



The Theme of Wife by Bharati Mukherjee

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ABSTRACT

The present study and honest attempt to examine how in her novel, Bharati Mukherjee has been a voice of the phase of Expatriation, concentrates on the individual eccentricities of her women Protagonists. "The quest for voice for identity is in fact the quest for a form on the part of the novelist which can render "apparent the difference between the process of actual experience of destruction and disintegration as a thought Bharati Mukherjee's writing largely reflects her personal experiences as a women caught between two cultures, she writes entertainingly and with a sort of fluid prose that it is very good to read and she can make her character spring to life with a world and has an acute ear for dialog.

Keywords: Barati Mukherjee, Wife

Bharati Mukherjee's second novel and a finalist for 'Governor General's Award. Wife_ (1975) takes up a more complex dimension of the theme of immigrant's experience. But Wife was a very 'controversial' book: Wife was written so long ago. It was very painful for me. It was very confusing. I hadn't expected such controversy. The Village Voice reviewer had, however, loved the book."

To the question whether her characters in "wife", are manifesting the darker side of psychological transformation and not its positive benefits. The writer explains that she thinks of herself:

"As a very comic writer and that finally in a bizarre way, my stuff is meant to be optimistic. Dimple, if she had remained in Calcutta, would have gone into depression and she would have found a very conventional way out for unhappy Bengali wives' suicide, but in the US she suddenly lives to ask herself "self" oriented question. Am I happy? Am I unhappy? And that to me is progress. So instead of committing suicide, turning the society mandated violence inward, she in a misguided act, kills the enemy. So, of course I am not approving of murder. It's meant to be a positive act, self-assertive."

Bharati Mukherjee continues:

What is regarded as passive or was regarded in Wife as passivity by feminist Ms Magazine type readers in 1975 was meant to be very different. My women are using tools at hand. I did not build. Deliberately build into the center of Wife the Ms. Magazine way, as the 'right' way with everyone else defective in their ways of fighting domination. Whether it is male or class or poverty. I want to think that power is my central obsession.

Mukherjee opens her novel in the true India tradition of storytelling. The simple opening line –"Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon is quite telling and once set the scene that anticipates something unnatural.

The heroine of "Wife" has been named Dimple, which oxford English dictionary defines as "any slight surface depression." As the novel Progresses. Dimple is much more than specifically depressed for "she leaves more of gosh than just a dimple.-69 She thinks that marriage is a blessing in disguise. It will bring her freedom, fortune and perfect happiness: Marriage would bring her freedom. Cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund-raising dinners for noble charities: marriage would bring her love.7°

Dimple "thought of premarital life as a dress rehearsal for actual living, years of waiting had already mode her nervous unnaturally to colds, coughs and headaches."7,

Dimple dutifully marries Amit Basu, a consultant engineer. He has already applied for immigration to Canada and U.S. and his job application is also pending in Kenya. In Amit's family she does not like Amit's mother and sister also. Dimple thinks that all these problems are temporary and with the confirmation for immigration they will eventually come to an end. She frequently talks with her husband about the anticipated foreign trip though "thoughts of living in Africa or North America terrified her." Dimple Basu has always lived in a fantastic world. A world, which is created by herself. But when she confronts the hard realities of life,

the leathers of her She starts haling everything She hated the gray cotton with red roses had inside yellow circles that her imagination are clipped. She starts hating everything: She hates the gray cotton with red roses inside yellow circles that her mother-in-law had hung on sagging lopes against the metal bars of the windows.

Dimple thinks that marriage has robbed her of on romantic yearnings so tastefully nourished. Amil was not the man Dimple had imagined for her husband. When she is out of the house she starts creating the man of her dream: She borrowed a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eyes and chin from a body builder and shoulders ad, the stomach and legs from trousers ad and put the ideal man.

With the passing of time the excitement of marriage diminishes and she becomes pregnant. A stage known for vomiting tendency. She feels a strange sensation:

The vomit fascinated her. It was hers: she was locked in the bathroom expelling brownish liquid from her body. She took pride in brownish blossoms....

Pregnancy is a boon for Indian women because they are supposed to maintain the continuity of the. Clan. But Dimple is singular in that "she thought of wan to get rid of whatever it was that blocked her tubes and pipes.

Her killing of the mice which looked pregnant also suggests that she does not feel at ease with her Pregnancy. She becomes almost hysteric in killing that She pounded and pounded the body clothes until a tiny gray creature ran out of the pile, leaving a faint trickle of blood on the linen. She chased it to the bathroom, She shut the door so it would not escape form her this time... "I'll get you' she screamed. "There is no way out of this my friend...." And in an outburst of hatred, her body shuddering, her wrist taut with fury, she smashed the top of a small gray head."

The act of killing is a manifestation of violence which is smoldering inside her. She systematically. Sadistically, kills a mouse. The entire scene is bizarre: But today she hated the invisible mice for disrupting her daydreams -she could not dare borrow features from a rodent and.... In her hurry to snatch the broom, she stepped on the stainless steel platter of rice grains. The little toe on her left foot began to bleed. There was a tiny drop of blood, her blood she thought, astonished on the coarse, reddish white grain of rice. It was on added reason for killing the mouse.

Dimple is about to migrate but she does "not want to carry any relics from her old life."⁷⁹ She thinks that old things will remind her of frustrations and irritations. She counts her pregnancy also among the relics and Ponders over the ways of getting rid of it. At last, she decides to end it by skipping ropes. The description of her self-abortion is very poignant and touching:

She has skipped rope until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned: then she had poured water horn the heavy bucket over her head, shoulders, over the light little curve of her stomach. She had poured until the Iasi of the blood washed off her legs, then she had collapsed.

Rosanne Klass counts it a serious mistake on Bharati mukherjee's part and questions her understanding of Indian culture. In a review of vita she comments:

For an Indian wife, childlessness is a disaster, pregnancy the achievement that seals her status. To overturn such ingrained values would involve a major emotional upheaval: yet Dimple acts on the vaguest and most undefined impulses: and thinks no more about it.

In the very beginning. Mukherjee has hinted at Dimple's ill mental state. In the view of some critics. Dimple's act of abortion "is a sacrament of liberation from the traditional roles and constraints of 'womanhood' like the western feminists she asserts her will but her abortive act is a kind of "moral and cultural suicide." "**Wife**" is the rarest kind of book, combining artistry humor and cultural diagnosis. Unlike *The Tiger's Daughter*, Mukherjee in *Wife* simplifies and sharpens her focus. It appears. "She reverses the pilgrimage journeying from East to West, she confronts personal and social violence head on, and she splits her complex self into facets. Creating characters who shatter like glass. "Bharati mukherjee, in her second novel "*wife*" writes about the extreme case of women, who when transplanted into another culture lose their bearing. Her young heroine. Dimple's final act of violence is unconvincing on a realistic level yet really is an attempt out a mode other than realistic.

This both "**The Tiger's Daughter**" and "**Wife**" together partially, in their own individual variations the obsessive theme pervasive in modern fiction: a theme described by Michel Zeratta as "disintegration as a universal language of discourse. "The quest for voice for identity is in fact the quest for a form on the part of the novelist which can render "apparent the difference between the process of actual experience of destruction and disintegration as a thought". Hence the need for Mrs. Mukheriee and Indo-English novelists in general to evolve "a new structure of thought." In effect, the theme of disintegration is co-terminus with "narrative dislocation". In this area Mrs. Mukherjee has yet to show her individual talent.

In fact. Bharati Mukherjee in the first phase of het Creativity, i.e. the phase of Expatriation, concentrates on the individual eccentricities of her women Protagonists. While Tara Banerjee is more of On Indian girl, Dimple's character betrays an impatient and reckless trait. The end "*The Tiger's Daughter*" leaves the readers guessing as to what happens to Tara's late but in *Wife*. Dimple's mental abnormality leads het to kill her husband.