CHAPTER - 3

WIFE
CHAPTER – 3

WIFE

_Wife_, the second novel written in 1975 by Bharati Mukherjee focuses on a story of an Indian girl, Dimple Dasgupta. Though the story looks very simple, _Wife_ is a novel ostensibly about immigration, gender, ethnicity, identity and power. In this chapter, it is an attempt to discover the transformation in her identity from being Indian-daughter-wife-American immigrant. Discourses on her being a daughter, wife and an immigrant are the components in recreating Dimple in _Wife_.

The novel opens with a statement, “Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon, but her father was looking for engineers” [1]. It introduces the debate and differences. This puts Dimple in the very frame of Indian traditions brought up to obey the patriarchal dogma. At first to accept the love match arranged by her father needs to play a role of good and docile wife in her marriage. Marriage unwinds Dimple’s story, because marriage for girls like her is to have a good chance for a better life. Dimple believes that marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpet lawns, fund raising dinner for noble charities. Marriage would also bring her love.

She is a naïve daughter of well-to-do upper middle-class professional and gets close to the age where her marriage prospects seem limited. Dimple constantly oscillates between fear and fantasy, worrying about her “star shaped body and rudimentary breasts” [2]. Her notions of marriage are rather vague. They are derived from the Hindi movies, movie magazines and the advice columns in the periodicals labeled for women. Her father gave matrimonial advertisement in newspapers and magazines for a match for his daughter. Her father's choice for her husband was Amit Basu, an engineer. He was most suitable groom for her because he had applied for immigration to Canada and US, his application for a job in Kenya was also pending. His older sister had married to chartered accountant (P K Ghosh) with important family connections and that would have helped him in facilitating the process of getting passport, visas etc. for the bride. Dimple believed that marriage would bring her freedom, lots of passion. “Discreet and virgin, she waited for a real life to begin” [3].

Beauty is dominant factor for a perfect marriage matches, in addition, education is another component. When Dimple is constantly worrying about her beauty, she comes to know that the school examination will be delayed, she is upset because without a B.A, she'd never get a decent husband. Then

[2] Ibid., p.4
[3] Ibid., p.13
she has anxiety that “all the handsome engineers would be married by the time she got her degree [4]. Amit also expresses the same thoughts. One morning Amit surprises Dimple by telling her “I always thought I’d marry a tall girl. You know the kind I mean, one meter sixty-one or sixty two centimeters tall and slim. Also convent-educated, fluent in English” [5].

Dimple reconfirms that she is not the first choice. At her first meeting Dimple is disgusted with Amit’s mother, Mrs. Basu and his older sister, Mrs. Ghose, because of her Bengali name and her dark skin. In order to get his daughter married to this so called perfect match Mr. Dasgupta advises his wife to try more whitening creams and home made bleaching pastes” on Dimple.

In the customs and traditions of our society mother of the bridegroom is a symbol of authority. Mrs. Basu though admits that the marriage of her son Amit and Dimple is a good match, she confirms that Dimple Dasgupta was not their first choice. Later Mrs Basu objects to the name Dimple. She does not accomplish the name Dimple because she considers the name frivolous and Unbengali. After the marriage Mrs. Basu authoritatively renames Dimple as Nandini. Dimple, though very reluctant by nature, does not resist in order to getalong with her mother-in-law.

Living in the Basu family, Dimple confronts conflict between being herself and being Sita, “Sita the ideal wife of Hindu legends, who had walked through fire at her husband’s request, such pain, such loyalty, seemed resumed for married women” [6]. In order to make her marriage work and be good and docile wife, she learns to please Amit. To please her husband Dimple took to wearing bright colours: reds, oranges, purples, she wore her hair up in a huge bun and let a long wispy curl dangle behind each ear like Mrs Ghose. She even tried to imitate the way Mrs. Ghose laughed and left sentences half finished. She gave up eating her favourite hot green chilies.

The apartment Dimple lives in on Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road is “h-o-r-r-i-d” and it despairs Dimple. The apartment was on the top floor of a three-story building on Dr. Sarat Banerjee road. The entrance was a narrow alley that led off the sidewalk to a warped green door at the side of the building. The electric bell on the frame of the green door had been ripped out and had not been replaced. The stair case was shared by the tenants of the upper two floors; there were no electric outlets in the staircase area so the tenants had to use flashlights in the dark.

Dimple has complaints against her father; who had mislead her and picked Amit as suitable match. He had not told about the house that Basu’s lived in. The house that the Basus lived was not ideal. There was no light on the staircase and the water had to be carried up in buckets and stored. The tap in the bathroom was broken.

Dimple had dreamt all her childhood that marriage would bring her all the luxury in life but now is not happy; she is in disgust because of the situation put in out of marriage. At first she has to forego her name and then she has to change in the life style in order to make to be a good wife according to the laws of convections.

Dimple’s status in the Basu’s family is changed when she becomes pregnant. The pregnancy is another challenging task for Dimple. Basus considered “unborn son as communal property and were very solicitous of her health” [7]. The care taken towards her health is not welcomed by Dimple, she feels that the Basus are guarding a breeding ground of their next generations. However, Dimple is not happy being pregnant, she thinks that it is another mission to complete as her role as Mrs. Basu. Her body swelled violently with unvented hate. She hates all the Basus and finds that baby

may become obstacle in all the happy endeavors in future. “She began to think of the baby as unfinished business. It cluttered up the preparation for going abroad. She did not want to carry any relics from her old life and if given another chance she could be a more exciting person, take evening classes perhaps become librarian. She had heard that many Indian wives in the States became librarians. So she plans to terminate her pregnancy for which she tries many possible devices, and finally she uses skipping rope as a weapon. Conventionally her attempts are considered unnatural and murderous. But her ‘rational’ determination, after a great deal of debate in the mind shows that her natural methods of abortion are not anti-human.

“It is not like murder”, Dimple said one afternoon in June. “I could never commit murder”. If she had planned it for months, she would have used something flashy- a red hot poker from the kitchen or large sewing scissors – but if she had planned it, she knew her anger would have chilled and adaptable as usual. Certainly she would not have picked a skipping rope as her weapon. Who would have thought she could skip her way to abortion? Infact, Dimple stuns at her plans of abortion which are crazily executed.

It was difficult to reconstruct the exact details. She remembered the bathroom floor was slippery especially near the mouth of the large drain and there was a smell. It was everywhere, on the shelves lined with newspaper,
on the toothbrushes and soap dishes and pumice stones and loofas, even the
towels hanging from a nail behind the doors smelled bad. She skipped rope
until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned. Then she had poured
water from heavy bucket over her head, shoulders, over the tight little curve
of her stomach. She had poured until the last of the blood washed off her
legs, later she had collapsed. It was Pintu who had carried her to bed and
summoned the doctor. No one noticed the skipping rope, coiled under the
plastic foil.

In self-inducing abortion, Dimple takes revenge against Basu family.
It presents her freedom, on being herself and her triumph in revolting and
resisting the Basus. On one hand, Dimple seems to vent her hatred by means
of abortion and on the other she takes sovereignty over her body
symbolizing that she is her own master. She does not like to be ruled by the
Basu’s nor commanded by her husband. Her act is interpreted in many ways
by other characters in the novel. They bring out the debate distinctly. The
subordinate characters describe the social milieu. Dimple’s abortion is a
sacrament of liberation from traditional roles and constraints of womanhood.

Dimple does not wish to carry any relics from her old life.
Motherhood to Dimple is an encumbrance. The mental status of the
protagonist flares up when she systematically and sadistically kills a mouse. The entire scene is bizarre.

She always cautiously listened to the soft scratchy sounds so that she could kill the rodent. When the sound came from behind the wooden door leading to the bedroom, she was very nervous and took broom to kill it. In a hurry she stepped on a steel plate, which had rice grains in it. The little toe on her foot began to bleed. The blood oozed and the rice grains became reddish. The reddish rice grain and blood, which oozed were an added reasons for killing the mouse. She chased the rodent.

The rodent ran everywhere. Then the noise came from er bedroom. The rodent had hidden in the pile of baby clothes, which were sewn by Mrs. Ghose for the baby to be born. Dimple is agitated, tightened her grip on the groom and hit the pile of clothes. She pounded the baby clothes, until the tiny gray creature ran of the pile. It was been hit and it left a tiny bit of blood on the Lenin. Being hurt, the rodent ran into bathroom. Seeing the rodent running into the bathroom she is happy, so that she could kill it very easily.

_I'll get you!_ She screamed. _There is no way out of this my friend!_ She said. _She seemed confident now, a woman transformed. And in an outburst of hatred, her body_
shuddering, her wrist taut with fury, she smashed the top of a small gray head.

It lay behind a plastic pail. Just the head was visible horribly misshapen, bloody from the blows. Now that her passion had subsided and she was almost calm, she held the broom like a walking stick and gently, very gently, eased the broom behind the pail, pushed out two bobby pins and finally the rodent body covered with hair falls, wet, black and matted. It had a strangely swollen body, a very small creature with a fat belly. To Dimple the dead mouse looked pregnant [8].

When Amit confirms migration to the US, Dimple’s happiness is inexpressible. She prepares well and sees that nothing she misses which is necessary for a new life. Dimple says to her best friend Dixie over phone that she is not taking any of her old saris when they go to America or Canada. Old saris are the old memories. It proves the surrealistic use of ordinary images to represent the inner realities. A Sari is an image of simple Indianness.

Dimple is happy to migrate to the land where she would be freed from the hardship of domesticity and escape from being domesticated or controlled from the Basus and to have her own new identity.

[8] Ibid., p.34-35.
Amit and Dimple are received by Jyoti Sen at Kennedy Airport. Jyoti Sen, former classmate at the IIT Kharagpur while escorting them to his house talks about the triple murders, three persons including the ice cream vendor were killed, just for the simple reason that the vendor does not have a chocolate ice-cream cone. On their first foot in America, they are confronted with the hardships of life living in an alien land.

When we look at the immigration part of Dimple and Amit, Bharati Mukherjee cleverly places them in Indian community, which helps us to look into the many aspects of Indian immigration life in the States and the crisis in their cultural identity. They were never satisfied being resident aliens. In their dreamland, the land of opportunities, they faced lot of conflicts as immigrants. Unlike Tara’s single story of overseas life in the States in the *Tiger’s Daughter*, in *Wife*, Mukherjee uses a broader aspect to depict Indian immigration in the US to focus and explore their alien life experiences. In Dimple’s first impression to America, Mukherjee develops an exaggerated contrast between what she sees in the US and what she knows about Bengal. Dimple’s first sight of New York is thrilling and also little scary because the new city is full of the skyscrapers, taller than anything in Calcutta and the enormous cars speeding in regimented lane.
Jyoti Sen’s family provides Dimple and Amit’s first impression of life in the United States. The Sen’s house is their first place to live in and it is exactly like a common Indian house in Calcutta – Jyoti’s American house is a very Indian like with no chairs in the room but only mat or rug is served to guests. Jyoti’s house makes Amit comfortable because he feels no difference between his house in Calcutta and Jyoti’s house.

America, land of opportunities, makes every alien person to feel proud because of the so-called fusion world and the conversion of the currency. For Jyoti, America was a land of money. He wanted to earn a large amount of money, go back home to his Calcutta and be a king of his house. He had always dreamt of living in his own house. He wanted to build a house which could cost him around 5 lakhs and become the “Maharaj of lower circular road” [9], a very typical Indian thinking. He always felt United States as only a place to make fortune and he dreams to return to India when he has earned enough dollars for a comfortable retired life.

However, there are different stories in this Indian Ghetto that Dimple meets in the States. At her first party in Manhattan, Dimple encounters the Diaspora of Indian and Pakistani immigrants who provide varying examples

[9] Ibid., p.54.
of the ways in which being “Indian” is in conversation with being “American”. She hears about Ina Mullick, the Bengali wife whose careless husband allowed her to become “more American than the Americans” [10]. Ina Mullick in contrast is with the Indian group and completely segregated from it. Her look is so chillingly Sexy and her garments of white pants and a printed shirt reveals how she was so different from both Meena and Dimple, who wear the sari, the very traditional Indian women’s dress. Ina’s cigarette smoking and use of the brightest red lipstick make Amit uncomfortable because he felt as an Indian; her behaviours are informal and eccentric. Unlike Jyoti’s pure Indian family in the US, Ina’s good adjustments to the US present her bicultural lifestyle. Introduced to Ina Mullick, a “liberated” house wife, Dimple is awed by her air of sophistication, her command of English and her “women’s lib” advice to “crack the whip” [11]. At this party, Bharati Mukherjee presents Ina’s love for Americanization. She is the symbolic representation of many women who came from India and other cultural groups.

[10] Ibid., p.11.
[11] Ibid., p.76
There are already a dozen people in the apartment- it is the largest she has ever seen in New York- and not all the guests are Indians. “There was a blond woman in clothes rivaled Ina’s (but not with the same effect) who seemed to be married to a short wide-shouldered Indian” [12].

When Ina offers her a “weak gin”, Dimple feels that Amit perhaps wants her to uphold the image of a Bengali womanhood, the Indian system marriage and male pride of the Indian society. In fact her attitude is also that of Amit.

I do not need stimulants to feel happy in my husband’s presence..... my obligation is to my husband. If she takes a drink she knows Amit would write it to his mother and his mother would call the Dasgupta’s and accuse them for giving an immoral, drunken daughter. The Calcutta rumor mill operated as effectively from New York as it did from Park Street [13].

Ina’s party does not seem to be Indian but Americanized. What impresses Dimple about is her Americanization she loved the way. Ina blew cigarette smoke through her nostrils and led them into the living room. Her lipstick was the brightest red she had ever seen.

[12] Ibid., p.75
[13] Ibid., p.78
As an Indian woman Ina had abandoned her modesty and adapted American attitudes. From Indian observation, Ina is more American than the Americans.

Ina's theory reveals that assimilation/Americanization occurs when the Indian immigrant starts adapting alien lifestyle, culture, language and food. Cultural blending is shown not only in Ina's dress or behaviour but also other Indians. When Dimple talks to Jyoti at the beginning, she finds that Jyoti speaks very fast and funny mixture of English and Bengali and all the way Dimple thinks that she and Amit will also be able to speak that curious language in a few months. Mrs. Bhattacharya finds "the food is so good, so unadulterated" [14] and another Bengali woman who has a taste for American style and remarks that she could make Chicken Curry here (in US) because the quality of Chicken was much better than back home (India). She feels that Indian Chickens are so scrawny because in India when the farmers cannot have enough to eat for themselves, they cannot feed their chickens.

Assimilation is to change our name, our accent, our nose; straighten or dye our hair; stay in the closet; pretend the pilgrims were our fathers; become baptized as a Christian; wear dangerously high heels and strive our self to look young, thin. To assimilate means to give up not only our history,

[14] Ibid., p.66.
but our body, to try to adapt to alien appearance because our own is not good enough, to fear naming ourselves lest name be twisted into label.

Hence expatriates encounter conflicts with a powerful and dominant culture of the adapted land and feel they are from a powerless and inferior one and the assimilation occurs when the inferior one is vanishing and the dominant one is invading and occupying. With respect to the original cultural identity, assimilation, in other words, is a kind of colonialism without troops or coup.

Ina’s Americanization was not accepted by the immigrant group. Jyoti blames Bijoy for Ina’s attitudes or her liking towards American lifestyle. When a woman starts going wrong it is usually because she was not looked after by her husband properly. In Ina’s case her husband was a business tycoon and she had all the money required for getting westernized. Amit and Jyoti both staying in US, still want their wives to be as good as “Sita”, the traditional Hindu wife. The Hindu Indian woman as a subject is the same in social expectations and norms regardless of their geographical, cultural or political location. Traditionally Indians liked to regard their woman as goddesses, giving them a hallowed position in the inner chambers of the home. Such elevation was a perfect way of keeping them contented in the house.
Amit expects Dimple to be a good Bengali wife, taking care of her home and husband and adapting life in American society without becoming too influenced, too Americanized. Ina’s western thought changes her relationship between she and her husband and it also affects her point of view of Indian and American culture. Ina’s life style, her way of looking at getting Americanized very much disturbs Dimple. Dimple’s confusion over American communalism is further compounded by her inability to pick up the language either of the Americanized Indians or the Americans or inability to get along with Ina and the immigrant group; she confines herself to her home. Self-imposed isolation drifts her mind towards watching Television and reading magazines and newspapers. The italics in the magazines become a turning point in Dimple’s life. One of the magazines defined happiness as expressing oneself in their surroundings, discovering their own grand passion and indulging excessively, then simplifying the rest and being ruthless. Dimple finally realizes that she has to get adjusted to culture and place she lives in America, a place where she thinks everything is possible and where you can make and control your life. Getting slowly Americanized, she feels that she is going away from Indianness. It is well expected in the words she tells Amit, “If I could brood about Calcutta I’d be
okay, wouldn’t I? I mean the trouble is I am not even dreaming about Calcutta anymore” [15].

Dimple slowly adjusts to the American lifestyle, when Milt Glasser sets her a drink and praises her beauty, she loves it. Jyoti also praises her by telling her that she was smarter than Ina Mullick, and Ina also tells her that she also used to look a lot like her. She was astonished to receive so many compliments in such a short time. She had never been complimented in her life before coming to New York.

With Amit’s economically inferior position, his socially embracing helplessness and his discomfort with the other, more liberal and more Americanized Indian immigrants, Dimple has her doubts about the basis on which Amit defines himself as the head of the household or even a man, for, in her attitude a man without a job wasn’t a man at all.

With such a situation Dimple feels that staying on Dr Sarat Banerjee Road back home in India, where Amit had been the boss was much better. There she had experienced him in terms of permissions and restraints. Here in New York, Amit seemed to have collapsed inwardly, to have grown frail and shabby. He was shabby compared to the nicely suited Jyoti Sen or the

[15] Ibid., p.112.
men pushing toothpaste and deodorant on television. She did not trust him anymore, did not trust his high-pitched yes and no which had once seemed oracular, did not trust his white cotton shirts with erect collars. She wanted Amit to be infallible, intractable, god like, but with boyish charm; wanted him to find a job so that after a decent number of years he could take his saving and retire with her to a three-story house in Ballygunje.

Amit’s confidence is collapsing, just as his image in the mind of Dimple is also breaking down. He no longer fits in her dreamy future. With such a situation with Amit’s inability to provide her with a suitable future, she feels her own identity is felt hanging in the air. It is almost impossible for an Indian immigrant woman to forge an identity based on her actions as an individual because she already has, as always defined herself by her status as someone’s wife, a part of her husband’s identity.

Little by little American life distances Dimple from Amit and the TV programme becomes her only friend who is undemanding. T.V shows become the major part of her life, the other reality. As an Indian woman, it was her feminine duty to subjugate her feeling and desire to the will of her husband. Dimple wanted to dream of Amit but she never could so because Amit did not feed her fantasy life, he was merely the provider of small material comforts. In bitter moments she ranked husband, blender, colour
TV, tape recorder, stereo, in their order of convenience. For Dimple her marriage to Amit is a big disaster. Dimple is sad because she thinks that marriage has cut off glittering alternatives. If fate has assigned her some other engineer instead of Amit she might have been very different person.

In such a social and psychological situation, Dimple is left with no options but to accept the friendship with Ina because of the possibility of being a woman of both the east and west. Receiving Ina in her life Dimple has to accept Milt Glasser, Ina’s boyfriend and their love affair.

In accepting all their relationships, Dimple does extend the horizon of her understanding the indigenous culture. Ina is a model who adjusts to American society very well and Milt is the symbol of America because he “knew how to apply for things, knew about consulting, advising, assessing; he seemed to have a dozen careers and at least as many specializations” [16]. Amit’s restraint becomes a kind of restriction to Dimple because she always has to act according to his commands. However, Milt’s unrestraint becomes a symbol of freedom because, she is left with her own options and can act according to her own will. When facing Amit’s very restrictive control and domination, Dimple starts to revolt against her husband.

[16] Ibid., p.174.
“Her body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne” [17]. Dimple senses the difference between east and west from Amit who stands for traditional India and Milt Glasser who is an embodiment of the Free State of America. Dimple has become a prisoner of the ghetto and being an educated woman she is unable to accept the contradictions of this existence, hence she was in depression and was going mad. Living in America for Dimple is like a tug of war and she is helpless, caught in a ripping quest for a new female American Identity. She oscillates between a new life in America and her old one in India; Amit’s confinement and Milts’s consideration; Meena’s traditional Indian values and Ina’s American modern values. The shifting cultural values between tradition and modernity and between east and west America endanger Dimple’s transformation. She would like to wear white American sweaters and pants which are called normal dress in Ina’s point of view, but the Sari, the very traditional dress makes her feel normal. Not able to cope up with their hardships Dimple mismanages her life. With the days passing, isolated from the world outside and disappointed in Amit, who is unable to find a professional position she has taken to washing dishes.

[17] Ibid., p.117.
Dimple feels that life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a chimera. Dimple slowly drifts towards depression. She did not want to watch television, it was becoming the voice of madness. She wanted to go bed, but the bedroom was full of streetlights. She placed Amit’s pillow over her eyes and chanted nine ways to die.

As she was not getting sleep, she warmed a quart of milk and sipped endless mugs, staring at the patterned stars of the World Trade Center. Amit had fallen asleep on the sofa. But she suffered insomnia. Between three and four she must have fallen asleep because she dreamed that she was dying. It was a most horrible sensation, not because she was in pain, but because she could see her head, neatly sliced just below the chin, as the base of a pretty table lamp beside the travel alarm clock and a China vase bought at Macy’s. She was nothing more than an adumbration. Her life was slow, full of miscalculations. Her life had been devoted only to pleasing others, not herself. When Dimple too, is ignored by Amit when she is most in need of his support she readily accepts the friendship offered by Ina Mullick and Milt Glasser. Dimple feels comfortable and nice in the relationship with Milt. Their relationship is the only means in which Dimple is able to express herself.
She liked Milt Glasser. He was the only one she could talk to. With the others, people like Amit and Ina and even Meera Sen, she talked in silences. With Milt she could talk about all sorts of things: clean air, acts, emission controls, depletion allowances, the Vinland map of forgery, the Knicks (the year before Milt had followed them on tour through New England and the Middle east) Watergate and Marilyn Monroe and Mr. Clean and soap operas.

Dimple’s friendship with this American man turns into a love affair after several encounters. Milt appreciates Dimple’s domestic skills without presuming that they define her whole female identity and encourages her curiosity about life outside her own experience. She too has loved this man in her life; a man who she thinks loves and appreciates her very much.

With such a situation Dimple becomes infatuated with Milt. She enjoys going out for restaurants to eat pizzas with Milt. When Dimple finds out that Milt is a friend of a policeman she is “amazed again, that in the hands of Milt Glazzer, the inhuman maze of New York becomes as safe and simple as Ballygunje” [18].

[18] Ibid., p.196.
In a letter to problem Walla, Dimple writes,

how can I tell if I’m really in love? I’ve this boy who is not of my caste and class and my heart tells me it is love but how can I be sure? I have met him several times and once under rather intimate circumstances, the memory of which still makes me blush somewhat. He is rather unconventional and nonconformist, you might say. I have enquired into his family background: his father is the athletic type and his mother is ailing (she has piles, also ulcer). They are both retired people. The problem is that he hasn’t actually expressed his love to me. He is a very generous-hearted person. The reason I know this is because a friend of mine, also an Indian resident here, has spoken very affectionately of him.

Whenever I think of him, my heart dances a jig and there is an uncomfortable, though exciting feeling in my throat. Is love to be measured by physiological symptoms? Please help me, for I cannot ascertain if this is really love. I just cannot” [19].

When Dimple quite consciously engages in a flirtation and extra marital relationship, she feels that she performs the ultimate sacrifice. Her guilt consciousness stirs her to betray Amit, consequently, her isolation and

despair become even more acute. "She was so much worse off than ever, more lonely, more cut off from Amit, from the Indians, left only with borrowed disguises and she felt like a shadow without feelings" [20].

Dimple abandons all the accustomed notes of a wife and a middle class Indian woman. Dimple isolates herself from the outside world, and finds safety only in solitude. She also detaches herself from the familial structure, instead of being dutiful, efficient and sociable wife, she sleeps all day, gives up eating.

In Dimple's neglect of the domestic order, routines and dedication to her husband that once constituted her self-image as a wife, one can see not only signs of madness but conscious decisions that go against the familial structures, definitions of a normal woman - dutiful; contented with her domestic roles-which so poorly correspond to Dimple's life in America.

In addition to the familial structure, Dimple reacts violently against her position within the class and gender structures. Novel traces Dimple's rather madcap attempts to escape the limits and gendered definitions of her identity which she is subjected to because of her background and position as Amit's wife. The apartment she and Amit rent from an Indian friend Milt Glasser and his American wife becomes the site of Dimple's desperate

experiments to be "American" to try to relieve the frustration caused by her identity that no longer corresponds to her increasingly fragmented reality but instead renders her paralyzed and powerless in social relations. When Dimple not only engages in a flirtation with Milt and with the freedom and individualization he represents, she is very clearly breaking away from the Indian middle class gendered divisions of the public and private, male and female space. Dimple recreates her own self-made identity when she sleeps with Milt. In recreating herself from the obedient daughter-wife-a lover she loses her sanity and becomes a sort of insane. It is the insanity of infatuation.

Dimple goes to kitchen opens a kitchen drawer, grabs a knife and closes it. Meanwhile she hears Amit having cereal. She sneaks upon him and searches a spot and finds her favourite one, the mole, which was getting larger and browner just under the hairline. She draws an imaginary line of kisses because she did not want him to think she was the impulsive, foolish sort who acted like a menial just because the husband was suffering from insomnia. She touched the mole very lightly and her fingers drew a circle around the delectable spot, then she brought her right hand up with the knife, stabbed the magical circle seven times, each time it became harder, until the milk in the bowl became pretty pink and then she saw the head fall off. Her negotiating as a means of survival and her response as an act of resistance,
left with the options available to her, she kills her husband Amit. "Dimple loses her sanity when faced with a culture she does not comprehend and which refuses to make room for her. Therefore, intensely lonely and isolated, she loses even the little confidence she has in Calcutta" [21].

Dimple has traveled as far as she could in her quest to a new identity and yet is no closer to her goal of achieving self-fulfillment in America. Her desire to unite with America has taken her to a dead end; she experiences enough of expatriate life to know that she cannot stand it anymore. Dimple's dreams begin with marriage and end in despair. Her quest to acquire new identity has lead her to accept the reality. In the opening pages of the novel Bharati Mukherjee gives the meaning of Dimple: any slight surface depression. Hence Dimple with a slight depression of mood turns into a monster instead of being a monistic beauty. Dimple's joyful name is subverted by a series of oppressions.

At no juncture does she posit a world which is more integrated or more free than the one in which she is placed. Her Isolation is rooted not merely in loneliness, in isolation or cultural differences but in her estrangement from her own past and her own in her being [22].

By reading this novel several times, one can attain a careful understanding of how Dimple is constructed and how these can contribute to rethinking her violent response. Bharati Mukherjee ironically sketches an Indian housewife expatriate's confrontation. In escaping from each stage to acquire freedom, Dimple who is sketched as a daughter-woman, wife, lover and widower is culturally and linguistically silenced. This reminds us of the essay written by Gayathri Spivak 'Can the Subaltern Speak'.

Bharati Mukherjee leaves the novel for subsequent discussions with the murder of Amit and the protagonist of the novel having a deep crisis in identity.