CHAPTER - III

Identity and Cultural Exigency in *The Tiger’s Daughter and Wife*

Bharati Mukherjee’s debut novel *The Tiger’s Daughter* is a categorical presentment of the formative years of the protagonist Tara’s marital life in the United States. The novel is also recourse on Tara’s home coming and the retrospective images of India enlisted in her memories seven years ago. Tara an elite Bengali Brahmin girl comes back to her home land after spending seven years with her husband David Cartwright. The novel is a string of experiences underwent by Tara at emotional, social, cultural and psychological levels on the plane of two different countries. The novel therefore is a firsthand experience of a woman who explicates her life and times and two different dimensions of Time and space.

Tara Banerjee Cartwright is the protagonist of the novel. Calcutta is her birthplace and she gets educated in New York. Her father, Bengal Tiger Banerjee is a firm, determined and a fearless man. He chalks out medical and disability insurances for his factory labourers and organizes classes at night in the tobacco firm for the benefit of illiterate workers. His brave heartedness urged him to send his daughter to the US in the prospect of higher education. Tara is married to an American after falling in love with him. She becomes an American and also an American wife in the true sense. The United States has bestowed her with two key essential life elements: one is foreign education and the other is marriage. She comes back to her home land after seven long years. Bharati Mukherjee projects her mental trauma and her struggle between the cultures of both lands. The novel is a clear presentment of Tara’s inner
inhibitions and her anguish. There is a cultural, social, and psychological transformation that takes place with her migration and subsequent marriage. The novel is a manifestation of her struggles and her inevitable dilemma of belongingness.

*The Tiger’s Daughter* gives a vivid manifestation of cultural conflict. It is a scintillating story of an upper class Bengali girl who frequents the US for higher education. Her initial inhibitions and predicaments of the new culture make her adapt to it and get married to an American. The life spent there for seven years makes her come back to India only to find herself a stranger in India. Tara realizes her double alienation and double identity and opines that she is neither Indian nor American in its true sense.

The story travels time backwards and begins in the year 1879, on a rainy day. Hari Lal Banerjee, the *Zamindar* or village Pachapara gets his daughter married off and the story takes off during the wedding ceremony. Hari Lal Banerjee did not even dream of the prospect of the coming generations. This was due to the fact that, “the shadows of suicide or exile, of Bengali soil sectioned and ceded of workers rising against their bosses could not have been divined by even a wise man in those days” (TD6).

Life seemed happy and gay for Hari Lal Banerjee after his daughter’s marriage. Year after year many marriages and many deaths happened. After two summers, Hari Lal Banerjee has had to encounter an unforeseen disaster and this led to the loss of reputation and recognition for his family. His death marked the death of all respect and love he earned for himself in his village. Little did Hari Lal imagine that his death would be grieved by someone in America. “She would sit by a window in America to dream of Hari Lal, her great-grandfather, and she would wonder at the gulf that separated him from herself” (TD9).
Tara Banerjee is the great granddaughter of Hari Lal Banerjee and the proud progeny of Bengal Tiger, the owner of famous Banerjee and Thomas (Tobacco) Co. Ltd. Tara is sent to US for higher studies by her father when she was fifteen. Tara faces fear and anger coupled with awe when she steps into the United States for the first time.

For Tara, Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake. If she had not been a Banerjee, a Bengali Brahmin, the great daughter of Hari Lal Banerjee, or perhaps if she had not been trained by the good nuns at St. Blaise’s to remain composed and lady like in all emergencies, she would have rushed home to India at the end of her first week (TD10).

In Poughkeepsie, Tara feels discriminated and alienated when her roommate refuses to share a bottle of chutney with her. She defends her country and family like any other Indian who goes to America for better prospects. She constantly prays to goddess kali for strength and peace. During May, after her first year tenure ends abroad, she is shell shocked of the fact that she has to go back home. She musters courage and confidence to prepare herself for the battle of cultures. She bumps into a young man, in Madison at a bus stand, and without realizing that, she would marry the same man. Tara’s husband David Cartwright is hardcore American and she was always hesitant to communicate to him the family legacy she cherished and also the life at Calcutta.

Dimple Dasgupta, in the novel Wife gets married to an ambitious engineer and moves to the United States. She is submissive, supple, subservient and tender by nature. Her parents therefore choose her to be married to Amit Basu and get her settled down in America. Her marital imagination is subtly said by Mukherjee as;
“She thought of pre-marital life as a dress rehearsal for actual living” (WIF 3). Dimple becomes disappointed with her incessant delay in her marriage. The intensity of happiness gets her reach soaring heights when she is ostentatiously married to an illustrious engineer. Dimple gets disgusted when she feels a sense of utter disillusionment after marriage because of her conflicts between herself and her marital restrictions. She is re-christened Nandini by her mother-in-law but the name does not derive her any satisfaction. The new apartment where she plans to move in does not make her feel at home too. Dimple feels dislocated and disturbed at this new ambiance. Her resistance is shown in the novel as, “It was this passive resistance, this withholding of niggardly affection from Amit, this buying of one’s head among dusty, lace doilies that she found so degrading” (WIF 30).

Pixie, her friend lives close by and the fact of her friend’s proximity brings her a sense of solace. The distance between her friend and Dimple is merely a phone call away. The thought of relocation and immigration makes her feel de-energized. The conventional thought of pregnancy and prospective motherhood bring to her a feeling of depression and dismay. These thoughts of motherhood are naturally a woman’s intimidation but she feels it more due to her settling down at a variant country.

She decides to start her life afresh and new. She also decides to burn her bridges and wants to forget her older and painful self. The trip to the U.S therefore serves as an anti-dote to her anguish. “I want everything to be nice and new.” (WIF 41) Pixie, her friend is announced by of her moving to the new land. Amit and Dimple are left to live their lives in the U.S. Her impression of Amit back home does not match up with her expectations in this alien land. She only realized that the remarks and observations made by her mother and her friends on Amit were only a bundle of contradictions and a set of illusions. His joblessness made him less secured and more self-centered. His financial and economic problems made him turn hostile and apathetic to Dimple’s emotional drains.
The façade of romantic self, perceived of Amit and his real self, had made the gaps widened and made the familial ties more void than ever before. Amit on the one hand becomes nervous on thinking of his lost job. Dimple on the contrary makes perfect plans for a new bed to be bought. The salad prepared for Amit with great care goes in vain as Amit is reluctant to even taste it. Her gesture of romantic help and cooperation are turned down by her husband slowly and steadily. This emotional tussles result in making her marital dreams get squashed. She looses sleep and this makes her insomniac. Dimple feels that Amit does lack a serious insight and a sense of accountability towards her. She philosophizes on Indian Women after marriage as, “With so many Indians around and a Television and a child, a woman should not have any time to get crazy ideas.” (WIF69)

_The Tiger’s Daughter_ is therefore about Tara, a young Indian who comes back to Calcutta after having spent seven years in the United States. The experiences she gained at America makes her clearly comprehend the gulf between the cultures of these two countries. Tara is not fascinated by the socio-cultural mores of India and at the same time becomes painfully aware of the fact that she cannot imbibe the American values either. Her earnest reading of Sartre, Camus, and Joyce make her critically conscious of the hostility and agony prevalent in Calcutta. She tells Pronob, “it's all so very different,” Tara said. “And it's going to be a lot more different…. and tragic.” Don't be silly!” Pronob retorted. “we've got to beat this nonsense out of system. Purge our factories of unions and things like that.” (TD45).

America does not hold a special place for her despite being seven years there. She gets into utmost despair at the thought of her life spent there. She is also not very supportive of the life in India as well. The bone of contention begins with her cultural and cross- cultural differences. Her reflections are conveyed as:
The house on Camac Street began to exercise its hypnosis on her. New York, she thought now, had been exotic. Not because it had Laundromats and subways. But because there were policemen with dogs prowling the underground tunnels. Because girls like her, at least almost like her, were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings. Because girls like her, at least almost like her, were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment building. Because students were rioting about campus recruiters and far-away wars rather than the price of rice or the stiffness of final exams. Because people were agitated over pollution. The only pollution she had been warned against in Calcutta had been caste pollution. New York was certainly extraordinary, and it had driven her to despair. (TD33-34)

Tara’s longing for her home land blooms when she comes back home but her initial reactions to the houses on Marine drive after her return did not amuse her because, “now their shabbiness appalled her” (TD18). The gap between her perceptions of India and the realities scandalize her. She also becomes restless on watching many sick people sitting on trunks around Calcutta. Her train travel does not delight her for she feels more uncomfortable in her journey. A Marwari family makes their way to the compartment, which she observes as:

But the gentlemen in the compartment simply did not interest her. The Marwari was indeed very ugly and tiny and insolent. He reminded her of a circus animal who had gotten the better of his master. The Nepali was a fidgety older man with coarse hair. He kept crossing and re-crossing his legs and pinching the creases of his pants. Both men, Tara decided, could effortlessly ruin her journey to Calcutta. (TD20)
Tara’s marriage to David was also another facet to highlight her immigrant experience. Tara feels that she is not being given any credit for her contributions to family maintenance. Her personality gets broken down to finer fragments and during prayer she does not remember her next course of ritual; she comments on her inability, “it was not a simple loss, Tara feared, this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and center. But her mother came quickly with the relief of words” (TD51). When she hears “Raghupati Raghava Rajaram/ Patita Pavana Sitaram” (TD53), she wants to sing the prayer. She feels that the song along of the hymn “would stave off the madness that curled under the pungent sunlight” (TD53). She realizes that:

The walls of her mind were caving in like black tenement buildings in Shambazar. The children near Tara were screaming now, making each Raghupati and Raghava crackle, eyeing the fruits offered to the icons on silver plates. Their bright animal-eyes darted from little table to table. A liveliness or greed settled on the children and quickened their song. Tara had not thought that holy names could seem so abrasive. (TD53)

The first eight chapters of the novel clearly reveal Tara’s apprehensions, her angst, her paranoia and her inability to cope with the cultural clash. The problems, perspectives, issues, concerns and questions that Tara have are the clear representations of every immigrant Indian who comes back to his home land with the hope of reclaiming his lost life and identity.

Tara finds it extremely difficult to come to terms with American life when she is dispatched to America at the early age of fifteen for her studies.
For Tara Vassar had been an almost unsalvageable mistake. If she had not been a Banerjee, a Bengali Brahmin, the great granddaughter of Hari Lal Banerjee, or perhaps if she had not been trained by the good nuns at St. Blaise’s to remain composed and ladylike in all emergencies, she would have rushed home to India at the end of her first week. (TD10)

Amit slowly and steadily fails Dimple in her expectations and commitments towards her. Dimple tries to openly disclose and convey her fears to Amit but this causes no serious and grounding changes in her relationships. Amit does not make any attempt to raise above her expectations. Dimple is therefore surrounded by many psychic tribulations like mental breakdown, daytime sleeping, and her state of indecisiveness, her despair, so on and so forth. Dimple fights a losing battle with her problems all alone. Her loss of hope is expressed in the novel as, “She had expected pain when she had come to America, had told herself that pain was part of any new beginning, and the sweet structure of that new life had allotted pain a special place” (109)

Dimple turns up to Ina, Leni, and finally towards Milt Glasser in her moments of hopelessness and drains. Ina and Leni also fail her in spite of being her friends. Milt does prove to be her solace but this does not continue for long. The inner-self as a rebellious woman asks her to find very many ways to contemplate suicide. She says, “I’m terrible in crises” (WIF 204). She had already mentioned of her psyche to Meena and extra marital affair adds to her feelings of guilt. Her efforts to confide to Amit of her problems did not materialize. She had but no choice to take the drastic and the traumatic step of murdering her husband. Dimple convinced herself that she could not go on with this life of pains and anguish forever and ever. Dimple’s thought process is presented by the author as, “but he never thought of such things, never thought 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” (WIF 212) Dimple becomes calm, placid and cool. She takes a knife out of
the drawer and brings it towards her husband’s hair-line and keeps hitting on it several
times and this is done to punish Amit of his ignorance for Dimple.

The emotional detachment and drain causes a psychological break down in
Dimple. This earlier has its maturation in Calcutta but gained its fruitions due to
disappointments in marriage. She constantly keeps worrying about her dejection in
marriage which causes her emotional detachment. There is a sense of envy in her for
her friend Pixey, who works for the All India Radio, with regard to her openness with
the outside world. Dimple has no objective in her life and this does not concern her.
She is weak-willed and is angry with the fact that her own culture gives no
importance to her, because she is a woman. She finds no way to articulate her loss of
identity. She does nothing to overcome her impotent rage. She mutters of her
helplessness as “I’ll wear synthetic saris if I want to! I’ll wear any goddamn thing I
want to, so there!” (WIF 117). Her stringent Indian culture and tradition restrain her to
let out her unfulfilled emotions. Her exposure to the new culture makes her a non-
conformist and causes her sterio typical Hindu concept of Wife to fade away. She is
invited and offered a drink on many occasions but resists because of the fear of Amit
and the news of her new attitude reaching her mother-in-law. When she visits the
apartment of Mukherjis who have left for India, she yearns to put on to Marsha’s
American clothes, thus inadvertently taking up an identity new to her. She wants to
rejoice, freak out and stand tall but the thought of going against her culture stops her.
The Bengali couples in New York, like the Sens, the Bhattacharyas and the Basus, are portrayed Mukherjee to show the predicament of this Asian immigrant community in metropolitan America. These people are drawn by the promise of America which brings and instills into them, a series of new opportunities and a new future. It also does sever the Indian identity as a costly compensation to the promises of an illuminating future. Jyoti Sen, in the novel, tells Amit: “With old friends why put an act? …. I’m going to retire when I’m forty, go back and build a five-lakh house and become the maharaja of Lower Circular Road! (WIF53).

It’s a hard reality and a distant dream to every man in India to earn all the money he can, enjoy the luxury there but settle down in India. They become mere expatriates in America, and do not reflect what Ms.Mukherjee calls “the exuberance of immigration” (Leong 488). Women do not have any identity of their own because they are practically not involved in any activity of the mainstream, and are recognized with the identity given to them by their men. In a sense, they are prisoners of their fate. They do not have an independent life of their own because, her in- laws and parents become the remote controls of their whims. Meena Sen cannot give her daughter the name she wants because of the fear that her mother- in- law in India would only prefer the name Alokanda. The disapproval of the name Judy as suggested by Milt Glasser only shows her dismay to identify herself with American culture. The women on the one hand are caught up with the culture they cannot disown and on the other hand, they want to stay away from the culture of the alien land.
Mukherji’s apartment is now occupied by Dimple and Amit after he has found a job as a boiler engineer. Dimple is to herself with no guidance, companionship or belongingness as she drifts herself away into an oblivion. She stays aloof from all activities, be it physical or mental. Dimple lacks vision and ambition to propel her to a sense of direction. She has no comprehension of her past or a sense of progression towards her future. Dimple gets into a state of psychological tryst with herself. This makes her inflict violence on Amit. Dimple contemplates various ways of committing suicide and also meditates on murdering Amit, though she does not consider killing seriously.

The latent propensity for violence in her, manifested in her Calcutta days in her husband’s house, and in her skipping rope to kill the foetus in her womb, is brought out and activated under the pressure of the new environment. “Setting fire to a sari had been one of the seven types of suicide Dimple had recently devised” (WIF 115).

An intense feeling of home sickness envelops Tara and she prays to Goddess Kali to bestow strength and hope. Circumstances make her fall in love with an American. The differences in points of view and perspectives of Tara and David are judiciously exploited by the novelist to portray the cultural rift in communication and ways of life. The institution of marriage in India is a foil to the one in America. Indians consider marriage as a sacred union of not only two individuals but also two families. Marriage enjoys a special place in the hearts and culture of India and Indians. Marriage is a merger of two souls into one in the east but the westerners view marriage as a social contract which can be made and bade easily. The novel is an elongated struggle and shuffle between two cultures that Tara encounters throughout. The struggle and strife between the cultures constitute the breaking down of her personality into many segments.
The frustration and futility of her life in India are symbolically represented by many train journeys between Bombay and Calcutta. Tara’s psyche vacillates from sympathy, irony, anguish, sorrow and inability to cope with the changing and testing times. The novelist is dexterous when she describes the cultural assimilation witnessed by Tara through the course of the novel. The novelist clearly reveals the differences in culture and the struggles Tara face to reconcile the worlds of differences. “It was so vague, so pointless, so diffuse, this trip home to India” (TD130). Tara also “Knew she could never tell David that the misery of her city was too immense and blurred to be listed and assailed one by one”(TD131). She is caught up in the vicious circle of human relationships at home and overseas so much “That it was fatal to fight for justice, that it was better to remain passive and absorb all shocks as they came” (TD131).

A critical perusing of the novel clearly highlights the cross-cultural burdens and predicaments faced by an Indian woman. The fact of the matter is that, Tara is one of the first best fictious creations of Mukherjee to bring out the problems of feminism blended with cultural assimilation. She is torn apart by the feeling of loneliness and rootlessness in the novel. She has to undergo a feeling of alienation and no sense of belongingness in the story. The novel remains open ended making the reader to decide whether or not she returned to her husband."And Tara, still locked in a car across the street from the Catelli-Continental, wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she didn't, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely”(TD210).The ending of the novel suggests the various ways of self – discovery a woman undergoes in a world of despair and rootlessness.
The novel is a sordid representation of Tara Banerjee Cartwright, a twenty two year old “sensitive person, sensitive especially to places” (TD12), and her much awaited re-union with her family after seven long years of stay abroad. “After seven years abroad… that had swept her from Calcutta to Poughkeepsie, and Madison, and finally to … Columbia” (TD33). It describes whether she ate “curried hamburger” (TD34), or decorated her apartment “to make her apartment more Indian’ and “burned incense sent from home” (TD34) to shun the “despair” and “homesickness” (TD13) during her time of life spent in America. Tara returns to recapitulate that, “longing-for Camac Street, where she had grown up”. (TD10) Her Indian homeland waits to “desecrate her shrine of nostalgia” (TD26). Ultimately the protagonist discovers to her dismay that “she was in a racist New York, where “girls like her … were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings” (TD33-34).

Tara is a fine description of the changes she foresaw on her return to India, very different from the one pictured as Indian in her dreams and memories. She is welcomed and greeted by her relatives at the airport with “garlands and sweetmeats to put her at ease” (TD17). Tara feels restless when she comes home and she is addressed with her childhood nick-name “She had not remembered the Bombay relatives' nickname for her. No one had called her Tultul in years … It was difficult to listen to these strangers” (TD17).

She finds the apartments crowded and congested when being driven at the streets of Mumbai. She remembers admiring these apartments seven years ago on her trip to the US, “admired the houses on Marine Drive, had thought them fashionable … now their shabbiness appalled her” (TD18). There is a clear evidence of the flux of time in the novel which Tara had not expected. She wanted India to be stable and always replete with its Indianness. The two day train journey in turn provided her with a horrifying experience of the transition:
For years she had dreamed of this return to India. She had believed that all hesitations, all shadowy fears of the time abroad would be erased quite magically if she could just return home to Calcutta. But so far the return had brought only wounds. First the corrosive hours on Marine Drive, then the deformed beggars in the railway station, and now the inexorable train ride steadily undid what strength she had held in reserve. (TD 25)

The neurosis of Dimple gets increased with the dynamic environment at America. This is seen as, “While driving the just arrived Basus to his apartment, Jyoti Sen recounts a triple murder in a drugstore” (WIF 51). Jyoti Sen tells Dimple about a murder in Nevada or Nebraska, and she thought it was…. because he wanted her to be relaxed, to enjoy the coffee” (WIF 99). This attitude to violence increases her malice to be violent. This makes her preoccupied with suicide and finds herself a release of angst with her husband’s homicide. Dimple is dissatisfied with marriage and throws the frustration on Amit. At first, she devises various ways of suicidal plans but later, they issue out in action with Amit.

It becomes ironical when one realizes that Dimple is in no way connected to Amit. He becomes totally non existant and unreal to her. “Amit did not feed her fantasy life; he was merely the provider of small material comforts” (WIF 113).

Bharati Mukherje feels that Amit is solely responsible for his own murder because he never did treat Dimple as his wife either in India or in New York. Amit never thought her to be his wife in his true sense. Amit restricted her liberty and did not allow her to take up any job nor did he give her the respect and love she deserved. At no point of time in the novel, Amit thought of re-thinking Dimple’s decision to go back to India.
after they had arrived to United States. There is a serious dearth of understanding between Dimple and Amit, which drives her to suicidal thoughts and finally his murder.

Dimple finds the psychological deterioration of herself in the apartment. She becomes further furious when Ina Mullick and her crony Leni Anspach spoil her carpet without compunction, and make her feel lonely. She tries to come to terms with reality by thinking of her past roots in Calcutta. She also tries to project her anguish through her continuous vomiting. Dimple’s obsession with her Amit’s murder, her alienation and her lack of identity are all conditioned by her sense of disapproval from her husband and the others. This bizarre circumstance throughout the novel makes the reader clear of the endings of the novel and also justifies this brutality. The Indian culture which must have prepared her to be self-reliant, confident and audacious has instead let her down and made her murder her husband.

Amit is preoccupied with his own professional problems and does treat Dimple with kindness. He therefore instigates Dimple to live a life of loneliness, in a new land. She is held between the cultural disparities represented by Ina Marsha Mookherji and her brother, Milt Glasser. She protests the unfair treatment meted out to her passively to restore her identity in the beginning. Then later, Ina and her hunchback friend, Leni Anspach, fall out in her apartment. Then, Leni throws an ashtray at Ina and casually adds, “It’s only a lousy kitsch ashtray for God’s sake. I’ll go down to Khanna’s India Emporium and buy her a dozen, okay?” (WIF148). She was never inherently capable of this strange conduct. In a state of mute revenge, she keeps pouring tea over their cups and onto the carpet until they stop her. In recollection, “she savoured the physical sensation” (WIF152).
Dimple is therefore left in lurch to survive in a lonely and an unfriendly environment. This traumatic change resulted in neglecting the conduct of Marsha’s brother, Milt Glasser. He hugs her, and then lifts her in the kitchen. This made her uncomfortable in the beginning but slowly she realized the comfort zone with him that was lacking in Amit. He realizes her uncomfortable feel but does nothing to get her out of her predicaments. He promises her to take her to India reluctantly but this causes no avail in Dimple. Amit’s nonchalant behaviour instigates her to seduce Milt in their apartment one afternoon. She is guilt free, does not question her infidelity and monogamy because she was forced to lose them by her husband.

Milt also proves to be secretive and does not openly express anything about himself to Dimple. He also does not tell her the source of his income. She was expected to be satisfied with his reply when he says, “I’ m not just hustling the foundations” (WIF199). He constantly reassures her of the fact that he loves her. Milt also offers her a ray of hope and offers to maintain her sanity. Dimple attempts to overcome her sense of guilt towards adultery. She therefore conspires with herself to murder Amit and keep his body in the freezer. Amit becomes the reason for her accumulated problems and her infidelity. This makes her deviate between killings Amit and killing herself.

Dimple represents the embodiment of loneliness under the umbrella of Indian wife, who lives and settles in the U.S. This is commented by Sivaramakrishna as, “finding herself out of depths in a foreign country with an alien milieu-this situation of ‘culture shock’ is too trite to need analysis- but essentially it is the agony of a voice struggling for identity and getting stifled repeatedly” (80). The story beautifully tells the experiences of a submissive middle class Indian wife, who decides to marry an
engineer abiding by the wishes of her parents and gets in the fits of psychological neurosis due to the injustices she encountered. Bharati Mukherjee has poignantly depicted the psyche of Dimple:

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 pretty pink and the flakes were misty and would have embarrassed any advertiser, and then saw the head fall off but of course it was her imagination because she was not sure any more what she had seen on the private screen of three A.M and it stayed upright, still with its eyes averted from her face …women on television got away with murder (WIF 212-213).

Dimple has been understood from the shoes of her inner psyche. Dimple as the name suggests is an example of flawed beauty. The name is enchanting on the one hand but lexically means a disturbed self. The commotion she faces within herself is examples of her disturbed psyche, filled with irritations around herself. When Dimple looks at the lakes, “She hated the lakes, thought of them as death” (WIF 29). Her name “just does not suit” (WIF 18) her. Her flat is “horrid” (WIF 18). She hates Amit’s taking her to Kwality: “He should have taken her to Trinca’s” (WIF 21). Her craze for the ideal man carved out of “a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eyes and chin from a body-builder and shoulder ads, the stomach and legs from a trousers ad” (WIF 23), succinctly explains her abnormal self longing for a perfect man of her dreams.
Dimple’s broken marital happiness is symbolized by the mole on her husband’s chest. She stabs on her husband’s mole seven times, which also symbolizes the ritualistic journey of coming around seven times around the fire during marriage. The slitting of her husband also means the breaking away of the marital cord. The fragmented and broken psyche is impeccably portrayed by the author in the novel. Dimple moves from a silent state of resentment to exasperation and finally to a state of violence and homicide.

Dimple on the one hand is troubled but she is also humorous on the other hand. She also has in her the unseen facet of humour and playfulness like a child which is curious to see the anger in men when, she drops “bits of newspapers, hair balls, nail clippings, down to the heads below to make them jerk upward in anger” (WIF 33). Dimple often “sucked into the centre of cone-shaped emotions that made her sweat, cry loudly, sit up in bed” (WIF 34). Mukherjee tries to re-discover the child-like qualities in Dimple so as to re-create the storyline in tandem with the theme of the novel. Dimple is a subtle human being who has in her fissures of melancholy and at the same time, fringes of humour. She seeks a different outlook towards life and longs for “a different kind of life” (WIF 3). Her preference to marry a neuro-surgeon does hint the reader of her neurosis only at the end of the novel. She begins to be inclined for a neuro surgeon at the beginning but later prefers to get married to an Engineer. Dimple does not prefer neuro-surgeons because the novel is a series of detours on the trajectories of her mind that finally unravel the inate desire to belong and be belonged to.

The reason to get married to an engineer was not because of the physical need or attraction for Amit but a more psychological need to be rich and the need for plenty. She is clearly conscious of being ugly and therefore substitutes the paucity of physical
beauty to money in her prospective groom. She fantasizes of all TV soaps that project and promotes beauty. This is also a humorous instance of her obsession with the self, when she writes a letter to ask for pieces of advice from, the experts of Beauty. She writes down a letter to Miss Problemwalla, C/o Eve’s Beauty Basket, Bombay, to clarify the problem of her bust which was not so much developed. She also wanted her husband to be a bundle of desires towards advertisements of beauty. Dimple is therefore a thorough blend to advertisement and erotic fantasies which are violent and effacing “At night she hallucinated. Sometimes when she entered the bathroom in the dark, the toilet seat twitched like a coiled snake. Tight, twisted shapes lunged at her from behind cupboards or tried to wrestle her into bed” (WIF 12-13).

Her mother thought that they “were a part of getting married” Dimple felt that, marriage would free her, fill her with passion,” she waits “discreet and virgin … for real life to begin” (WIF 13)----- But what does marriage offer her? Only mute bickering of the self. Her life with Amit in the choking milieu of the narrow flat propels her to hysterical ruminations with her dreamy self. Happy people to Dimple “did not talk to themselves” (WIF 21).

Dimple’s character is a psychic representation of an abnormal woman. Dimple, “angers her husband by making fun of his dress, spilling curry on his shirt font. 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” (WIF 69). The description of her evading pregnancy is subtly described by the author so as to make one understand the abnormal self of Dimple. This is shown in the novel as:
She had 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 the tight little curve of her stomach. She had poured until the last of the blood washed off her legs; then she had collapsed (WIF 42).

The digression and diachronic movements of the plot in the novel become more serious and intrinsic when the problem of aborting the child is shown more seriously thereby making it ghastly. The fists of mental break down are seen when she kills a mouse and sadistically atones for the killing. Her anger is directed upon herself as well as her husband. The killing of the mouse is made more weird and bizarre because she reasons the act and says, “she hated the invisible mice for disrupting her daydreams-she could not dare borrow features from a rodent” (WIF 34).

Dimple wants to do away with the traditional taboos of life and therefore spends her life and time in wild fantasies. The killing of the mouse symbolizes the suicide of herself. Dimple feels as though she is a bug in the United States and therefore feels humiliated and dejected.

It was as if some force was impelling her towards disaster; some monster had overtaken her body, a creature with serpentine curls and heaving bosom that would erupt indiscreetly through one of Dimple’s orifices, leaving her, Dimple Basu, splattered like a bug on the living room wall and rug (WIF 156).

Bharati Mukerjee’s *Wife*, shows Dimple as a woman, who wants to break away from the shackles of a typical wife. She wants to be known as someone who shares an independent identity and not merely called Amit’s wife. She longs earnestly for freedom and happiness in marriage but ironically, she is bestowed with resentment, anger, dejection, frustration and bitterness.
The novel is all about displacement and alienation in the life of a young Bengali wife, Dimple who longs for happiness but becomes numb to the circumstances and finally a murderer. She is,

Sensitive enough to feel the pain, but not intelligent enough to make sense of her situation to break out. The American culture and society and the traditional constraints surrounding an Indian wife between a feminist desire to be assertive and independent and the Indian need to be submissive and self-effacing. Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma of subversion exercised by the values, ideals of freedom, and individuality identified with America, and the cultural identity Dimple’s that they undermine and unravel” (Leong 490).

In *The Tiger’s Daughter* the two male passengers, a Marvari and a Nepali, with whom Tara travels, provide her with the hope of finding her ancestral identity: She finds these fellow travellers uphold the solidarity and impressions she had for them.

Her Bombay aunt would have said all Marwaris are ugly, frugal and vulgar, and all Nepalis are lecherous… The Marwari was indeed very ugly and tiny and insolent…. The Nepali was a fidgety older man with coarse hair…. Both men, Tara decided, could effortlessly ruin her journey to Calcutta. (TD20)

These two men compliment and comprehend her as “foreign-returned” (TD23). On reaching Calcutta, she is shocked at the changes she witnessed.

The Bombay relatives and their servants came to the railway station to see her off. The uncle rushed ahead, keeping track of the coolie who had Tara’s light bags. Tara, lagging behind with several nephews, thought the station was more like a hospital; there were so many sick and deformed men sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks (TD19).
The “squalor” of Calcutta’s Howrah Station, dense with its coolies and vendors and beggars, first “took Tara by surprise” (TD27), then fills her with “outrage” (TD27) and “confusion” (TD27). She was enveloped by many coolies and relatives “They had come to the railway station in two small delivery trucks” (TD28), Tara becomes extremely dejected at the thought of events that happen. She feels lonely and strange in her own homeland. “For a moment she thought she was going mad …Calcutta had already begun to exert its darkness over her, she thought.” (TD28-30) The only person whom she felt accommodating was, her father.

Tara felt aloof and “cut off” (TD89) in the presence of her family and friends, as she was unable to relate to them. Many a time she had framed in her memory of the prayer she offered with her mother but the same prayer evaporated. For her, “It was not a simple loss, Tara feared, this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and centre” (TD51).

The sense of alienation was acute even in the company of her friends at “Camac Street” (TD10). Tara’s thought of being a stranger in the family was intensified when her friends accused her of doing away with her caste and getting married to an American. Her husband was considered an outcast because; he belonged to a different race and class. It became extremely obvious when her friends perceived an American, always as a white. This serious misconception of race is also seen when an American exchange student, Washington McDowell, frequented Calcutta. The happiness of Reena’s family was short-lived when they found him, usually called “the African” (TD138), in India, was at their home.

In a serious introspection, she feels that the sense of alienation happens to her not only in America, where she had “watched the New York snow settle over new architecture, blonde girls, Protestant matrons, and Johnny Mathis” (TD37), but also to her hometown, Calcutta.
How does the foreignness of the spirit begin? Tara wondered. Does it begin right in the centre of Calcutta, with forty ruddy Belgian women, fat foreheads swelling under starched white headdresses, long black habits intensifying the hostility of the Indian sun? The nuns had taught her to inject the right degree of venom into words like common and vulgar. They had taught her the Pirates of Penzance in singing class, and “If I should die, think only this for me” – for elocution”. (TD37)

Tara's alienation in her homeland can be aptly summarized by Gikandi's words, the “gap between the desire for a home and the reality of homelessness” (TD 34).

Tara’s lamentations and struggles make the reader clear of the fact that, she expected her family and her relatives to offer her solace on the issues of her loneliness and cultural disparity. The word home, as defined by her in her primitive years as a teenager is no more the same. It has lost the purity and sanctity of its essence with the passage of time. The furniture in the living room, that was imported, “heavy, dark, incongruous pieces whose foreignness had been only slightly mitigated by brilliantly coloured Indian upholstery”(TD31-32), the “Sears and Roebuck garden swing, sold to the Banerjees by a departing librarian of the local USIS”(TD33), and “the canvas easy chairs in the verandah-reminiscent of the order and ease of the British days”(TD33), are all gleeful pictures of India that once had its Indian identity. Being a descendant of Zamindars, in Calcutta, which was one of the first places of British colonization in India, she finds it awfully difficult to adjust to the newer changes. The Zamindar family was the first in the village to adopt to the culture of the British but ironically, Tara, being the lineage, could do nothing to changing situations and overcome her sense of alienation.
The events of the novel draw to a grinding halt, and Tara prepares herself to face the ghastly changes that have been brought by time and culture. She finally reconciles with the fact that, the ancestral home in which she once belonged to, and the home where she asserted her identity is no more the same utopian ideal she had thought of. On the contrary, Calcutta that she had imagined in New York had become to Tara, as, “the deadliest city in the world” (TD168)

Tara decides to leave for the United States unable to bear the sense of nostalgia. There were plans of her departure and “If she were to stay, she thought, there would be other concessions, other deals and compromises, all menacing and unbearably real, waiting to be made” (TD202). After seven years of her stay abroad and her homecoming, had made her realize that, “reentry had been barred” (TD110). The novel ends with Tara indecisive and confused, where she is locked in a car at the Catelli-Continental Hotel, and surrounded by an angry mob of naxalites who protested on the killing of Pranab. The novel closes with the dilemma of Tara when she wonders if “she would ever get out of Calcutta” (TD210).

Dimple’s dream was realized when she came to the U.S but tells her friend that “there are some things I can’t do. Wearing pants is one of them. I couldn’t walk down the street in your pants and sweaters, “and then she asks “what’s more normal and graceful than a sari”? (WIF32). Amit also takes off his western wear when he returns home from office and wears a thin kurta to make himself comfortable at home. These cultural complications that Indians face are also clearly picturized by the author. Amit together with Dimple want to be a part of Americanization, though they innately long for their nativity. They earnestly long to go back to India but their ego does not allow them to do so. Dimple had an intense internal pain when she first
stepped into the U.S but she convinced herself that the pain was ephemeral and was because of the new beginning she had undergone. “She had not anticipated inertia, exhaustion, endless indecisiveness” (WIF 115). Calcutta and the life there was never her cup of tea. She longs for a life back home only after she reached America. “If she were to stand in the lobby and say to the first ten people she says, “Do you know it’s almost October and Durga Pujah is coming?” They would think she was mad. She could not live with people who didn’t understand about Durga Pujah” (WIF 114).

The novel presents a cultural clash of ideas when Dimple was brought up only to think that the sole job of every woman was to be beautiful, responsible and be the care takers of their husband and children. She wanted to freak out free in the American environment but still she felt difficult to acclimatize herself to the alien environment. Amit had his freedom to be and become what he wanted to. He experiences to choose a value; he also creates and discards new values unlike Dimple, who cannot bank on any modern values.

Dimple cannot adapt herself to the American way of life though she tries her best to emulate Ina Mullick. “Sleeping was worse than staying awake, for then she was sucked into the center of cone-shaped emotions that made her sweat, cry loudly, sit up in bed” (WIF 34). Her husband was a complete stranger to her and felt that he was possessed by some ghost in this new land. She felt that her emotional balance had been toyed with and that “a creature with serpentine curls and heaving bosom that would erupt indiscreetly through one of Dimple’s orifices” (WIF 156). Her television dissuades her into a world of vacuum and she is caught “between what she has seen on TV and what she had imagined” (WIF 157).
The thought of killing Amit made Dimple “feel very American somehow, almost like a character in a TV series” (WIF 195). She is not able to adjust to the familial circumstances. Amit makes her feel alienated in his search for pompous and attractive job offers. She lives in an atmosphere of utter hopelessness. Amit does not spend time with her and she is “bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined” (WIF 101-102). She constantly wants to dream of Amit in vain because, “Amit did not feed her fantasy life; he was merely the provider of small material comforts. In bitter moments she ranked husband, blender, colour TV, cassette tape recorder, stereo, in their order of convenience” (WIF 113).

The hostile circumstances feed her depression and ultimately she becomes distressed and depressed. There were potential signs of her disturbed psyche uprooted back home in Calcutta and these signs insinuate the continuity of them in America too. She feels confused and sad as she “suffers the terrible assaults of lonely existence” (WIF 117) in the united states and her body becomes “curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, an insane desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne” (WIF 117). She asserts inherently that she would have been some one stable had she married someone else and anybody else than Amit would have cherished and possessed her with utmost love. She attends and organizes parties to gear up with the aloofness that Amit had given her. She mutters,

I would read up recipes and make watercress soup. I would do wonders with two carrots and chicken. You know what I mean? Something daring and glamorous… “It were my party, I’d serve drinks indoors and food on the patio. Or should it be food indoors and drinks in the patio?” (WIF 88-89).
Tara defines Bengal as a stable landscape of cultural solidarity and identification. This is in stark contrast to the aesthetic and naturalistic opening of the village, Pachapara, which is amidst a gala of celebrations, the place, “was losing its memories in a bonfire of effigies, buses and trams” (WIF 9). The end of Tara’s stay makes her realize the “cool green spaces: (WIF 105) and “forests” (WIF 105), “she had once associated with the Bengal of her origins are on longer recoverable, that something or the other had “killed them” (WIF 207).

Tara feels uncomfortable and uneasy when she is confronted with multiple questions posed by her friends and relatives on the life and landscape of America. She herself is encountered with numerous questions on her life in India, “seven years ago, she had played with these friends, done her homework with Nilima, briefly fancied herself in love with Pronob, debated with Reena at the British Council” (TD 43). But now after her return from America, “she feared their tone, their omissions, their aristocratic oneness” (TD43). Tara’s friends cannot accept the American way of life and question her on their whims and perceptions of it. Her marriage is not much approved of because her relatives reflect that Tara had stooped to marry David, by leaving her caste and Brahmin hood in lurch. She herself feels that her mother does not love her anymore for she had abandoned her caste and married a foreigner. Her mother perhaps was offended with the fact that she no longer remained a Brahmin woman. She was unable to vent her feelings by writing a letter because, her husband would not authenticate the Indian marital system. “Her voice in these letters was insipid or shrill, and she tore them up, winging at the waste of seventy-five naye paise for each mistake. She felt …the bitterness of slogans scrawled of walls of stores and hotels” (TD 63)
A friend of hers, Joyonto R. Choudhary, takes her to see the funeral pyres at the Ganges. Tara’s friends organize a picnic to celebrate her return. The social, cultural, psychological and emotional hick up she faces becomes acute. During the course of the picnic, she becomes hyper on seeing a water snake, which was harmless. A little girl assaults her in squalor because she was jealous of Tara’s sari. Tara’s cultural and emotional displacement, become more acute when, she meets up with an industrialist and politician, P.K. Tuntunwala, on a train journey to Calcutta. Tara visits Nayapur, with her friends when, Tuntunwala, seduces and exploits her in a room. This makes her turn cynical and disillusioned at the thought of India and Indian mindscape. She desperately seeks solace through communication which does not support her outburst.

Tara’s first reaction had been to complain to Sanjay and Pronob, to tell them Tuntunwala was a parasite who would survive only at their expense. But the outrage soon [...]. In a land where a friendly smile, an accidental brush of fingers, can ignite rumors -even lawsuits-how is one to speak of Mr. Tuntunwala’s violence? (TD199).

Tara goes to a temple shrine as she has surpassed the prejudices she had framed at America in terms of her cultural background. She has learnt to come to terms with her religious and ethnic roots. The furious mob that shouted slogans, hurled stones and its uproar made Pranab get killed in the violence. This makes Tara depressed and therefore plans to leave for the U.S. disappointed. She is shown as a Tigress in the emotionally drained forests of Bengal. The novel ends in Tara being inside a car and the mob stoning the car. An inner voice reveals that she would be safe-guarded by an ancestral spirit. Bharati Mukherjee’s success lies in portraying a
cultural conflict through the eyes of a Tigress and her impotent rage throughout the novel. The novel subtly traces the cultural displacement, Identity crises and the loss of belongingness from the perspective of the immigrants. Their enigma and inner conflict is distinctly shown in the novel.

Tara, the protagonist of the novel is shown as an outcast because of her marriage with a man outside her caste, and race. She feels alienated from her friends and becomes displaced. Her rootless ness is seen from an outsider’s perspective. There is also a decry of the decline of Calcutta after the communist’s regime. She feels that she has become lonely and the world has become a desolate space. The paranoia and the angst intensifies when Tara gets raped brutally by an unscrupulous and wicked politician who constantly rapes peasants and also grabs land in the name of industrial progress. The novel is a clear presentment of her husband’s wish who wanted her to stay in the United States and Tara’s persistence to visit India. The tension in the novel catches up with her coming to India and the instances that follow.

Dimple spends her time reading magazines, and eating Pizzas. She also likes window shopping. TV becomes her only solace and pass time. Many parties are organized to accentuate social gathering at home and she constantly checks “if the hostess was supposed to provide the cigarettes as well as the coffee” (WIF 146). The life style of the elite class was exposed to her by Bengali movies. Dimple thinks of Milt and Ina when Ina gives him a massage as:

Happy people, gravitate; she was not a happy person. But she could imitate them in her dreams, fake punches, tell indecent jokes, walk like a model, be incautious, extravagant, scandalous no one would know. Amit was not like Milt and Ina. She could not imagine him on the floor, laid out on his stomach, being tickled by a woman (WIF 189).
But soon Dimple realises the superficiality of her existence and feels disgusted with it. In the thick of despairing moments, “she felt like a shadow without feelings” (WIF 200). Later she tells Meena Sen that she is in a terrible crisis and that she is suffering from insomnia and headaches, which Meena interprets as “homesickness” (WIF 205).

The problem with Dimple is that, she does not strike a balance between the world she once lived in India and the one she lives in the United States. Initially there were inhibitions of the tabooed Bengali life. She felt that “Marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love.” (WIF208). She constantly dreamed of becoming Sita, the ideal wife of legendary Rama, who walked through fire upon her husband’s request. Ironically, her dreams remained only dreams at the end. Amit could not cull out time from earning money. Dimple gets frustrated to the extent that words like loyalty, fidelity, love and care become meaningless words and therefore decides to murder her husband. Her frenzied state of mind kept increasing when she left India for America. It further aggravated with her husband’s aloofness. The environment at the United States elevated the grief even more. These circumstances made her loose her sanity. The novelist ends the novel with a sad note when one is given the picture of a hysterical woman who has become “impulsive, foolish … a maniac” (WIF 212), with watching “women on Television got away with murder” (WIF 213) and finally murdering her husband.

*Wife* deals candidly on the issues of displacement, disgust and alienation. *Wife* is the story of a Bengali wife, Dimple Mukerjee. The kernel of the novel talks of a woman, who dreams, yearns, fantasizes, rebels and finally kills her husband.
Mukherjee discusses the unfulfilled journey of girl, who becomes a victim of depression, in a foreign land after marrying a man of her father’s wish. The novel’s progression brings to light the hidden intentions of retribution in an Indian woman, who was brought up in a traditional, conservative family. The story is the reconciliation of a Bengali wife, who defines the roles and jobs of an ideal wife to the demands of an Americanized way of life. Dimple does not have the courage and perseverance to cope with the changing times and life style of America. The novel is a telltale version of a woman who comes to America with a lot of dreams, who is torn between two cultures and finally kills her husband and commits suicide for not being able to reconcile the cultures. The wife is shown as a weak and meek personality who is transformed with time. “Dimple Dasgupta had set her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon, but her father was looking for engineers in the matrimonial ads” (WIF 3).

She is a traditional upper class woman who derives the notions of marriage and husband from Bengali films, magazines, and the columns periodicals on women that give advice. The marriage was pompous and went well after the horoscopes matched. Amit was her father’s choice. He was an Engineer who went constantly from Canada to the U.S. Dimple is one of the many examples of women who marry according to her parent’s wishes and exercise no authority of will to choose her spouse.

Mukherjee has skillfully mastered the predicaments and amalgamated them in the form of a story-line. Postcolonial India has become more industrialized than being agrarian. The downtrodden sections of the society have now begun to assert their rights. In *The Tiger’s Daughter*, every action of an individual is centered around the government’s hegemony to crush them. Tara comes back to her home land after a
break of seven years only to find the modified Calcutta filled with protests, demonstrations and political uproar. In these deviant cultural and political differences, Tara aims to synchronize with the old world. Her father is the center of the old world with the dominant Bengali facet and the new world of communist government. She had already experienced discrimination and deception in the United States, when she says, “Little things pained her. If her roommate did not share her bottle of mango chutney, she sensed discrimination” (TD9). Tara’s inability to share her inner commotion and pain with her parents – “Dearest Mummy and Daddy” (TD10). She tried writing letters to confide her bottled up emotions and her immense love for Johnny Mathis.

As each atom of newness bombarded her she longed for Camac Street, where she had grown up in a house surrounded by imported furniture, that filtered sunlight and unwelcome guests through an elaborate system of coir blinds, rose-water sprays, durwans, bearers, heavy doors, locks, chains, and hooks (TD 30).

Tara thought in vain that her visit to India would end her cultural and emotional controversies. The present world she witnessed was a string of disturbances and political predicaments. She always had an indelible affinity to Camac Street. Calcutta had now become a restless place with riots from Tibet. These rioters became intolerant. They targeted ransacking industries and beheaded businessmen. They took them to their own lands, the resources of Calcutta, slowly and steadily.

Tara has little idea of the turmoil that Calcutta undergoes when she comes to her home town after seven years. She loses her identity and feels that she does not belong to any of the countries. Tara is aware of the fact that she cannot adapt to the emerging and changing scenario at her homeland. She is scorned by her relatives for
her inadaptability. David’s letters during monsoon also depress her completely. Her husband had told her of his reading of Ved Mehta’s journals about India, in New York. These journals reported on the impending dangers that surround Tara. He mentioned to Tara that Calcutta had become garbage of collectivism, where disease and sickness surround. It’s a place for “survival to the lower forms, insects and sludge worms” (TD 202). The impressions on Calcutta which Tara had, started fading away. Her identity became a question to be seriously pondered. Tara submits herself to be sexually molested by a politician not being able to refute or oppose him. Her identity is at stake with this incident and the fears of being left lonely at Calcutta takes her over. Despair against despair, she finds herself not being able to cope with any of the worlds.

Tara travelled to America at fifteen and adopted the American way of life since then. She becomes home-sick and fearful at the ethnic problems there. “New York was certainly extraordinary, and it had her to despair. On days when she had thought she could not possibly survive, she had shaken out all her silk scarves, ironed them and hung them to make the apartment more Indian.” (TD 34)

She was destined to marry an American, who was a westerner by birth and values. Tara’s duty bound tasks as a wife failed to impress upon him. Her familial customs and traditions did not find a place in David’s culture. He kept asking her questions after questions on Indian culture and practices. She put up with all troubles with a hope of returning to Calcutta and restoring her identity. She pined for the times of Sathyajith Ray, where children ran around to play in greenery, where aristocrats listened to melodious music in empty rooms. She rather witnessed a restless city encountered by fanantics and fundamentalists. Calcutta was slowly losing its identity
to demonstrations, effigies and trams. It had an untiring attitude to evolve into a city. “Tragedy was not uncommon in Calcutta. The newspaper was full of epidemics, collusions, fatal quarrels and starvation stretching before her was the vision of modern India.”(TD 177)

Dimple becomes pregnant on moving to her mother-in-law’s place. She considers the baby as an interference of her trip abroad. It was her idea that Indian women would work part time in the US by becoming librarians. She therefore wanted to evade pregnancy because she thought the baby to be an intruder into her American dreams. She induced miscarriage by playing on a skipping rope until her legs became numb. The United States gives her a string of varied experiences from being a typical traditional Indian housewife to becoming a fund raiser during parties at Manhattan. The topics of conversations in the parties were different from those in the Indian set up and way of life. She gains an acquaintance with Ina Mullick, a typical American housewife whose command of English fascinates. Ina offered her a glass of Gin, though she was tempted to accept the drink, she tried to impress upon Amit of her staunch upholding to the traditional Bengali values. She was afraid if Amit would write to his mother accusing her of getting drunk in gatherings.

Dimple is caught up in the crossfire of cultures and it is difficult to uphold one of the two completely. She is caught between her cultural deeds and her inherent needs that lead her to constant conflict between herself and the world outside. Language also becomes a barrier when she is neither able to speak English like Americanized Indians nor the Americans. Ina Mullick comments when she says that talking to Dimple is like “talking to a . . . porpoise,” (WIF 136) for which, Dimple says, “I like porpoises…. They’re so nearly human, aren’t they?” (WIF136). “When Ina spoke in
English, her words were predatory, Dimple realized” (WIF 137). When she later talks to Amit, she imagines how Ina would have pronounced the word supportive. Dimple spends most of her time watching television not knowing what to do. Her paranoia is expressed in the novel as:

   Daytime shows with inspiring names like ‘Guiding Light’ and ‘Love of Life.’

The women on television led complicated lives, became pregnant frequently and under suspicious circumstances … murdered or were murdered, were brought to trial and released; they suffered through the Ping-Pong volley of their fates with courage (WIF 72-73).

   Tara had her disappointment increased on her sight of the railway station, which “was more like hospital; there were so many sick and deformed men sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks” (TD 19). She had to face a double cultural shock, both in the U.S and in India. Tara felt her husband’s absence in Calcutta and blamed herself for coming to India alone. The emptiness in relationship between husband and wife is shown when they miss each other. They communicated with each other through letters. David was like a foreigner for Tara than her husband due to the cultural differences they shared. She found herself not married to a person but instead to a foreigner because she could not make her feelings concrete in her letters due to the cultural barriers. Writing a letter to him was difficult for she fumbled for words and could hardly expunge her emotions for him. They were alien to each other in their thoughts and deeds. She found it extremely difficult to express her love for him.

   Tara felt difficult to fall in love with a foreigner and prolong the same bunch of feelings for him. She could not find emotional solidarity with him. The anguish of estrangement is expressed in her letters that were either insipid or shallow. She could
not seek a place for her either in the east or the west. She was internally split into two parts, one being an Indian and the other, an American. Her alienation was due to the gulf between her memory of Calcutta and her disgust for the changed Calcutta. The memory of Calcutta as a child was opposite to what she witnessed after her return to India. Tara becomes disgusted to see the same Calcutta in poverty and squalor. “She had seen three children eat rice and yoghurt off the sidewalk” (TD 84). The moment she reached the railway station, her alienation began to develop.

Tara’s experiences in Calcutta were distressing and dejecting. The city was full of caste and class clashes. The dreams of a utopian Calcutta are broken away. The alienation further increases when her relatives greet her, Americawali. She feels that she has been trapped in an alien land and no one loves her anymore. She was unable to come to any conclusion with her own self.

Perhaps her mother, sitting serenely before God on a rug, no longer loved her either. After all Tara had willfully abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner. Perhaps her mother was offended that she, no longer a real Brahmin, was constantly in and out of this sacred room, dipping like a crow (TD 50).

Tara kept dangling between the two dimensions of cultural complications. The concept of idol worship, prevalent in Hindu houses was long forgotten by her in the U.S. Idol worship only existed in her faint memories and she did not remember any ritual. She became separated from religious and cultural values. Religion and culture being the heads of the same coin, she felt sad. Her inability to sing bhajans aggravated her trauma. She remembered singing bhajans as a child. “She had sat on a love seat beside a very holy man with a limp and had sung “Raghupati Raghava Rajaram”. But
that had been a very long time ago, before some invisible spirit or darkness had covered her like skin” (TD 54).

The American spirit had erased the cultural transitions she had seen in India. The culture blindfolded her to singing of bhajans. Reena, her friend felt that she had become too self-centered and become like a European. Her finer hopes for a peaceful stay in India were obliterated. The riot-torn Calcutta brought to her the horrific elements of violence. The novel does not show whether or not she survived at the end of the novel, after the riots. She gets locked in the car and thinks of David and her own problems. The reason for Tara to come to Calcutta was to lead a peaceful life but ironically she had to make peace with the city and reconsider her own cultural problems.

Dimple is deprived of the right as a woman, a wife, and her identity is questioned. She is frustrated with herself and the broken promises the land had to offer her. “She was so much worse off than ever, more lonely, more out off from Amit, from the Indians, left only with borrowed disguises … living like a shadow without feelings” (WIF 200). She is isolated from herself and dejected with Amit who does not find a proper profession for himself. Dimple says, “Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a chimera” (WIF 156). Television slowly becomes a reality for her and imagines Amit being stabbed when he eats a bowl of Wheaties. She makes every attempt to protect and cherish her identity only to find Amit toying with it all the time.

The television she watches makes her imagine Amit’s severed head kept on the table. She asks herself if the head would look good if kept mounted. Dimple also asks Leni to make an elevation for her to keep the head, because Leni was an exponent in
making strong bases. Dimple’s mind rehearses the violent act. Madness is nothing but a movement reason to unreason. Dimple’s murder of Amit is moment of dissolution. She rehearses the act of violence time and again and does in a moment of madness and frustration. Her character only drives home the fact that she is unable to draw a distinction between right and wrong, dream and reality. She becomes marginalized due to the patriarchal culture and feels that Amit does nothing to make her feel better. Dimple literally feels let down by Amit because he left her when she needed him the most, “her life had been devoted only to pleasing others, not herself” (WIF 211).

Dimple’s anguish multiplies when Amit’s friend tries to seduce her. Her insanity can be attributed to her misconception and miscomprehension of Indian and American cultures. The frustration continues with her inability to cope with the new environment and culture. The madness stems with her sense of loneliness and apathy shown towards her by her husband and the inanimate life spent by her while watching TV. The novel Wife represents the cross road of two cultures that are diametrically opposite to each other and the inability of a woman to strike a balance at both. Dimple is shown as an immature dreamer who thinks marriage can bring her freedom because she does not clearly define freedom because she had taken the cues from movies and magazines on women. She is married to an engineer who neither understands his wife nor her aspirations. Dimple realizes very late of the futility in her search for freedom. The dreams of marriage are shattered with her new life in her new land. Dimple represents all women who migrate to the U.S. with dreams and promises. Every culture is an amalgamation of the positives and negatives. The immigrants always want to toe a line between both the cultures. This results in psychological disturbances and tribulations.
Tara realizes that it was not possible to harness peace without making peace with oneself. Tara becomes incomplete because, she is neither oriental nor occidental. Her roots are scattered and spread in America and in India. Root is a key element central to any human being as it brings his origin to the forefront. Rootlessness is the feeling of not belonging to the place where one belonged to Tara lost her roots when she was sent to America by her father for higher education. She found it hard to find her place in a foreign land of different ambiance. Ironically, India also appeared foreign on her return to her roots. *The Tiger’s daughter* is Tara’s search for her lost roots in her land of birth. The novelist does not seek an answer to this for she leaves the novel open-ended.

Tara is amidst binary emotions that bring to her hostility and displacement. She tries inexplicably to adapt herself to American culture but the thought of leaving behind her traditional legacy forbids her. The antithetical feelings beset her. She is caught in a conundrum and does not strike a fine balance between the two opposing cultures. She cannot distinguish illusion from reality and her migrant experiences do not bring her promises of hope.

The incidents in India repel her and she finds it difficult to react to this confronting tensions. The city has now become a symbol of defiance and distress. Calcutta as a city has lost its sweetness and charm which she once witnessed with her friends. The riots, demonstrations and her rape by a corrupt politician are instances of her ugly paintings of Indian culture. She finds it difficult to overcome the trauma of bitter experiences. “Calcutta was the deadliest city in the world; alarm and impatience were equally useless” (TD168).
Calcutta which brought the sensations of prosperity and bounty has stopped being the city of her Identity. The tension in West Bengal under the communist regime makes her think Calcutta as a disowned mother and America as a step father. Tara suffers from extreme emotional and psychological pangs of despair. She becomes a symbol of voiceless suffering meted out by every woman migrant. She finds her self-trapped in a vicious circle where her identity and belongingness are at cross roads. Tara tries to evaluate Calcutta in terms of her white sensibility which causes her to be restive. Her journey is a journey from hope to hopelessness in nostalgia. She views India as an alien land and her sense of American spirit influences her Indian mind set. The drabness, dullness, squalor and poverty bring to light her traumatic memories of India. She comes to India with a hope of finding meaning in life only to see her identity losing itself in her own country.

Immigration has given shape to her identity as Americawali. She experiences loneliness and rootlessness in the United States due to her cultural affinity in India. She ends up neither being an Indian nor an American in her ways of life. The conflict of cultures do find a synchrony in her marriage with David. Bharati Mukherjee portrays her immigrant experiences and her candid reflection through Tara’s eyes. Tara Banerjee confronts strangeness and unfriendliness after her visit to India after seven years. The Tiger’s Daughter presents Tara’s lost identity in her land along with the troubles of her depressed psyche of troubles. She wants to leave India for good and waits inside a car to meet her husband. The conclusion of the novel is open ended to show the mental predicament the novelist undergoes when expectations shatter. The psychological needs are one of the aspects of human survival; the other aspect is
the sense of belonging one possesses not only to the world within but also to the world outside. In *The Tiger’s Daughter* Tara’s attempts to adjust to Indian ways of life only give her sense of pain and rejection by the Indian society.

Bharati Mukherjee belongs to a versatile class of writers who find the discrepancy in culture not knowing which one to adopt. In an interview with the Times of India, she says:

> We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries…. When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb two hundred years of American history and learn to adapt to American society….. I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. (Oct, 1989).