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Bharati Mukherjee's wife: A novel of diverse female sensibility

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Abstract

In a centuries-old patriarchal social structure of India, a woman continues to be subservient to a man. Similarly, in Indian literature, female characters are typically coloured as subservient, meek, and passive. In Indian English works, women are portrayed as subjects to rebel against and resist, and this is none other than Bharati Mukherjee. She makes an effort to reinvent herself as a woman who dares to insurg and revolt. She writes about a lady who embodies the resistance and wrangling that start in writing from the Indian diaspora. Numerous strands of the woman-self become apparent in Mukherjee's book *Wife*, as she experiences alienation and loses her identity. This essay attempts to address the issue of marital adjustment, which gives rise to a number of challenges such identity loss and the behaviours of women in the society of their time. At the same time the article seeks to draw attention to the problems associated with women's migration, including the lack of a home and a sense of self while enduring dual marginalisation as a married woman and an immigrant.

Keywords: Women, expectations, alienation, new experience, sense of exile, psychological sufferings

Introduction

In a society, each and every human is both an individual and a person. While a person owns an identity that is formed or developed on the basis of its link with other aspects of society, an individual is a biological being. A person's sense of self, interactions with the outside world, and personal values are all constantly impacted by changes in time and location.

That which has been marginalised in the postmodern world is approaching the edge and attempting to establish its presence. Everywhere in the globe, women suffer from the same horrible situation, which has inspired writers to openly express it these days. In her works, Bharti Mukherjee hopes to portray female characters that are working to present a compelling narrative that transitions from "Feminine to Female."

The emergence of "female sensibility" is the affirmation of the dignity of the human being in this ridiculous world and the refusal to be treated as an object any longer. Even with its fragility, identity must be asserted, and this requires a lot of fortitude and bravery despite of overwhelming oddities. Mukherjee depicts the might, craftiness, and powerlessness of women. With the goal of getting rid of well-known notwithstanding myths and stereotypes, Mukherjee showcases the people "who aspire to attempt and strive to be their true selves." (Srivastava: 24) Mukherjee's second novel *Wife* aims to portray a normal woman of India. Dimple, playing the part of a wife, so defining the situation of all similar women in this particular setting.

The present Research paper attempts to address the issue of diverse female sensibility adjustment in marriage, which gives rise to a number of complications such identity loss and the alienation of women in the society of their time. The story is divided into three parts. Each parts brings into light a different stage in Dimple Dasgupta's life. The beginning part of the novel talks about her aspirations and ambitions for her marriage, and her later union with Amit Basu, a mechanical engineer. The second part goes into great detail about her anticipated start over in America. Her entire disenchantment with married life, her full relapse into her neurotic mentality, and her murdering her husband are all described in the third and last phase.

The story opens when Dimple reaches adulthood and her family starts looking for a suitable husband. She waits for a bridegroom to approach her because, like many females, she was raised in the romantic delusion that marriage brings independence, love, and liberty. She views marriage as a means of expressing her individuality, far from such pressures. She gives marriage, a very practical concept, ethereal dimensions.

The story realistically depicts the widely accepted custom of presenting a girl as an item to the bridegroom's family. The bridegroom's family has the discretion to accept or reject the item that is about to be purchased. Mrs. Basu did not like the name "Dimple," calling it "too

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frivolous and unbengali,” and Mrs. Ghose, the sister of the would be groom, thought that dimple was "a little darker" than the photo had represented when Amit Basu's family arrived to see it (Wife: 15). The bride's side also attempt to sugarcoat the facts and provide an exaggerated account of their daughter's humility during the same examination. They make an effort to convince others the fact that they have raised their daughter in a manner that has prepared her to fulfil every obligation. With the Basus, Dimple's father, Mr. Dasgupta, begged and smiled at Dimple, saying: “She is sweet and docile; I tell you she will never give a moment's headache” (15).

Dimple was given a new name, "Nandini," after her marriage, which symbolises her loss of individuality. She finds it difficult to identify herself by her new name. She finds it challenging to adapt to a new name. The bridegroom's family members also frequently attempt to shape the females in accordance with their own customs in just a couple of days. They don't give these matters much thought that the girls were raised in a separate household with distinct traditions. The girl's choice to go by a different name and be known or not is not a concern for them.

Here, Mukherjee does her best to depict a new woman as a self-aware, independent thinker with a strong desire to stand up to the numbing influence of traditional family cultural beliefs. Dimple worries about meeting the expectations of her post-marriage role, which includes impressing everyone in her immediate vicinity. She has a sacred obligation to win the new family over and win their hearts. Since the dictionary definition of a spouse is "to govern; to rule," she must also submit to all of his demands.

With the word "Wife," Dimple identifies herself as a certain category and social category. Dimple prefers to have a name of her own rather than just being Amit Basu's spouse. She understands: “How hard it was for her to keep quiet and smile though she was falling apart like a very old toy that had been played with, sometimes quite roughly, by children who claimed to love her” (212).

Amit has the power to select and shape him into what he wants to be. He makes his own values by doing, experiencing, and making decisions. He has complete control over his own conduct.

Dimple is characterised by Mukherjee as a disillusioned, solitary thinker who struggles to identify with a particular race, class, or community and looks for ethical importance in the tiniest of things. Dimple struggles against wifehood in many ways and resents being the Basu family's wife. Abortion is accepted as “a sacrament of liberation from the traditional roles and constraints of womanhood” (Sharma: 15) and she had “picked a skipping rope as her weapon” (41). Since being pregnant is a blessing for women in India and they are regarded the origin of “Creation,” this act of self-abortion is condemned on the grounds that it is plainly a murder of motherhood and the result of violence festering inside Dimple rather than her desire for emancipation. Hatred in society is the result of failing to harness this creative force. Nevertheless, Mukherjee gave Dimple a unique character that demonstrates her desire for a new identity and her bravery in choosing to terminate her own kid. By rejecting her motherhood, Dimple is symbolically freed from the conventional position of a Hindu woman, which entails just carrying and raising a kid.

Women tend to inflict harm on themselves first when they are hurt, which can make them appear almost psychic and

escape-oriented. This occurs as a result of the centuries-old stereotypes of women as dependent, silent, and subservient. She hesitates to make decisions while hiding, which makes her seem harmful or deserving of criticism in many ways. However, this encounter highlights the terrifying strength that Dimple hides underneath her seeming domestic and submissive exterior. Dimple, who is utterly dissatisfied with this loveless marriage, starts to long for some new things in her life that she chances on during her exodus with her husband. Dimple now appears to be an escape artist immersed in her own fantastical universe.

Dimple's country of assurance, America, too fails to live up to her aspirations. Dimple is stuck in a situation where there are conflicts between American society and culture. The differences between Amit and Dimple deepen due to the customs surrounding Indian wives, which balance the feminist ideal of assertiveness and independence with the Indian necessity of self-effacement and submission. Amit begins his quest for financial stability. He's not sensitive enough or has the time to comprehend the intricate changes occurring within Dimple. Gradually, the sense of deceit in her marriage envelops her, intensifying her perception that Amit is an unproductive spouse. She starts to develop insomnia as a habit.

Amit's disregard of Dimple's need of emotional support serves as evidence of his superiority complex. She lacks motivational drive all the time and eventually experiences a total mental collapse as a result of emotional hunger. Dimple gets annoyed even with trinkets and feels lifeless inside her heart. After she yells in annoyance: “I feel sort of dead inside and you can do is read the paper and talk to me about food... you never listen and you have never listened to me. You hate me. Don't deny it; I know you do. You hate me because I'm not fat and fair.” (110).

Amit is too conventional and self-absorbed to support his wife in becoming her own person, despite the fact that he is often fairly kind and thoughtful. Wife and husband, clearly going in different directions in North America; the distance between the couple, hardly perceptible in Calcutta, grows considerably in New York.

The situation of a normal wife, who is “exploited by housework and afraid of self-expression and about avoiding confrontation,” (149) is reflected in Dimple's life. Her irritation with her normal, monotonous, and boring life is growing. She watches in quiet as her life falls apart and regretfully realizes that Amit is still “a chimera”. Since Amit personifies the forces that seems to have trapped and isolated her “in a high-rise full of Americans who are hamburgers and pizzas,” (119), she also considers striking him. Ironically, she is encouraged by the USA to use harmful methods to get revenge on others. In a final effort of self-liberation from the oppressive, suffocating, and boring existence that has been bestowed upon her, she murders Amit in her psychologically disturbed state. The narrative of Dimple is so very similar to Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*, in which the heroine murders her spouse out of sheer craziness.

The primary cause of many Indian reviewers' “chee chee” reaction is the protagonist's murdering of her spouse. Her already unsettling neurotic inclination was made worse by her feelings of isolation and sadness, her husband's coldness, and-above all-the media's exotic portrayals of violence. Some commentators have criticized the work and its perverted author, while others have analysed it

positively, citing themes such as culture shock, female subjugation, violence in the the society which is dominated by media, savagery, etc. For example, Mukherjee receives harsh criticism from critics such as Ragini Raachandra for demeaning the great customs of Indian femininity. It is equivalent to “subverting the frame work of an entire culture,” in her opinion (*Wife* 65). According to Ragini, Bharati is determined to purposefully misrepresent Indian women. She believes that the novel is a sign of Bharati's mental illness. It is not propagandist Bharati Mukherjee. Offering a credible representation of her selected subject-good or terrible, beautiful or ugly-represents her honesty as a writer. “Whether they forays into realism, flights of fancy, or incisive insights into human motivations,” her writing endeavors are triumphant (146).

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