



**ADJUSTING WITH A NEW PLACE IN *THE LOWLAND* (2013)  
BY JUMPHA LAHIRI**

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**ABSTRACT**

Skripsi ini merupakan analisa dari novel *The Lowland* (2013) karya Jumpha Lahiri. Permasalahan yang dibahas didalam kajian ini adalah bagaimana cara pendatang melakukan penyesuaian diri dengan lingkungan baru yang memiliki nuansa yang sangat berbeda dengan lingkungan yang mereka tinggali sebelumnya. Permasalahan dari analisa ini adalah sejauh mana karakter dalam novel ini merefleksikan cara-cara yang dilakukan untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan lingkungan baru, serta seberapa besar fungsi elemen-elemen fiksi seperti karakter, setting, dan konflik berpengaruh untuk memperlihatkan cara tersebut. Tujuan dari analisa ini adalah untuk mengungkapkan cara-cara yang dilakukan pendatang dalam menyesuaikan diri terhadap lingkungan baru, dan untuk mengetahui peran karakter, setting, dan konflik dalam membantu untuk mengetahui cara-cara dalam penyesuaian diri. Metode yang dipakai adalah *text-based* dan *context-based interpretation* yang dikaitkan dengan konsep *life instinct* dari Sigmund Freud. Hasil dari kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana cara pendatang menghadapi masalah yang mereka dapati selama proses penyesuaian diri melalui sikap dan perilaku dengan mengendalikan masalah, menghadapi tekanan, membangun hubungan sosial dan memperoleh tujuan. Konflik yang terjadi dari luar dan dalam diri mereka mendorong mereka untuk mencari cara agar tidak terus terjebak dalam hal tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** *adjusting, new place, The Lowland*, sikap, perilaku.

**A. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the movement of people from one country to another country which is called immigration is an actual social issue. One of the reasons

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why people become migrate is to get prosperous life and become more optimistic, also solve problems they have in their homeland. Azzahra, F.S, Ningsih, and Wahyuni (2012) mentioned that people confront problems every day. Problems are part of one's life and continuously occur no matter how difficult they are to solve. Problems come when people are in a process to achieve a goal. They need mental process that involves discovering, analyzing and solving.

Destination where they are going to go become a main factor as one reason of the movement. It may offer convenience, safety, and support their economical need. The movement of people is caused by some factors. People who choose to move for getting safety may caused by war, social and political conflicts, or terrorism.

There is a well-known country which becomes destination for many immigrants in the world; they believe that they can achieve prosperity by working hard. It is the United States that has an ethos about opportunity to be successful. It is also known as the American Dream which values democracy, right, liberty, opportunity and equality. According to Adams in Cullen (1931) the dream of land should be better for everyone who sees opportunity and achieves it through his/her ability.

According to MPI's (Migration Policy Institute) (2014) analysis data from 2009-13 shows that 51 percents of immigrants from India settled in a country during or after 2000. Indian generation is a highly educated and economically successful population that has integrated well in the United States through their accomplishments in information technology industry, skills, professional and social networks. In recent years members of the Indian generation also have become increasingly involved in United States politics.

The phenomenon of adjusting process with a new place is represented by the novel that is written by diaspora author, Jumpha Lahiri in *The Lowland* (2013). The novel shows how characters adapt in a new place and face some difficulties in adjusting processes.

Jumpha Lahiri tends to criticize the Asian American literature on cultural questions in the immigrant culture as transplanted Indian culture into America. Her latest fiction *The Lowland* has won DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2014. Her writing is characterized by her 'plain' language and her characters, often about Indian immigrants to America who must navigate between the cultural values of their homeland and their adopted home. She examines her characters' struggles, anxieties, and biases to chronicle the nuances and details of immigrant psychology and behavior.

Novel *The Lowland* (2013), written by Jumpha Lahiri shows how immigrants adjust with a new place. Adjusting with a new place in this analysis refers to how immigrants adapt in a new place in order to pursue the new one and to get a better life. It is represented by two characters. The first character is Subhash Mitra. He is an Indian man who feels restraint in human space by the bad political situation and culture. The second character is Gauri. She is a pregnant

widow that restricted by feminine prototype. She used to be officially wife of Subhash's died brother. They leave their homeland to put away horrible events behind them and to pursue a new better life. In this analysis, these two characters adjust themselves in a new place through the changes of their mindset and behavior.

They try to recognize their environment through mindset in some aspects. This is done through their attitude towards knowledge and society. These two characters have awareness and their effort to get knowledge. They believe that knowledge is an important thing as bridge to achieve a better life. Thus, they decided to continue their study. They also have an attitude toward social. The first character tries to recognize his society. He changes his mind towards women and family. He brings the second character out from domestic area and let her to continue her study to university in America. He also cares about his family life. While the second character try to socialize by exposing herself with other people. She joins a study group.

The second change that characters do in adjusting with a new place is through behavior. They behave differently towards their lifestyle and surroundings. Lifestyle deals with appearance, food, and language. Both of the characters start to get dressed like others. The second character changes her appearance by cutting her hair and not wearing saris. They communicate with English toward other people. They don't eat Indian foods. They also behave different with their surroundings by being open hearted and interact with others. While the second character changes her behavior toward her new environment. She becomes a more open personality and exposes herself with area of study and work.

Another analysis entitled *Immigration: 'A Lifelong Pregnancy'? An Analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction* written by Ramona-Alice Bran (2014). In this study, she focused on characters that can't stabilize their thought of their past memories yet on their present in a foreign country. She analyzed it by using the concepts of cultural translation and cultural hybridization by Homi K Bhabha. In her analysis, she explained how characters struggle with traumatic historical and dramatic political events that have marred their family's story in a new place. The result of her works shows how characters are scarred by feeling of guilty of their past.

This study deals with the life of immigrants. The conceptual frameworks that is used in this analysis is the concept of life instinct in psychological and socio-cultural adjustment by Sigmund Freud. Freud in Strachey (1961: 34) stated that life instinct is the instincts which watch over the opportunity to survive the whole individual against the external world. It leads an individual to be free in confronting such a difficult situation. In *Passion and Theory* (1996), Freud in Ferrel states that sense of guilt establishes role in the development of civilization. It means that civilization is related with the sense of guilt. It affects the progress

of civilization. While the sense of guilt is able to worsen the civilization, it can also give influence to improve the civilization. The greater people feel the sense of guilt then they won't be able to achieve the happiness. Conversely, the more they reduce that sense in the process of civilization then they will be succeeded in achieving the happiness.

According to Maddux (1995), adjusting deals with controlling over behaviour, thoughts, and emotions. This is how people try to be better in controlling life's challenges, dealing with stress, building healthy relationships, and achieving personal satisfaction and peace of mind.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The analysis of this novel will be done through text-based and context-based interpretation. Other fictional devices such as character, plot and setting are needed during the process of analyzing. Plot and conflicts in this novel also take an important role in revealing the meaning. Setting deals with the situation and condition exist in the novel in order to reveal characters' effort to settle in a new place. These elements are analyzed based on the concept of life instinct by Sigmund Freud.

## **C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section analyses the fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict) and setting to reveal the way of characters *adjusting with a new place*. The Indian man and woman characters show the life changes of immigrants in a new place. It is shown through the adaptation of attitude and behavior. They adapt their mindset toward knowledge and society and they also adapt their behavior toward lifestyle and surroundings.

### **1. Mindset**

Mindset is a person's attitude or set of opinion about something. In this analysis, the characters start to adjust by having attitude. They try to recognize their environment through attitude in some aspects. The attitude can be seen through their effort to get knowledge and their effort to recognize their society. The effort to get knowledge can be seen from their decision to continue their study and have perseverance in study. While their effort to recognize their society can be seen from the way the first character changes his attitude towards women and cares about family life and the second character tries to socialize by exposing herself. The feeling of restriction encourages them to be out from their country to get a better life. In order to reach a better life, they decide to do some changes that they can't do in their origin country.

The first character's effort to recognize his society is also shown in this following text:

In the spring semester, for three weeks, Subhash boarded a research vessel with a group of students and professors. ... Sailing even slightly east reminded Subhash of how far away he

was from his family. He thought of the time it took to cross even a tiny portion of the earth's surface. Isolated on the ship with the scientists and other students and crew, he felt doubly alone. Unable to fathom his future, severed from his past. (p.28)

The text above shows that he lives in excommunication at his first time in the new place. It shows that his presence is ignored by others. The setting from the text above refers the tense condition. The tense condition refers to the loneliness and condescending of the first character which is disregarded by others. The loneliness that he feels is not only by the people around him, but also his longing toward his family. The condition brings him to remind his past and disturbs his mind. However, he deals with the stress that disturbs his mind. The internal conflict triggers him to centralize his mind to keep moving forward. In order to break the disturbance, he starts to socialize and opens his mind toward others.

The second character, Gauri, also has an attitude towards knowledge. She has a great interest about education. It can be seen through this quotation below:

One day she found the philosophy department. She came upon a large lecture hall with rows of descending seats. The doors were still open as students continued filing in. She took a seat at the very back, high enough so that she was looking down at the top of the professor's head. Close enough to the door so that she could slip out if she needed to. ...Students around her were also smoking, or knitting. A few had their eyes closed. ... But Gauri found herself paying attention. Eventually, wanting to take notes, she searched in her bag for a sheet of paper and a pen. Finding no paper, she wrote her notes in the margins of the campus newspaper she'd been carrying around. Later, on a pad she found in the apartment, she copied over what she'd written. (p.86)

The setting here refers to the environment situation which she enters now, it is very different with what she has in her origin country. This situation triggers her to internal conflict. It makes her confused and afraid. At the beginning, she is confused about the way of people study there. She is also afraid about if she will be pushed away by other students or the professor because of her condition with different ethnic and different appearance. However, the internal conflict doesn't let her deject. She's able to deal with the stress. Her curiosity triggers her to know more about the study. She is interested in the course therefore she encourages herself to enter the class. The sentence '*She took a seat at the very back, high enough so that she was looking down at the top of the professor's head.*' shows that she indicates her will by entering the class and following the class. Her will is also shown from the way she takes an initiative to utilize other things in order to study and understand more about the material.

In summary, having attitude toward knowledge and society is important in adjusting with a new place. Knowledge and society are the influential parts toward the development of adjustment. The dominant setting refers to the

difficult condition which is really different from their origin country. The conflict that the characters have faced during the adjustment makes them aware about what makes them happy or suffer. It proves that the characters have a good attitude toward knowledge and society. Thus, it shows the way of characters receive, control, and solve the problem that comes over them during the adjustment with a new place.

## 2. Behavior

The second adaptation that characters do in adjusting with a new place is through behavior. They behave differently towards their lifestyle and surroundings. Lifestyle deals with appearance, food, and language. Both of the characters start to get dressed like others. The first and second character changes their appearance. They communicate with English toward other people. They don't eat Indian foods. They also behave different from the past by being open hearted and interact with others. The second character changes her appearance by cutting her hair and not wearing saris. She also changes her behavior toward her new environment. She becomes more open personally with others and exposes herself with the area of study and work.

The first character changes his appearance in the new place. Appearance is a prominent thing that also reflects attitude toward the environment. His change toward appearance shows that he is able to bring himself to adjust with a new place. It can be seen through this following quotation:

The same height, a similar build. Counterparts, companions, though she'd never seen them together. Subhash was a milder version. . . . He was wearing corduroy pants, a checkered shirt, a zippered jacket, athletic shoes. (p.80)

The text above shows that he is not taken along with fashion style of his origin country. He doesn't wear clothes which people used to wear in India. The setting here refers to the strict nuance between his origin country with America. In India, appearance represents people's class and status based on the material and color. However, he doesn't take along with his habit of dressing from his origin country. He shows his intention by building healthy relationship through the appearance. It also shows his polite behavior toward appearance. He is not overdressed which means he adjusts the clothes based on the situation and its necessity. He is able to adapt the clothes from his new environment. The appearance of what he wears shows that he has good ability in adjustment.

Clearly, adapting behavior toward lifestyle and surroundings is important in a new place. Lifestyle which deals with appearance, food and language is an important prominent thing that contributes in adjusting with the new place. Adaptation towards surroundings has important role as lifestyle to make interactions toward other people. The dominant setting refers to the ungainly condition of lifestyle and surroundings which is really different from their origin country. The conflict that the characters face during the adjustment makes them aware about what makes them comfortable and they deserve to do. Both of characters do changes in adjusting with a new place. They learn much from their



surroundings. It proves that the characters adapt their behavior toward lifestyle and surroundings. It shows the way of characters control and deal with problem that comes over them during the adjustment with a new place.

#### D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The Novel *The Lowland* (2013), written by Jumphah Lahiri shows how immigrants adjust with a new place. Adjusting with a new place in this analysis refers to how immigrants adapt in a new place in order to pursue the new one and to get a better life. It is revealed through text-based and context-based interpretation by focusing on fictional devices such as character, plot, and setting. Adjusting with a new place is represented by two characters. The dominant setting refers to difficult condition which is completely new and really different from their origin country. Adjusting with a new place needs awareness to make the people keep holding out with their intention to achieve the better life. There are some important points that have to be done to be successfully adapted, it is attitude and behavior. Having a good attitude helps people to develop their awareness about how important their understanding about the new place. Everyone that adjusts with a new place changes his/her behavior in order not to be different with others.

**Note:** This article is written based on the Tesalonika's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A., 1<sup>st</sup> advisor, and Dra. An Fauzia Rozani Syafei M.A., 2<sup>nd</sup> advisor.

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