CHAPTER THREE

Wife

3.1 Cross-cultural background: *Wife*

The story of an Indian wife who has to leave India and who settles in America is full of many traumatic experiences - both physically and psychologically. Her expectations of life after marriage clash with relatives she has to face. The departure from the native country and assimilation in the foreign culture are the major landmarks of her career as a wife. The old cultural affiliation with the Oriental culture needs to be altered in the context of the Western world of America. The transformations she undergoes are the processes of change from a dreamy college girl to a young bride. Then, as a housewife, she passes through various stages of reflecting the culture of the East, mirroring the culture of the West, the stage of alienation from her roots and the process of getting assimilated in the Western lifestyle. These transformations are exquisitely displayed in the course of the novel. The novel has the three structural divisions of part one, part two and part three.

The first part of the novel *Wife* (1975) by Bharati Mukherjee reveals what Dimple thought of the prospects of her marriage. Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon. Dimple wanted an apartment in Chowringhee, her hair done by a Chinese girl, trips to new markets for nylon saris and so she placed her faith in neurosurgeons and architects. This conversation shows how Dimple too is waiting to get married. Dimple's mother Mrs. Dasgupta advises her to use to her best advantage what God has given her. She prescribed pre-bath mustard oil massages, ground almond and honey packs. Ping Pong, homeopathic pills and prayers to the Lord Shiva, the Divine husband. Dimple was supposed to be studying for the university examination. Dimple's best friend Pixie comes and repeats the rumours about the postponement of the university exams. Dimple
guessed that all the handsome young engineers would be married by the time she got her degree. Dimple, in her desperation wrote a letter to "The columnist" Miss Problemwala, C/o. Ere's Beauty Basket, Bombay-1, about her problem of being a young woman of twenty with a flat chest.

Dimple felt sure that marriage would fill her with passion, discretion and virginity. Dimple waited for real life to begin. Mr. Dasgupta announced that he had found his "Ideal Boy" Amit Kumar Basu of twenty nine years of age who was a consultant engineer with 7 years’ experience. His widowed mother and his younger brother studying in Presidency College were other members of his family. He had already applied for immigration to Canada and US. Dimple Dasgupta was now on the threshold of becoming the wife of Amit Basu, an Engineer. He looked tall when he sat next to her at Kwality's, the other day. Dimple Dasgupta, the college girl has now become Dimple Basu, the wife of an Engineer Amit Basu. Dimple with her husband is in the Baus’s flat on Dr. Sarat Road. Dimple complains to her mother about the different matters of inconvenience such as the dark staircase, the water problem, the broken tap in the bathroom and other things like Pintu coughing and the spiders behind the kitchen door. Dimple is in a habit of the day-dreaming and imagining ideal features of the stars in her husband Amit. Dimple's character trait of indulging in a fantasy world is noticed to be dominant. Pintu made a confession and took Dimple in confidence. Pintu announced that he had started giving maths lessons to a twelve year old boy in order to pay for his own movie tickets and postage stamps. Amit returned from the office and found her with the letters to the editor. He seemed angry, as she had forgotten to prepare his fresh lime and water. She was about to move when Amit came back around the bed and kissed her on the chin. He promised her some interesting things.

Dimple missed a period. By the end of the month of May she began to vomit. Amit came to know about the secret through his mother. Her friend Pixie asked her to meet at the sky room on Park Street. Mrs. Basu and Dimple came home from Lake Market and found Amit lying on the sofa. Amit had resigned from work. Dimple dusted the floors, killed the cockroaches and worked harder. She knew she ought
to rest in her pregnancy but she neglected that. Dimple began to think of the preparations for going abroad. The abortion took place and now Dimple was not obliged to take the baby with her to the US. Amit could not digest the abortion and considered it a bad omen. Amit heard that they could immigrate to the United States. Amit became very excited. Amit wrote to his friend in New York and Jyoti Sen responded by offering to put them up in his Queens Apartment. Dimple and Amit were invited for tea by Pixie. There she met Ratna Das the actress. Ratna Das remarked that it would be fun to go to America for vacation but settling there would not be so, a person would be just resident alien there.

In part two, Jyoti Sen met them at Kennedy Airport. Amit asked questions about job opportunities. Dimple noticed the bigness of the city which thrilled her. Jyoti advised Amit to select a job carefully and to work twice as hard, to keep his mouth shut and to become a millionaire in fifteen years. Dimple found the work in the kitchen satisfying. Dimple offered to buy cheesecake for dessert. Meena asked her to go in the shop and start shopping. Dimple entered the wrong shop of meatsellers instead of dairy products and then the shopkeeper directed her to the street to the right shop where dairy products were sold. Dimple was caught in the cross fire of an American communalism she could not understand. They went to the party in Manhattan near Columbia University. The party at Vinod Khanna’s was big and noisy. Dimple was watching Captain Kangaroo on TV and Archana was busy in her finger-painting. Dimple watched TV most of the day. The Sens and the Basus go to the apartment of Mullick on the corner of the 100th street and Central Park West. Amit’s remark was considered to be that of an Indian. Dimple read a letter from Pintu informing about Mrs. Basu’s fractured ankle. Dimple felt better. She had never really been friends with anyone before. Dimple told Amit that he snored and that she would like to have a queen-sized bed. The twelfth section compares Amit on Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road and in New York. Amit began to bathe three times a day; Dimple made it a point to mop the tiles after Amit came out. Ina Mullick rang the doorbell at a quarter to eleven. Ina gave Dimple a leaflet about Mr. Clean which was meant for giving to a friend. Dimple impulsively thanked Ina for considering her to be a friend. Ina and Dimple were in the kitchen. Dimple and
Amit were talking about the job prospects, of getting a boiler maintenance job. Dimple lay awake between two and four in the morning. Jyoti Sen was trying to make coffee. Dimple went in the kitchen and prepared coffee. After the interview Amit cut his finger trying to change a bulb in the kitchen. She remembered how she was complimented by Milt Glasser, Jyoti Sen and Ina Mullick in so short a time. Between three and four the next morning Dimple thought of seven ways to commit suicide in Queen's. The job comes through in August. Dimple realized that Amit was full of new words in his conversation. Dimple looked constantly at ads in newspapers for furnished apartments. The problem of where to live was settled by the Mullicks. Pradosh and Marsha Mookerji were going on a leave for the semester; their university apartment would be occupied by the Basus. Meena Sen gave birth to a daughter and Dimple was required to look after Archana. At the end of part two, Dimple and Amit were about to occupy an apartment in New York.

In part three, Amit advised her not to get bored, not to stay at home and not to think about Calcutta and to do something constructive. Amit told her that she was becoming American but not too American. He poured some beer in her glass to celebrate his job and her Americanization. Dimple got up only to make Amit breakfast and put his clean clothes out on the bed. Meena called Dimple to tell about an accidental death. Dimple passed the chin deeper in the hollow, applying light, rhythmical pressure. She began to feel that violence was right, even decent. Her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice and an insane desire to hurt. Dimple felt the sirens in the street below to be reminders of a dangerous world. Milt Glasser arrived first and Dimple was ready to shake hands but Milt entered with his own key and kissed her on the right cheek. Dimple slept soundly and Amit was almost late for work. She woke up at 4pm and then tried to take a bowl of wheaties with milk. Then she pulled the sheet up to her chin, listening to footsteps in the hall. Amit cut his finger as all he wanted was romance. She did not realize that Amit was sneaking up behind her but thought some burglar had broken in through the windows. He had come home late from work. She had been more nervous than usual. He crept up on her from behind. She was chopping garlic. She has lunged at him with the knife. Dimple had stopped talking to Amit.
except to issue curt information like “Dinner Ready” ‘Undershirt on the bed’. Ina Mullick dropped in without calling at eleven thirty. She told Dimple that she was unhappy. Ina and Dimple did not refer to that incident again. Dimple liked bread and cheese but read parts of the books and returned them. Ina Mullick and Dimple went out for a Pizza and a walk. Ina was in the mood for autobiography and told of her childhood, her reading of books from the lending library, her sitar lessons and her interest in Physics and her marriage. Mrs Dasgupta wrote that Pixie had married a fifty three years old actor Prostento Bagchi and was honeymooning at the Oberai Sheraton Hotel in Bombay. Ina Mullick began to bring her American friends to Dimple’s Apartment. They made their own cigarettes, sometimes Milt Glasser come with Ina. Dimple was thinking about two ways to die, one to cut the jugular vein and the other to consume pesticides. Dimple admitted that she was scared. She felt helpless and old. She wished Ina had stayed though Ina could not have consoled her. She thought of the television set as her only friend. Dimple was visited by the man who winked at Ina in the elevator. He asked questions on the weather Dimple realized that the man had considered it to be Ina’s residence.

Dimple received a letter from her mother and a phone call from Meena Sen. Her mother’s letter informed that the boy with water in his head had been run over by a bus. Meena called and asked Dimple and Amit to come over for dinner and meet two new Bengali couples who had just arrived from Calcutta between six thirty and eight. Meena Sen took Dimple by the arm and led her into the living room and introduced her to the new couples who said they had heard so much about her from Meena. Mr. and Mrs. Bhattacharya had been in the US for about seventeen years and Mr. and Mrs. Roy and Mr. and Mrs. Guha were recent arrivals. Amit threw up the Kala jamuns on the deserted part of the subway platform. Dimple knew that the world was divided into friends and enemies and that the enemies outnumbered the Friends by a hundred to one and the odds were becoming increasingly long. Ina Mullick and Mitt Glasser came in and Ina informed her of Leni’s going to Katmandu. Milt bent over Dimple and brought his face very close, Dimple wanted to say something. Milt Glasser touched her and asked her to take it easy. After Ina left, Milt said that he liked to cook also and that he would show her how to make a
Julia Child special chocolate mousse. At six, Milt left and Amit came home at seven. The next afternoon Meena Sen came with Mr. Roy while shopping in that area. Somebody rang the doorbell thrice and then on the phone she heard Milt’s shadow voice. Dimple pushed the shopping cart with Milt Glasser on a Tuesday morning in mid-December. Milt Glasser knew how to live on city, state or federal projects. Dimple was getting assimilated. Dimple sat on a bench in the playground before the apartment building. Amit found her there at six thirty. Dimple demanded if sitting on a public bench and waiting for one’s husband is wrong. Amit pulled her toward the elevator and told her they would talk about it upstairs. He took her to the bathroom, turned on the shower. She thought that she had judged her marriage too harshly on the day she was sitting on a public bench. At eleven thirty Ina and Milt came and Ina gave a massage to Milt and threw things. Dimple liked Milt Glasser. She could talk all sorts of things with him. Milt Glasser took Dimple home she asked him to come upstairs and unlock the front door. Milt asked her to prepare tea. An hour later she thought that for a tall person, Milt Glasser had very short legs. Amit wanted to know if he should shave his moustache off. Milt Glasser almost after a week came with tickets for a show called the Bulls Eye. Dimple served him four cups of tea with lemon and sugar. Mrs Dasgupta sent her a letter. Meena Sen called Dimple for a name for their new baby. Her mother-in-law suggested Aloknanda but Dimple told her about her headache. Dimple felt very low but there was no fever and not even cold. Amit watched the Johnny Carson show in the bedroom because he could not sleep.

In the thirty-fourth section when Dimple asked Amit if he would save her in her attempt to commit suicide, Amit told her that she would bungle it and would save herself. Dimple got confused about the Black singer, the blonde starlet and the Italian sailor. It was not very hard for her to keep her quiet when she was falling apart. She opened and closed a kitchen drawer. She sneaked upon him and chose her favourite spot under the hair line. She drew circles around the detectable spot. Then she stabbed with that kitchen Knife the magical circle once, twice seven times and then she saw the head fall off. Dimple murdered Amit making the imaginary world of TV blur with the world of reality.
3.2 Reflecting the East

Reflection of the Eastern culture is the first aspect; Dimple Dasgupta becomes Mrs. Dimple Nandini Basu in this part. She has acquired the status of wifehood from the phase of an unmarried college student to the daughter-in-law of Mrs. Basu and sister-in-law of Pintu and Mrs. Ghose, her husband Amit’s married elder sister.

i. “Dimple wanted a different kind of life—an apartment in Chowringhee, her hair done by Chinese girls, trips to new market for Nylon saris—so she placed her faith on neurosurgeons and architects.” (Mukherjee, 1975:03). Dimple lived in fantasies. Her wishes were to get an apartment in Calcutta’s top locality like Chowringhee, to visit a beauty parlor for hairdo and the market for saris. She guessed that she would enjoy these if she married a neuro-surgeon or an architect. She fantasized more around saris, regular make-up and an apartment call switch. These are a typical Indian girls’ wishes to be fulfilled. Dimple considered marriage to be a turning point of her life that would transport her from an ordinary life to the life in a dream world. Her peculiar Indian mentality is reflected in her dreams of life after marriage.

ii. “Marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, funraising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love.” (Mukherjee, 1975:03). Dimple’s idea of life after marriage was that it would be life that would bring freedom and love to her. She would receive nothing but love from her partner in marriage. In the East, marriage is considered to be the zenith of life. It is the event that brings freedom, love and happiness in the life of the married woman. She gets her own home, her own man and she dreams of managing her life on her own terms and according to her own desires of getting rich abundance, joy, happiness without cares or sorrows.

iii. “Would the now inevitable engineers—she visualized him in starched khaki pants and dark glasses, still mustached on half- built bridge directing
labourers-, be disappointed, that she wasn’t bosomy and fair like a Bombay starlet?” (Mukherjee, 1975:04). Dimple thought her prospective husband; an engineer would be disappointed in finding her unlike a Bombay starlet. He would expect his wife to be quite bosomy and fair in complexion. Her mother did not allow any stuffing. She prescribed massage, almond honey packs and prayers to Lord Shiva. Her mother advised her to use whatever God had given her to the best advantage. This too is the peculiar Indian view of being satisfied with whatever God has given and not to attempt for artificial methods of beautifying oneself. Fatalism is a marked feature of the culture of the East, of the Indian culture.

iv. “In Dimple’s dreams she became Sita, the ideal wife of Hindu legends, who had walked through fire at her husband’s request.” (Mukherjee, 1975:06). Sita is the ideal of womanhood. Sita, Savitri, Draupadi and others are known as ideal wives. Their main characteristic is their loyalty to their husbands. Sita followed her husband in exile and suffered. King Ram asked her to perform the fire ordeal, which she did perform to prove her chastity.

v. “Such pain, such loyalty seemed reserved for married women.” (Mukhejee, 1975:06). Sita suffered along with her husband. She passed through various painful situations during the years of their exile. Inspite of pains and sufferings Sita’s loyalty to her husband remained constant. The wifely standard in the culture of the East consists in unshakeable loyalty. In the years of exile, Sita proved her competence as an ideal wife, and obedient and devoted partner in marriage. The ups and downs of her fortunes did not disturb her and her performance of wifely duties continued uninterrupted. Sita is the model that has to be followed by all married women. Every Indian woman is expected to mould herself into the image of Sita. This feature reflects the Oriental culture that prevails in India.

vi.“Mrs. Dasgupta read the illness as a sign, mysterious pains, headaches, nervous tics were Nature’s ways of indicating young woman’s readiness for marriage.” (Mukherjee, 1975:06). Dimple was in the hospital for four days.
Her illness was interpreted by her mother to be an indication of Dimple’s readiness for marriage. Nature indicated the willingness to marry through such signs as mysterious pains, headaches and nervousness. In the hospital Dimple had dreams of Sita. Her determination to follow Sita is another indication of her readiness for marriage. Her dreams, her choice of the ideal woman, her nervousness and her illness indicated that Dimple was ready to get married. Her mother being a typical Indian read the signs correctly. She understood the reflection of the cultural marks of the East.

vii. “It was a perfect wedding. There were one hundred and five photographs to prove that it was perfect.” (Mukherjee, 1975:16). The marriage of Dimple and Amit was perfect as a wedding ceremony. All the rituals were performed and all customary practices were given due prominence. There was a proof of the perfection of this ceremony in the form of one hundred and five photographs. The place of the wedding ceremony in the cultural context of the orient is prominent. It is considered to be a heavenly knot that is materialised on earth. The procedure of the ceremony is convention bound and culture specific. Each ritual is bound by tradition. The knot is tied in the presence of the holy fire. The marriage between Dimple and Amit proved to be a perfect ceremony.

viii. “Mrs Dasgupta’s youngest brother who was a photographer for a Bengali newspaper had taken pictures of the old men chewing betel leaves and spitting red juice on rented mattresses; young women braiding the bride’s hair with traditional red ribbons and tinsel, the bride trying to conceal her bandaged finger behind the folds of her red, bridal brocade.” (Mukherjee, 1975:16). The photographs included the old men, the young women and the bride herself performing some peculiar activities. After the feast the old men were enjoying the chewing of betel leaves and spitting juice. This is a peculiar Indian activity during the performance of the wedding. The young women were busy braiding Dimple’s hair with traditional ribbons and tinsel. This too is a peculiar once in life decoration for beautifying the bride on the
occasion of her wedding. Dimple herself was wearing the traditional bridal red brocade. The betel leaves, the traditional ribbons, and red brocade are the objects associated in the ceremony of tying the knot. The photographs taken include the fact that the transition of Dimple Dasgupta to Mrs. Dimple Basu was marked by the cultural ceremony peculiar to the Eastern Indian culture of the Orient.

ix. “To please her husband Dimple took to wearing bright colors. Reds, oranges, purples.” (Mukherjee, 1975:22). After marrying Amit, Dimple began to wear her saris according to his choice of colors. She began wearing saris of bright colors like red, orange, purple because they were her husband’s favorite colors. She considered it her duty to please her husband. She changed her color combination according to her husband’s tastes and likings. This is the Indian cultural trait that wives begin to change and put on clothes as liked by their husband. This is a wifely virtue that is adopted by women after their marriage. Dimple followed the cultural tradition.

x. “She wore her hair up in huge bun and let a long wispy curl dangle behind each ear, like Mrs. Ghose.” (Mukherjee, 1975:22). Culturally Indian wives after marriage begin to follow whatever is approved by their husbands or in laws. They often imitate the dressing style or hair style of their in laws. Dimple followed her sister-in-law Mrs. Ghose, Amit’s married elder sister in respect of the hair style. She began to make a huge bun of her hair and allowed long wispy curls to dangle on either side. She changed the colors of her saris to bright red, orange and purple and changed her hair style into a bun. She did this to please her husband. This change in wearing clothes or hair style is in order to perform her wifely duty towards her husband. This is an Indian cultural trait. The Indian culture prescribes such a conduct for married women.

xi. “Marriage is the song of the road and we should all sing it. Otherwise the virtues of our culture will wither and fall off by the wayside.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 27). Dimple turned to Magazines during the siesta hour and spent
hours on letters to the editors. In one of the letters, she read how the writer praised the significance of marriage. The writer of the letter insisted on the fact that marriage as the song of the road should be sung by all. Otherwise the virtues of the Oriental culture would wither and fall off. The virtues of the Oriental, rather Indian culture, have been preserved by the importance attached to the institution of marriage by all Indians. The traditional system should be preserved so that the cultural virtues will be maintained and preserved. The uniqueness of the cultural virtues preserved by the system of marriage in India should be kept intact. The Oriental cultural features have been emphasized and reflected in maintaining that marriage is the song of the road.

xii. “Are you forgetting the unforgettable Sita of legends? Can you not recall how she walked through fire to please Ram, her kingly husband?” (Mukherjee, 1975:27). The letter writer through a series of three rhetorical questions, emphasizes the wifely virtues incarnated by Sita. Sita, the legend is unforgettable on account of being the ideal wife and on account of her virtues of loyalty, obedience, devotion and decency. In order to please her kingly husband Ram, Sita walked through the fire to prove her chastity before King Ram’s subjects and friends. Sita’s sacrifice, her devotion and her decency have emphasized the ideals of a model wife. In the Oriental culture, the wife’s obedience to the husband is known to be a wifely virtue exemplified by Sita’s sacrifice. The cultural values of the Orient demand the sense of responsibility, the spirit of sacrifice and a high degree of patience demonstrated by the wife. The reflection of the culture of the East is evident.

xiii. “I forgot to make it. I am sorry. I was busy reading”. “But you know I like fresh lime and water when I come back. You know this little thing means a lot to me.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 28). This conversation between Dimple and Amit clearly indicates that the Indian husband always expects his wife to be fully prepared to satisfy his each and every wish and never to fail in her wifely duties. She is obliged to be in attendance to her husband’s smallest of
desires. The domination of the husband is the feature of the Oriental culture and the same is reflected through this conversation.

xiv. “But she knew that there was nothing fraudulent about the Basu family’s joy. They looked on the unborn son as communal property and were very solicitous of her health.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 33). The Basu family was overjoyed to know of Dimple’s pregnancy. Their joy was genuine and they conspired the unborn son as the communal property. They were very much concerned about Dimple’s health in this stage. The reaction of the Basu family is in line with the customary tradition in the cultural context of an Oriental country like India. The Basu family laid down rules for Dimple to be observed by her during her pregnancy. She was not to carry heavy pails of water, not to trip on dark staircases. These too are traditional rules for pregnant women. These conventions are culture-specific which reflect the Indian culture.

xv. “After dinner he moved into the bedroom and turned it into a fortress: the windows were shuttered, the desk cleaved and brought close to the bed so he could use the bed as his desk and write applications and letters.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 40). When Amit resigned from his job the entire atmosphere in the house changed. Everything was arranged as he desired. He made the bedroom the fortress of his activity. The windows were shuttered. He changed the arrangement in such a manner that he could note his applications by using the bed as his desk. This is how the entire domestic environment is dependent on the mood of the breadwinner or the husband in the family. The same happened when Amit made his bed, the fortress of his work. The peculiar Indian cultural feature is reflected in this incident.

xvi. “Dimple brought him paper clips, note paper, newspaper Ads and fresh cups of tea every half an hour.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 40). After resigning his current job Amit moved his place of the action to the bedroom. He converted it into his fortress and strategically started sending out missiles in the forms of Applications and letters in his endeavours. He was whole
heartedly supported by his wife Dimple. She assisted him in every possible way. She brought him whatever he needed and regularly, after every half an hour, gave him fresh cups of tea. He was treated like a royal commander and Dimple played the part of a working assistant. The master slave relationship is taken for granted between the husband wife relations in the countries of the Orient like India. Dimple’s obedient conduct reflects this cultural trait of Orientalism.

xvii. “Once she brought him a parrot in a rusty cage from a vendor on the road, and saw his bitterness soften.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 40). In order to soften Amit’s bitterness Dimple bought a parrot from a street-hawker. She is careful to pay attention to his mood. This is a wife’s duty to her husband to keep him in the best of spirits- physically and psychologically. Dimple performed her cultural obligations as a wife in keeping with the Oriental culture.

xviii. “During the day she took winter clothes out of the trunk there was a hand-knitted cardigan, two sweaters and a Balclava cap the late Mr Basu had worn on a trip to Darjeeling; she spent the evenings mending bug holes.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 44). Amit went out every morning with travel documents. Dimple happily left the real work to her husband Amit and as a dutiful wife, of the East, Dimple took upon herself to pay attention to the fringe details such as winter clothes, undergarments and packing and repacking the baggage. She started collecting winter clothes like sweaters, cardigans and the winter cap. She started mending them. This reflects the Oriental division of work between the husband and the wife. The wife doing work at home indicates the cultural trait of the East.

xix. “She sewed long-sleeved blouses for herself and bought a dozen cotton petticoats from a hawker near Gariahat Market.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 44). The preparation for their journey to the U.S were being finalised by Dimple- She prepared the long sleeved blouses hereself as she sewed them at home. She purchased a dozen cotton petticoats. Along with the winter clothes, the
clothes for daily wear for herself were prepared by Dimple. She performed her wifely duty of getting ready for the long travel and stay in America. She made it a point to do things in the most economical manner. The Oriental cultural feature is reflected in that.

xx. “In the early afternoons, instead of sleeping or reading novels, as she had done when she was pregnant, she cleaned out empty Horlicks bottles and filled them with spices to take them with her to the States.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 44). She filled with spices the empty bottles every afternoon. The Indian spices are missed in a country like America. Dimple carefully stuffed the bottles with the spices needed. She performed another of her wifely duties. The love for spices is an Indian characteristic. The cultural aspect is reflected in stuffing spices in bottles.

3.3 Mirroring the West

Dimple and her husband Amit have arrived in the USA. They have come to the apartment in Queens that belongs to Jyoti and Meena Sen. Their stay mirrors the Western lifestyle.

i. “He kept pointing out buildings, roads, names of suburbs, insulting other drivers while keeping his window rolled up.” (Mukherjee, 1975:51). Jyoti Sen came to the airport to receive Dimple and Amit. On his way back from the airport, Jyoti Sen informed the newcomers about the location in the new country. The U.S in particular the new city in which the Indian couple had arrived. He mentioned the names of places like the suburban areas of the city, the main roads and the landmark buildings on the way home. Jyoti Sen desired to enlighten the new arrivals about the geographical landmarks of the area in which they were likely to reside. He wanted them to know and get familiar with these locations. He wanted to acquaint them with a panoramic view of the places around their residence. These buildings, roads and the suburban areas reflected the landscape in a typical Western metropolis.
ii. “He was full of news about a triple murder in Queens, something he’d heard on the car radio on the way to the airport.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 51). Jyoti Sen informed Dimple and Amit about the news he heard on his car radio while coming to the airport to receive the couple from India. The news that he had heard was about the triple murder in Queens. Jyoti Sen reported the details of the murder. An individual demanded a chocolate ice-cream cone from the seller. The same was not available with the seller. He had only stock of vanilla and strawberry ice cream. This infuriated the gun man who took out his gun. He shot the ice-cream seller and the two other customers in the ice-cream parlor. It was for a very trivial cause but for that the murderer killed the three persons in the ice cream parlor. Such a brutal triple murder exemplified the scale of violence in the Western countries. The news of the triple murder holds the mirror to the Western culture.

iii. “To keep awake she concentrated on the sky scrappers, taller than anything in Calcutta and on the enormous cars speeding in regimented lanes.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 52). Dimple and Amit were welcomed at the airport by Jyoti Sen, in whose apartment in Queens they were to stay. Dimple, seated back, watched the skyscrapers. Those buildings were really taller than any constructions in Calcutta. She also watched the speeding big cars running in the lanes; she was surprised to note the enormous size of the buildings as well as the speed of cars. The buildings were imposing and the cars moved at a fast speed. The enormous size, the imposing bigness, the constant movement and rapidity of speed impressed her. The enormous size and fast speed characterized the lifestyle in the Western countries. The wonders of the Western world impressed her mainly by their size, their speed and their efficiency. She was just getting the first of its kind of experience of these things in which the Western culture got mirrored.

vi. “They were going so fast and so quietly, with no obstructions and no horns blowing (“Here, Jyoti said, ‘If you honk your horn at some guy, he’s likely to blow your head off”). That she couldn’t read the green signs overhead.”
On the way to the apartment of the Sen’s from the airport, Dimple, on the first encounter with the US watched the traffic. She was surprised that the vehicles moved fast but without making any noise and without blowing horns. It was a quiet and smooth drive from the airport. Jyoti reported that blowing horns would invite bullets from a guy. The speed of Jyoti’s car was such that Dimple was unable to read the green signs overhead. The fast but quiet noise free vehicular traffic is a characteristic feature of the Western life style and it is mirrored here.

v. “It was the first wall to wall carpet she had ever seen.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 53). After arrival in the U.S Jyoti Sen drove the couple-Dimple and Amit to his apartment in Queens. They sat in the living room. Now Dimple watched the objects there. The carpet was pretty, wall to wall, yellow with little blue specks. Dimple saw such a wall to wall carpet for the first time ever in her life. She was impressed by the size, the color and the beauty of the carpet. That rich wall carpet is an object of colorful beauty too reflected the Western lifestyle. There was no dearth of material comforts in the Western world. Its culture is reflected even in the material objects of domestic use.

vi. “There were other pretty things in the room: A Television on a fancy stand with a rack of magazines, a tea trolley that could be plugged into the wall to keep food warm, a stereo set with large speakers at the far corners of the room, a two shelf- book case that held a transistor radio, a cassette tape recorder, a plastic floral arrangement and eight engineering books.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 53-54). The physical facilities such as un-interrupted water and power supply and smooth but speedy transport, quick communication links and the material objects are the watchwords of the Western lifestyle. In the apartment of the Sen’s, the television set, a transistor radio, a cassette tape recorder, a tea trolley, a stereo set with speakers, a book case, a plastic floral arrangement and a magazine rack and other objects were noticed by Dimple. She was impressed by the abundance of the electronic and electrical gadgets in the living room. She found the
modern entertainment gadgets of almost all types. The rich variety of material objects and their capacity of providing material comforts satisfied Dimple. She got a glimpse of Western culture in these objects.

vii. “My Law, God’s Law”. He presented a blood smudged sign in a language she’d never seen. “If I wanted to break God’s law, I’d sell you cheese cake.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 59). Dimple and Amit were served cheese cake by Meena Sen and Dimple suggested buying some. Meena asked Dimple to go in and just ask for cheese cake, as she wanted to stay with Archana and the groceries. She enters the shop with the sign Schwartzs Deli. It was a shop in which were noticed salamis, beef, turkey, duck and in that Dimple asked for cheese cake. The man in the shop asked her if she wanted him to break the law, He did not want to break God’s law. Only if he meant to break God’s law he said he would sell cheese cake to her. Without any intention and because of her ignorance Dimple had entered the meat seller’s shop. In such a shop, nothing connected with milk could be sold. Being a newcomer to the US and the West Dimple did not know this distinction and she entered the wrong shop. That experience taught her a lesson and also held the mirror to Western lifestyle.

viii. “For chrissakes Lou knocks it off. A greener like her what does she know? The fat man was smiling reached out to touch her shoulder and she withdrew.” (Mukherjee, 1975:59). The other man the fat man in the shop understood the situation. He told the shopkeeper that Dimple was greener in the country. She was new to this lifestyle. She did not know what the sign and the name of the shop meant. The fat man tried to reach Dimple but she withdrew. It was then explained to her that selling milk products in such a shop was prohibited. Dimple came to know this at the cost of such an embarrassing experience. She of course found the culture of the West mirrored in this incident.

ix. “Milt was back talking to the bearded Saheb and Prodosh Mookerji. I was just a kid when the first Kennedy for it. he was saying . And when King
and Bobby got killed I was senior in high school, but when Roberto Clemente died in that crash I was a senior in Columbia and I couldn’t eat for three days. There I was on new Year’s day in my room, crying Christ!”(Mukherjee, 1975:83). Milt Glasser talked about different stages of his own life to Pradosh Mookerji and another man. He as if told his autobiography to them. There are three stages of his life. The first one is when he was a kid, the second when he was senior student in high school and the third when he was a senior university student in Columbia University. These three stages are associated in his psyche with three deaths. When John Kennedy was assassinated, Milt was a kid in the first stage of sixties. The murder of Bobby Kennedy took place when Milt was a senior high school student. The accidental death of Robert Clemente affected him most. He was then a senior university student in Columbia University. This accident affected him so much that he did not eat for three days and on New Year’s Day he wept in his room in the university hostel. The murders of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and the accidental death of Roberto Clemente marked three stages of his life. The impact of violence is noticed here. The place of violence in Western culture is underlined here.

x. “When he spotted her just outside the kitchen with a tall empty glass in her hand he took one giant step toward her, clamped his hands on her bare midriff and lifted her onto the plastic counter”. (Mukherjee,1975:83). Dimple was standing outside the kitchen holding an empty glass. Milt Glasser noticed her. He immediately came to her in a single giant step. He lifted her holding her bare midriff and put her on the counter. Milt Glassers actions here are quite normal and natural for him though for Dimple it is something shocking. The way Milt Glasser behaves is peculiarly Western. Being open minded, frank and spontaneous, Milt Glasser through his speech and conduct represents the Western style of living. The mirroring of the Western culture is evident in this incident.
xi. “Meena said, “The answer to all this is that people here too impatient. Do you know I read in the papers that a woman divorced her husband because he snored?” (Mukherjee, 1975:86). Meena interrupted the conversation by her remark. It is not just the possession of the gun nor the violent tendencies, but impatience of the Westerners is in her opinion, the reason behind the frequent occurrence of violence in the West where rape murder and ragging took place quite often. She reported that a woman divorced her husband just because he snored. The ground for the divorce was just a petty cause but the women divorced her husband for that. This impatience is another reflection of the mentality of the Westerners. Their cultural traits are mirrored through such incidents.

xii. “And the magazine added in italics. Express yourself in your surroundings. Discover your own grand passion and indulge it to excess.” (Mukherjee, 1975:87). The advertisement in the magazine stated the rules of living. Express yourself in your surrounding like the patio and the romantic comfortable absolutely adorable cushions. This is the way to discover the grand passion which used to be enjoyed to the fullest extent. Find yourself, find your passion and indulge in it fully, get to know what you desire and after you obtain it fully enjoy it. Try hard to get what you desire and then immerse in enjoying it to the fullest extent and to possess whatever is desired. It is mirrored here. The attitude to the art of living and the secret of happiness from the point of view of the Westerners is revealed. The culture of the West is duly mirrored.

xiii. “At quarter to eleven Ina Mullick rang the doorbell. She was wearing new blue jeans and a pink skinny top and had cut her hair severely short. “I hope you don’t mind my inviting myself over like this”, she said with a smile and deposited her large leather purse by the stroller in the hall.”(Mukherjee, 1975: 93). Ina Mullick had invited herself over. She arrived at quarter to eleven. She was in her new blue jeans and a pink top and carried a large leather purse. She hoped Dimple did not mind her inviting herself over in
this manner. Ina Muullick’s frank behavior shows how she enjoys freedom in a country like America. Her dress, her mannerisms, her actions and her bearing show the impact of the Western culture. Dimple is a new arrival. Meena Sen is settled but living in an Indian ghetto but Ina Mullick is totally Americanized. The West is reflected here. Ina Mullick told Dimple that Dimple would not have gone to Ina Mullick’s place if she had called her there. Dimple would not have risked passing through the subway. On her own, Dimple would not have taken the risk to go through the subway. There was the danger of mugging while going through the subway. The violence on the subway is another feature of the life in the West.

xiv. “Ina took out leaflets from her large purse and gave them to Dimple and Meena Sen. I thought you’d like to read them, she said looking directly at Dimple who smiled weakly and then looked away.” (Mukherjee, 1975:94). Ina Mullick on her visit to Meena and Dimple brought some leaflets for them. She gave them the leaflets. She considered Dimple to be elastic enough to be impressed. Ina’s progressive outlook is reflected here which is in its turn the mirroring of the Western life style. Ina Mullick had collected the leaflets from a store where women could sell things they had made. The name of the store itself indicated the self-reliance of women. It was Your Mother’s Mustache. Ina Mullick wanted Dimple to participate in such activities and get into the new life style of the country to which she had migrated.

xv. “Someone had written on the top in green felt pen, free…. Give ONE TO YOUR FRIEND, above the article’s title, You Don’t Need Mr Clean,…. but Mr Clean Sure As Hell Needs you! and she impulsively touched Ina’s arm and said; I am so glad you think of me as a friend.”(Mukherjee, 1975:94:95). The article about Mr Clean needing the reader was to be distributed to a friend. Ina Mullick gave it to Mrs Dimple Basu. Dimple felt obliged by this gesture of friendship on the part of Ina Mullick. She expressed her happiness over this. Dimple was expected to respond to this
gesture. The Western life style in respect of the progressive moves made by women is reflected in this incident. The Western culture is mirrored.

xvi. “In the kitchen over the halwa, brownies and coffee Cake Ina, doodled on the margin of the leaflet until there was a woman with her Sari wrapped around her like a shroud on one side and another woman in a bikini with a best bosom on the other. That’s me she said with a shallow laugh Before and After. The great moral and physical change and all that.” (Mukherjee, 1975:95). Ina Mullick followed Dimple in the kitchen on the margin of the leaflet. She doodled the figures of a woman wrapped in a sari on one side and a woman in a bikini on the other side. The woman in the sari is described by Ina as an image of herself as before. The woman in bikini is an image of herself as after. She belonged to the traditional set in her before stage. She now belongs to the modern Western set in her after stage. Ina Mullick’s stay in the US has brought this change in Ina as presented ‘in before’ to Ina as presented ‘in after’. The change from before to after presents the change from tradition to modernity.

xvii. “I m always a before “Dimple said” I guess I’ve never been an After.” (Mukherjee, 1975:95). Dimple considered herself to be in the phase before. She considered herself to be in the phase after she considered herself to be in the traditional set. She did not consider herself to be capable of change from tradition to modernity. She expresses her position to modernity. She expresses her position frankly. She felt that she would never be in the stage to which Ina Mullick belongs. Ina has reached the stage of modernity. Dimple considered herself to be incapable of reaching this stage. She thought that she would always be a tradition-bound person and therefore she would not belong to before stage only. In a Mullick remarks that it is better to remain in the stage of before, if that is possible. She states that the immigrant Indians imitate badly and Indians are even worse. The views expressed by Ina Mullick are of a woman who belongs to the after stage.
She represents the after stage that is in which the immigrants are following the Western life style. That is how the West is mirrored here.

xviii. “Then he began talking very causally about a murder in Nevada or Nebraska and she thought it was because she would not look at him, because he wanted her to be relaxed to enjoy the coffee. Talking about murders in America was like talking about the weather, and she was glad that an elderly couple had been fatally shot on a fishing trip so that she did not have to feel guilty about Amit.” (Mukherjee, 1975:99). Dimple, being sleepless on account of her insomnia, heard the sound of running water in the kitchen. She found Jyoti Sen trying to make coffee. She prepared the coffee and when both of them held their mugs, Jyoti Sen, in order to make Dimple feel relaxed, started telling about the murder of an elderly couple on a fishing trip. In America, murders are so common that talking about murders is just like talking about the weather. Dimple was worried that she was in the kitchen with Jyoti Sen when Amit was still sleeping. The murders of the elderly couple made a digression. Dimple thought that the violent murders that took place so often in America were characteristic of violence being a feature of life there.

xix. “The search for a place to live gave her a new kind of certainty, almost an arrogance, she knew she was boring Meena with the descriptions of the Breakfast Nook and the Boudoir but she didn’t care.” (Mukherjee, 1975:104). Amit got a job of boiler maintenance, Dimple then began search for a new residence. She read the advertisements for furnished apartments in newspapers, in the yellow pages of the Telephone directory. Dimple read the names, addresses and phone numbers of the estate agents but she did not actually call them. She started to look at the pictures of beds and sofas in the old copies of better homes and gardens. This search gave her a sense of certainty, confidence and even arrogance. She went on talking about the other things continuously and bored Meena Sen with her constant chatter. She did not care for anything else but just thought of the
new apartments for her and Amit. The desire to process comforts is now
dominant in Dimple’s mind. She was haunted by the possession mania
which is a characteristic feature of the culture in the West.

xx. “The Sen’s living room, especially the blue sofa and the speckled rug, had
now become hideous to her. Was it only a few days ago, she thought, she
had worried about a beer stain? It was all so shabby, so bare.”
(Mukherjee,1975:104). What Dimple admired previously now appeared
hidden to her in the blue sofa. The rug appeared unattractive to her in the
present mood. The objects in the living room of Jyoti and Meena Sen
appeared shabby and bare to her. They lost their previous charm as the
change appeared in sight. The reflection of the attitude and life-style of the
West is noticed in this incident. Dimple wanted big chairs with chrome
arms and legs, enormous lamps. Life was so promising but it delivered
comforts so slowly to Dimple. The insatiable desire to possess things bigger
and nicer made Dimple restless now. The mirroring of the Western culture
is witnessed here.

3.4 The phase of Alienation

The cross cultural relations are marked by the stage of getting alienated from the
native culture. In the case of Dimple, it is the alienation from the East.

i. “Boredom is the devil’s workshop or however that proverb goes. The point
is you must go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at
home and think about Calcutta.” (Mukherjee,1975:111). Dimple
complained about her tiredness and lack of any constructive activity, He
advised her to go out, make friends with the women in their neighbourhood,
in particular with the other Indian women in the building. He told her to
pursue something constructive. Moving out, mixing and managing
something constructive was the remedy for such a mood of tiredness and
absence of liveliness. Amit diagnosed the cause of her boredom to be her
brooding over Calcutta. It was an easy guess for him to attribute homesickness as the cause of Dimple’s boredom.

ii. “I am not brooding about Calcutta.” (Mukherjee, 1975:111). Dimple reacted to Amit's advice to her about not brooding about Calcutta. She asserted that she had stopped brooding about Calcutta. Dimple told him that she had stopped brooding about Calcutta. She had stopped being homesick. She had stopped remembering the native country. She had become alienated from the culture of the East. She was now passing through the stage of alienation from the East in her encounter with cross-cultural relations. Amit accepted that Dimple was becoming American and that she was steadily getting alienated from Calcutta and the native surrounding. He of course emphasized the fact that Dimple was becoming too much of an American like Mrs. Ina Mullick. The stage of alienation had started.

iii. “He left the table to get a cold can of beer. He came back with the beer and a wine of glass for Dimple and poured her an inch of foam from his can, “Just this once”, he begged, "It's a celebration. I mean we have to celebrate my job and your Americanization, so go on take a sip of beer.” (Mukherjee, 1975:112). Amit was in the mood of celebration. He wanted to celebrate his getting a job and Dimple's Americanization. In order to celebrate he desired Dimple to sip some beer that he offered. This celebration would mark Dimple's alienation from the East and her progress towards becoming an American to the desirable extent as Amit approved. Dimple sipped the beer delicately holding her glass high. Dimple's Americanization is her step towards alienation from the native culture. Getting away from the Eastern culture is moving towards the Western culture. That is the procedure that slowly takes place in the situation in which cultures cross and interact in different encounters.

iv. “There were no letters from Pixie, just UNICEF card in mid-September saying, Hi, Dimple old girl. Greetings from your forgotten friends in good old Cal! Long time no scribble. How come? Here's hoping you'll sharpen
your epistolary gifts. Affly, Pixie.” (Mukerjee, 1975:113). Pixie, Dimple's friend from Calcutta, sent her a card with a brief note. She was estranged now from the East. Pixie Ray, her friend from the Calcutta did not write her a long letter but sent the UNICEF card jotting few lines inquiring about Dimple and urging Dimple to write. Such a feeling of strangeness marked the stage of alienation from the native land and culture of the East. Dimple was passing through this stage of alienation.

v. “Every day she thought she should write a letter something funny and witty with little hints of how American she had become but not so American that she was ridiculous but every day she kept putting it off.” (Mukherjee, 1975:114). Dimple wanted to respond to the card sent by Pixie through a letter of hers. She wanted to inform her friends in India how Americanized she had become. She wanted to write in her funny but witty letter how much American, she had become and that she had not become to American. She kept postponing the letter. She could not answer as she knew that she had become alienated from them. Her alienation from the native culture made her move towards becoming American.

vii.“Gradually, as she pressed the chin deeper in the hollow, applying light, rhythmical pressure, she began to feel that violence was right, even decent. If she were to ram her chin deeper into the hollow, perhaps she could crush the bone that lay directly under, Perhaps she could extract from Amit a thrilling surrender.” (Mukherjee, 1975:117). Dimple, while sleeping in the apartment of the Sens, pressed her chin in the hollow of flesh on his shoulder. She applied light and rhythmical pressure. She thought that by pressing her chin deeper into the hollow, she could crush his bone and that would make Amit surrender to that pressure from her. The thought that violence would be right and even decent entered her mind. This justification of violence was something that alienated her from the native Oriental
culture that prescribed non-violence. The process of alienation is implicit in this change of her perspective towards violence.

viii. “The darkness was unbearably exciting, taut with angry premonitions, promises. Her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne. She dug her chin deep into the depression, so deep that he squirmed in sleep.” (Mukherjee, 1975:117). Dimple thought that her body was alien to her. She thought that her body was filled with hate, malice and a desire to hurt. She thought that her body was light, almost weightless as if airborne; she pressed her chin so hard that Amit squirmed in sleep. Dimple’s psychological state made her feel that her own body was alien. The state of alienation of the body is the beginning of the state of alienation through which Dimple's psychological state made her feel that her own body was alien to her. This physical alienation is the beginning of the state of alienation through which Dimple passed.

ix. "Hello," Ina said, and laughed loudly over the phone. "It's me. I was hoping you would call and invite me over. Marsha used to." Dimple stood, silent and indecisive, in Marsha's blue wraparound bathrobe (Marsha had not said she could use the clothes but Dimple decided that).” (Mukherjee, 1975:118). Ina Mullick called Dimple and extracted an invitation for coffee at eleven the next day. Ina Mullick told Dimple that she was hoping Dimple would call and invite her. Dimple was in Marsha’s blue bathrobe. She was wearing Marsha’s clothes, as Marsha would never know that Dimple was wearing her clothes. Dimple’s wearing Marsha’s clothes and her yielding to agree with Ina Mullick’s demand to write to her mark the stage of alienation from the native culture of the Orient.

x. “Then she said, “I’d love you to come over. I’ve been so busy getting unpacked and settled and all that....” (Mukherjee, 1975:118). Dimple told Ina Mullick over the phone that she would love Ina’s coming over to her place in the Mukerjee’s apartment in the University Apartments. She could
not call Ina on her own because she was busy in getting the baggage unpacked. She was busy in settling in the apartment. She was busy putting things in order. In fact, Dimple had not unpacked her suitcase and two handbags. She kept them under the bed and every now and then pulled out the suitcase to get her things from there. Dimple told Ina Mullick over the phone that the situation in the US was different from what it was in Calcutta. There in India, servants were there to help unpacking and putting things in order. In the US no such help was possible. She was passing through the process of alienation.

xi. “Dear Pixie (ran her imaginary letter): How are you? Are you still working? Why don’t try to come to the States and try your luck with radio and television? It’s really (and I’m not kidding) the land of money, honey and opportunity.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 119-120). Dimple wrote an imaginary letter to Pixie. In her imagination, she drafted the letter. She wanted Pixie to come to the States, which according to Dimple was the land of money, honey and opportunity. She made inquiries about Pixie’s job and suggested Pixie to try her luck in the States. She hoped Pixie could get a job with the radio or the television in the States. It was different from India where Pixie still lived. Dimple has made a departure from the native country India and has arrived in the land of money and rich comfortable life style. Dimple has alienated herself from India.

xii. “I wish you were here, so we could do interesting things together and go to the movies and have coffee in little restaurants in Greenwich Village. Can you believe we’ve ended up living in the village- the very place we heard so many stories about in Cal?” (Mukherjee, 1975:120). In the imaginary letter that Dimple wrote to Pixie, Dimple told Pixie that they would have done many interesting thing in the US had Pixie been there. They would have watched the movies. They would have taken coffee in Greenwich Village in small restaurants. They had heard so much about the village in Calcutta. She told Pixie that she was now residing in ‘The
Village’ itself. The stage of alienation is marked here as Dimple is residing in the very village.

xiii. “She held out her right hand to shake because she had practiced the handshake and “I am so glad you could come, I hope the curry will not be too hot for you, I made it only medium- hot with you in mind and you must see the plants, they are flourishing (She was proud of that word) by the window.” (Mukherjee, 1975:121, 122). Ina Mullick has invited herself over but the first to come was Milt Glasser. Dimple has practised the handshake. She held out her hand to shake. She has also rehearsed some lines in order to open the conversation. She told Milt Glasser that she was glad to welcome him. She has prepared the curry just medium hot taking into consideration his presence. She was getting alienated from the customs of the Eastern countries like India. She was slowly moving towards her Americanization.

xiv. “But Milt entered so swiftly, twisting his long elastic body and bending over her head (Over the unpleasant curls of the crown) kissing her on the right cheek and saying, “Hi Dimple”, so softly, that she couldn’t say a word.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 122) Dimple was ready to welcome Milt Glasser by shaking hands with him. She was ready to talk to him about the curry she has specially prepared for him. She did not get the opportunity to do so. She could not say a word. Milt Glasser opened the door with his key and swiftly entered. He twisted his elastic body and bending over Dimple’s head. Milt kissed her on the right cheek. He called her, “Hi, Dimple, very softly. His movements were quick and he kissed so spontaneously that Dimple was lost for words. Dimple’s orientation in becoming American worked at such a pace that she got alienated from the native customs and culture of the East. Her getting into the other culture signaled her alienation.

xv. “By the end of the week she had stopped talking to him except to issue curt information like “Dinner’s on the table” or: Your clean undershirt’s on the bed.” (Mukherjee, 1975:132). One evening, Amit came up from behind
Dimple when she was chopping garlic. His moves frightened her and he was bruised. After that, Dimple stopped talking to Amit and she just informed about dinner on the table or undershirt on bed in a curt manner. This gesture of hers to stop talking to her husband shows how she is moving away from the native culture of the East. Dimple was getting alienated from the native culture.

xvi. “Ina, sensing a challenge, said, “No one- no Bengali not my husband not you absolutely no one understands me. Do you know that last night I thought seriously of suicide? Now do you get it?” (Mukherjee, 1975 : 136). Ina Mullick asserted that nobody understood her. Not even her husband or Dimple Basu was in a position to understand Ina Mullick or what passed through her mind. She was thinking seriously about committing suicide the previous night. She was so restless that night that she just thought of dying, of ending her self. She wanted to be comforted by Dimple. That was her reaction to the state of being alienated.

xvii. “Later in November, Ina Mullick began to bring her American friends over to the apartment on Bleecker Street. To Dimple they all looked alike; even their clothes were similar. “(Mukherjee, 1975:146) Dimple was frequently visited by Ina Mullick. Then Ina began to bring her American friends. This contact with the Americans through Ina was a step further in the process of alienation from India, the country and its culture. She was thrown into the company of Ina’s American friends. She watched them from close quarters and though she did not much interact with them personally; their company was thrust on her by Ina Mullick. She listened to them talk. Their talks were on various topics from sexism to day-care centers for children. Dimple’s interest in the American friends of Ina was quite formal. She was slowly and steadily getting alienated from her native Indian culture. She was away from her native country India.

xviii. “They make their own cigarettes. Dimple had once taken Ina aside and asked if the hostess was supposed to provide cigarettes as well as the
coffee….. But Ina said that Americans liked to smoke their own brands.” (Mukherjee, 1975 : 146). Ina’s American friends rolled their own cigarettes. Dimple wanted to know if as a hostess she was required to provide the American friends cigarettes with coffee. Thereupon Ina told her that she need not provide cigarettes and that they preferred to smoke their own brands of cigarettes, Dimple’s readiness to supply what Ina’s American friends needed is a move towards alienation from Indian culture and getting closer to her Americanization.

xix. “Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a Chimera. Amit was no more than that.” (Mukherjee, 1975:156). Dimple Basu was now staying in the apartment of the Mookerjis. She spent her time in sleeping and eating something. She became restless, felt helpless and was continuously surrounded by the thoughts of some impending disaster. She felt restless and disturbed because she felt that she did not get what she deserved. She should have been treated better in her life. She should have married a person who was not just a Chimera like Amit Basu, a self-centered person. This thought disturbed her; troubled her constantly and her mind became confused with the threats of disasters. She got alienated from her native culture.

xx. “He did not feed her reveries he was unreal. She was furious, desperate; she felt sick.”(Mukherjee, 1975:156). Dimple’s restlessness made her uneasy, angry and frustrated. She considered her husband Amit to be an unreal individual. He did not match her day dreaming. Sickness overpowered Dimple on account of Amit’s nature that lacked any reality. This feeling of restlessness, this state of being disinterestedness made Dimple alienated from her native background. Dimple was as if trapped in the serpentine curls of some monster. She felt like a bug on the rug.

xxi. “Dimple thought that the man did not really want to know any more about Ina, that for him Ina was probably an ephemeral, unsatisfying topic
compared to Indian monsoon patterns and having exhausted the weather he was anxious to leave.” (Mukherjee, 1975:161). The man who had winked at Ina in the elevator came to Dimple’s apartment. He showed her a bicycle deal and remarked that she would like that as it was of one of the Indian goods. This experience of intrusion by a stranger marked Dimple’s alienation. Dimple faced the man who intruded in the apartment and mistaking her perhaps for Ina Mullick he asked her a number of questions. Dimple then paused for a longer time in her conversation with the stranger. She wanted to give him a chance to say a casual farewell. Dimple’s reaction shows how the process of alienation has started and how this alienation has separated her from her native country and culture in her stay in America.

xxii.“She considered herself a master of situations in which passions are discreetly restrained. Ina, Dimple knew, would either have led the man to the deep, brown sofa or shoved him out into the hall.” (Mukherjee, 1975:161). Dimple was discreet and controlled in the situation. The intruder’s entry in the apartment meant a crisis. In the situation, she remained a master of situations. Her reaction was different from what would have been the reaction in Ina’s case. Ina would have taken him to the sofa or would have shown him the way out. Ina lacked restraint but Dimple showed the same. Dimple was in the process of alienation and could act accordingly.

3.5 The Phase of Assimilation

The cross-cultural encounter results in the assimilation in the culture to which persons get migrated. Dimple gets assimilated in the culture of the West through her Americanization.

i. “Dimple was afraid that the plate he was balancing on his knees would slope down into his lap and ruin his pants.” (Mukherjee, 1975:166). Dimple
and Amit came to the Sen’s apartment and met other Bengali couples who were invited for the dinner. Jyoti Sen wanted to establish equality of sexes as in the American set-up, they believed to become modern. At dinner Dimple sat by his side. Mr. Guha collected information from Amit about job prospects and Amit looked a well established Indian in America. He was wearing his new American suit. He was eating from the plate he was balancing on his knees. Dimple was afraid that the plate would slip down and his clothes would be ruined. The way both Dimple and Amit have carried themselves out at dinner shows that they are steadily getting into the mainstream of life in America. They are getting assimilated with the American culture.

ii. “He was putting on weight and the pockets of his pants flared out on either side, revealing white lining and tight crease marks. When he sat, there was an unpleasant fold of fat straining at his shirt buttons.” (Mukherjee, 1975:166). Dimple noticed the way Amit was putting on weight. She observed that he was getting fatter. His pockets and white linings bulged out. His shirt buttons appeared strained due to the fat he had gained weight in the US. Amit Basu was temperamental and he was sensitive to changes. When he was jobless he was in constant tension. Now he was employed. It was a matter of relief for him. That resulted in his putting on weight. That marks how he was acclimatized to the conditions in America. Dimple’s progress in this respect of assimilation appears to be more rapid.

iii “Milt bent over Dimple and put his huge hands on her shoulders and brought his face very close (she noticed that he had acne scars on his nose) and she stood very still, leaning slightly against the wall, not sure if he was about to kiss her and what she should do if he did kiss her on the cheek or the mouth.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 168). Milt Glasser put his hands on Dimple’s shoulders and brought his face very close to hers. She stood quietly. She thought he would kiss her on the cheek or mouth. She was not yet sure about her reaction to his kissing her. On one occasion he kissed her on the
cheek and she was expected by him to do the same. She was mentally prepared to behave in America as Americans do. She was being assimilated into the American culture.

iv. “Milt Glasser came over to her corner and touched her elbow and said, “Easy now, take it easy”, and made a sign to Ina, then moved his hand from her elbow all the way down to her wrist.” (Mukharjee, 1975 : 169). Milt Glasser and Ina Mullick made it a point to frequently visit Dimple in her Manhattan apartment. Milt Glasser came to Dimple and moved his hand from the elbow down to her wrist. It was a gesture that demonstrated his intimacy with Dimple. Dimple too did not mind being so intimately touched by him. In fact she willingly held herself in getting so softly touched by him. This is moving into the process of Americanization which is the stage of assimilation.

v. “Don’t pay any attention to her”, Then louder, turning to Ina, “Lay off, Ina, I mean it.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 169). Milt Glasser told Dimple not to pay any attention to whatever Ina Mullick had said to Dimple. Ina Mullick told Dimple that Dimple did not want to be rude and therefore she tolerated their visits. Now Milt Glasser told Ina too. Ina Mullick should not continue to talk in this manner. He asked Ina to stop saying such things. He told her he meant it. Milt Glasser knew what Ina was talking about and he knew Dimple’s nature too. Therefore he appropriately addressed both of them. Dimple allowed Milty Glasser’s hand to rest on her wrist. She thought it to be a nice hand, hand that could never do anything that has made Dimple allowed Milt Glasser to touch her, to hold her hand, to caress her. This is her gesture that demonstrates her Americanization.

vi. “Milt stayed by the cactus and moved his big hand from Dimple’s wrist to her palm. She noticed that he had no hair on his fingers, but the veins stood out on the back of his hand like maps of the Ganges.” (Mukharjee, 1975 : 170). Ina Mullick on this day of December was in a different mood from her usual self when she came to Dimple’s apartment. Dimple tolerated Ina
Mullick and her visits. Dimple reacted that she could not keep up with Ina because she had to cook and watch TV and embroider. When Dimple sensed that Ina was making fun of her, she asked Ina what right she had to make fun of Dimple like that. Ina got up and asked Milt to follow her. Milt did not move. He continued to move his hand into Dimple’s palm. Dimple was at ease with his gestures and noticed his hairless fingers and the veins on the back of his hand. Dimple’s reaction and her gestures are quite in accordance with the life-style of the Americans. She answers back Ina Mullick and allows Milt Glasser to caress her. These gestures show that Dimple’s Americanization is complete. She has become assimilated in the company of the Americans.

vii. “When Ina left, shutting door very angrily behind her, Milt said that he liked to cook also and that his mother has gone to school with Julia Child”. (Mukherjee, 1975:170). Ina Mullick went out. She angrily shut the door behind her. Then Milt Glasser mentioned that Julia Child was his mother’s school friend. He told Dimple that he knew cooking. He taught how to prepare Julia Child special chocolate mousse. When Amit came back, Dimple gave him this Julia Child special Chocolate mousse to demonstrate her Americanization. Dimple completed the phase of assimilation into target culture. Milt Glasser mentioned that he liked to cook and could prepare Julia Child special chocolate mousse. He imitated the way Julia Child spoke in her television programmes. He started preparing that and in the course of preparations called Dimple sweetheart and told Dimple that the tricky part was to beat the yolks. His calling her a sweetheart rather stiffened Dimple. He then told her that he was imitating the actors Humphrey Bogart and Woody Allen. He again called her sweetheart. These actions and words of Milt Glasser pleased Dimple. She accepted Milt Glasser’s address gladly. Her Americanization is noticed here. Her assimilation is getting completed.
viii. “Dimple giggled after that, giggled as if she were a one-woman audience at a comic movie, and Milt continued in his Bogart voice, alternating with his Howard Cosell, his street dude, his Woody-Allen-impressing-a-lady-with-a-chocolate mousse for which he ended up dabbing her cheeks with egg yolks and she thought of Archana finger painting in nursery school and dobbed Milt right back with melted chocolate and butter.” (Mukherjee, 1975: 171). In the beginning, Dimple becomes stiff being called a sweetheart by Milt Glasser. He called her sweetheart and now she laughed. He continued to imitate Humphrey Bogart, Howard Cosell and Woody Allen. Then he dabbed her cheeks with egg yolks and Dimple dabbed Milt with melted chocolate and butter. Dimple’s initial stiffening disappeared and both of them playfully dabbed each other. Dimple behaves like an American as she is totally assimilated in that lifestyle. As time passed both Dimple and Milt became more and more intimate. They sat side by side. She fed him chocolate mousse. She told him how she slept all day. She confided in him how she lay in bed. Dimple accepted Milt’s warm hearted companionship. She got assimilated into American life-style.

ix. “Dimple pushed the shopping cart between the aisles and wondered what she was doing in borrowed clothes on a Tuesday morning in mid-December with Milt Glasser in the Grand Union.” (Mukherjee, 1975:174). Milt Glasser and Dimple were moving with their shopping carts in mid-December. The shopping activity is being performed by Dimple in the manner in which Americans do this kind of shopping. She was accompanied by Milt Glasser. Dimple’s assimilation in the American culture is noticed in this act of hers of shopping in the mall with Milt. Dimple had put on a printed sweater, blue jeans and a windbreaker. She has put on these clothes of Marsha and Prodosh Mookerji as Milt Glasser had told her to wear these clothes. She was now dressed like the Americans. That was an indication of her accepting the American way of life. She has put on jeans and other items to suit her in the American style.
x. “She wheeled her carts at a reckless speed to the frozen food section and fended off a fat woman who was about to reach for a frozen cheesecake on the shelf above Dimple’s head. “Lemon or strawberry?” she yelled at Milt Glasser who was lagging behind, I love them both so I don’t care which one we get.” (Mukherjee, 1975:175). Dimple and Milt Glasser were shopping in the mall. She was in American clothes taken out from Marsha Mookerji’s bedroom closed. She moved her cart speedily and she asked Milt which flavour he would prefer between lemon and strawberry. Milt would not mind any choice as he loved both. This is Dimple’s act of getting into the American culture. Her American clothes and her American food selection immersed her into the American spirit. Her companion Milt Glasser was to her America. This is her assimilation.

xi. “When Milt did not yell back his choice, she put two pies in the shopping cart and wheeled ferociously out to the crowded area where he was examining hamburger and beef liver.” (Mukherjee, 1975:175). Milt did not indicate any choice and so Dimple put both the pies in the shopping cart. She then brought her cart to that section where Milt was examining hamburger and beef liver. The section was of non-vegetarian food and Milt observed it for making a choice. Dimple did not object to this as she was now almost Americanized. She did not mind taking both the pies and even Milt’s selecting items like hamburger and beef liver. Her Americanization is noticed here which indicates her assimilation with the culture of the land to which she is migrated.

xii. “That night Amit looked up from his crossword puzzle and said, “You used to be a lot of fun, you used to pester me to take you out and get a pizza or a gaucho pie, you know, do things. But now you just want to stay at home and you don’t even watch television. What’s wrong, for God’s sake?” (Mukherjee, 1975 : 176). On the evening of the day when Dimple went out for shopping with Milt Glasser, Dimple’s husband Amit remarked that Dimple used to ask him to take her out and get something like pizza or pie
but in the last few days she just stayed home and even did not watch the T.V. He asked if something was wrong with her. Amit noticed the change in her. The change in Dimple was due to her Americanization. Even Amit could notice the change in her. Her constant chattering was silent and she did not talk of taking her out and moreover she did not watch the television.

xiii. “Dimple said that there was nothing wrong. But Amit would not believe her.” (Mukherjee, 1975:176). Dimple answered Amit’s query. She told Amit that there was nothing wrong with her. Though she said this, Amit did not believe her. Amit continued to think that something was the matter. He sensed the change in her but could not exactly locate it. It is clear that the change in her resulted from Dimple’s Americanization. Her getting assimilated into American culture was the cause of the change in her behaviour.

xiv. “He was the only one she could talk to with the others, people like Amit and Ina and even Meena Sen, she talked in silences.” (Mukherjee, 1975 : 191). Dimple felt at ease with Milt Glasser. She could talk to him whatever she wanted and whatever she felt. She could open her mind to Milt Glasser. She talked to him; she spoke to him in words. With the others around her, with the other persons like Amit, Ina and Meena Sen she talked in silences. Her becoming Americanized perhaps made her talk to Milt so freely.

xv. “With Milt she could talk about all sorts of things: clean air acts, emission controls, depletion allowances, the Vinland map, forgery the knicks (the year before, Milt has followed them on tour through New England and the Middle West.” (Mukherjee, 1975:191). Dimple felt comfortable in talking to Milt Glasser, with others she talked in silences but with Milt, she talked in words. She talked with Milt on any topic such as pollution and ways to control it, the political changes, film stars, the T.V. programmes and many others. She talked freely and frankly with Milt. She realized that in these talks the division ultimately was most talking by Milt and most listening by Dimple. This intimacy in talking with Milt, the confidence that Dimple
experienced is comforting to her. Her Americanization and her assimilation with the American life-style and culture is evident in this incident.

xvi. “An hour later she thought that for a tall person Milt Glasser had very short legs.” (Mukherjee, 1975:197). Milt Glasser offered pizza to Ina and Dimple but Ina wanted to get her contact lens fitted. Then Milt and Dimple went to the pizza shop. Then Milt took Dimple home and he told her he would go off, after a cup of Dimple’s special Darjeeling tea. They went in and after an hour or so, they came out. The novelist mentions the shortness of the legs of a tall person like Milt Glasser. Dimple and Milt did come together. While Dimple was still in her bra and petticoat, she remembers how Milt Glasser’s legs appeared short in comparison with his enormous height. The act was completed by both of them and Milt’s shortness was noticed. His legs happened to be shorter in proportion to his tall stature. Dimple’s observation of the length was from very close quarters. Dimple and Milt coming together confirmed the assimilation of Dimple into the American spirit.

xvii. “On the whole, he was hairy; he had hair all over his body on his chest, shoulders, thighs and even on the bulges of his calf muscles.” (Mukherjee, 1975:197). Dimple noticed during the period she spent with Milt Glasser inside that Milt Glasser was hairy all over his body. She noticed his hairy body when both of them were close together enjoying themselves. She observed him to be hairy on his chest, his shoulders, his thighs and even on his calf muscles. Dimple’s observing shows her close physical closeness to Milt Glasser. This leads to the confirmation of her conversion to Americanization. This is how her assimilation into American culture is total. Milt’s body was muscularly built. It was solidly built in his legs. The physical features of Milt were noticed by Dimple in their highly intimate scenes and poses. His hair all over the body, his muscular strength and his short but solid legs through his continuous practice of basketball are the features of his body. Dimple and Milt have merged into each other. Dimple
has attained total Americanization. She has become assimilated with the American culture through her companionship with Milt.

xviii. “Milt stood fully dressed by the kitchen door; he was running his hands through his curly hair. She handed him his cup of tea, which he sipped while standing. “I am sorry for what I said. You shocked me, that’s all. Everything about you is shocking and exiting and a little sad, “He slurped very loudly, like a Bengali.” (Mukherjee, 1975:201). Dimple thought perhaps Milt was a consultant or a co-ordinator of the government spending and projects. He did not clearly say so. Dimple felt more and more cut off from the Indians. Milt dressed himself and began to sip tea. Everything about her for Milt was both shocking and exciting. Dimple has been cut off from the Indians around here in the US including her husband Amit. She felt close intimate companionship for Milt and Milt too shared the same with her. That confirmed her total Americanization in this land to which she migrated with her husband in search of brighter job prospects and high financial returns.

xix. “He was standing by the counter when she came into the kitchen. Without turning around he said, “We should have more potatoes and less frozen broccoli. You’re too extravagant. The important thing is I’ve been working seven months and we haven’t even saved a thousand dollars.” (Mukherjee, 1975:212). When Dimple entered the kitchen, her husband Amit was standing by the counter. She heard Amit saying that they should have more potatoes and they should save more. They did not save one thousand dollars even after seven months of job. He blamed her that she was extravagant. Amit remarks have hurt Dimple. The bridge between the two was clear. He thought of less expenses, more saving, economy drive. He nourished his Indian traits. Dimple was Americanized. The gap was not to be bridged. Amit’s intention to come to America was for monetary reasons only. He continued to think in terms of earning money but not spending it but saving it in terms of at least thousand dollars every five or six months. Dimple was
not extravagant but in Amit’s view, she was so. They could not save and for that too Amit blamed her. The break between the two is noticed in this. The break is complete. She is assimilated but Amit is not yet assimilated in the Western culture.

xx. “She noticed the Wheaties flaks on the counter. And sugar- he always spilled sugar on the counter. It was one of the little things that irritated her.” (Mukherjee, 1975:212). Dimple noticed that Amit had spilled sugar and wheaties on the counter. This irritated her. Dimple’s Americanization and assimilation into the American culture separated her from Amit. Their ways were destined to part them apart. Dimple realized that it would be horrible for her to watch how much sugar was wasted by Amit in his lifetime and Amit would for ever be insensitive to what Dimple suffered. How hard and how difficult it was for Dimple to remain quiet and to smile in spite of all these odds. She was falling apart like an old toy. She was roughly treated as an old toy. She was sure that she would disintegrate in Amit’s company. The break was imminent. Dimple got assimilated in the American cultural set-up. Her Americanization now made her realize the imminent possibility of total breakup with Amit. Dimple, the Indian wife, had become an American woman in the company of Milt Glasser.

3.6 Summing up

Amit and Dimple both leave India and migrate to the US. Jyoti and Meena Sen give them temporary accommodation in their apartment. Dimple gets acclimatized to the conditions in America during her stay at the Sens. She gets the reflections of American culture and life style into her system. It is on account of Mrs. Ina Mullick that she has glimpses of American life. The psychological transition through which Dimple has to go through matches the changing environmental set up around Dimple. These stages of transition have been presented more or less in the chronological order. The sequence of events has marked the cultural encounters between the culture of the East and the West in a criss-cross fashion. It is an onward moving structural design. The novel has three parts and in these three
parts, four phases of cross cultural encounters are presented. In Calcutta, Dimple moves from her parent’s house to her mother-in-law’s place. The reflections of Indian culture abound in the first part of the novel. The mirroring of the life in the West is noticed in the second part of the novel. Her residence in Jyoti and Meena Sen’s apartment has made her aware of the ways of the Western lifestyle. Jyoti Sen has characterized American life as consisting of violence, rape and murder. The material comforts and the physical facilities of the land of money, honey and prosperity are noticed by Dimple in this phase. The third stage of the phase of alienation from the Indian culture of the East is presented in the third part. Dimple gets Americanized totally and her assimilation with the American culture of the West is complete through Ina Mullick and Milt Glasser.