

# Exile and Identity: A Thematic Study of Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Wife*

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## **Abstract**

Bharati Mukherjee writes about Indian women, their conflicts and predicaments against the background of contemporary India. She occupies a unique position among contemporary Indo- Anglican novelists in English. She deals with the middle class Indian woman who represents the overwhelming role of Indian women and the struggle to adjust in it rather than get free from the traditional role. *Wife* is the story of exile and identity of Dimple, the main protagonist.

**Keywords:** Protagonist, Exile. Identity, Emancipated

## **1. Introduction**

Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Wife* was published in 1975 and received harsh criticism from the political and social view. Ms. Magazine reviews about *Wife* "some books can be allowed to die, but others have to be killed". Many critics called Mukherjee "Miss Mean Mouth" for having written such a controversial novel "*Wife*". *Wife* is a modern novel by Bharati Mukherjee and presents an inner world of an individual.

Mukherjee's novel *Wife* is centred on a young girl named Dimple Dasgupta, a twenty-year-old, timid, middle- class Bengali girl who is eagerly waiting for her marriage. She is waiting for a handsome and caring young boy of her dreams. As we know Mukherjee's *Wife* is a very controversial novel. *Wife* is an emotional story of a young and sweet girl Dimple. She has a romantic nature towards life. The novel explores the journey of a young and romantic girl who goes to the U.S and feels alien herself in that new culture. It is a romantic story of Dimple's self- hood. Though she passes through many emotional, physical and mental tortures, she is very much alert for her upcoming married life. She wants to marry with a neurosurgeon, but her father is looking for a suitable engineer:

Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon, but her father was looking for engineers in the matrimonial ads. Mr. Dasgupta was an electrical engineer (he called himself s "high-tension" man) with the Calcutta Electric Supply Company and lived in a narrow pink house on Rash Behari Avenue. (*Wife* 3)

Dimple, a very docile, obedient and a very submissive girl of a middle- class Bengali family. From the very outset of the novel, we see that Dimple is quite different from other normal girls of her age; she

thinks that only marriage can bring complete freedom and fortune, blessing and happiness for her. As she states:

Marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love. (*Wife 3*)

Dimple always thinks that marriage will give her freedom, but she does not know that it will close everything for her. Her only aspiration in life is to get married to a neurosurgeon, and enjoy the life of freedom and luxury. She wanted to be emancipated from the shackles of the traditional society. For her marriage is a Pandora box. This was the only reason when her father brings Amit's proposal she accepts that proposal without any hesitation. Her training to be a submissive and sacrificing wife has been done since her childhood days. Her mind is all set for traditional arranged marriage. It has been inculcated in her mind to be a woman, who can sacrifice and be submissive throughout life. On the other hand, in her unconscious self, the pre-dominant trait of her personality was vacillating between traditions and modernity. In her mind there was a dream to be a modern woman, which comes out as a jolt which gives to the whole society a bolt from blue.

She wants to marry so that she can enjoy a good life. Her innocence makes her perceive marriage as a release from endless restrictions and brings all the happiness for her. After marriage, instead of experiencing freedom, she is reduced to the status of a puppet and an object. Dimple is not happy with her marriage. She feels herself entrapped and finds no alternative to come out from this marriage.

In general, marriage is a relationship, which is based on love but in reality, it is a power game where men decide women's territories. She tells Pixie that she believes in short engagements. "I do believe in short engagement"(13). The husband decides what she has to do and what she does not have to do. Man has his own place of superiority and he has defined a woman's place, a place that is of submission, subordination and surrender. She is inferior and lives within the four walls. If there is a talent in a woman she has to wait for her husband's decision if he wants or not to utilize her talent. Man does not want equality and woman craves for equality. In most marriages, we see it as a power game.

Dimple imagines herself as "Sita", the ideal wife of Hindu legend"(6). She gets pleasure in imagining marrying a man who will bring all happiness and will provide all comforts to her. She was studying but all the university books irritated her. Mukherjee presents her as a weak, passive and irresolute woman. For her marriage is everything. "Marriage, she was sure, would free her, fill her with passion. Discreet and virgin, she waited for real life to begin".( Wife 14)

At the age of twenty, she feels that she is too old for marriage. Dimple feels that if there will be delay in her marriage she can go for suicide. She had no interest in higher studies like other girls. Her only aim is to get married as soon as possible. She thinks that degree is only an open passport for marriage. She is frightened that all handsome and rich boys may get married before she gets a degree. "All the handsome young engineers would be married by the time she got her degree" (10) She is very much curious about marriage. Her mother Mrs. Dasgupta convinces and consoles her that her father will find a suitable boy for her. Dimple should not think too much about her marriage. Meanwhile her parents find a handsome and suitable boy for her. The name of the boy is Amit Basu, a consultant engineer. Amit has applied for immigration in Canada and his one application for a job is pending in Kenya. On the other hand, we see that Dimple is too excited for her marriage. Dimple does not know that after marriage her all dreams and

desires will remain unfulfilled and unsatisfied. Here we see that Dimple is going to be married to a man who is of her parents' choice. Dimple knows that with her average education and other drawbacks she cannot have better prospects but willingly accepts the proposal.

Dimple marries Amit Basu, an engineer, chosen by her parents. Dimple thought of premarital life as a dress rehearsal. The ambitions and expectations from her husband become very high. Dimple is an escapist and wants to live in her private world of fancy and imagination. After marriage, Dimple comes to Amit's residence and here she dislikes everyone. She craves for the love of Amit and yet desires to be independent. The house of Amit is not big and spacious. She does not like his mother and sister.

Amit's mother does not like her name and gives a new name 'Nandini'. She dislikes her new name. After marriage, she feels a kind of dissatisfaction. This sense of dissatisfaction fills her with despair and irritation. In her new home, she suffers from a psychic disorder. Now she rejects the path of her normal life and pangs for a new and different kind of life. Dimple was not the first choice of her in-laws. On the very first day of marriage Amit's mother makes it clear that she agreed to the match only because she was satisfied with the dowry. The sister also does not conceal her dissatisfaction with the new bride's complexion. Dimple submits to the whims of her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Very soon, Dimple realizes that, "waiting for marriage was better than getting married". She starts hating everything in her new home. Dimple always thinks that marriage will give her freedom, but she does not know that it will close everything for her. She wants to show Amit that she is mature enough to take decisions of her own life. Time and again, she asks the question: why do people get married? After a few months of her marriage, she feels that she is cheated by Basu's family. Through the character of Dimple, Mukherjee tries to explore the emptiness or shallowness of Bengali arranged marriage or institutionalized marriage. Before marriage, she was so excited about going abroad; even though she does not want to relive her past. She feels Amit's home as horrified and hates everything here. She finds that all expectations and dreams are shattered. Now she hates the idea of being a wife. She was so abnormal in her thoughts that she started eating chillies. "eating hot green chillies in the hope that her body would return to its normal cycle"(30)

She believes in a nuclear family that is why she does not like to live with her in-laws. Her relationship with her mother-in-law was not cordial as an ordinary daughter-in-law has with their mother-in-law. Moreover, she has passed on some of the same hostility to her own relationship with her husband. "So, now I learn I've married a gambler"(18). She wants the sense of comfort and security, which relieves her from the tensions and also frees her from the outrageous self-image. There we see the two selves in a woman, one that wants freedom, the other that wants to belong. One of the two has to yield. For Dimple, her married name 'Nandini' indicates the presence of 'other'. If Nandini takes birth, Dimple has to die. Dimple wants to regain her own name given by her parents, it shows her victory. Her refusal to adopt the name Nandini shows resistance to the stereotyping that is inflicted on every woman in Indian society.

We see the man-woman relationship is crucial in this context. Earlier Dimple imagined that marriage is the only thing which can fill her life with romance and love. Her husband Amit will be her savior who will save her from all kinds of hardships and will give her overwhelming love. A normal Indian woman usually wants to feel the blessing of motherhood. A woman accepts the blessing of being a mother with full zeal because she thinks that it will make her complete. Moreover, in the absence of her husband, that child will become her companion and she will enjoy the company of her child. On the contrary, Dimple

is not happy with the news of pregnancy because she thinks that it can become a great hindrance in upcoming happiness. Dimple shows her anger of pregnancy by killing mice that were pregnant. She kills those mice and feels satisfied. She states :

“ I’ll get you!” she screamed. “ There’s no way out of this, my friend!” She seemed confident now, a woman transformed. And in an outburst of hatred, her body shuddering, her wrist taut with fury, she smashed the top of a small gray head.....A very small creature with a fat belly. To Dimple the dead mouse looked pregnant.( *Wife* 36)

In America, she hopes that Amit’s love helps her in forgetting her past. However, after marriage, all illusions of love shatter. Dimple realizes that romantic ideas of love have no existence in the world of realism. She feels that nobody comes to save any woman from hardships and difficulties. She realizes that the two people who get married do not lose or dissolve their identities; they remain two individual human beings and thus loneliness, disagreement and disappointment do fall to their lot.

Dimple realised that marriage is not a plain and simple contract, but is a part of a larger human relationship, which travels through attraction, love and sex. There is a whole world of understanding, of living together and of tenderness, which is only based on sex. Dimple very clearly manipulates the termination of her pregnancy with the reason that she wants to live her life in the U.S. Dimple thinks pregnancy will hinder her happiness. She aborts that unborn child because she does not want to take the burden of her past life. Her killing of mice badly who were pregnant gives an idea that becoming a mother fills her with anger. She shows her outrage on her body. Somewhere in her unconscious mind, the revolt and rebellious traits were engrossed in her mind. Whenever, these traits get a chance they come out in the shape of resentment and with full flowering.

Finally, Dimple killed that innocent and small mouse without any crime. The only reason for killing that creature is just to get rid of the severe thing which she thinks that anyone can impose on her, without her agreement and will. According to Dimple, ‘anyone’ is her in-laws and her careless husband Amit Basu. We can see her abnormality is on climax when she tries to find out the new way for her abortion.

For a traditional woman it is not easy to kill her own baby or it is a kind of sin to even think about aborting her own baby. Apart from that, the Dimple case is different. We can see the new seeds of a modern woman in her. As we see nowadays girls, after marriage do not want to take the burden and responsibilities of a baby because it is a prevalent thing among modern girls that if they will give birth to a baby, it can be a big obstacle in their married life and as well as in their freedom. Modern women want to live a free and happy life so that they can enjoy themselves fully, same thing we see in Dimple when she decides that she will not give birth to this baby who is going to be a hindrance between her and her dreams. Dreams are the actual vision of our desires and the seeds of vision to go to America with her husband we see in Dimple also. By hook by crook, she wants to leave this home and she thinks that only by aborting this baby can she get rid of this problem. She is too ambitious to achieve her dreams that she does not go to hospital, because she thinks that if she goes to hospital, her in- laws and her husband will come to know that she herself is the reason for the death of the child. Therefore, she takes the risk and in doing such a brutal activity, we see not a single mark of fear in her face. She tries to prove herself that she is not a meek, weak and silent Indian girl; rather she is a new woman who knows how to take advantage at the right time by doing the right action. Dimple has dual fear in her mind, when she came to know that she is pregnant

a) in a larger perspective, pregnant women are not allowed to travel far away so that it can come as a barrier to her mission to go abroad, to fulfil her longing and desires.

b) another fear was in her mind is that by chance she was taken to the medical check- up and in that medical check- up if the fetus in her womb is a female baby so everybody would compel her to go to abortion.

c) Next she has a fear in her mind that she has an average appearance, with the child birth, there are so many physical changes that occur in a woman's body also take away the beauty, which she having now because if she will lose her charm and attraction Amit can seek pleasure from the other charming woman.

She is so romantic that she becomes incapable of understanding others, even her husband Amit. Her views of Sita's docility, sacrifice and responsibility gives innumerable messages to her, but she wants to break all the traditional, social taboos and craves for freedom and love in marriage. However, for a short while, we see her as a traditional woman but very soon, she realizes that she cannot play the role of a traditional wife. She wants to achieve her goal. She does not want to confine herself in the four walls of the house. She does not like her mother-in-law, who sings only one song that she will die and no one cares for an old woman. She wants to get rid of all these things, which makes her personality splitted. As we see, modern women do not want to live in a joint family because they think that in a living joint family, they will not be able to fulfill their desires and ambitions. All the time they have to give attention to their family, therefore they prefer the nuclear family. Dimple also wants to live along with her husband so that she can be able to get the love and attention of her husband. Her rough and rude behavior of her in-laws fills her with anger and frustration. This deep desire fills her with grief, resentment and anger. She herself feels that she is stepping forward towards destruction:

It was as if some force was impelling her towards disaster; some monster had overtaken her body, a creature with serpentine curls and heaving bosom that would erupt indiscreetly through one of Dimple's Orifices, leaving her, Dimple Basu, splattered like a bug on the living room wall and rug. (*Wife* 156)

She realizes that though she is a woman, she is not weak, meek and submissive. Dimple sacrifices herself, her identity only for the sake of love for Amit to whom she loves the most but her yielding, her emotions and her passion find no place in the sexual relationship with her husband. The life of a woman is judged by her fidelity, but when Amit spends his time with other women she feels that he is cheating her. She wants to change her personality. We see it is the first step towards her self-assertion.

Her disinterestedness and inability to enjoy pregnancy may be a reason for her in-laws' behavior because they want a male child. Amit clearly says that the baby will be a boy. As he states: "It'll be a boy," Amit said. "He'll be a doctor and mint money" (34). She terminated her pregnancy and her termination raised a question on her womanhood. A cruel person cannot be cruel like her because she never regrets her cruel deed of killing a human being. Life with her husband Amit, both in India and America, brings disappointment to her. He always tries to humiliate her. When in America Vinod Khanna, an owner of sales office, offers a job to Dimple, immediately Amit states:

"Besides, Dimple can't add two and two. She would ruin your business in a fortnight". (*Wife* 61)



Many critics think that Dimple's abnormality is a statement of liberation from the traditional roles and constants of womanhood. Dimple wants to make herself free from the traditional role of a mother and for a bear child. According to a critic, it is a kind of 'moral and cultural suicide'. She feels that marriage also requires a lot of pretension, of keeping up appearances with each other, when there is no passion of agreement, when there is disagreement. She fails in her marriage and it leads her to an extra marital relationship. The suppression of women in our patriarchal society depends upon the varies of class, caste and race.

In the suppressed classes, female subjectivity appears as the most aggressive element where the woman pangs for freedom, love, material and emotional comforts and dependency of a fixed class identity. The psychic of a woman plays a vital role in her subordinated emotional comfort and liberation.

As we see in the novel *Wife*, Dimple's marriage to Amit, a young and ambitious engineering graduate planning to go to America, brings a turning point in the life of the main protagonist. Amit is not exactly her dream boy. Dimple gets the first shock when his family does not welcome her. After being interviewed, and rejected several times, Dimple loses all her enthusiasm towards marriage and her only wish is to get married at the earliest in order to save her parents from the groom hunt. It shows the plight of a young woman. She is sensible and emotional. As she knows, that marriage will provide her shelter and respect in the society.

Not being able to harmonize her love for Amit, with her desire for freedom and her need of being complete in herself, she suffers from a mental chaos. Very soon she feels cheated as her romantic, and her imaginative mind cannot accept the reality that freedom too has certain limitations. She starts to resent her new home, her in- laws and even her husband, who does not seem to be able to fulfill her fantasy desires and life. In the present novel Mukherjee presents the problems faced by an Indian woman.

We see the alienated atmosphere of Basu's family as to change her name, dissatisfaction of mother-in-law etc becomes the reason of hatred for Basus. Dimple's pain and agony increases day by day until she gets the news to migrate to America. She wants to go away from these agonies and wants to enjoy the freedom in the new imaginary world. She always imagines that Amit should behave like her dream lover. Amit does not pay any attention towards Dimple and she craves for his love. She wants that as Amit is her husband therefore it is her right on Amit and he is the one who will fulfill her all unfulfilled desires. As she states:

She wanted Amit to be infallible, intractable, godlike, but with boyish charm; wanted him to find a job so that after a decent number of years he could take his savings and retire with her to a three- story house in Ballygunje Park. It would not be too hard, Dimple thought, to persuade him to settle in Ballygunje rather than in Kalyani. Her charms were still untested. (*Wife* 89)

With the passage of time, we see Dimple in much more depression. Mukherjee drew Dimple as a very brutal character that ends in depression, madness and in the end she turns out to be a murderer. She is very disappointed especially with her marriage. For her marriage is an instrument which will bring freedom for her.

In the beginning, Dimple does not want any disharmony in her married life because she knows that it is Amit, who can secure her from others so it is important to keep healthy and wealthy for her husband.

She forgets that sheltering trees can protect, but they do not allow anything to grow beneath them. They act as a wall or barrier between the self and the wall. To make her husband happy she wears what he likes. We can see Dimple's love in these lines:

To please her husband, Dimple took to wearing bright colors: reds, oranges, purples. She wore her hair up in a huge bun and let a long wispy curl dangle behind each ear, like Mrs. Ghose. She even tried to imitate the way Mrs. Ghose laughed and left sentences half- finished. She gave up eating her favourite hot green chillies. ( *Wife* 22)

In America, when she went to attend the party, which was organized by Vinod Khanna, he observed simplicity in the personality and offered her a job in his call centre with a handsome salary. After hearing this, Amit was not happy, because he could not get a job in America, and his wife got a job. As it is a setback to Indian male dominated society, in which a man cannot be dependent on his wife economically, but if Dimple accepts this offer of job, Amit has to be dependent on his wife, which Indian society does not allow. Therefore, he at once objects by saying that, "Besides, Dimple can't add two and two. She would ruin your business in a fortnight"( *Wife* 61). As we know that in male- dominated society women are not allowed to make the decisions of their lives whether it is wrong or right. Mr. Vinod Khanna tries to offer a job of sales girl to Dimple, at that time being a male, Amit ego arises and he does not bear it that someone is offering a job to his wife. He at once interrupts by saying that Dimple cannot do this job because she is less educated. It was not the question of Dimple's education rather it is the ego of a husband, who cannot see her wife as an independent one. In our patriarchal society, it is a prevalent tradition that men will go outside for work, and women will keep managing all the household work. Though, Amit is a modern man, his thinking is traditional like others and it is his male ego which cannot see Dimple as a working woman. Amit's immediate reaction regarding Dimple, shows his male ego. After this incident, Dimple recognizes and for the first time thinks about her self- identity.

When the discussion was about the capabilities of Dimple, she realized that she had been rebuffed in front of Vinod Khanna and again her rebellious nature and revolt broke out in her mind. She gave it a serious thought and she feels that Amit will never allow her to do a job. As a husband, Amit does not know how to fulfill the dream and desires of his wife. He fails to understand the simple and innocent heart and mind of Dimple, who loves him passionately and demands only a physical, mental and emotional satisfaction from her husband. Dimple wants to feel freedom along with her husband. She is a splitted personality because sometimes she behaves like a traditional woman, and wants to give and take all the pleasures from her marital life. When Amit tries to dissolve Dimple's identity, she realizes Amit is a hindrance in her dreams that is reducing her idea of freedom. From the beginning of her marital relations with Amit, we see her dissatisfaction. She wants Amit to stop her mother from changing her name. We see the rebellious seeds in Dimple when without asking help from Amit, she refuses to accept the name Nandini, and it is a token of her victory that she cannot move against her in- laws wish. Amit does not realize her emotions and never gives her time to know her feelings. He is not sensitive towards her desires that what she wants from him. She wants to learn to express herself freely. There the novel is described as Dimple's progress from a passive role to an active one.

Dimple is an example of the forlorn and ill- accommodated self of an Indian wife. From the very outset, we see that Dimple is quite different from other normal girls. She keeps herself busy only thinking about marriage. She has nothing to do with her education. She only dreams that marriage would bring her

freedom, fortune and perfect happiness. She marries Amit because she wants to marry a neurosurgeon but she marries an engineer and it also fills her with dissatisfaction. She also lacks inner strength and resources. It takes her in a fear of alienation in New York. Dimple tries to merge the Bengali Indian ideals of the perfect, passive wife, the necessities of her; he has applied for immigration to Canada and U.S and application of job is pending in Kenya. As we know, that's American life. She finds herself failing to make the transition from one world to another. by her parents but the feeling of dissatisfaction she realized in America.

In America, she feels that Amit is not a suitable match or the perfect one. She was suffering from an inferiority complex of not being beautiful and incapable of accepting western culture and she thinks that she is not for this different culture.. Her desire not to be confined within the four walls of a house, her need to be loved like a wife, and to be able to communicate with others. This was a typical Indian woman who was nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support. Dimple was not always like this. Her dissatisfaction with the role of Sita marked it by her awareness that her feelings towards Amit are not true. We see her as a new woman, when she decides that she will accept American culture.

The process of self-realization in her is complete when she acquires necessary courage. She thinks that she is able to exercise her freedom of choice and she tries to start her life on her own terms. On the other hand, Amit also does not understand the eagerness of Dimple. He should give his extra time to Dimple. He thinks that material comforts are enough for a wife. Dimple dies for much and more attention and, when she does not get that attention, she behaves like an abnormal woman. She longs for an emotional atmosphere but finds herself too far from Amit. She is weak in speaking English. Dimple also does not understand her husband's practical approach towards life. He wants to earn money so that he can provide all pleasure to Dimple. She realizes that Amit is not her dream lover. She thinks that she deserves a much better husband than Amit. She meets Jyoti Sen, a friend of Amit. After meeting Jyoti, Dimple realizes that marriage is a kind of business. She states:

Marriage was a chancy business; it could have easily been Jyoti instead of Amit that she had married since both were of the same caste. (*Wife32*)

Dimple started comparing herself with others and it fills her with sorrows. In India, she compares herself with Pixie, who is the announcer of AIR. For Dimple, doing a job in AIR is a thrilling and glamorous one. In America she meets Ina Mullick, whose views on freedom bring jealousy and dissatisfaction for her. Dimple herself is the reason for her grief and sorrows for her life and becomes unable to get her husband's love, attention and care. We see here that her dissatisfaction from her husband leads her towards an extra- marital relationship with Milt Glasser, whom she thinks is the only man who can give her a mental and physical satisfaction. However, she is not aware that this satisfaction will be temporary. For a traditional woman, it is not easy to go into an extra-marital relationship, because for a traditional woman, her husband is good or bad, he is her God, and she has to worship her God. Dimple's desire for satisfaction leads her towards extra- marital relationships. She does not think it as a crime or sin, rather like a new woman she feels that she wants physical satisfaction is in fashion, people take it as a token of modernity; And Dimple also does the same. She thinks that if she does these things, she will be Americanized. However, her persuasion for satisfaction is temporary but she accepts this temporary transformation. When she was ideally sitting at home, she started watching TV serials, especially those which deals with the criminal activity of society, and where there is no emotion. She sees that there is only



a rat race for acquiring money, these characters of TV serials are performing ghastly deeds beyond the considerations of ordinary human beings.

Her act of abortion in Calcutta, her love for another man in America, her persuasion for happiness and enjoyment provides her some characteristics of a new woman. However, her acts are negative like her, but her steps for breaking the chains of traditions are new. She does not want to keep herself in the boundaries of traditions, rather she wants to choose the way, which for her, will bring happiness.

As we know that tradition does not allow a woman to have an independent identity of her own and marriage is a weapon in the hands of patriarchal society to suppress the self of a woman. Like a new woman, Dimple also wants to break the hard weapons of patriarchal and male dominated society. In America, she also wants to do some job and wants to become self-reliant. It is Amit, who always becomes the hindrance in the progress of Dimple. He is used to making fun of Dimple's ability. Dimple decides to change her ways of life. In America, she is fascinated by the dressing styles of women and longs to wear it. At one party, she is surprised to see the dress of Ina Mullick. Dimple sees many operas and she thinks that infidelity in love would help her in becoming a beautiful and glamorous one. Her illicit relationships give a new kind of excitement and pleasure. Her illicit relationship with Milt leads her in an imaginary world. She feels more satisfied and more happy and safe in the company of Milt. The irony is that she feels unsafe and unhappy in the company of her husband Amit who is her legal husband.

She thinks that Amit is not like that husband, which she thought for her. She accepts the truth that there is a lot of difference in imagination and reality. She wants to break the traditional rules or social taboos of a wife. She wants to come out from the traditional roles. She pangs to know herself. She wants to prove that beyond Amit's wife she is Dimple also. When she kills the mice, she kills herself and after that incident, it was a rebirth of Dimple. In the end of the novel, we see she becomes mad. Her deep loneliness leads her towards nightmares of suicide, of violence, of death and the intense sensation of being raped and killed in her own flat.

We can see that in Indian traditions, for a wife it is considered a sin to kill her own husband, but unlike a traditional woman, she decides to kill him because she cannot live with him. In killing Amit, she thinks that if she will give him only once, she will not be able to get rid of him. So she stabs him not one, two or three times rather seven times. Her seven stabs to Amit symbolically show Indian traditions. Dimple wants to kill the bonds of seven lines also. In Hindu mythology, it is prevailed that a husband and wife will live together for seven lives. Dimple wants to get rid of Amit for forever and ever. That is the reason she stabbed seven times, because at the time of marriage, a married couple takes seven rounds around fire and it shows their deep bond for each other. We see that Hindu marriage is a kind of bond and after stabbing seven times, she feels that now bond has no existence. She feels that she has won or received her freedom. new ways of alien culture.

We see that Dimple's act of killing her unborn child is her first act of assertion that marks her steps towards her evolution. Dimple regenerates and re-identify her, as she has never done before. According to some critics, Dimple's act of abortion is a kind of, "a sacrament of liberation from the traditional roles and constraints of womanhood". In this sense, she feels herself free from the traditional role of a Hindu wife told by her mother.

In America, she does not get any kind of consolation. The new life in America seems destructive to her but it provides a little bit of freedom to her. She feels alienated and isolated in the new alien culture and finds a difference between her fancy world and real world. There she goes worse. She has nothing to look forward to. In this new world and new culture, she is hardly permitted to talk freely and cannot express her will. Dimple tries her level best to adopt modernity and frankness of this new alienated world.

Dimple always remains frustrated, depressed and confused. She moves to Ina, Leni and Milt Glasser for moral and emotional support but they provide her temporary comfort. She becomes rebellious and her revolting spirit gives birth to an inner conflict and violence.

We see that the life story of Dimple somehow resembles Maya, a leading female protagonist in *Cry, the Peacock* by Anita Desai. Like Dimple, Maya also kills her husband in complete madness. Dimple cheats Milt and it shows her assimilation and attempt to accept the new world of America.

We can compare the character of Dimple with the character of Madame Bovary of Flaubert who goes in the deep search of self – discovery, self- analysis, and self- realization through extra- marital relationships. Like Madame Bovary, Dimple also goes through sexual experiences. In America Dimple wears a modern dress of Marsha but this modern culture fails to provide a permanent comfort.

At last, we see Dimple as an outrageous one, and take a knife and kill her husband seven times to get rid from the bondage of marital relationship. Dimple frees herself from all the traditional boundaries and steps forward towards regeneration and re- discovery through murder and blood. The final act of killing Amit explores her complete new transformation into a modern woman who thinks about selfhood. However, her transformation is negative and her journey to selfhood proves disastrous and descending and quite different to the transformation of Jasmine. Tara Chatterjee and Anjali Bose. She does not accept her fate of being an Indian wife and the ritual that her husband is everything. She acts against the conservative thoughts of marriage and tries to remove all the obstacles from her desired life. However, she is obedient, docile, and submissive but she is rebellious and transformative from her perspective. She does not allow anyone to move or to rule her life. She is not a common bird whose fate is to live in a cage, rather she is a rebellious one who wants to fly in the sky of ambitions, desire, freedom and liberation.

We see Dimple has to find her identity and freedom, with self, with tradition and with the wonders and horrors of a new culture, with growing aspirations, desires, ambitions and love.

To conclude we may say that *Wife* is a modern novel by Bharati Mukherjee and it presents an inner world of an individual. It is a story of the journey of Dimple Dasgupta and her selfhood. Though the novel ends in a negative point, where we see that Dimple kills her husband, there is a positive ray in the character of Dimple who wants to get her self –individuality and through her self- realization she wants to lead a happy life without Amit. Her concept of getting modernity and freedom is not clear to her also but there is a curiosity in her to achieve her personal freedom at any cost. She never cared for anything and as a new woman breaks all the rusted shackles of tradition, where woman is only a sheltered one. She never accepted those things, which her inner conscious did not allow her. We see Dimple as a rebellious one for everything, which is not good for her. Her character is negative but her need and necessity to achieve freedom and modernity converts her into a modern woman.

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