Chapter – IV

Emotional Quotient and Marital Disharmony in That Long Silence and Wife
Loveless marriage is anathema to our culture, and a life without love is unthinkable. The woman who remains unmarried must have missed her chance, lost her boy in the war or heisted and was lost; the man somehow never found the right girl. It is axiomatic that all married couples are in love with each other (Greer: 1971:222).

The similar situation appears in the lives of Jaya and Mohan, the couple in Deshpande’s _That Long Silence_. The estranged man-woman relationship in this novel is a perfect example of marital disharmony. The marital conflicts start at the early stage of their marriage. The relationship between Jaya and Mohan does not remain on the same note permanently; it goes on constantly fluctuating as the story proceeds; however the novel is narrated through the protagonist’s perspective. Shashi Deshpande introduces tense relationship as the central theme of her novel. Jaya narrates the story of her life where she maintains silence throughout her life, but ends hopefully with her resolution to break that long silence. The novel progresses through her memory and the narrator oscillates between the past and the present. Satish Barbuddhe observes:

> The relationship between Jaya and Mohan was never cordial but perturbing her throughout her life. Her courage, her submissiveness, uncorrupt attitude towards life, made her noteworthy in the novel (quoted in Bala [ed.]2001:109).

Both Mohan and Jaya were brought up in different family background. Social set up is responsible for the mental make-up of an
individual. Mohan’s family represents patriarchal system whereas Jaya’s family is liberal. The disparity in their background affects the relationship between Mohan and Jaya deeply. Jaya admits:

Both Mohan and I grew up in ‘Saptagiri’ but our memories make them two entirely different worlds (87).

Mohan, the true representative of patriarchal system, nurtures himself in the family where man is dominant and woman is submissive. For Mohan, the boundary line between two sexes cannot be erased. His mother is a victim of his father’s violence and sexual hunger. She silently accepts her death without any grudge in the process of begetting the chain of his father’s issues. Conversely, his father is a drunkard, poor and careless. He is an autocrat and an authoritarian who used to throw a plate of stale chutney on every petty reason and used to beat his wife. N. Sharada Iyer says:

Socialization is a very powerful instrument; it has enormous influence in conditioning not only a girl’s but also a boy’s psyche since its influence begins early in childhood (quoted in Mohan[ed.]2004:42).

The image imprinted on Mohan’s mind about mother is that she must be extremely tolerant against his father’s extreme violence. In addition to this Mohan is impressed by his father’s male ego that makes him look at woman as a child producing machine. Mohan’s issueless
sister, who dies silently, is a victim of her strongly traditional in-law’s injustice.

On the other hand, Jaya, the only daughter of her father, is from a well to-do middle class and unconventional family. Her father and brother adore her very much rather than her mother. The boundary line between the two sexes is vague. The picture carved on her mind before her marriage about both the sexes is very pleasant. Foil to Mohan’s father, it is Jaya’s father who is the main prop of her life who infuses a positive confidence in her; he always tells her that her name is synonym for victory ‘Jaya means victory’. It is her father who makes available English education to his children quite against the wishes of his family, and never discriminates between daughter and son. He sends Jaya to English school, which enables her to make herself confident and broaden her views. With these different attitudes Jaya and Mohan bound in a wedlock.

Jaya’s marriage with Mohan is an arranged marriage, but he had already decided to marry her when he had seen her at first at Ramukaka’s home. It was Mohan’s dream to marry an English speaking girl since his childhood. He had decided it when he ran through English speaking girls in a house-warming ceremony. Mohan says, “That was the first time I had seen such women, they were so different from all the women I’d seen
until then” (89). He further adds, about their beauty, “...eyebrows arched in an impossibly high, haughty, curve, hair swept up above their necks, diaphanous saris floating about them in an airy abandon, giving them an appearance of floating rather than walking” (Ibid). Their English was so good that he had never heard before, “They spoke it as if it was real language, easily and fluently” (Ibid). He says, “You know Jaya, the first day I met you at your Ramukaka’s house you were talking to your brother Dinkar, and somehow sounded so much like that girl, I think it was at that moment that I decided I would marry you.”(90) It is clear from Mohan’s confession that her first appearance had fascinated him a lot.

Mohan talks of marriage with Jaya to her brother, Dada, who considers this as an opportunity. He has the responsibility of his sister’s marriage after the death of his father. He confirms Mohan as her suitable mate. The concept of typical Indian marriage of a girl is seen here in which girls are taken for granted as Simone de Beauvoir remarks:

Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society (quoted in Tiwari 2004:90).

Jaya, who blindly believes her brother, accepts Mohan because there is no fixed picture of groom in her mind. As she is not totally aware of her partner and his nature, she finds it difficult to cope up with the situation and considers marriage as a calamity. Even Jaya like Beauvoir
defines marriage as, "For girls, for me anyway, and for most of the girls I knew well, it had been an age nebulous search. We were looking for something but what we were looking for we did not know; or, if we did, we were unwilling to give it name. If we had been forced to name it, the thing we were trailing, I suppose we would have called it love" (91). Confused Jaya, who represents a common Indian girl, reveals the fact, "And then as we grew into young women, we realized it was not love, but marriage that was the destiny waiting for us" (Ibid).

It seems that when Mohan marries Jaya they don’t identify each other well, Mohan marries her just because he wants to marry an English speaking girl. Jaya marries him as she finds no defect in him and like Indian girl mutely accepts the groom chosen by family. Moreover Indian girls are not nurtured in an atmosphere where they could think nor could they have a clear idea about their groom.

Like many Indian women, Jaya doesn’t find intimacy with Mohan after her marriage. She is confused about how to develop physical intimacy with him while Mohan thinks it’s natural and hopes will go better in the course of time. When Jaya understands, she reveals the fact in words, "...feeling his heavy, damp body on mine, this is the real truth." (95) Physical intimacy was not memorable for her. The couple did
not even discuss their conjugal life. Jaya objects to their mechanical relationship saying, "In fact we had never spoken of sex at all. It had been as if the experience was erased each time after it happened; it never existed in words. The only words between us had been his question, 'Did I hurt you?' and my answer, 'No'. Each time, after it was over, the same question; and my reply too, invariably the same 'No'" (Ibid). The early experience in her sexual life leads Jaya to understand the difference in their attitudes. For her it is a delicate union and the thing to experience on physical level, as well as emotional level.

It seems that because of dissimilar attitudes both Jaya and Mohan are fed up. As a woman, Jaya feels lack of warmness in her earlier intercourse with Mohan. Both represent typical Indian couple.

P.F.Patil remarks regarding husband-wife relationship seem pertinent:

Similarities between the attitudes of both husband and wife to life and things in general play important roles in making their conjugal life successful. Marriage is a union of two souls. It is to be woven very carefully and thoughtfully. General situations in society are such that no proper time or thought is given to these affairs. Its results are the clashes, desperation, separation and loneliness (quoted in Dhawan [ed.] 1991:131).

Jaya experiences her mechanical relation inwardly at initial stage. She gives out the dryness she feels about Mohan saying, "The contact, the
coming together, had been not only momentary, but wholly illusory as well. We had never come together, only our bodies had done that” (98). The conflict arises for the first time when she is pregnant. Her conflict is not an outcome of her insatiable sexual life. She has come from the background where the gender norms are not severe. Jaya is always found straightforward before marriage because of her liberal family. She was habituated with the idea that her anger was a thing of amusement to her father and brother. She expresses her thoughts and feelings to anyone at any time. When she asks Mohan to cook one day, Mohan refuses. Being straightforward, Jaya unintentionally remarks about his mother who used to be a cook. These remarks hurt his male ego and he says, “How could you? I never thought of my wife could say such things to me. You are my wife” (82). Jaya realizes for the first time that her anger shattered him. Their first clash breaks the image of woman which he had in his mind. He had his extremely submissive mother which made him think so. In this connection, Urvashi Sinha and Gur Pyari Jandial aptly observe:

His mother had silently endured the moods of her drunken husband and slogged to fulfill his irrational demands. This had set Mohan’s mind the qualities of endurance and sacrifice in a woman (quoted in Mohan[ed.1]2004:146).

Mohan purposefully narrates the ordeal of his mother, “My mother never raised her voice against my father however badly he behaved to
her” (83). The difference in their attitude becomes clearly discernible when Mohan tells her about the story of his mother’s extreme submissive life. He believes that, “She was tough. Women in those days were tough” (36). While Jaya opines, “…He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire but I saw despair. I saw despair so great that it would not vice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender” (Ibid). Jaya believes that the difference in their attitudes is because of the gender bias in Indian society, “I am a woman and I can understand her better; he’s a man and he can’t” (37).

Their first clash proves to be a turning point in Jaya’s marital life about which she says, “A first love, a first affair, a first-baby, a first quarrel- I suppose they are all unforgettable landmarks. But a few quarrels in the beginning could have been as earthshaking as ours was. In that I learnt so much. I shed so much of my ignorance, my naivety…” (81). From this dispute, Jaya comes to know Mohan better, particularly about the impact of traditional patriarchal system on him. He behaved traditionally just like his father. Rajeshwar Mittapalli says:

Mohan is by no means an exception. He has been a dutiful son, in spite of the inhuman treatment meted out to him by his father and by extension he is a dutiful husband

Jaya realizes that his displeasure aroused out of her anger and he refused to speak to her until her conciliation. Mohan impels her to think that Jaya has no right to be angry, “To him anger made a woman unwomanly” (83).

Jaya learns to compromise thereafter, she comes to know the futility of her anger and rights. Her life of long silence starts. She says, “I had learnt it at last no questions, no retorts. Only silence” (143). To sustain her marriage, she learns to submit her will to the will of her husband and not to annoy him. It is he who makes her aware of the limitation of her gender. She admits the change within self after the dispute:

    I had learnt to control my anger after that, to hold it on a leash. Terrified of his disapproval, I had learnt other things too, though much more slowly, less painfully. I had found out all the things I could and couldn’t do, all the things that were womanly and unwomanly. It was when I first visited his home that I had discovered how sharply defined a woman’s role was. They had been a revelation to me, the women in his family, so definite about their roles, so well trained in their duties, so skilful in the right areas, so indifferent to everything else. I had never seen so clear, so precise a pattern before, and I had been entranced by it (83).

    Jaya clearly displays the change in her attitude by not asking her husband to cook as their neighbour, Kamat does, which astonishes her.

    Jaya compromises at each and every level to become an ideal wife and mother. The thing she just knows is to follow him, at the cost of self
suppression. She easily mingles with her new role and soon habituates. Transformed Jaya even resents her mother for not teaching her the lessons of woman’s subordination. Jaya as a wife of Mohan involves herself in shopping, cooking, cleaning and organizing and caring for her home with passion, forgetting all her needs. About the transformation in her, she says, “...almost the stereotype of a woman: nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support. But what puzzles me is this: how did I get this way?”(76) Mohan renames Jaya as Suhasini. Jaya defines Suhasini as, “A soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped... she is like the sparrow in the story of the crow”(16). Suhasini is a submissive woman who submits her will to her husband, children and family by neglecting her own needs. She is a stark contrast to Jaya. Jaya’s father tries to boost her confidence by calling her Jaya, synonym for victory and she too was confident of her own ability as a woman. Jaya compares herself with the legendary Gandhari:

If Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband, could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eyes tightly. I didn’t want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay, that we could send Rahul and Rati to good schools, that I could have the things we needed... decent clothes, a fridge, a gas connection, traveling first class(61-62).
When she recalls her past during her stay at a flat in Dadar in a siesta hour while going through the diaries, she says, “What I found was the woman who had once lived here. Mohan’s wife. Rahul’s and Rati’s mother. Not myself” (69). Typical Indian housewife has many roles to play. Wearing various masks, she is the event manager. She has to perform all the duties; she has to attend her husband, her children as well as her in-laws. Along with the household chores she even has to shoulder some responsibility outside the house. Being busy with all the household activities, she hardly has time to look after herself. Simone de Beauvoir’s observation of women’s subordination seems apt in this regard:

She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the other


Being the ‘other’, Jaya has to entertain Mohan’s guests and befriend their wives. Like other Indian housewives the question haunts her, “What shall I make for breakfast/lunch/tea/dinner? That had been leit motif of my life”(70). She represents an Indian woman when she grudges, “There’s no room for anger in my life, no room for despair, either. There’s only order and routine-today, I’ve to change the sheets;
tomorrow, scrub the bathrooms; the day after, clean the fridge…”(147-48).

Mohan’s behaviour affects their marital life as well as her personal writing. Jaya is a creative writer and has proved her talent in writing when she was awarded the first prize for her short story. Afraid of social stigma, Mohan doesn’t allow her to write. He castigates the themes of her stories. He perceives that the story resemble their personal life. He fears that it would expose their private life. Though women have diverse key roles to play at home they are always taken for granted as they are always offered a secondary status in family and the society. Very few husbands like their wives to be consulted. They don’t care for their wives’ personality and career. Whenever a woman in the family decides to work outside the frame she is always put to questions. As a result, she cannot do anything without the consent of the family members especially husband. Jaya once again compromises and quit her creative writing, “And, looking at his stricken face, I had been convinced I had done him wrong. And I had stopped writing after that”(144). Mohan thinks her writing should enhance his social status and should not be a discreditable thing. So he encourages her to write in a manner which would establish her as a writer and him as
a prestigious person, it would be a thing of honour for him to be a writer’s husband. Saru exposes “I had been no writer, only an exhibitionist” (Ibid).

Jaya’s story expresses woman’s world and male outlook which perceives woman as only sexual commodity. She says, “I had relinquished them instead, all those stories that had been taking shape in me jeopardising the only career I had, my marriage” (Ibid). She begins to write under the nick name ‘Seeta’ to please her husband and writes what people want to read, and not what she wants to write. Indira Nityanandam rightly observes:

Even the pen-name-Seeta that Jaya chooses is indicative of her desire for conformity- the traditional Indian woman who treads the expected path of a dutiful wife. In satisfying Mohan’s ego and expectations, Jaya is forced to curb her creative genius. She gets smothered under the weight of her own silence (2000:45).

Her compromise in writing once again proves her secondary place in her home and society. Vanitamami’s ‘pithy unforgettable maxim’, “A husband is like a sheltering tree... you have to keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies.” (32) has an impact on her mind. She has listened to the same from her childhood and imbibed it. Now she refuses to believe in the maxim. The life she led has suffocated her. She pretends to be satisfied in the ‘Mohan oriented’ world.
Kamala Das in one of her poems *The Suicide* comments on the women’s similar predicament:

But  
I must pose  
I must pretend  
I must act the role  
Of a happy woman,  
Happy wife (1984:71).

Her pretence leads to frustration and suffocation. Consequently the boredom and frustration makes her think over the situation. Seventeen years of monotonous flow of her life is disturbed by an incident, which provides her chance to break her silence, which had dominated her marital life for years.

Mohan’s corrupt practices incurred the inquiry. The probability of his loosing the job changes the life of Jaya drastically. Agrawal, Mohan’s partner in this crime, who seems to be habituated to such crimes, suggests Mohan to stay away from the office as well as residence till the storm blows over. The incident terrifies Mohan. Jaya observes Mohan, “...the frightened man who looks out from behind this wall of indifference. All his assurance had deserted him” (8). Jaya compares Mohan with Graham Greene’s characters, “sad, obsessed man, reconciled to failure”(Ibid). Mohan pleads his innocence to Jaya:

I don’t think I stand a chance. I am finished. Both Agarwal
and I are finished, Agarwal deserves it, he’s been doing these things ever since he became secretary, he got me into this, he got more out of it than I have done, he’s responsible for the whole things, not I (9-10).

Marriage, according to Kate Millet, is ‘power politics’. One who is powerful controls the family. In Indian family and society, man is powerful and naturally controls the family matters. His decision whether right or wrong is binding on others. Even sometimes the whole family has to suffer because of his wrong deeds and decisions. Mohan too is not an exception to this when he vents his frustration, “I did it for you, for you and children” (10). Being a thorough house-wife, Jaya has built her own world of children, schools, home, food, account, etc. at the cost of her needs. While ambitious and selfish, Mohan’s world is of contracts, tenders, favours, commissions and so on. The two different worlds have never met together during these seventeen years leaving them apart psychologically and spiritually. As their children are away on a tour with their family friends, he decides to hide himself in a flat at Dadar with Jaya. For the first time after seventeen years, inwardly she refuses to comply with her husband. Jaya resolves, “…No, I have to be honest with myself. It was not he who had relinquished his authority; it was I who no longer conceded any authority to him” (9). But superficially she has to follow him:
...I remember now that he had assumed I would accompany him, had taken for granted my acquiescence in his plans, so had I. Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband’s trials(11).

But soon Jaya overcomes the thought and thinks she has nothing to do with the mythical women. She compares the husband and wife as “Two bullocks yoked together… it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful; and what animal would voluntarily choose pain”(11-12).

The flat at Dadar belongs to Jaya’s maternal uncle. Jaya and Mohan had lived here when they had first arrived at Bombay before they went to the flat at Churchgate. At Dadar, both devoid of their busy schedule, have a lot of time which enables them to indulge in mutual recriminations in the absence of their children. Jaya feels, “There was nothing he needed, so there was nothing for me to do, nothing I had to do”(24-25). She served when he was busy with his routine. Their residence at Dadar provides them an opportunity to come near as they have a lot of time but the same opportunity was also responsible for the small bickerings and severe friction at the end of the novel. Friction has become one of the characteristics of their marital life. Their stay at Dadar helped Jaya to define herself in her own rights; it offered her space for self-interrogation.
She became an introvert and went into deep contemplation of her past and childhood. They have ample empty hours here. Jaya seeks to pass her time, but Mohan is alone, because he contemptuously looks at the people around him. Conversely, she has a good relationship with the people—the sweeper Nayana, the maid servant Jeeja, her neighbour Mukta with her daughter Nilima, who are there to help her. Restless Mohan expects her faithful company when he needs it. He calls her in his authoritative tone when she is busy talking with Nayana. Jaya understands, “...I knew I was not free, I could feel the burden of his wanting, the burden of his clinging” (29). Jaya observes Mohan’s restlessness while waiting for something and her feminine ego wanted him to realise this suffering. She comments that, “for women the waiting game starts early in childhood”(30).

Marriage is a social institution which rests on sexual relations and understanding. However, Jaya and Mohan fail to understand this. Jaya recollects her sexual life in leisure hours at Dadar but intimate moments seems just like mechanical process to her. It makes her think that ‘sexual memories are coldest’. Jaya resents the fact that they never discussed sex. The lack of communication keeps them apart emotionally. Mohan does not think it necessary to discuss or to know her physical demands, desires
etc. He does not recognize Jaya's sexual needs. It shows that Mohan's male pride crushes her feminine needs and affects the relationship.

Being a writer, Jaya observes consciously the women around her, comes to know their problems and helps them. She uses the information she collected to write. Jaya's interactions with her maid servant Jeeja make her know the deeply rooted patriarchal system in the society in which they live. Jeeja thinks that woman's life is futile without husband. Her belief is asserted as she says, "...he keeps the Kumkum on your forehead. What is a woman without that?" (53) She blindly accepts the traditional beliefs regarding woman's secondary position and accepts the physical abuse at her husband's hands. Jaya observes that Jeeja's philosophy of life is, "... to go on living. Enduring was part of it and so she had to"(51).

The pregnant sweeper, Nayana is also a victim of her husband's torture. She easily tells Jaya about her insistence upon male child, "...why give birth to a girl, behnji, who'll only suffer because of men all her life? Look at me!"(28) She observes that women had to live suppressed lives. Her Ajji (widowed) never leaves her room, Kusum- was tortured, Mohan's mother and sister are the representatives of the oppressed womanhood and Vanita mami who is barren accepted the male
chauvinism. She suggested her to ignore her husband’s mistress because he is a sheltering tree. These women don’t believe in self. They are weak, timid and sacrificing and victims of patriarchy. Jaya thinks about her married life and finds nothing but submissions and adjustment, as Alka Saxena comments:

Jaya remains confined there for few nights and it is during the brief but critical period that she remembers the past events of her life. The memories of the days gone by make her feel uncomfortable and unhappy. She analyses her life and her relationship with her husband and children, and finds that she has miserably failed in each of them

Jaya thinks she has followed each and every counsel of her kins-
Vanita- mami, Ramukaka, Dada, Ai ‘to keep her husband happy’. When she thinks about the output of her relationship with Mohan, she says, “Deception, lies, evasion-was this all we had been able to offer each other in our years together”(132). Jaya criticizes Marx’s concept as it seems to her treacherous, deceitful and betrayal. To her, “The relation of man to woman is the most natural of one person to another”(Ibid). She perceives her relationship with Mohan like the “Two bullocks yoked together”(11-12).

Mohan loses his confidence and feels helpless. But he makes her realize the husband’s dominance at Dadar too; she realizes his
shrewdness. She feels that Mohan needs her assistance only when he requires it. The man, who isn’t aware of his wife’s expectations and desires, expects her duty to obey her husband, like a typical patriarchal male. But Jaya prepares herself to come out of her traditional role as a wife, and Mohan observes the gradual changes in her, which led to the conflict between them. The estrangement between Jaya and her husband widens the communication gap between them.

Jaya goes to meet her brother Ravi. Mohan doesn’t want to expose the matter of misappropriation to Ravi who already knows it. When she comes back, she finds Mohan eagerly waiting for her to know whether Ravi knows about it. When he comes to know that Ravi already knew it, he bursts out, he accuses her like anything. His attack makes her loose her confidence in the relationship with Mohan:

Each relationship evolves its own vocabulary. Ours had been that of the workday world. The vocabulary of love, which I had thought would come to us naturally and inevitably, had passed us by; so too had a vocabulary of anger. No it was I who had left that alone after the day when my first disastrous foray into verbalizing, emotions had almost ripped our marriage apart. Since then we had never gone beyond those first basic mudras. Now suddenly, unfairly, he’d overtaken me. His fingers flickered, caring images, not of beauty, but of darkness and deceit (116).

Mohan charges her of avoiding and neglecting him. He tells her the reason of his being neglected, “But the truth is that you despise me
because I have failed- as long as I had my job and position, it was all right; as long as I could give you all the comforts, it was all right. But now, because I’m likely to lose it all…”(121). Jaya too retorts. His aggressiveness makes her feel that both Jaya and Mohan are responsible for the destruction of the image of ‘Suhasini’.

All his attacks seem a deluge to her; nothing can stop it. It makes her hesitate. Her confused thoughts swirl in her mind. She can’t control herself and breaks her long silence as S.P. Swain says:

Her hysterical laugh at the absurdity of marriage echoes the insane woman’s laughter (quoted in Mohan[ed.]2004:92).

Humiliated Mohan leaves her alone. When Jaya recovers, she finds herself alone. Mohan does not appear thereafter but she received his telegram at the end of the novel.

Jaya searches Mohan at each and every possible place. She waits for him restlessly at night. She expresses her mental condition:

I am alone I must talk to someone; I’ll go upstairs and talk to Kamat. The thought died the moment it was born. And now the sense of confusion, of turmoil, towards which I had been rushing headlong, met me with brutal force. I could feel myself gasping, drowning in the darkness, the wild, flailing, panic-stricken movements that I was making taking me lower and lower into the vortex. I switched on the radio and turned frantically from station to station (125).
The feeling of being deserted reminds her of Kusum who was deserted by her husband as she was mad. She compares herself with Kusum whom she always hated. She thinks her present condition is bringing her close to humiliated and abandoned wife Kusum who finally commits suicide by throwing herself into the well. Adesh Pal rightly draws the parallel:

Jaya undergoes the same experience when Mohan angrily leaves the house. She feels deserted. An utter loneliness darkens around her. Silence fails to be the protective shield and there is close contact with death. But she is conscious of Kusum, her alter ego whose madness led her to death. Jaya escapes suicide but goes hysteric

(quoted in Bala [ed.]: 2001:104).

Jaya recovers and thinks positively about her relationship with Mohan:

A husband and wife care for each other, live with each other until they are dead; parents care for their children and children in turn look after their parents when they are needed; marriage never ends, they cannot—they are a state of being (127).

Kusum’s story helps her to recover from Jaya’s mental imbalance. When she reaches the flat of Churchgate, she is disappointed to know that she has lost Mohan and she suffers from mental trauma. She then becomes seriously ill. With the help of Mukta, Manda and Niliama she recovers herself. Jaya narrates her helplessness as Mohan’s wife to Mukta:
I’ve failed him. All these years I thought I was Mohan’s wife; now he tells me I was never that, not really. What am I going to do? What shall I do if he doesn’t come back? I was so confident, so sure of myself I felt so superior to others… Kusum, yes, and you too… and now. Without Mohan, I’m… I don’t know, I don’t know what I am” (185).

Jaya slowly loses self-confidence. She holds responsible not only Mohan but also herself for her wretched condition during their long married life. Like Naren for Indu and Boozie for Saru, Kamat plays the vital role in Jaya’s development in her journey to self-actualization. Kamat has a very minor role in the novel but it is crucial, in the development of the novel. Indira Nityanandam aptly observes:

None of Deshpande’s protagonists are presented in the traditional pativrata mould. Closely related to their attitude to marriage is their capacity to analyse their relationship with their husband as well as their extra-marital relationships. Since these relationships do not seriously affect their marriage or stretch over a long period of time, they are dealt with in a very matter of fact fashion by the protagonists (2000:50).

Jaya’s meeting with Kamat, a widower living upstairs of Kulkarni’s flat in Dadar, provides her an outlet for her suppressed feelings. She believes and tells him everything. Kamat being a reader and critic tries to understand her writing. They discuss on certain issues. Kamat boosts her confidence which is as a turning point in her life. As Atre- Kripal observe:

The male friends are instrumental in leading the women to redefine their lives within marriage (1998:56).
Kamat makes her forget her frustration in conjugal life. When Jaya realizes about Kamat’s overtures, she withdraws herself from his proximity. It proves Jaya as a traditional Indian woman and Mohan’s chaste wife.

In this way, extra-marital relationship in this novel proves helpful to Jaya. It makes her aware of her wretched condition as Mohan’s wife, which denied her all rights of a woman. Though Jaya has relationship with Kamat, the notable thing is that she does not go to the extent of physical relationship like that of Indu with Naren in *Roots and Shadows*. When she suspects, she goes back to Mohan and proves herself as a true Indian wife. Deshpande, who strongly believes in the values of Indian marriage depends Jaya’s behaviour. In one of her interviews with Holmstrom Deshpande points out:

No, I don’t think there could have been an affair, even if Kamat hadn’t died. In that there is no avoidance. Jaya couldn’t have done it; it wouldn’t be consistent with her character. But yes, I did bring in Kamat to serve purpose: to show Jaya the kind of relationship that she could achieve with a man. She gets a kind of companionship with Kamat that she never gets a kind of husband. Yet that is marriage and this isn’t. But perhaps I do idealise that kind of relationship, the kind of companionship that is possible, although it is very rare. Often it is missing, because of the predominance of the sexual motif in India, within marriage. Because of being forced to stay together (quoted in Pathak [ed.] 1998:247).
Jaya has a pure relationship with Kamat, which is rarely found in our society. Friendship between married woman and a widower is often suspected. It is for this reason that Jaya never informed Mohan about Kamat. Being her guide, Jaya accepts Kamat’s charges and to protect herself crawls into the warm hole:

As Mohan’s wife, as Rahul’s and Rati’s mother. And so I had crawled back into my hole. I had felt safe there. Comfortable. Unassailable. And so I had stopped writing. It hadn’t been Mohan’s fault at all… Mohan had not forced me to do that kind of writing. I’d gone into it myself. With my eyes wide open (148).

She accepts her own mistakes, which allow her to maintain a normal reciprocal relationship with Mohan. She remembers her relationship with him and also her role in her own suppression. She comes to know that she obeyed because social norms demand her to do so. Sarla Palkar observes:

The novel avoids the facile solution of putting the blame on man only. Both men and women are products of their culture and victims of the institution of marriage. It is difficult for women to outgrow the images and roles allotted to them by their society as it is for men (quoted in Singh[ed.] 1991:131).

Jaya thinks positively after a long time and decides to break her silence and adjust with Mohan. The story that she was writing at Dadar comes to an abrupt end. At this juncture Mohan’s telegram, ‘all well’ relaxes her a lot. She collects the spread papers and sees them, “Well, I’ve
achieved this. I’m not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I am Mohan’s wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife” (191).

Jaya has created the image of herself and Mohan. Later on, she rejects the very image of ‘Two bullocks’ and says, “It’s wrong. If I think of us in that way, I condemn myself to a life time of disbelief in ourselves. I always thought- there’s only one life, no chance of a reprieve, no second chances. But in this life itself there are so many crossroads, so many choices” (191-92). Jaya remembers the words of Lord Krishna ‘Yathecchasi tatha kuru’ which means “I have given you knowledge. Now you make the choice. The choice is yours. Do as you desire” (192). These words boost her confidence.

Jaya thinks that Mohan will return and their life will come to normalcy. Jaya resolves to live a free life. She does not want to lead the life according to Mohan’s desires. But she prefers to remain silent. However, it is not possible for her:

But it is no longer possible for me. If I have to plug that ‘hole in the heart’, I will have to speak, to listen, I will have to erase, the silence between us (Ibid).

Jaya’s resolution makes her confident and hopeful about her future with Mohan. Urvashi Sinha and Gur Payari Jandial put it thus:
Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists turn out to be most realistic and balanced in their view as, Jaya after a long deafening silence and seventeen years spent with an incentive and rigid man, decides to change her own perspective and hopes to change that of Mohan too (Mohan 2004: 151).

The novel ends with Jaya’s hope to make Mohan understand her and her feelings; she remembers Mukta’s words ‘people don’t change’ but hopefully she rejects the thought and says “But we can always hope without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this: Life has always to be made possible” (193).

Thus Jaya decides to assert her womanhood. Her self realization brings her close to the last phase of self-discovery that is the ‘female phase’ as explained by Elaine Showalter in her book The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory.

It is for this reason that she uses the flat at Dadar. According to Indira Nityanandam, Deshpande’s heroines:

... attempt to resolve their problems by a process of temporary withdrawal. They have as the models not traditional stereotyped women who were willing to sacrifice their individuality for the sake of upholding traditional norms. Instead ‘Yathecchasi kuru’ or do as you desire becomes their guiding principle (2000: 100).

Jaya thus, proves to be a typical Deshpande heroine. She in the search of ‘self’ knowingly or unknowingly follows the principle ‘Do as you desire’ which is the reinterpretation of feminine urge.
Mukherjee’s novel, *Wife*, presents a psychic study of abnormal protagonist, Dimple. She becomes neurotic because there is a wide gulf between her desire and fulfillment. The protagonist is a very immature and insane woman who loves to live in the fantastic world. If one’s psychological needs are not fulfilled, one tends to abandon his real self. Dimple’s abnormality ruins her life. The husband and wife in the novel aspire for a different world and get the different world. It led to an estranged relationship.

Dimple wants a neuro-surgeon, economically strong who can afford material comfort for her. Amit, her husband wants fair and fleshy wife like Meena Sen, his friend’s wife and also expects fluency in English. This is one of the reasons for the estrangement.

Dimple’s psychological disorderliness fails to achieve the harmony in relationship. S. Sujatha observes:

Dimple is not a strong enough person to withstand the struggle. She does not have the required mental resilience. In fact her very name Dimple which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as ‘a slight surface depression’, symbolizes her essential shallowness

(quoted in Dhawan [ed.] 1995:82-83).

One has to peep into her life before marriage where she is obsessed with the thought of marriage. The basic need of Dimple Dasgupta is her long cherished desire to marry a person of her choice and settle down
happily. Dimple, a twenty years old immature and average looking girl, is a daughter of Mr. Dasgupta, an electrical engineer. She and her parents are obsessed by the thought of her marriage. Her parents were busy in search of a worthy bridegroom for her. Mr. Dasgupta is found checking regularly the matrimonial ads for a worthy candidate, preferably engineer but Dimple would like to marry a neuro-surgeon. She has dreamt about post-marital life, “an apartment in Chouringhee, her hair done by Chinese girls, trips to New Market for nylon saris “(3). She likes, “the young men with mustaches, dressed in spotless white peering into opened skulls” (Ibid).

Though marriage for Dimple is a fancy she must have failed to understand its meaning. According to Indian tradition marriage is a social institution that imposes certain rights and duties and even restrictions upon both the husband and wife. To shoulder responsibilities and nurture a healthy relation in other words is the meaning of a married life. Strong emotions, intellectual co-operation too must develop between the husband and wife. Marriage is neither a physical relationship between man and woman nor it is spiritual. It requires physical and spiritual oneness. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, defines Marriage as:

an interpersonal relationship with governmental, social, or religious recognition, usually intimate and sexual, and often
created as a contract, or through civil process
(www.wikipedia.com).

Dimple has her own concepts about her would be husband. She visualises, “Male faces, cricket stars, young cabinet ministers, hero from the novels. Her heart grew vulnerable and paper thin, transparent and butterflies’ wings” (12). She thinks him more or less likely to be the heroes in the films or the models in the magazine advertisements. Her obsession with marriage creates expectations in her mind which makes her think that married life is a real life “marriage, she was sure, would free her, fill her with passion. Discreet and virgin she waited for real life to begin” (Ibid). She looks at her marriage as a problem solving device. From her imagination it is clear that she never thinks about the responsibilities and duties which follow the marriage. She always has thought the marriage to be a means of freedom and love. She thinks that marriage, “would bring her freedom... marriage would bring her love (9).

It shows that Dimple looks at her marriage as an ultimate goal. At last her father gets a suitable candidate. He is, “Amit Kumar Basu-29 consultant engineer with 7 years experience, son of late Ajay Kumar Basu (Outward Bills Department of the Chartered Bank, Calcutta) Dependants: Widowed mother and younger brother studying Physics Honours in Presidency College” (14). Amit’s first appearance pleases her as she tells
her dear friend Pixie, "...a lean young man in a business suit, dazzling white teeth, thin mustache" (Ibid). After checking the horoscope they fix the date of marriage. Dimple and Amit meet before marriage once again. On the day of marriage all her friends praise Amit a lot. They inform Dimple that he looks like Amitabh Bachchan. Amit impresses them a lot, "They loved the stiff, athletic way he walked, just like a cricket bowler, and the way he brushed the petals off his shoulder like a movie star at a mahurat" (16). But Dimple in a bridal dress isn't very happy, instead she complains of his height. It is the premonition of her doomed marriage and presents Dimple as a least satisfied woman.

Amit seems to be aware of the situation of his new bride and feels apologetic for his inconvenient, unattractive third floor flat and says, "My immigration should come through any day" (17). She wants to ask him when they would depart but keeps mum like newly married wife and shows her submissiveness, but shrewdly asks him whether he likes to call her Nandini like his mother. Amit avoids answering her. Their first night is not as usual romantic.

Her dream shatters when she confronts the reality after marriage. The much desired marriage would not make her happy. Dr. Annie John points out in her unpublished thesis:
In marriage, she looks forward to a magical change of life, she expected a fairy to appear with a magic wand and put her into the fanciful world that she always dreamt of. But when she actually confronts the man in Amit, all her fantasies are brought down to the earth, with a thud (7).

The fancy about the husband seems to be shattering. This reminds that there is a gulf between dream and reality. Before her marriage, Dimple looks at marriage as a problem solving device. And after marriage she looks at her migration as a problem solving device, each time she expects more from life and gets disappointed. She doesn’t want to face the realities of life. She is incapable of accommodating the adversities of life. Her demands are so unreal that no one could ever think of achieving them. Amit is a career conscious guy who spends much of his time outside the home. Once he takes her out for dinner to the best hotel Kwality but instead of enjoying the moment she complains, “He should have taken her to Trinca’s on Park Street, where she could have listened to a Goan band play American music, to prepare her for the trip to New York or Toronto. Or the discotheque in Park Hotel, to teach her dance and wriggle” (21).

Disappointed Dimple phones to Pixie and complains about her new name given by her mother-in-law. From the very beginning Dimple is not comfortable there. She complains, “Everything’s fine except for the apartment” (18). She hates her mother-in-law and Amit’s sister. She
doesn’t talk to anybody except Pintu, Amit’s younger brother. She always
talks about the anticipated foreign trip though, “Thoughts of living in
Africa or North America terrified her”(17). Amit is too obsessed with the
thought of immigration. Dimple resents the old grey cotton curtains and
thinks at least she can choose the new curtains for her room. Her life is
not happy one. She could not find any hope of fulfillment of her desire.
Even small matters begin to worry and annoy her. Nagendra Kumar aptly
observes:

Dimple Basu has always lived in a fantastic world, a world
which is created by herself. But when she confronts the hard
realities of life the features of her imagination are clipped. All
her dreams crumble one by one and she is deeply upset

She phones her mother complaining about rooms, water, staircase etc.
The magazine-fostered feelings regarding mate, matrimony and decorated
interiors gain full control over her and all of a sudden she finds her
expectations and dreams shattered. The thought of happiness elude her
mind. She looks at herself in the mirror says, “Dimple Basu, a happy
woman”(21). She repeats frantically. Never for a moment she takes her to
be a housewife and the woman of earth. Morbid longings, unreal
imaginings, foul fantasies become her routine. Days roll on sapping her
soul. No zeal, no mirth. She hates everything at home except Amit

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because of Amits appearance, “she told herself it should be easy to love Amit. He was quite handsome, not in the way movie stars were, but in the way real people sometimes were. His face was very symmetrical, with large eyes and a square jaw and high cheekbones. She liked his hair, especially the way he curled in the back, and the little mole just below the hairline on his neck” (23). She tries to be a dutiful wife and tries to fulfill his needs.

It shows that she is leading the dual life. Surely she is not happy with her marriage. Amit appeared to be an ordinary object to her and not a man of her dreams. She is dissatisfied. Marriage had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined. Amit is normal and considerate person and likes Dimple. But her disturbed psyche fixes up her ideal man and draws in her loneliness by borrowing “... a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eyes and chin from a body-builder and shoulders ad, the stomach and legs from trousers and put the ideal man and herself in a restaurant on Park Street or by the side of a pool at a five star hotel” (Ibid).

Amit is a middle-class professional having dreams and has aspirations to move higher up the social ladder. He is unsentimental and unresponsive to the emotional needs of his young wife. As Dimple is an escapist lost in her world of fantasy, she is alienated and aloof. She is
submissive, recessive, socially disinterested and socially ineffective. Lonely and confused, she wants to breakthrough the traditional taboos of a wife. She is unable to enjoy the mating process with her husband because of her disturbed mind, “Sometimes in bed she thought of the baby lizard she found in her pillow case”(12). The relationship progresses at various levels. Amit talks to her about his dream after retirement that they will live in a pink house with garden. Dimple is also amused by it and adds a lawn and a statue of Venus. Amit says he will bring pink Venus statue. Both of them like the idea and , “For the rest of the week they took to going to bed earlier and earlier so they could talk of pink Venus” (24). Such harmony is the rare moment in the marital life. When she tells him about Pintu’s affair, he laughs at her and tells her she is stupid. He undermines her and doesn’t take her seriously which is also a kind of domination. He tells her that he always expected tall and convent-educated English speaking girl as his wife. So Dimple tries her best to acquire fluency over English by reading books during the siesta hour. Amit easily dominates Dimple who always tries to follow him, hiding her real ‘world’ from him. Off course her ‘world’ is not the world of feminine urge like Deshpande’s heroines. Amit scolds her harshly and misses no chance to dominate her. The fact is, “His disapproval was torture; all her
life she had been trained to please. He expected her, like Sita, to jump into fire if necessary” (28). Amit is mischievous husband but demands her to be submissive and docile.

Dimple is pregnant. Women have to cope with many problems during pregnancy. However Dimple enjoys it. Nagendra Kumar observes:

However, her nauseating proneness is abnormal because she deliberately vomits and never leaves any opportunity of doing so at all hours of the day night. She feels a strange sensation (2001:45).

This shows that Dimple is an abnormal woman whose temperament, likings are different from any common woman. Her favourite pass time when nobody is at home except her mother-in-law is to vomit, “The vomit fascinates her. It was hers; she was locked in the bathroom expelling brownish liquid from her body. She took pride in brownish blossoms” (30).

Motherhood is a greatest pleasure of life for any woman. A woman considers herself to be fortunate if she becomes a mother. But Dimple being an abnormal woman detests an idea of being a mother and wants to be free from it, “She thought of ways to get rid of ...whatever it was that blocked her tube and pipes” (31). The arrival of the baby is the happiest moment in life of couple, especially when it is for the first time, but Amit comes to know it from a third person. Though he doesn’t grudge about it,
but it shows the lack of communication between husband and wife. Lack of communication between husband and wife hinders the relationship. It happens with Dimple-Amit but both do not care as they are busy in their worlds. Dimple doesn’t think it necessary to tell this good news to Amit.

She doesn’t feel at ease with the thought that she is going to be a mother. She shows her discomfort by killing a mouse in her house that looks pregnant to her. Nagendra Kumar says:

This act of killing is a manifestation of violence is smouldering inside her. Her repulsion with her own pregnancy is born out of her hatred for Amit who fails to feed her fantasy world (2001:45).

Marriage proves to be a total failure for her; her aspirations of love and freedom are totally crushed. She doesn’t know that freedom too has its limitations. Dimple now thinks her migration would bring back her happiness. Sushma Tandon opines:

Under the passive posture of Amit’s wife, there is a considerable accretion of violence. Dimple lives with her fermenting frustrations and puts her faith in the New World. She believes that now a whole new horizon is going to open before her (1998:47).

Dimple, who hates to be a mother, apprehends that caring the child in her womb might spoil her prospects of going abroad. She neither cares for Amit’s desire to make a baby doctor nor bothers about Basu’s happiness about new arrival. She makes all possible attempts to terminate
her pregnancy. The description of her self-abortion is very poignant and touching, "She has skipped rope until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned; then she had poured water from the heavy bucket over her head, shoulders, over her tight little curve of her stomach. She had poured until the last blood washed off her legs; then she had collapsed" (42). This act proves Dimple as an eccentric woman who cruelly crushed her womb, her foetus before it blooms. The surprising thing is that she never repents. This very act raises a question mark on her womanhood. Amit naturally expresses his sorrow that his dream to be a father is unfulfilled. Jaya in That Long Silence never comes out her guilty conscience regarding her abortion but Dimple neither feels guilty nor tense.

When the moment of departure to US comes, career oriented Amit becomes too much happy, as it is the happiest moment in his life. He expresses his happiness to his beloved wife thus, "He hugged and kissed her like a movie star husband" (43). Amit is obsessed with his work and busy in his own world. Dimple and her needs are ignored. On the contrary, Dimple too creates her own world of fantasy and romance. These two worlds never meet, creating a gulf between them. The couple leaves India for USA.
Amit’s friend Jyoti Sen comes to welcome them; they are going to live at Jyoti’s home until Amit gets a job. Dimple listens about a triple murder from Jyoti and ponders over it but Amit forgets it and thinks about his job. Meena Sen warmly welcomes them. The magnificence of New York city terrifies her but the perfect Bengali ghetto in Sen’s apartment comforts her.

Right from the very first day of her arrival in New York, all that Dimple hears from people and sees on the Television about mugging, rape, murder- an aspect of the new world that seems to hold an inexplicable but unending fascination for immigrant-residents like Jyoti Sen, Seema Sunil observes:

Even in America, Dimple finds no consolation or relief. The New York life appears to prove destructive to her. She is further shaken by the realization that New York with all its glitter is a crime-prone city, allowing little freedom to Indian wives. She experiences total estrangement from herself and her surrounding as well. She finds a wide gulf between her fantasy world and the reality of her situation. She sinks into a world of isolation, unable to welcome the bright prospects of setting up of a new home after Amit gets a job (1995:14).

Being an incurable fantasizer and addict to the bright colourful world of advertisements, Dimpel falls an easy victim to the various magazine and T.V. adds. She accepts them literally and one example, sufficient to speak volumes about her total lack of maturity and depth, is a
magazine ad which exhorted people to “express” themselves in their “surroundings” “Express yourself in your surrounding. Discover your own grand passion and indulge it to excess. Then simplify the rest, throw out, be ruthless. That’s the secret of happiness” (87). Fascinated and inspired by this ads Dimple looks at Sen’s apartment which she found lovely before.

Amit strongly opposes Khanna’s job offer to Dimple, showing his dominance. He says, “one bread-winner in the family is quite enough” (61). His ego is not satisfied and so he looks at her for agreement. When Dimple smiles and gives her consent he further undermines her saying “Besides, Dimple can’t add two and two. She will ruin your business in a fortnight” (61). Dimple realizes that though Amit has progressive attitude, but he has typical traditional Indian mindset. On the other hand, she too isn’t career conscious. But she comes to USA with some hope and would have definitely liked to make her career. Her inferiority complex does not allow her to mix up with the people around her who are enjoying and busy talking in the party. She tries her best to look happy. On their way back home, Dimple asks about Night College but both Meena and Jyoti protest her saying a single woman should be afraid of mugging here. Amit responds, “With so many Indians around and television and a child, a
woman shouldn’t have any time to get crazy ideas” (69). Amit’s patriarchal mind reveals his thoughts and actions. He always tries to dominate his wife Dimple by imposing restrictions on her even in America. He shows his disgust on Ina Mullick’s adopting free American ways. He imposed his will on Dimple that he does not like such women. He is sure that Dimple is not like Ina. Dimple is not affected overtly but inwardly, the process of pining starts. She blindly believes in Amit’s intelligence and she is sure that he will get a fine job. But slowly she loses her faith in him and when she compares the up-to-date American with Amit she finds Amit some what frail, she observes in the parties, “she had seen other men avoid him” (69).

In Sen’s apartment, Dimple finds TV as her new time pass; as Amit is busy with his job searching, Jyoti with his job and Meena has the backache problem so she spends most of the time on the bed with her daughter. Dimple becomes crazy and keeps TV on all the day. The whole day Dimple watches TV and reads newspaper. This shows that she is fed up of her loneliness. Soon after few days’ stay she starts scorning Sens’ household. Not only this, Amit who fails to get an immediate job, instead of finding an emotional support receives her malice in turn. In Dimple’s belief a man without job is not man at all. Her frustration with
Amit rises. Amit too collapses inwardly. However, he is still innocent about the secret broodings of Dimple who often dreams about her Americanization.

In the party arranged by Bijoy and Ina Mullick Amit tries his best to keep Dimple away from Ina. He makes her reject drink which Ina offers. He is not comfortable and remains around her as he is not acquainted with the Americans.

Amit is a possessive husband who snatches her freedom in USA as well. Amit’s domination is different as F. A. Inamdar points out:

But no where in the novel Amit seems to have exploited her by cruelly either burdening her with house-hold work or by neglecting her pleasures in life. He is always worried about her well-being. Though they converse without communicating, they live together as strangers


It is in the same party where she meets a Bengali person Prodosh Mukherjee and his American wife Marsha and her handsome brother Milt Glasser whom she prefers. Amit seems less impressive to her in the parties, his opinion doesn’t matter in the parties. Being jobless, Amit too loses his confidence day by day. He is aware of his failure and cannot communicate with the people. When he is alone with Dimple in the bed, he admits, “I screwed things up. You saw that for yourself. I couldn’t
even tell a joke” (84). His lost confidence affects their relationship too.

Nagendra Kumar puts it:

> As the days pass by, he becomes more impatient and his confidence starts shaking. This embitters his relationship with Dimple and petty-fogging becomes the order of the day (2001:50).

Dimple, who is very happy when she arrives in USA thought that her dreams would be fulfilled. Now she feels protected in Sen’s apartment in the city where murders are discussed like weather. But slowly she gets bored in the Sen’s apartment. She lacks privacy there. It shows that Dimple is frustrated in America. Nagendra Kumar says:

> Dimple starts breaking after the realization that she is deceived in marriage and a good- for- nothing husband like Amit will not cater for her dream world. She cannot tolerate his snores any more and insomnia becomes her accustomed habit (2001:51).

Dimple feels that she has been deceived in marriage and her expectations are unfulfilled even in USA where she has come with hope. She says, “She was bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined, had not brought her cocktails under canopied skies and three A.M. drives to dingy restaurants where they sold divine kababs rolled in roti” (101-102). Though Dimple is disturbed she doesn’t show it. She is confused with names of the places like Nebraska and Nevada, Ohio and Iowa. She behaves like a dutiful
wife. She cleans the bathroom after every bath of Amit. Dimple is mentally disturbed but pretends to be a dutiful wife.

She clearly shows her disgust for Sen’s apartment. She hates Sen’s apartment, sofa, bed and the wall to wall rug. Amit’s unemployment is the root cause of all troubles. Amit is not able to fulfill her expectations. She wishes Amit to be:

...infallible, intractable godlike but with boyish charm; wanted him to find a job so that after a decent number of years he could take his saving and retire with her to a three-story house in Ballygunge park” (89).

Her accumulated frustration, confusion, cultural shocks, her observing violence through media results in her abnormal behaviour. Ina Mullick makes her known the materialistic aspect of the USA life. Ina is a modern woman. Dimple looks at herself with Ina’s eyes, her sari-swathed skinny body makes her ashamed of herself. Each and everything thing in America underscores Dimple’s inferiority and she contemplates the ways of bringing an end to her unbearable existence.

In case of Dimple, when her expectations are not fulfilled according to her neurotic claims, she begins to behave most abnormally. She begins to suffer from insomnia. Amit beside her looks unreal to her. Death recurred in Dimple’s thoughts. Being a neurotic, she was able to face the reality of life and attempted to embrace death. Death was the only
solution for her. Amit wakes up at dawn and tells her about his tension to appear for the interview. Dimple boosts his confidence but Amit undermines her saying, “You are lying to me. You think a wife is supposed to say such things to her husband” (101).

This shows lack of understanding in Amit that widens the gulf leaving Amit unaware of it. Jaiwant Dimiri says:

In US Dimple is left alone with Amit. Back home she had held him in high esteem. The commendable comments and remarks of her friends and mother had drawn her attention to her husband’s virtues and qualities but in the US odds are against him. Lack of a job makes him less self-assured and more self-centered. His own problems partly turn him apathetic towards Dimple’s piling mental and emotional turmoil. The gap between the romantic fanciful Dimple and the matter of fact, down-to-earth realist Amit widens day by day in the US. Amit is panicky for job, meanwhile Dimple is planning to buy a queen size bed. She prepares the salad with great care and effort, Amit refuses to taste it, Dimple offers to fix the tie for him as a goodwill gesture, Amit turns down the offer to help. Hence the bickering and bantering. A little later she stops complaining to him and turns into a taciturn introvert (quoted in Dhawan [ed.] 1996:72-73).

Quarrel is unavoidable in any kind of relationship, much more in a couple. Surely, there’ll be clashes and some fights because a husband and a wife are two persons with personality differences. They are two persons capable of reasoning based on their own dispositions. What may be good for the wife may not be good for the guy’s opinion or vice versa. What may be offensive for one person may not be offensive for the other one.
The couple faces the same problem, their different attitudes towards life and lack of understanding each other are sensed clearly in US where Dimple is left alone with Amit. But after his getting job the couple moves to a well-furnished flat. Dimple always longed for such well furnished home. Her dreams come true when she gets this apartment with sort of American appliances in the kitchen. They celebrate their first day in the home. They laugh and behave like happy husband and wife. Amit behaves thus only when he is happy, otherwise he ignores her. He is aware of her needs for the first time in America and says, “Boredom is the devil’s workshop or however the proverb goes. The point is you must go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and think about Calcutta” (111). Though Amit wants her progress, he doesn’t want her to be completely Americanized like Ina. He just wants to link her with America and no more to India.

This shows that Amit, like an Indian husband dominates her but shows his positive dominance. His Indian upbringing makes him think that American culture is a raw culture. He expresses, “You are becoming American but not too American, I hope don’t want you to be like Mrs. Mullick and wear pant in the house” (112). As usual Amit does not care for her. He failed to share the depressed feelings of Dimple. He does not
soothe or even consoles her. When she grudges about her weakness, he replies her bluntly, “its probably because of you eat so little” (110). He does not have even a word of sympathy or encouragement. He is completely indifferent to mounting tensions of Dimple. This non challenged and callous attitude of Amit made her feel enraged and violent. She continues to feel that Amit is not responding to her and that he lacks warmth and intensity of feeling which at that moment she needs acutely and Dimple bursts out, “I feel sort of tired inside and all you can do is read the paper and talk to me about food. You never listen you have never listened to me. You hate me. Don’t deny it, I know you do hate me because I am not fat and fair”(110). She was puzzled so as to know why she behaved like that. She attempted seriously to know the causes of her misery but she failed to reach any conclusion.

The second innings starts in N.Y.U. Amit leaves for job early in the morning and returns late in the evening. Dimple used to sleep during the day watching T.V. and contemplates upon her plight. Her inferiority complex doesn’t allow her to mingle with outside world; she is not fluent in English hence can’t communicate. She is not able to do shopping alone; she can’t even operate the elevator and hence cannot go out. Her inferiority complex makes her think that she is not able to win her
husband's love and affection. Amit also ignores her wife's psychology. Amit's typical Indian patriarchal upbringing makes him think that providing only material comforts inside the house to the woman who always remains inside the home is enough. Marriage subjugates woman and enslaves woman and according to Simone de Beauvoir it leads her to, "aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slip away gently toward death without questioning its purpose" (1974:500). Women pay for their happiness at the cost of their freedom.

Dimple lives in a world of fantasy cut off from realities of life. Amit is not aware that he has failed to fulfill the fantastic desires of Dimple. He plays merely the role of the provider of material comforts. He could not comprehend the emotional needs of Dimple. Her need is warmth, love and a few words of encouragement. Gajendra Kumar points out that:

Psychologically woman needs man's loving company

Indian patriarchal society hardly permits women's emancipation, and the male members of the society decide the fate of their female counterpart. Amit always kept her away from American society and particularly from Ina Mullick.
Both of them fail to understand each other, which is the root cause of the doomed marriage. There is a lack of communication in their relationship. Indira Nityanandam says:

Inspite of failing to have a meaningful relationship with her husband, Dimple goes through the traditional gestures of a dutiful wife like leaving the tastier portion of the meat for her husband. Dimple and Amit both appear fully preoccupied with themselves and hardly notice the needs of the other person. Usually conversation between the two is limited to: “Aren’t you going to ask me where I went? Or “You don’t sound happy to see me back” (2000:75).

Dimple creates her own world in Amit’s absence. She doesn’t inform him about her activities. Being nostalgic, she starts writing letters to Pixie and gets answers too. Her whole world is confined within the four-wall, media becomes her nearest friend. Dimple having no other substitute to share her feelings, writes to Pixie. Amit is away from home, fails to be her friend, “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, cassette tape recorder, stereo in their order of convenience” (113). Amit appeared to be an ordinary object to her and not the man of her dreams. She is dissatisfied. Amit who provides her just material comforts is less a human being to her. It shows that there is lack of emotions in their relationship. It clearly shows the attack of American culture upon her. She cannot save herself from the continuous violence
outside, which is a part of American culture. Apart from this, Dimple is not able to forget her Indian Sanskaras and finds it impossible “to live with the people who did not understand about Durga-Puja” (114). A typical Indian girl suddenly gets herself involved in ultra modern atmosphere of America which affects her. Linda Sandler aptly observes:

Dimple emigrates to the electronic age with her traditional values almost intact, only partly modified by the pop culture of modern Calcutta she is unable to make the transition from before to after and chooses violence as a “problem solving device…” “Violence as a device for problem solving” in Saturday Night 90 (5 Oct 1975:75).

At Queens she could discuss her problems with Meena but here she is alone and helpless. She even cannot discuss with Pixie who knows nothing about America. She is not able to share it with Amit, she often keeps it secret, “She didn’t tell him about these imaginary beginnings. She didn’t tell him about her immoderate daytime sleeping either. They were unspeakable failings. She thought of them as deformities- sinister, ugly, wicked” (115).

She is often angry with Amit but she suppresses her feeling. The suppressed anger keeps seething in her unconscious all the time. She thinks of dying. She desired to destroy herself. A dying bonfire becomes her visual image of life. In that land of money, honey and opportunity she turns sickly, sulky and soul sapped. An utter loneliness makes her think of
violence, like in T.V. serials. It can't be denied that they possessed killer instinct. For this, Dimple is often compared with Maya, Desai's heroine in *Cry: The Peacock*. In this connection, S. Indira says:

Bharati Mukherjee presents the morbid psyche of Dimple only through the grotesque. Both Maya and Dimple are morbid but their morbidity does not stem out of marriage. It is inherent in both of them (quoted in Dhawan [ed.] 1996:61).

Her arrival to USA kindles that instinct. She contemplates seven ways of committing suicide. Dark, evil, sinister, gruesome—murder, suicide, mugging all these words now become the part of her world. She is fascinated by the advertisements showing the act of suicides or murders.

The party arranged by Amit and Dimple is appreciated by their close friends. The party brings her closer to Milt who lightly kisses Dimple. During the day time she watches or reads about mugging, rape and violence and at night insomnia overcomes her. Any outer sound terrifies her. She wakes Amit up who explains her that they are secure on the 14th floor. But it is she who thinks that anything is possible in the crime-prone city New York. Her abnormal behavior destroys their harmonious relationship.

Ina Mullick starts visiting her, which initially annoys her. She brings with her Leni and both of them quarrel in front of Dimple on the
point of Leni’s affair with Milt. Leni breaks the ash-tray, which is the symbol of Dimple’s breaking loneliness and freedom. Ina brings Milt with her to whom Dimple is attracted. She enjoys with them, goes out wearing Marsha’s clothes and goggle. For the first time she enjoys the materialistic America’s shopping and lunch. She never reveals that she enjoyed with Ina and Milt. She cannot bear the burden of these things. She cannot differentiate the real life and television life. It shows the symptoms of her being neurotic, “After Leni removed her cup Dimple kept on pouring, over the rim of Leni’s cup over the tray and floating dentures till the pregnant – bellied tea pot was emptied and Leni and Ina were standing and shaking her, Dimple, Dimple, stop it!” (152)

She begins to betray her husband. To show herself more Americanized and still attractive Dimple seduces Milt at day time. She tries to affirm her self identity in American culture. Conversely, her frustration and morbidity deepens day by day which have a deep impact on their relationship.

She creates a feeling of revulsion for Amit who does not fulfill her dream on the other hand but demands her to be a dutiful wife. Seema Sunil rightly observes:

She somehow comes to realize that he is not a man of her Dreams. Quite often we see her obsessively measuring her
husband against her ideal man. While she tries to adjust herself to Amit’s wishes and be a dutiful wife, she has a growing feeling that he is not the man of her dreams (1995:14).

Her disturbed psyche shows that, “Her life was slow full of miscalculations” (178). Though Amit finds her disturbed, neglects as usual and considering it to be her homesickness promises her to take her to Calcutta. His decision never pleased her. On the contrary, she develops extreme hatred for Amit. Dimple’s hatred for Amit is not instantaneous. It has been a slow but gradual process which is active in her mind and apparent in her behaviour, “Symbolically speaking, in her rejection of pregnancy, she rejects Amit” (quoted in Dhawan [ed.] 1996:84). Unable to differentiate the reality from imagination she crosses the limits and it her psychic decay that compels her to explore several ways of committing suicide. A feeling of insecurity grips her so much so that she thinks of committing suicide. But she drops the idea, as she believes that Amit deserves death, as he is the one who shattered the hopes of her fanciful world. Torn by her psychic and emotional tensions she thinks of to take drastic step that is Amit’s murder, thinking that she cannot bear this sort of life for ever. She contemplates, “She would kill Amit and hide his body in the freezer. The extravagance of the scheme delighted her, made her feel very American somehow, almost like a character in TV series” (195).
The lack of understanding widens the gulf between them.

Psychiatric expert Dr. Baucom explains:

When there is a crisis in a marriage...No marriage crisis appears overnight. Rather, the crisis slowly builds over time, with one person often caught completely off guard, and the other claiming that he of she is tired of trying and trying, with no change (http://www.savethemarriage.com).

Amit is not unaware of Dimple’s mental and physical sickness. He tries to be very considerate and loving husband. But he has his own problems. He is yet to settle in new job, worried about Dimple’s extravagance and his negligible savings. Amit who hails from a middle-class Bengali family believes that it is his responsibility to earn and provide all material comforts to the family at any cost. This takes him away from Dimple and their marital relations become bitter.

But for Dimple Amit has never been a dream person; rather he was a big disappointment to her. Her frequent interaction with Milt and Ina gives rise to a feeling of hatred for Amit. She likes Milt and his company. 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. With Milt she could talk about all sort of things” (191). As a result, Dimple goes on the extreme of making baseless and fabricated charges against Amit, “You want me to die” (177).
She develops hostile feelings towards her husband. But Amit loves her. In this way the two extreme feelings in this relationship lead to marital discord.

Nagendra Kumar calls it, “the violence outside turns inside” (2001:57). Dimple believes that, “tragedy was that he lacked extravagance; he presented in the immigrant virtues of caution and cunning” (195). Amit is unable to understand her needs. He thinks, “He never thought of such things, never thought of how hard it was for her to keep quiet and smile though she was falling apart like a very old toy that had been played with sometimes quite roughly, by children who claimed to love her” (212). Ancy Eapen says:

He advises her to spend less time sleeping. But again he does not offer any positive solution to the question of her increasing boredom. She spends long hours watching TV serials. Her make-believe world becomes coloured by American thrillers where crime and sex are glamorized (1999:106).

Dimple undergoes mental trauma which allows her no peace of mind, she loses her sleep and becomes a sleep-walker like Lady Macbeth. Though she tries to be American, her core is Indian, which deepens her sense of guilt of having her affair with Milt and keeping it secret from Amit. Her sense of guilt is clearly shown after she seduces Milt, “After he left...she cushioned her head in her arms and wept” (201). She cannot
maintain her mental balance and her vision fails to differentiate between reality and imagination. In a calm and cool manner she takes out the knife from the kitchen drawer and dives it down on a spot near his hairline repeatedly hitting at the same place seven times on the petty cause of his spilling sugar on the counter:

She sneaked up on him and chose a spot, her favourite spot just under the hairline. Where the mole was getting larger and browner and she drew an imaginary line of kisses because she did not want him to think she was the impulsive foolish sort who acted like a maniac just because the husband was suffering from insomnia. She touched the mole very lightly and let her fingers draw a circle around the delectable spot, then she brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice, seven times, each time a little harder, until the milk in the bowl of cereal was a pretty pink and the flakes were mushy and would have embarrassed any advertiser, and then she saw the head fall off... but of course it was her imagination because she was not sure any more what she had seen on TV and what she had seen in the private screen of Three A.M.-and it stayed upright on the counter top, still with it eyes averted from her face, and she said very loudly to the knife that was redder now than it had ever been when she had chopped chicken and mutton with it in the same kitchen and on the same counter, “I wonder if Leni can make a base for it; she’s supposed to be very clever with her fingers.” Women on television got away with murder (212-13).

Her seven-time stab has also symbolic meaning according to M. Sivramkrishna:

In fact, that Dimple stabs the ‘mole’ on her husband’s chest seven times in itself is a clue symbolically to the destruction of the marriage as a sanctified ritual for according to Hindu ritual the married couple take seven steps and this is, ritually,
supposed to bind them together (quoted in Prasad [ed.] 1982:81).

She stabs her husband seven times as if she is setting herself free from the bondage of marriage which is performed by taking seven steps around the holy fire. The estrangement in the relationship leads up to the murder of a husband. Amit is shrewd enough in his career. As he is involved in bribery case, he resigns the job suddenly. His temporary break up from job in India and in America too makes him restless. The man who handles successfully the business or outside matters and also immigrates successfully to USA fails to understand his family matter. His terrible ignorance of his wife, his male ego makes him the mute victim of his neurotic wife’s violence. F.A. Inamdar observes:

If the jacket of her novel claims its theme to be docility and submissiveness in Dimple, it is a thematic failure. Dimple has been portrayed free and rebelling throughout the novel. She has no inhibition in expressing whatever she feels. On the contrary, it is Amit Basu who is a victim in India as also in New York. His murder signifies how an innocent, duty-conscious husband falls a prey to neurotic madness of his wife (quoted in Awasthi [ed.] 1993:72).

She stabs Amit which is a gruesome act. Seema Sunil points out:

At this stage, Dimple’s relationship with Amit is at the lowest ebb. She is increasingly rejecting her husband as she is in the process of absorbing American culture. Prone to the world of fantasy, she easily falls a victim to the glamour and colourful world of advertisements. This fascination leads her to a long journey of unreal, meaningless and morbid existence. Indeed
she is unable to grasp her own intensity of feeling and chooses to express her ungratified passion through violence. She cannot come to terms with either her own culture or America’s culture and almost in a fit of hallucination, kills her husband Amit (1995:15).

Dimple is attracted to American culture and at the same time goes away from Amit psychologically. The American culture haunts her totally Amit is a good looking and confident man but fails to match her dream figure, which is made up of romantic ideas of Bollywood heroes, advertisement model and novel heroes. Dimple is not much beautiful. Being flexible, her morality changes easily with time. Her values are based on material standards. Her extra-marital relationship with Milt Glasser is out of her inferiority complex, which confines her to the flat and abolishes her liberty. To show that she is going to adopt the American culture she herself initiates Milt to seduce. Her hatred for Amit is so intense that she is not even ashamed of her illicit relations with Milt. To hide her guilt; she plans to kill Amit. It is also out of her unquenched thirst, to her winning Milt is a great victory. But her unreal expectations lead her to frustration. The victory seems meaningless to her. M.Rajeshwar aptly observes her guilty conscious:

In this light, her seduction of Milt, her landlady’s brother, in her bedroom, can be interpreted as a desperate attempt by her diseased psyche to preserve her and stop her further deterioration. Freud has held that when there is a pathological

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masochistic configuration in a person the ethical consideration concerning sex is drowned so that the person indulging in these ‘sinful’ acts can be subsequently chastised by the conscience. And Dimple is hungry for that kind of punishment (quoted in Dhawan [ed.] 1996:97).

The influence of excessive violence that is being shown over American Television inspires her. It gives her a feeling that one can get away with crime with much ease. She has to face alone, because of her going away from Sen’s and other Indians among the totally American neighbours. The lack of support system in the form of friends, relatives and even from her husband ruins her. Amit’s failure to understand the psychological turmoil of Dimple also plays an important role in destroys their relationship. Dimple’s problem is the loss of culture and loss of identity; it is rather her quest for identity. Had it not been for this, she would have committed suicide. But infact, she murders Amit in the style of a T.V. character which is not very uncommon in America. Kalpana Wandrekar observes her transformation:

from sanity to insanity is authentic and pathetic. In keeping with modern trends Bharati Mukherjee explores the psychological recess of an immigrant in such a systematic way that wife becomes more a clinical study than mere fiction (quoted in JIWE 1996:76).
Her neurosis is because of her state of being rootless. Some critics deny that Dimple is a case study of rootlessness or facing immigrant’s problem. F. A. Inamdar remarks:

Dimple is a psychic study of an abnormal woman. She has nothing to do with the problem of immigrants. Therefore, she angers her husband by making fun of his dress, spilling curry on his shirt front. She goes to the extent of condemning the gifts he brings for her. Her abnormality reaches the climax when she skips her way to abortion


Though she is not homesick, her love for India might be deep in her subconscious mind (her dream to come back from America and settle in India) but at every stage the hub-dub of American culture overcomes her and contradiction in American and Indian culture destroys her.

Kirtee Agrawal adds the reasons for the failure of the relationship thus:

Amit fails to understand her extreme need for love. Gradually Dimple begins to withhold affection from Amit. Her detached observations of Amit soon turn into an inexplicable hatred culminating into absolute alienation from him. However, the thwarting of ‘esteem needs’ exerts the greatest psychological pressure upon Dimple. An intense sense of loneliness, breakdown of communication, and feelings of inadequacy stemming from a lack of self-esteem fray her already fragile sensibilities. She is unable to cope under the immense psychological pressure and responds by retreating into her own private world of nightmarish visions. Her neuroticism assumes a homicidal character as she decides to kill Amit instead of herself. The murder is an extreme step taken by a woman driven to neuroticism by a patriarchal society.
Thus, Mukherjee’s *Wife* shows that the estrangement in the man-woman relationship of modern times can acquire the lowest level that even makes a wife killer and husband a victim.

Jaya in Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* and Dimple in Mukherjee’s *Wife* are educated, young and modern women, both are bourgeois. Both the novelists present marital experiences/problems of their protagonists. Marital-dissonance is definitely a reality, a painful disturbing fact of conjugal life, but its causes are rooted in the rigidity of male behaviour and consequently, in the seemingly abnormal relations of women. Both the writers deserve admiration for such a far-reaching insight into the nature of male-female behaviour—marriage being the medium to verbalize them.

Both Jaya and Dimple are urban women. Both have arranged marriages and are victims of gender inequality. Jaya is aware of her seventeen years of subordination in married life; she breaks her silence and decides to lead her future life according to her own will and wish. Jaya presents a new image of Indian womanhood. Dimple is submissive in the presence of her husband but being neurotic she doesn’t allow herself to think upon her situation. Amit controls her in USA at every public
function, which is one of the causes of her becoming abnormal being. Jaya’s husband Mohan and Dimple’s Amit have typical Indian male psyche to dominate their female counterparts. Amit’s control is out of his thinking of her well being in USA and to save her from its destructive culture. S. P. Swain opines:

Dimple is an alien to the world of Amit, an outsider to her husband. Despite this lack of communication between the husband and wife, there is no personal hatred of rancour. On the other hand, Amit has all love for Dimple. He has never thought of exploiting her but is always worried about her well-being. Amit is not a lackadaisical husband like Gautama in Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock* (quoted in Dhawan [ed.]:1996:87-88).

While Mohan’s male pride is extreme which demands a total submissive wife, Jaya becomes aware of her situation due to his remaining busy outside and a total negligence of home, he is too much career oriented man. The same happens with Dimple in addition that the burden of cultural clash, her inferiority complex and her sense of guilt out of failure in wifely duties destroy her. Both the heroines’ husbands neglect the emotional side of their female counterpart, which results in the disharmony. It is evocative of suppressed Indian womanhood.

The basic difference between Jaya and Dimple is that Jaya is quite sane while Dimple is neurotic basically. Jaya is full of life while Dimple’s favourite time pass is finding out new ways of suicide, she is
overwhelmed by death. Jaya, a convent going girl, learns seriously and wishes to make her career, her father is a constant source of inspiration to her, but Dimple lacks this. Jaya is a sole daughter of the house and subsequently has pampered childhood. Jaya becomes aware of the stark reality of his father’s untimely death, a bitter experience she faces very early in her life. Dimple is the sole heir of the house, her upbringing provides her romantic vision towards life and her parents are eager to married off their young girl, and remain flat characters in her premarital life. Jaya faces a lot of problems as she has a dominating husband. Jaya is a creative writer but Dimple as the title of the novel suggests is just a housewife. Jaya is self-confident while Dimple is not.

Jaya lives in her own country while Dimple leaves her country and settles abroad. Jaya at least is aware of her suppressed self and tries to escape from it but Dimple being indulged in her psychic problems fails to acquire an individuality of her own. Though Dimple acts as a radical feminist to get freedom and killed her husband, she is not such a woman who aspires for a traditional role assigned to her by society. Her acts are not inspired by her feminine urge but Jaya consciously tries to gain self-assertion.
Jaya welcomes her womanhood naturally and abnormal Dimple crushes it cruelly. Jaya is a mother of two children and Dimple denies being mother. Living in a country like USA, Dimple doesn’t forget her Indian-ness though she comprises on a few occasions.

Both have extra-marital relationship. Dimple has a loose morality while Jaya is chaste. Jaya leaves Kamat when he crosses the limits of his friendship. But Dimple initiates and seduces Milt, though she repents later. It shows her wavering personality but Jaya is confident and monogamous. Jaya shrewdly uses her relationship with Kamat to acquire self-assertion but Dimple fails on this front.

Jaya having a core of Indian traditional womanhood goes back to Mohan with realization. Her arrival at Dadar withdraws her from her sub-ordination and makes her think upon her plight in her home. Jaya goes back to Mohan and for her it is not a failure. Jaya is a representative of those Indian women who are traditional as well as modern. To her, it is less important that she is going back to her husband, her self-realization is important. In an interview with Laxmi Holmstrom, Deshpande says:

As far as Silence is concerned, for me the ending isn’t completely ‘open’ either. There is a conclusion in that Jaya has changed. That is what matters, not whether she is going back to Mohan or not. It is what has happened inside her that is going to shape her life now. How that is going to happen, I don’t know. I’d have to write another novel to know
Deshpande believes in Indian family system. The protagonist lives alone to assert her womanhood. She is well aware of the troublesome lives of lonely women. Deshpande believes in relationship and tries to suggest that women are restricted within the confines of domesticity. Her feminine thoughts are not radical. She expects that the woman should be treated as a human being. In an interview with Geetha Gangadharan, she expresses this view:

I think, we need to have a world, which we should recognize as a place for all of us human beings. There is no superior and inferior, we are to halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone-de-Beavoir that, “that fact that we are human, is much more important than our being men and women”. I think that’s my idea of feminism


The unexpected end of the novel *Wife* fail to arouse sympathy for Dimple. In her interview with Michael Connell, Jessie Grearson and Tom Grimes, Bharati Mukherjee justifies her protagonist’s act:

Dimple, if she had remained in Calcutta, would have gone into depression and she would have found a very conventional way out for unhappy Bengali wives-suicide,. But in US, she suddenly lives to ask herself “self” oriented question. Am I happy? Am I unhappy? And that to me is progress. So instead of committing suicide, turning the society – mandated violence inward, she, in a misguided act, kills the enemy. So, of course, I am not approving of murder. It’s meant to be a positive act, self assertive (The Iowa Review: 1990:20).
Having a true Indian upbringing, Dimple decides to come back to India and lead a happy life but her hypersensitive nature and the burden of cultural strain led to unconventional end.

Both the women represent Indian womanhood of new era. One represents woman as a victim of gender discrimination while other as a victim of cultural shock as well as male chauvinism.