantly renegotiated. Through these characters, Lahiri dramatizes different modes of cosmopolitan outlook that emerge not only from migration but also from political commitment, ethical imagination, and personal reinvention. This study has examined how *The Lowland* reconfigures cosmopolitanism beyond its conventional association with elite global mobility and liberal universalism. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Kwame Anthony Appiah, Ulrich Beck, Homi Bhabha, Pnina Werbner, Martha Nussbaum, and other scholars of cosmopolitan and postcolonial thought, the analysis has shown that Lahiri presents cosmopolitanism as an ethical and affective condition rooted in specific historical and cultural contexts. The Naxalite movement, rather than serving merely as historical background, becomes a crucial site for understanding how local revolutionary politics can reflect a global ethical consciousness. Udayan's ideological commitments, Subhash's transnational life, and Gauri's self-fashioning together produce a spectrum of cosmopolitan orientations that challenge simplistic binaries between the local and the global, the national and the transnational, the political and the personal.

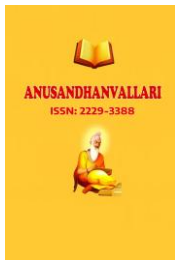


Gauri's Cosmopolitan Identity and Postmodern Feminism

Gauri Mitra, one of the central figures in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*, is portrayed as an Indian immigrant in the United States who becomes an accomplished professor of philosophy. Her character stands apart from conventional representations of Indian womanhood associated with the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than remaining confined within socially prescribed roles of wife and mother, Gauri gradually reshapes her life around intellectual pursuit, personal autonomy, and self-determined identity. At a later stage in her life, she also enters into a same-sex relationship, further complicating traditional gender and sexual expectations. Through Gauri, Lahiri constructs a character whose life can be understood through the intersecting perspectives of postcolonial feminism, postmodern feminist thought, diasporic consciousness, transnational identity, cosmopolitan orientation, and queer subjectivity. Gauri's journey from Calcutta to the United States is not simply a geographical relocation but a profound transformation of subjectivity. Her life unfolds across multiple historical and cultural contexts, and her identity is shaped by both personal choice and inherited history. Theoretical discussions of transnational feminism help illuminate how Gauri's identity is formed within shifting relations of gender, culture, race, and global mobility. Transnational feminist thought emphasizes how women's identities are shaped not only by gender but also by historical legacies, class structures, racial perceptions, and geopolitical location. Within the American context, immigrant women like Gauri are positioned in complex ways, as they negotiate freedom, opportunity, and the pressures of assimilation within a neoliberal social order that promises autonomy while silently reproducing older hierarchies of race and empire.

Gauri's life in America demonstrates how personal choice becomes central to her sense of self. Her decision to pursue higher education, to prioritize academic work over domestic life, and eventually to leave her husband and daughter, all reflect a commitment to individual agency. Yet these choices are not made in a vacuum. They are shaped by the emotional rupture caused by Udayan's death, by the social suffocation she experiences as a widow in Calcutta, and by the new possibilities opened up through migration. Her intellectual life becomes a means of reconstructing herself beyond the constraints of her past. However, this reconstruction is marked by tension, because the past continues to shadow her present. The idea of new cosmopolitanism, developed in discussions of South Asian diasporic experience, is particularly relevant to Gauri's character. New cosmopolitan subjects are not confined to a single nation, class, or cultural identity. They occupy fluid positions shaped by migration, globalization, media, and shifting value systems. Gauri fits this description because she neither fully abandons her Indian past nor fully assimilates into American culture. Her outward appearance may change, and her intellectual interests may become Western, but her accent, complexion, and name continually remind both herself and others of her origins. Encounters with subtle racial misunderstandings and questions about where she comes from reveal how her body itself carries traces of history that cannot be erased. Despite her efforts to distance herself from her past, Gauri retains symbolic connections to it. She keeps objects given to her by Subhash, hesitates to adopt American citizenship, and experiences unexpected emotional impulses when she encounters elderly Indian strangers or thinks about Bela. These moments reveal that diasporic identity is not a simple process of replacement but one of layering. Even as she tries to sever ties with her earlier life, memory persists in unexpected forms. Her return to Rhode Island with divorce papers, her attempt to reconnect with Bela, and her later visit to Calcutta demonstrate a desire, however fragile, to revisit the emotional threads she once cut.

Postcolonial theory, particularly in its contemporary engagement with globalization and transnational flows, provides a useful framework for understanding these tensions. Postcolonial subjectivity is no longer confined to a simple opposition between colonizer and colonized or between homeland and hostland. Instead, it reflects hybrid, in-between identities shaped by global movement and historical memory. Gauri's life exemplifies this hybridity. She is neither fully Indian nor fully American; neither entirely detached from her past nor entirely governed by it. Her identity shifts depending on context, reflecting the fluidity characteristic of postcolonial and transnational existence. Gauri's multiple roles throughout the novel illustrate this fluidity. She is at various

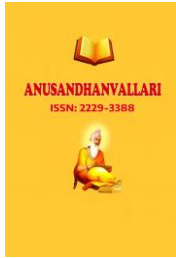


moments a student, a lover, a widow, a wife, a mother, a scholar, a partner in a same-sex relationship, and finally an aging woman seeking reconciliation with her past. These roles often contradict one another, revealing a fragmented yet evolving self. Such fragmentation aligns with postmodern feminist views that reject the idea of a stable, unified female identity. Instead, identity is seen as constructed through changing social, cultural, and economic conditions. Gauri's life is shaped by global mobility, academic culture, and shifting personal affiliations, all of which contribute to a scattered but dynamic sense of self. Her same-sex relationship introduces an additional dimension to her character. Feminist and queer theorists have noted that nationalist and patriarchal systems often define women as symbols of cultural continuity, assuming heterosexuality as the norm within family and nation. By entering into a lesbian relationship, Gauri moves outside these expectations, disrupting the connection between womanhood, motherhood, and heterosexual domesticity. Her sexuality becomes another form of resistance to prescribed identities and highlights how diasporic space can create possibilities for non-heteronormative lives that may be difficult to imagine within traditional settings.

Yet Lahiri does not present Gauri's autonomy as uncomplicated liberation. Her emotional withdrawal from Bela, her loneliness, and her guilt reveal the cost of radical self-reinvention. Her cosmopolitan identity, built on intellectual achievement and personal freedom, also leads to isolation. This tension suggests that cosmopolitan selfhood involves not only freedom from constraints but also the challenge of living without familiar anchors of belonging. Gauri's character thus embodies a form of postcolonial cosmopolitanism in which attachment to a single nation is replaced by a broader, though more fragile, sense of belonging to the world. She navigates multiple identities, shifting between them as circumstances demand. Her life illustrates how diasporic individuals maintain connections to their past even while attempting to create new futures. Through Gauri, Lahiri portrays cosmopolitanism not as glamorous global mobility but as a complex negotiation between memory, autonomy, gender and belonging. In the end, Gauri stands as a profoundly modern figure whose identity cannot be confined within traditional categories. Her life demonstrates how women in diasporic and transnational contexts construct selves that are at once shaped by history and driven by choice. Through her, *The Lowland* offers a nuanced exploration of cosmopolitan femininity, where intellectual freedom, cultural displacement, and emotional memory intersect to produce a deeply layered human experience.

Neo-Cosmopolitan Diaspora

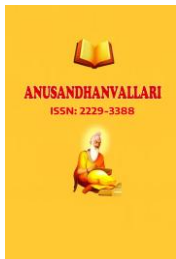
Gauri Mitra's character in *The Lowland* consistently unsettles conventional expectations of gender, family, sexuality, and belonging. From the moment she arrives in Rhode Island as Subhash's wife, her behavior signals a quiet but decisive refusal to inhabit the normative roles assigned to her as an Indian woman, a widow, a wife, and eventually a mother. Her withdrawal into intellectual solitude while Subhash assumes domestic responsibilities, her emotional distance from Bela, and her eventual decision to leave her family in pursuit of an academic career all mark a sustained reversal of traditional gender arrangements. This trajectory culminates in her intimate relationship with Lorna, a woman working under her supervision, an episode that reveals a further disruption of heteronormative expectations. Through these acts, Lahiri presents Gauri as a postmodern feminist subject whose identity is shaped within a transnational space where gender, sexuality, and belonging are continually renegotiated. Gauri's queer relationship cannot be understood simply as a private deviation from social norms; it reflects the broader cultural invisibility of lesbian identity discussed in feminist and queer theory. Judith Butler's argument that certain gender and sexual identities appear unintelligible within dominant cultural frameworks helps illuminate Gauri's need for secrecy. Similarly, Adrienne Rich's observation that lesbian existence has historically been erased or subsumed within male-centered narratives of sexuality clarifies why Gauri experiences her relationship with Lorna as something that must remain hidden. The narrative itself acknowledges that exposure would have led to scandal. Gauri's sexuality therefore occupies a marginal space, socially unrecognized and culturally unspoken, mirroring the theoretical claim that queer female subjectivity often exists outside the limits of what society is prepared to imagine.



This concealment contributes to Gauri's increasing isolation. Her awareness of having lived through multiple, often contradictory identities becomes explicit when she reflects on her life as a series of transformations: from wife to widow, from sister-in-law to wife again, from mother to a woman without children. These shifts reveal a fragmented sense of self that resonates strongly with postmodern feminist understandings of identity as unstable, constructed, and multiple rather than unified. Her life is marked by continual acts of self-redefinition, each undertaken at significant emotional cost. What remains constant is not relational attachment but the drive to reshape herself beyond imposed roles. Within transnational feminist thought, such multiplicity of identity is seen as a product of global mobility, cultural displacement, and shifting social structures. The idea that modern subjects are produced by "scattered hegemonies" created through global capital, migration, and transnational culture is particularly relevant to Gauri. She is not a coherent, stable subject rooted in a single cultural framework; rather, her identity is dispersed across locations, relationships, and historical moments. Her subjectivity stands in contrast to the idea of a unified, stable individual shaped by a single tradition. Instead, she embodies a self formed in movement, fragmentation and negotiation. Gauri's diasporic existence further distinguishes her from more familiar representations of first-generation South Asian immigrant women. Unlike characters who attempt to balance tradition with modernity within family life, Gauri dismantles the very structure of the diasporic family. Her decision to leave Subhash and Bela overturns the image of the immigrant household as a space of emotional cohesion and cultural continuity. In doing so, she redefines what it means to be a diasporic woman. Her life does not revolve around preserving cultural memory through domesticity; instead, it revolves around intellectual pursuit and personal autonomy.

Her distancing from other Indian women in Rhode Island underscores this difference. After attending a social gathering with fellow expatriates, she consciously avoids further contact, feeling no affinity with their shared nostalgia or domestic concerns. Her cutting of hair and replacement of Indian clothing with Western attire symbolize not merely assimilation but a deeper psychological separation from expected cultural scripts. These outward changes mirror an inner detachment that predates her migration. Even in her youth, Gauri is portrayed as emotionally self-contained, shaped by a childhood spent away from parental intimacy. Udayan's death intensifies this inwardness, making her withdrawal more pronounced. Life in California offers Gauri a space where she can exist without the demands of intimacy. Her professional environment allows for temporary, surface-level interactions with students and colleagues, relationships that never require emotional vulnerability. Even her romantic relationships remain detached and transient. She experiences a sense of belonging not through people but through intellectual work and, increasingly, through virtual connectivity. Her awareness of herself as a presence in the digital world reflects a new kind of diasporic condition, one shaped by technology that enables connection without proximity. This sense of being virtually present across spaces aligns with contemporary ideas about globalization, where movement and communication blur the boundaries of location and belonging. The concept of new cosmopolitanism is useful in understanding this condition. New cosmopolitan subjects are characterized by fluid identities shaped by migration, technology, and competing cultural values. Gauri exemplifies this fluidity. She is physically settled in California yet mentally and virtually connected to multiple places, including India and the wider world. Her life is not defined by a single national allegiance or cultural identity but by constant movement between them. She inhabits a state of perpetual in-betweenness.

Her position can also be understood through the idea of global "scapes," where people, technologies, and ideas circulate across borders. As a mobile academic and a constant user of digital networks, Gauri participates in both human and technological flows that characterize modern global life. These flows shape her consciousness, allowing her to maintain connections with distant histories while remaining rooted in her present location. Her diasporic life is thus shaped by both personal disposition and the structural possibilities offered by global modernity. At the same time, her empowerment in the United States is not merely the result of external



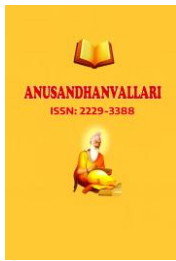
opportunity. It is closely tied to her internal inclination toward solitude and self-determination. Migration provides her with a context in which her preexisting sense of detachment can be fully expressed. The United States becomes the space where her internal mobility takes external form. Her cosmopolitan identity is therefore a combination of personal temperament and global circumstance. Gauri ultimately emerges as a figure who occupies multiple, shifting identities across gender, sexuality, culture, and geography. She resists containment within traditional categories of wife, mother, or immigrant woman. Instead, she embodies an unconventional femininity defined by intellectual independence, emotional withdrawal, and sexual nonconformity. Her life illustrates how diasporic women in transnational contexts can create new forms of agency by moving across roles and identities rather than remaining fixed within them. Through Gauri, *The Lowland* offers a complex portrait of a modern, neo-cosmopolitan woman whose existence challenges inherited ideas of home, family, gender and belonging.

Gauri and Subhash

In *The Lowland*, Subhash and Gauri emerge as two of Jhumpa Lahiri's most intricate representations of cosmopolitan subjectivity, each negotiating displacement, memory, and belonging in markedly different ways. Their trajectories from Calcutta to the United States illuminate how cosmopolitan outlooks are not merely products of mobility but are shaped by ethical choices, emotional negotiations, and acts of self-fashioning across cultural terrains. Through these characters, Lahiri stages a sustained inquiry into what it means to live across borders, not only geographically but psychologically and morally. Subhash's migration to the United States initially appears to align with what Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen describe as "cosmopolitan practice," the everyday negotiation of multiple cultural worlds. His academic journey in Rhode Island exposes him to a cultural environment radically different from his upbringing, compelling him to cultivate habits of openness, adaptability, and reflexive self-awareness. This process resonates with Ulrich Beck's notion of "cosmopolitanization," whereby individuals are compelled by global forces to reconfigure their sense of self in relation to cultural difference. Subhash does not abandon his Indian identity, nor does he attempt full assimilation into American society; instead, he inhabits an in-between space where his identity becomes layered and dialogic.

Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space" is particularly useful in understanding Subhash's position. Bhabha argues that cultural identity in postcolonial and diasporic contexts is formed in liminal spaces where meanings are negotiated rather than inherited. Subhash's life in America unfolds within such a liminal zone. His marriage to Deborah and his efforts to build a family life reflect a willingness to participate in American social structures, yet his memories of Calcutta, his attachment to Udayan, and his eventual return to India to assume responsibility for Gauri reveal that his identity remains tethered to multiple histories. This hybridity is not a crisis but a mode of being that allows him to respond ethically to situations that transcend national logic. Subhash's cosmopolitan outlook is most evident in his ethical responsiveness rather than in cultural fluency alone. When he marries Gauri to rescue her from social ostracism in India, his action reflects what Kwame Anthony Appiah describes as cosmopolitanism's "ethics of neighborliness," where moral responsibility extends beyond immediate ties of kinship or nationality. Subhash assumes a role that is neither mandated by tradition nor by personal desire, but by a sense of obligation to another human being caught in political and social catastrophe. His care for Bela, whom he raises as his own daughter, further exemplifies a cosmopolitan ethics rooted in relational responsibility rather than biological or national belonging. In this sense, Subhash's life enacts a form of everyday cosmopolitanism that is quiet, sustained, and deeply ethical.

Gauri's cosmopolitan trajectory, however, unfolds along a different axis. While Subhash's cosmopolitanism is relational and care-oriented, Gauri's is marked by self-reinvention, intellectual autonomy, and emotional withdrawal. Her relocation to the United States provides not merely a change of geography but an opportunity to reconstruct her identity outside the constraints of widowhood, family expectation, and political memory. This process of self-fashioning aligns with Michel Foucault's notion of the "care of the self," where subjectivity is

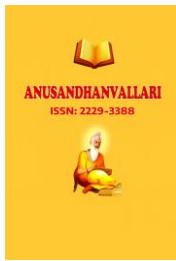


actively constructed through choices, practices, and forms of knowledge. Gauri's decision to pursue higher education and later a professional career in philosophy represents a deliberate attempt to craft a new self that is not defined by her past. Gauri's engagement with philosophy is symbolically significant. It situates her within a transnational intellectual tradition that transcends cultural and national limits. Her immersion in abstract thought mirrors what Martha Nussbaum identifies as the cultivation of a "world citizen," one who is trained to think beyond parochial attachments through critical inquiry and reflective reasoning. Yet Lahiri does not present this intellectual cosmopolitanism as wholly liberating. Gauri's pursuit of autonomy is accompanied by emotional detachment, particularly in her relationship with Bela, revealing the cost of radical self-reinvention.

Walter Dignolo's concept of "decolonial cosmopolitanism" helps illuminate Gauri's position as a woman emerging from the margins of patriarchal and postcolonial structures. Her rejection of traditional familial roles can be read as an assertion of agency against social systems that sought to define her identity through marriage, widowhood, and motherhood. By choosing intellectual life and geographic distance, Gauri resists the expectations imposed upon her as an Indian woman marked by political tragedy. Her cosmopolitanism thus becomes a strategy of survival and autonomy, shaped by a refusal to be contained within inherited narratives. At the same time, Gauri's detachment complicates idealized notions of cosmopolitan openness. Unlike Subhash, whose cosmopolitanism is expressed through care and relational continuity, Gauri's version involves severance and solitude. This tension echoes criticisms of cosmopolitan theory that warn against its potential to privilege detachment over rootedness. Lahiri uses Gauri to explore the ambivalence of cosmopolitan selfhood, where freedom from cultural constraints may lead to isolation rather than community. Together, Subhash and Gauri embody two complementary but contrasting forms of cosmopolitan outlook. Subhash represents an ethics of connection across borders, grounded in empathy, responsibility, and hybridity. Gauri represents an ethics of self-determination, where cosmopolitanism facilitates the reconstitution of identity beyond prescribed roles. Their lives demonstrate that cosmopolitanism in *The Lowland* is not a singular ideology but a spectrum of lived experiences shaped by history, memory, and individual choice.

Cosmopolitanism and the Naxalite Context

In *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri situates the formative years of her central characters within the historical turbulence of the Naxalite movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s in West Bengal. This political backdrop is not merely historical ornamentation but a crucial matrix through which Lahiri explores competing visions of justice, belonging, and ethical responsibility that resonate with theoretical understandings of cosmopolitanism. While the Naxalite movement was rooted in radical agrarian politics inspired by Maoist ideology, Lahiri reframes its presence in the novel to interrogate how localized revolutionary commitments can paradoxically reflect a broader cosmopolitan ethical impulse. Cosmopolitanism, as articulated by thinkers such as Kwame Anthony Appiah and Ulrich Beck, does not necessitate geographic mobility but rather an ethical orientation that transcends narrow communal or national allegiances. Appiah's formulation of cosmopolitanism as an "ethics of universal concern" emphasizes responsibility toward others beyond one's immediate cultural or national group, grounded in a recognition of shared humanity. Within this framework, Udayan's involvement in the Naxalite struggle can be read as a form of ethical cosmopolitanism that emerges from local political action. His activism is directed not toward nationalist revival or state allegiance but toward dismantling systemic inequalities that he perceives as violations of human dignity. Although geographically confined to Calcutta, Udayan's political imagination is shaped by global revolutionary currents, particularly Maoist thought, which itself emerged as a transnational ideological force influencing liberation struggles across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In this sense, Lahiri portrays Udayan as participating in what Beck terms "rooted cosmopolitanism," where ethical commitments are enacted locally but informed by global discourses of justice.

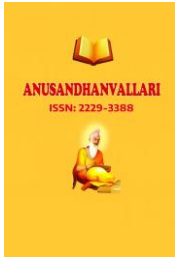


The historical Naxalite movement, as scholars such as Sumanta Banerjee and Kunal Chattopadhyay have shown, was driven by the belief that structural injustice transcended the boundaries of the Indian nation-state and required solidarity with oppressed populations everywhere. Lahiri subtly invokes this ideological dimension through Udayan's intellectual engagement with revolutionary texts and his rejection of middle-class complacency. His cosmopolitan outlook is thus not derived from travel or cross-cultural interaction but from a moral and political alignment with a global struggle against exploitation. This challenges the conventional association of cosmopolitanism with elite mobility or diasporic experience, suggesting instead that cosmopolitan ethics can be cultivated within intensely local political contexts. At the same time, Lahiri complicates this alignment by juxtaposing Udayan's radical political cosmopolitanism with Subhash's eventual transnational migration to the United States. Subhash's path represents a more recognizable form of lived cosmopolitanism, marked by physical relocation, cultural negotiation, and intellectual openness. The contrast between the brothers highlights two distinct modes of cosmopolitan orientation: one grounded in revolutionary solidarity and the other in cross-cultural engagement. While Udayan remains physically rooted in Calcutta, his imagination is outward-looking, shaped by global ideological currents. Subhash, by contrast, embodies what Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen describe as "cosmopolitan practice," where everyday life involves navigating multiple cultural frameworks.

Lahiri's portrayal of the Naxalite context also invites reflection through the lens of postcolonial cosmopolitanism, as discussed by scholars like Homi Bhabha and Walter Dignolo. Bhabha's concept of the "vernacular cosmopolitan" underscores how global consciousness can arise from specific historical and cultural locations without dissolving into abstract universalism. Udayan's political commitments are deeply embedded in the socio-economic realities of post-independence India, yet they articulate a vision of justice that exceeds national boundaries. His struggle is not for the nation as such but for humanity within and beyond it. This aligns with Dignolo's notion of "decolonial cosmopolitanism," which emerges from the margins rather than from Western liberal traditions, emphasizing solidarity with oppressed groups worldwide. However, Lahiri does not romanticize this form of political cosmopolitanism. The tragic consequences of Udayan's involvement with the Naxalite movement expose the limitations and ethical ambiguities of revolutionary idealism. His death leaves emotional and moral wreckage that reverberates across continents, affecting Subhash and Gauri in profoundly personal ways. Through this aftermath, Lahiri suggests that cosmopolitan ethical commitments, when pursued through violent political means, can generate unforeseen suffering. This tension reflects Martha Nussbaum's caution that cosmopolitan ideals must be grounded in empathy and care rather than abstract ideological fervor. The Naxalite context thus becomes a narrative site where Lahiri interrogates the relationship between political radicalism and cosmopolitan ethics. Udayan's revolutionary zeal is driven by a desire to alleviate suffering beyond his immediate circle, embodying a form of moral universalism. Yet the personal costs of this commitment reveal the complexity of translating cosmopolitan ideals into political action. In contrast, Subhash's later life in America reflects a quieter, relational cosmopolitanism based on care, responsibility, and cross-cultural understanding. The novel therefore stages a dialogue between different articulations of cosmopolitan outlook, one forged in political struggle and the other in everyday transnational existence.

Concluding Outlook

The Lowland ultimately demonstrates that cosmopolitanism is neither an abstract philosophical ideal nor merely the product of physical migration, but a complex ethical stance that takes shape within the tensions of history, memory, and personal responsibility. Through Udayan's revolutionary engagement, Subhash's diasporic negotiation of identity, and Gauri's radical self-reinvention, Lahiri maps a range of cosmopolitan possibilities that are grounded in lived experience rather than theoretical abstraction. Each character embodies a different response to the demands of justice, belonging, and autonomy, revealing cosmopolitanism as a multifaceted and often contradictory orientation toward others and the world. The tragic legacy of the Naxalite movement and its long emotional aftermath underscore the costs and limits of political idealism, while the transnational trajectories of



Subhash and Gauri illustrate how cosmopolitan outlook can be shaped by everyday acts of care, withdrawal, reinvention, and ethical choice. Lahiri's narrative suggests that cosmopolitanism is inseparable from vulnerability and responsibility, emerging from encounters with difference, displacement, and moral uncertainty. It is through these encounters that the characters confront the question of how to live meaningfully across borders that are at once geographical, ideological and emotional. By situating cosmopolitan thought within the intimate terrain of family, loss, and migration, *The Lowland* expands the literary imagination of what it means to be cosmopolitan in a postcolonial world. The novel challenges readers to reconsider cosmopolitanism not as a privilege of mobility but as a demanding ethical engagement with the lives of others, shaped by history and sustained through personal choices. In doing so, Lahiri offers a nuanced and deeply human exploration of cosmopolitan outlook that resonates with contemporary theoretical debates in English literary studies, postcolonial criticism and global ethics.

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