The title, *Cry, the Peacock*, in fact, conveys Maya’s neurotic sense of life, her mental working, her agony and death. The same suggestion is substantiated by Peacock’s cry for the lover. The dance of the peacock is symbolic of the dance of life as well as the dance of death. There is always a conflict between Maya’s conscious and unconscious mind, i.e., between life and death.

The novel deals with the psychic turmoil of Maya, which she undergoes during her marital and post-marital life. Several critics relate the novel to Freudian libido or Lawrence’s ‘Oedipus complex’. Basically, the novel deals with the neurotic character of Maya. She is a pampered child who is incapable of leading an independent existence. She is young, beautiful, sensitive, and sensual; but her mind registers stunted growth. She does not attain maturity, and therefore, she is unable to take any decision of her own. For every decision during her premarital period, she depends on her father. Virtually, whole of her neurotic life is imperceptibly linked with her father’s undivided attention. Being the only daughter of her father, he showered immense affection on her. Even after marriage, she looks for a father in her husband. Her marriage with Gautama only serves to highlight
her total involvement in father. It has been rightly opined by some critics that her neurosis “has existential dimensions, her sickness almost… ‘Kierkegaardian” (Prasad : 1981 : 25). Other critics feel that Maya lacks “Virtue of grace and self-possession” (Weir : 1981 : 2). Her neurotic self is, no doubt, brought into existence by her father. Her father is a ‘benevolent despot’ under whose guidance and love she grows. He cares immensely for his daughter, Maya. He offers her complete protection and excessive love during her childhood to the extent of suppressing and killing her own individuality. She is not allowed to grow as an individual who has to face all kinds of ups and downs for understanding the realities of the world. Maya lives in a world of illusion. She thinks that love is the only solution to all problems. She has a child-like longing for love. She always lives in utter helplessness. She thinks that this helplessness can be overcome when someone offers excessive love to her which her father always offered her. She thinks that clinging to love is the only way to actualize idealized self.

Maya deviates from normal pattern of behaviour because she fails to understand reality. She has been prevented from experiencing
the different shades of life. Her father never left her to wallow in trouble. She begins to think that it is her birthright to be loved. She develops a wrong attitude to life and its problems about living, and this is the reason for her neurosis. Her character can be contrasted with that of Dimple in Wife. In case of Dimple in Wife, it is withdrawal of love by her father that makes Dimple suffer in order to create her own idealized self in the society. Freud puts emphasis on childhood experiences, which determine the behavioural pattern of the concerned characters in their later part of life. Excessive love of Maya’s father can be well observed when seen during these small incidences which brought Maya closer to her father in emotional terms. Even for petty reasons, he rushes to her rescue. This leaves Maya incapable to judge things for herself. She fails to evaluate herself correctly. Maya’s psyche is rigidly shaped by the strict and orderly world of her father and she develops into a pampered child because of her father’s excessive love. Her brother Arjuna lost his father’s affection because he did not behave as his father wished. She always remembered that the father was terse, cold and grim with Arjuna. This is explicitly revealed in what Maya says: “with me he never was, no
matter what I did... even I noted the difference and felt uncomfortable” (133).

What is observed here is that two paramount forces operate on Maya’s psyche: one is that of the strict and orderly world of her father and second, is his blind adoration. The influence of these two forces creates in her what is termed as “basic anxiety” (Horney : 1965 :198). Karen Horney has referred to “injurious influences” (Ibid) which prevent a child from arriving at correct self evaluation. In fact, Maya’s father does not give her the real love, what he gives her is excessive attention and protection. Jasbir Jain thinks:

Whatever he could give her as a semblance of love was a manifestation of power and the relationship fed on his own ego. Maya is the sacrifice offered at the altar of his own image (1987:117).

Consequently, Maya’s basic needs for love and belonging are not gratified in the real sense. Her development is blocked; Maya continues to live in the world of fantasies. She is least worried about the harsh realities. As a result, there is imbalance in her life. She wants to live in a ‘Fairy Tale’ atmosphere. As a wife, she has to take care of
her husband and her family, but she fails miserably to fulfill her
domestic role of a married woman because she is mentally and
psychologically unable to meet the requirements of young married
woman. Explaining neurosis James has referred to the case of
psychological equilibrium:

Neurosis arises out of clash between an individual’s attempt
to adjust to some situations and his constitutional inability
to the change (Page:1970 : 91).

Maya has been shaped by her father’s excessive love for her.
Maya’s father, Rai Sahib develops extraordinary liking for his daughter
for two reasons – one, the premature death of his wife, and second,
Maya’s submissive nature. He does not accept rebellion.

He appreciates Maya’s submissiveness to the core of his heart.
He thinks that in a daughter he has a treasure. He wants her to
become a ‘Daddy’s girl’. Here again the protective feeling of a father to
his daughter is revealed. Rai Sahib is very apathetic towards Maya’s
education. Therefore, Maya does not get an opportunity to broaden
her vision about the realities of the world where she finds it difficult
to adjust to the ways of the ‘world’. Rai Sahib advises her to cut her
contacts with the world. Here, Rai Sahib appears to have adopted
double standards. His attitude to his son is not understood by his
daughter. He does not ask his son, Arjuna to cut contacts with the
world. Rai Sahib says to Arjuna:

What is the matter Arjuna ? Is this not good enough for
you ? Father asked once coming as close to a lipase of anger
as ever he did. Frozen anger like frostbite ‘what did you go
into those slums ? Why do you need to consort with
butchers’ sons? I have sent you to the finest college, where
you can make worthy friends, and you turn to city loafer’s
(137).

Even after her marriage Maya continues to fondle her father all
through her married life. Such a discriminatory attitude to the
daughter renders Maya unable to master her life. She has a tendency
to depend upon her father, and then after marriage, on her husband,
simply because for her the world is hostile and the two can provide
her protection against it. This is perhaps the reason why Maya agrees
to marry Gautama who is much older than her. She finds in him some
of the best qualities – intelligence and understanding that she found in
her father. Rai Sahib also feels that a person of Gautama’s age and
understanding will just fit into his own shoes and give a kind of
fatherly protection to Maya. Her mind is haunted by the feeling that
he is her gentle father and this has weakened her ties with the external world. Maya’s emotional and physical thirst remains unsatisfied and physical and emotional needs are unfulfilled. Gautama’s cold intellectuality and his advanced age are the chief factors that are detrimental and instrumental to make Maya’s life unpleasurable and she becomes totally frustrated. On account of this, she does not get sexual satisfaction from her husband. At the beginning of the novel itself, Maya makes a frank admission of her sexual dissatisfaction born of Gautama’s unpardonable negligence:

Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers He did not give another thought to me, to either the sort. Willing body or the lovely, wanting mind that waited near his bed (9).

Marital dissatisfaction creates in her an acute feeling of isolation and obsessive fear of death. This feeling aggravates her misery resulting into a sense of utter marital dissonance. Frustrated by his coldness, she gives herself up to a fit of pillow-heating. As her disillusionment becomes a routine experience, she increasingly
sexualizes her surroundings, perhaps by way of displacement. The papaya trees in the courtyard, for example, assume a new sexual dimension for her:

I contemplated that, smiling with pleasure at the thought of these long streamers of birded flowers that flow out of the core of the female papaya tree and twine about her slim trunk and the firm wax petal led blossoms that leap directly out of the solid trunk of the male (92).

As her grip over herself begins to slacken, she begins to experience hallucinatory visions of lizards and birds copulating in weird settings:

Of lizards, the lizards that come upon you, stalking you silently, upon clawed toes, slipping their club like tongues in and out, in and out with an audible hiss...They have struck you to the pillar of salt which, when it is motionless they will mount and lash with their slim dripping tongues, lash and lash again as they grip you with curled claws, rubbing their cold bellies upon your, rubbing and grinding – rubbing and grinding (127).

What Maya experiences here seems to be a symbolic gratification of the sexual desire which remains unfulfilled in actual life. The image of fighting and mating peacocks, apart from being the central motif of the novel, underlines Maya’s sexual frustration too.
The memory of her innocent enjoyment of their call in her childhood becomes a foil to her present over-crowded mind. There are several passages full of bird and animal imagery. One of such passages is:

But sleep was rent by the frenzied cries of peacocks pacing the rocks at night—peacocks searching for mates, peacocks tearing themselves to bleeding shreds in the act of love. The night sky turned to a flurry of peacock’s tails, each star a staring eye (175).

In spite of her total sexual frustration, Maya’s moral scrupulosity does not allow her to cross the bounds of marital morality. She is not able to sublimate this powerful biological urge in the manner of her friend Leila who selflessly serves her tuberculosis husband. Maya’s married life ends up her emotionally and socially, sterile existence. This continuous starvation of sex needs resulted into frustration and such an experience can be disastrous to a person like Maya. On the contrary, a healthy emotional and sexual experience would have brought to her a sense of security and happiness which would have prevented her psyche from decay. This substantiates Freud’s claim that:
Experience shows …that women who as being the actual vehicles of the sexual interests of mankind are only endowed in a small measure, with the gift of sublimating their instincts, and who… when they are subjected to the disillusionments of marriage, fall ill of neuroses which permanently darken their lives (Freud :1985 : 47).

Freud attributes neurosis of women to sexual dissatisfaction resulting from the rigors of civilized sexual morality. Biologically speaking, marital unfaithfulness could be a viable cure for the ailment. However, such a thing entails perhaps the most severe indictment in the rigidly organized Indian society. Freud continues:

The more strictly a woman has been brought up and the more sternly she has submitted to the demands of civilization, the more she is afraid of taking this way out; and in the conflict between her desires and her sense of duty, she once more seeks refuge in a neurosis. Nothing protects her virtue as securely as illness (Ibid).

Maya too seeks a neurotic solution but only to find it inadequate. Something more drastic than neurosis needs to be considered by her psyche. What she thinks actually is love must be reciprocated. Lack of response from her husband is interpreted by her as rejection which contributes to make her neurotic. For Maya, love offered by her father was the ideal love and was the proper ambience for one’s growth. She was never reprimanded by her father, therefore,
she could not become a matured and practical woman. Her father’s love was always remembered by her as being ideal and graceful. She fondly remembers how everything with him has grace and dignity:

...gracious and exact, where breeding, culture, leisure and comfort have been brought into a niche where no single weed is allowed to flower, no single flower to die and remain on the stalk, no single stalk to grow out of its pruned shape. As the streams in a Moghul garden flow musically through channels of carved marble and stands lone, so her thoughts, her life flow, broken into small exquisite patterns by the carving, played upon by uttering nuances of light and shade, but never ones stepping their limitations, never breaking their bounds, always moving onwards, with the same graceful cadence (45).

Father’s over-protective nature and love do not allow Maya any independence to think and grow as an entity. She always remembers the special affection of her father. She remembers her father even in her married life whenever she is upset. In moments of distress, she ardently desires to run to her father for assurance and for those; “Mesmerizing words...in his deep tones” (52).

Whenever she is in need of reassurance and love, she looks at Gautama not only as a father but also as a liberator and saviour. On seeing the caged monkeys at the railway station, Maya’s reaction is typical:
My father might have come; I announced ‘look for him. Look for him. Help me look for him, Gautama. He’ll open the cages and let them out. Hurry’ (156).

Maya feels secured whenever she remembers her father. Gautama’s remark that “you have a very obvious father – obsession” (2) is not correct because it carries a sort of libidinal reference. However, according to Horney, Maya’s love for her father is not a libidinal instinct. It is simply her search for glory. Her father profoundly influences Maya. Even the gloomy prophecy of the albino astrologer that her husband would die during the fourth year of her marriage is rigorously repressed in her unconscious because her father dismisses the whole prophecy as mere fraud. The father had managed to send the albino out of the town, and from that day, the word had not been uttered in Maya’s presence, nor ‘astrology’ nor ‘palmistry’:

Hush he had cried if any such matter were mentioned and it was with fear that his commands were uttered and with fear that he had watched the little bits of paper, marked with fine Sanskrit calligraphy and strange hieroglyphics, catch fire, curl up at the edges and turn to clarion black ash (75).

Arjuna her brother seems to point out:
After all if father did not belong to that sheep fold of superstitious, hide bound Brahmins, there would never have been that absurd fuss over a horoscope that, I remember was once cast for you…the trantruins, do you remember (141).

Maya keeps this prophecy repressed in her unconscious, deeply harbored in her memory. But when her marriage with Gautama enters the fourth year, this takes the shape of an obsessional neurosis, owing to the death of her pet dog, Toto. She begins to wonder whether it was not, “Gautama’s life that was threatened”(64).

She does not disclose this prophecy to Gautama. Very soon, she is convinced that Gautama is certainly fated to die, and therefore, she wants to keep the secret for herself at any cost:

He must not know, not even guess, never, never, never. If he guessed new dangers would arise like sudden fires out of the cracked earth…Ah, if Gautama found out, would he might not put me in peril of my life? Did he not love life too… (151).

Maya does not reveal this secret for the reason that Gautama and his family would “hoot with derision at the mention of superstition” (75). She does not want to become an object of ridicule. She feels that she would be rendered helpless and her personal identity would be
endangered. Therefore, she decides not to disclose it to Gautama and his family. The irony is that she has seen herself and the world from her father’s eyes. As a result during her married life, she cannot relate herself to the realities of her married life. She experiences a clash between the inner demands and outer liabilities.

Another reason why Maya becomes neurotic is that her ‘self’ is suppressed. Maya is treated as ‘insignificant’ by the members of the family. Therefore, she tries to retrieve her dwindling sense of significance. The psychologists have stated that “when man feels inferior in society, his strongest desire is to raise himself above all others” (Horney:1965 :21). With Gautama’s family, Maya feels that her identity is threatened. But ironically, identity for Maya is rooted in the memory of her childhood days. Therefore, she creates a childlike atmosphere by re-creating her fairy tale world of ‘Arabian Nights’; and “lovely English and Irish fairy Tales…in which much was included, which grew steadily more restricted, unnatural even, and in which I lived as a toy princess in a toy world” (89). Maya knows that this is all illusion, removed far away from reality, but she is unable to come out of it. Gautama irritatingly says to her: “Neurotic…neurotic that is
what you are. A spoilt baby, so spoilt she can’t bear one adverse word”
(115). Everyone must bring “present for little Maya – that is what her
father has taught her” (Ibid).

The excessive love received in childhood clashes with the
physical reality around, and as a result, her real self is destabilized.
Maya tries to establish her uniqueness. She plants flowers. “Palpitating
with living breath, open, wide, virginal” (106). Maya considers any one
who does not feel the smell. She is disgusted when Gautama cannot
distinguish between the fragrance of petunias and line blossoms. She
alienates from Mrs. Lal and other women because they do not come up
to her expectation. She considers herself very different from all others.
The sight of prostitutes terrifies her because they are engrossed in
“gross and useless” (91) they; “don’t see what really matters. All the
truth is living just passes them by, and I am so sorry for any one…
who misuses it” (Ibid).

In Mukherjee’s Wife, Dimple’s deviation from normal pattern of
behaviour originates from her feeling of disapproval of being called
Nandini by her in–laws, “My mother wants to call you Nandini. She
doesn’t like Dimple as a name. What will you call me?” “Nandini,
Dimple... said”(8). Here, it may be pointed out that, for Dimple, the name Nandini has no significance. The name Nandini has psychological roots and it signifies prosperity and sanctity in Hindu religion. The name stands for a virtuous cow, which brings peace, prosperity and happiness. The name Nandini symbolizes divinity. But for Dimple, it has adverse effects. On the contrary, for her the name looked meaningless and offending. This establishes dichotomy between Dimple and the house of her husband. Dimple says to Pixie, “The name just doesn’t suit me” (18). After marriage she has to move to her husband’s apartment. Dimple dislikes the apartment. For her, “The apartment is h-o-r-r-i-d” (Ibid).

Her disliking for the name and house signifies the abnormality of life. Dimple is unable to get adjusted with the people and the surrounding. She finds all of them quite incompatible. The much desired marriage would not make her happy. Dimple’s talking to herself with the mirror image is most ironical – “Dimple Base”, she repeated; “Dimple Basu is happy woman” (21). Even the members of Amit’s family appear to Dimple as disgusting and unaccommodating; “why doesn’t your sister like me?” (Ibid). Dimple doubts the love of her
husband and also the fact that her husband is not the man she has dreamt of;

She wanted to dream of Amit but she knew she would not. Amit did not feed her fantasy life; he was merely the provider of small material comforts. In bitter moments she ranked husband, blender, colour T.V., 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. Marriage had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined; had not brought her cocktails under canopied skies and trees: “Amit drives to dingy restaurant. Where they sold divine ‘Kabab’ rolled in ‘rote’ ” (101). The cumulative effect of all these experiences or rather lack of them render her; “incapable of love” (131) and leaves her a neurotic. 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).

Maya in Cry, the Peacock tries to create for her a separate identity; but the problem is that this separate identity doesn’t give her sufficient sense of security. Her real self is suppressed and the false ‘self’ does not generate healthy mental state, as a result her personality
becomes disintegrated. She has two selves-real and pseudo. Commenting on the conflict between the real and pseudo selves, which make a person neurotic, Usha Bande writes:

In his search for glory the neurotic starts making neurotic claims on the world. Whatever grandiose image he has created of himself must be recognized by the world. He cannot realize that he is harboring an illusion. He lives in the world of fantasies. Side by side his “should” make claim on him. He “should” as he has visualized himself to be. There are inner dictates that enumerate his standards for him. All his energies which should take a normal person towards self actualization drag him to actualize the idealized self. The glorified images generate a structure of intra – psychic defense which Horney terms ‘The pride system’ (1988 : 32).

The ‘should’ and the neurotic claims cannot be practiced in real life. They stagger in face of realities of life. When they are shattered, the neurotic pride suffers a blow, the tension mounts and the neurotic aims at a vindictive revenge to restore it. Depending upon a person’s temperament he may hit harder to get back his imaginary grandeur; he may withdraw, feeling just disinterested; or may try to forget the same by wishing away the incident; neurotic pride is based on imagined attributes. It is “The climax...of the process initiated with the search for glory” (Horney : 1965 : 21).
Neurotic may regard himself as a disembodied spirit; he may try to kill his hated-self. The onslaught of self-condemnation, self-accusation and self-hate are difficult to bear. Bonds with reality are severed and deteriorating process starts.

Maya’s self is an idealized self which is impossible to attain. She finds a hostile world around her. She is unable to adjust herself in such surrounding. She finds that Gautama does not respond to her feelings. She tries to find in him the love of father, which symbolizes for her protection and security. Gautama fails to provide the much needed love, admiration and sympathy to her. Gautama shows an aversion to much physical contact. Maya feels neglected, rejected, unwanted. As long as Gautama attends to her, she feels grateful. Gautama, for Maya, is merely a protector and guardian. A slight touch of his fingers makes her joyful; “fall, fall, long fall into the soft velvet well of the primordial or original instinct, of first formed love”(9). Maya’s neurotic pride is hurt when Gautama does not respond to her in the expected manner. She feels rejected. Gautama does not respect her feelings of misery and loneliness nor is he able to understand Maya and her sensitive problems. Thus, a hiatus is created between the two and the irony is
that Gautama is not aware of this gap. Maya never tells him about her problems.

Anxiety and despair develop in Maya because her desires are not fulfilled. There are moments when Maya shows an almost aggressive urge for sexual union with Gautama; but asleep or awake Gautama is totally indifferent to her sexuality, while Maya craves for love, Gautama feels it but does not respond positively. He is resigned and reserved by nature. He is very much influenced by the philosophy of the Gita. He values detachment and wants Maya to understand the futility of worldly pleasures. Thus, what is seen is that Maya and Gautama live in separate worlds and “did not even agree on which points, what grounds, this closeness of mind was necessary”(19).

Basically, the real cause of Maya’s embarrassment is that she is never trained to see life in the right perspective. Even love, for her, is simply a way of fulfilling sexual urge. It is a means to relieve her anxiety. Maya does not think that love signifies full faith. Love is a commitment without any guarantee, but Maya lacks faith. She angrily talks to Gautama, “you know nothing of me—and of how I can love. How I want to love. How it is important to me”(112).
One critic, Erich Fromm, terms it “immature love” (1965 : 25). This kind of love does not give a sense of sharing. Maya thinks that love cannot remain ideal in real life. When Maya’s love is not fulfilled, she suffers.

Maya’s neurosis is caused by two factors, one the albino priest’s prediction and the second Gautama’s lack of sympathetic understanding. Maya always puts the blame on Gautama. The “albino astrologer” (39) was always near her consciousness. In fact, she has developed the habit of blaming others for her calamities and failures. She could have rescued herself from such state of disillusionment by following Gautama’s therapeutic philosophy of Gita. Leela’s example of facing all vicissitudes of life, Arjuna’s rebellion but she does not take recourse to either of them because of the stronger hold of her father’s fatalism on her. When she finds that the outer world cannot help her, she looks within but unfortunately the self within is the glorified self (pampered childhood), not the real self. She has created exaggerated opinion of herself, which falsifies reality. She has fabricated a Fairy Tale, which is far removed from reality. She thinks that she is not one of those ordinary mortals who can be wiped away by fate. She has
perfected her image as being different from others. Gautama advises her to look at the world from a detached angle: “Life will remain emptiness to you and you will continue to reach out and grope for everything” (116).

Horney says that neurotics think that their life should be as they visualize it. They cannot face facts. The neurotics always think: “Because I am something extra special. I am entitled to be treated in accord with his grandiose notions about himself” (Horney : 1965 : 41).

Maya longs for preferential treatment from all, but fails to receive it from others. Realities strike her illusion, which she is unable to tolerate. Maya prefers to live in illusion and reacts violently to any thing that is real, definite and concrete. For Maya, the safest refuge is illusion. She considers illusions to be real and treats the reality of the world as tyrannical. As a result, Maya is torn by strange turmoil within and without. She does not get safety and security in the world which she longs for when her expectations are unfulfilled. She finally thinks that she has no friend and says: “Whomsoever I turned for reassurance betrayed me now” (64). She pities herself and thinks that the world is no more: “Like a toy specially made for me, painted in my
favourite colours, set moving to my favourite tunes” (36). Commenting
on the neurotic self of Maya, Usha Bande has rightly said:

As a morbidly dependent person, Maya could not express her rage openly. That would not be commensurate with her self-image of a loving and selfless individual. So, she hides her aggressive trails behind herself. Effacing and self-minimizing process. She projects herself as a helpless woman, gripped by the misfortune of her pet’s death. Her act of pillow – heating and crying piteously is what Horney terms the “Shrinking process” wherein she sees herself as a helpless child. These initial expressions lead to self-pity. Psychosomatic symptoms, like slitting headaches and fever, followed by delirium occur. Maya becomes vindictive when finally the self alienates itself from the real centre and self-hate takes hold (1988 : 56).

In the case of Maya, not only the demands are unfulfilled, like to see Kathakali Dance but also she is asked to suppress the desire for demands by Gautama. This leads to complicating the abnormality of Maya. Maya is denied freedom to go to see even the ‘Kathakali Dances’ which she has always relished. She requests Gautama:

I want – I want to see the ‘Kathakali dances’. I have heard of the ballets they have in their villages, they say, they go on for days and days and the dancers are all men, and they wear such fantastic masks and the drums...The masks they wear you must have seen them? And their customs and the special kind of music and it all out in the open, at night, by starlight and perhaps they have torches. Yes I suppose they dance by torch light (42).
As a matter of fact Maya’s desire is dismissed ruthlessly. Gautama assures her by saying that during dancer’s visit to Delhi, she can go to see the performance. Such a callous attitude only intensifies the grief of Maya. Maya has a love for the beautiful, colourful, the sensuous whereas her husband dislikes all these things. As a result, Maya feels that she is alone and neglected. The fear of rejection of neurotic person induces him to retaliate. Maya also thinks:

But there was a Moon. A great moon of hot, beaten copper, of Molten brass, living and throbbing like bloody human organ, a great full bosomed woman, who had mounted the skies in passion, driven the starts away from her, while she pulsed and throbbed, pulsed and glowed across the breathless sky. I spun around, clutching the baby, she stare at my relations, whose names I knew, whose moods, whose hands I touched and found there was not one amongst them to whom I could cry ‘Look-look there is the moon in the sky’ (50).

Gautama does never understand her, he always rejects her. He calls her ‘neurotic’, a spoiled baby. He does not appreciate richness of her life. Maya says:

Poor Gautama, not to be able to notice the odor of lives, not to hear the melancholy voice singing somewhere behind the plantains, not to have time to count the stars as they came out one by one to Gautama, my poor, poor husband (23).
Maya, too, fails to understand her husband, who suggests her to develop a feeling of indifference. She, however, ignores the suggestions and is driven into a desperate situation where her sense of reality is completely lost.

Dimple Dasgupta, the heroine of the novel *Wife*, becomes neurotic because there exist a wide gulf between desire and fulfillment. If one’s psychological needs are not fulfilled, he tends to abandon his real self. Neurosis begins when the real-self is forsaken. The loss of the real-self is the cause of the neurotic behaviour of a character. The basic need of Dimple Dasgupta is her long-cherished desire to marry a person of her choice and settle down happily. Dimple always -

Thought of premarital life is a dress rehearsal for actual living. Years of waiting has already made her nervous, unnaturally prone to colds, coughs and headaches. Wasted years – she was twenty – lay like a chill weight in her body, giving her eyes a watchful squint and her spine slight curve (3).

She thinks of marriage as something destined to bring prosperity and liberty. “Marriage, she was sure, would free her, fill her with
passion. Discreet and virgin she waited for real life to begin” (13). She hoped that she would get all kinds of comforts after marriage; “an apartment in Chowringhee, her hair done by Chinese girls, trips to new Market for nylon saris” (3). Her expectations of a happy married life are spoiled sometimes by her negative feeling about her own-self; “she worried that she was ugly, worried about her sitar – shaped body and rudimentary breasts. She thought of breasts as having destinies of their own, ruining marriages or making fortunes” (Ibid). Her mother would always come forward to support and console her during such moments of depression “Stop worrying” (Ibid) Mrs. Dasgupta consoled. “Worrying makes them shrink” (Ibid). Further, she would say, “you must be satisfied with what god has given you. But use it to your best advantage” (5).

Dimple feels comfortable with the advice of her mother, but any delay in marriage is intolerable for her. Dimple has to be hospitalized and it takes her almost five days to recover. For her mother, the illness is an indication of woman’s readiness for marriage, “Mrs. Dasgupta read the illness as a sign of mysterious pains, headaches, nervous ties were nature’s ways of indicating a young woman’s readiness for
marriage” (6). Dimple’s life is not a happy one. She could not find any hope of fulfillment of her desire. Even small matters begin to worry and annoy her. She writes for herself somewhere, “The rebellion of 1857 was the result of a thousand small annoyances. Rumours of cow fat on the bullet-casings were the icing on the cake”(7).

The statement clearly reveals that discontentment is seething in her mind and she was going to rebel. She was going to rebel because life to her, was dull and boring and it was, “but the waiting, the endless waiting” (Ibid). She was so disappointed with life that she thought of killing herself, “She looked in the bathroom for her father’s larf blades. She thinks of death”(11). Her behaviour was quite abnormal. Her neurotic demands made her a self-effacing woman. She did not want to face the realities of life. She was incapable of accommodating with the adversities of life. Her demands are so unreal that no one could ever think of achieving them.

Dimple’s neurotic tendencies have possibly been caused by two reasons – one that she hates herself because of certain deformities and second that she could not get her dream-husband. Her neurotic anxiety makes her incapable of becoming a dutiful wife. The idea of
dutifulness further made her uneasy and uncomfortable. One such incident recorded in the novel is - when Amit upon his return from the office asked for a fresh lime and water, which Dimple had not prepared. Amit cried, “But you know I like fresh lime and water when I come back. You know this little thing means a lot to me” (23). Dimple hates to be a dutiful wife. The novelist has rightly commented, “Her disapproval was fortune, all her life she had been gain to please. He expected her like Sita, to jump into fire if necessary” (Ibid). Amit’s attempt to rectify Dimple hurts her neurotic pride. In this way, she desires to destroy herself. The first incident of the vindictive nature of Dimple is revealed when she tried to destroy her foetus. She thinks that nobody has consulted her, “before depositing it in her body” (31). She dislikes the change in her body. First, she attempts to destroy it through vomiting. She consumed cleaning powder to cause vomiting. All the above traits in her character show abnormality and excessive sensitivity which prove only dangerous and damaging to her in future.

Freud contends that women become hostile when they feel neglected. But such statements cannot be generalized. In some cases, women can also be quite sacrificing by nature. Majority of wives
perform their domestic chores in admirable and sincere way even without showing a wrinkle of disapproval or grudge. Her growing conflict within the self and her mounting tension due to her hostile attitude has made her dislike everything including her, ‘own self’. She apprehends that caring the child in her womb might spoil her prospects of going abroad.

The baby in her womb is disliked by her for two obvious reasons: one is her dislike of Amit, the second is her pregnancy that would prove a hindrance to her much sought after freedom achieved through economic independence. Dimple protests against the natural process of pregnancy and delivery. She stands close to Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*. Maya wants to hold back the child and Dimple does not want to give birth to it, by killing it or destroying it in the womb. This is the greatest neurotic symptom of her mind. She makes all possible attempts to destroy her pregnancy. This reflects the dislocation of her sensibility. Fromm believes that destructiveness can be interpreted in psychological terms. He explains:
Destructiveness is the active form of withdrawal; the impulse to destroy others follows from the fear of being destroyed by them. Since withdrawal and destructiveness are the passive and active forms of the same kind of relatedness, they are often blended in varying proportions (1965 : 115 ).

But she fails. She finds that consuming pills and falling from the staircase is not enough to destroy the pregnancy. Upon being asked by her husband why she wanted to kill the child, Dimple replies the baby could be deformed: “I had this bad dream last week ... He had no arms and legs. I didn’t want to tell you, I didn’t want to tell anyone so it wouldn’t happen”(43). Dimple was slightly abnormal from the very beginning of her life. She told Amit, “When I was a little girl, I pulled a snake by its tail. I pulled straight out of its hole! Can you believe that?” (39). Dimple’s life is full of waiting before marriage. She waits for marriage. After marriage, she tries to find happiness in the married life. She fails miserably in both. Then, she waits to go abroad and anticipates a happy and prosperous life there.

This abnormal temperament is not something typical of an immigrant. This is something exceptional. Dimple appears to be despair personified. Marriage has not provided her “the glittering
things she had imagined” (112). It has not made her responsible and saner. Inamdar comments:

Dimple is a psychic study of an abnormal woman. She has nothing to do with the problems of immigrants. Therefore, she angers her husband by making fun of his dress, spilling curry on his shirtfront. 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 (1993:69).

The strange acts of Dimple give an impression that it is sheer sadistic pleasure that she derives. Dimple had the passion to accomplish selfhood. Maya in Cry, the Peacock also displays abnormal behaviour. But the difference is that, her husband Gautam, unlike Amit, hates her.

Frustrated and allegedly rejected, Maya and Dimple are driven into a desperate situation where their sense of reality is completely lost and their normal vision is blurred. Maya fails to relate herself to the realities of life and surrounding. She feels helpless and defenseless in the hands of her husband and the surrounding. She feels weak, unsatisfied, and frustrated, and in order to retain her chance of remaining meaningful to herself, she develops destructive tendencies.
When her contacts with realities are completely severed she moves towards psychosis. Psychosis is defined as a severely abnormal or diseased mental state. Maya is shattered by a reality too hard to bear. She sees death lurking somewhere near.

Death of Toto evokes a faint fear; her “tear-hazed vision” (8) is blurred by a horrifying sense of doom. She records the presence of something shadowy,

“That prodded me into admitting that it was not my pet’s death alone that I mourned today, but another sorrow, unremembered, perhaps as yet not even experienced, and filled me with this despair” (8).

Maya is constantly haunted by her fatal flow which is activated by her hidden fears or inhibitions created by her relationships with others or her circumstances of life. Her attempt to seek refuge in her loneliness worsens her situation still more, for her solitary musings add to her morbidity and quicken the process of her disintegration. When Maya looks at night, the dark spaces between the stars frighten her. “Death lurked in those spaces; the darkness spoke of distance, separation, loneliness” (24). Even joy, absolute joy, so overwhelms her that she is “filled to the point of destruction” (30). And the moon in
the sky is “not the gentle moon of ballads and fairy tales” (31). Further, the Cry of the Peacocks – a symbol that is used poetically throughout the novel and after which it is named – accentuates her death – anxiety.

The mysterious memory which frightens Maya is that of albino priest. This phantom from the mists of her past casts a dark and evil shadow on her life and this remembered image finally decides her destiny. This once forgotten episode from her early life colours her married life and distorts her perspective. The image of the albino foreteller created a terrible commotion in her consciousness. This crucial event of Maya’s childhood, which has such a traumatic effect on her life, is described in very vivid and lurid colours. Maya remembers that the priest was an albino:

He had been large or small? I cannot remember, but his eyes I do: they were pale, opaque, and gave him an appearance of morbidity, as though he had lived, like sluggish white warm, indoors always, in his dark room at the temple gates, where the central lingam was painted a bright, vicious red, as though plunged in sacrificial blood, and light burned in a single lamp from which oil spilled into a large, spreading pool (32).
The memory of the albino priest is very instrumental in disturbing Maya’s mental poise and his prophecy has a bearing to the events which take shape accordingly in the novel.

In her neurotic state of mind she sees something sinister about the priest – she calls him her Fate – and she believes in his prophecy that when she is married, she or her husband would die soon. Her nervous imagination magnifies everything out of all proportions and everything she sees, hears, or touches reminds her of or symbolizes her approaching death. Every time she attempts to communicate, she fails and then withdraws into herself. The world, which sometimes appears familiar and comforting, suddenly becomes something menacing and frightening. Maya translates everything in the world outside into her own intensely personal idiom. The cabaret, the bear dancing, the monkeys in the cage, the orchids kept in a basket in the verandah of the Lalas – all remind her of death. The memory of these things crowds her mind which shatter his vision and deepens her nervousness.

The prediction of the horoscope is, no doubt, a major factor emerging out of this encounter and determining the ultimate fate of
Maya and Gautama. Nevertheless, it is proper to comment here that Maya is not very clear in her mind about the outcome of the prediction. She knows who will be the victim out of the two. Maya suffers from headaches and experiences rages of rebellion and terror. Rebuffed by her husband and badly mauled by society, Maya is torn between her love for life and her fear of death. Then suddenly, during her interval of sanity, an idea hopefully dawns in her mind that since the albino had predicted death to either of them, it may be Gautama and not she whose life is threatened. She is able to resolve the tangled boughs of her consciousness, of her fear of death – she becomes freer of any ambivalence in her relationship with Gautama:

The man had no contact with the world, or with me. What would it matter to him if he died and lost even the possibility of contact? (175).

The above statement in the novel is very decisive in deciding the redundancy of Gautama’s life and so in the state of great commotion. Maya hurls down her husband into death in the moment of unbearable agony. She has proved the albino astrologer right, and has become the instrument of her own crazy destiny. Three days later, in a paroxysm of insanity, Maya jumps off the balcony of her ancestral
house in Lucknow and meets with an instantaneous death. This is how the albino’s prophecy remains at the centre in her sub-conscious till both die.

In the case of Dimple, when her expectations were not fulfilled according to her neurotic claims, she begins to behave most abnormally. She began to suffer from insomnia. The persons sleeping in the room would appear to her as dead and their bodies would appear to her corpses. During her sleepless hours, she would look outside the window on empty streets and the streets would appear to her. “As badly healed scars on a grant” (97). Her friend Ina Mullica appeared in her dream as dead. Death recurred in Dimple’s thought. Being a neurotic, she was unable to face the reality of life and attempted to embrace death. Death was the only solution for her, which would save her from what Keats calls “Fever and fret of the society” (Green: 1980: 61).

She begins to feel “collapsing inwardly” (110). She would not understand how to cope with the situation. She tells Amit “I feel very tired these days. I mean, I don’t have the energy to bake the chicken every fifteen minutes” (Ibid). But as usual Amit did not care to her
worries. Amit failed to share the depressed feeling of Dimple. He does not soothe or even consoles her. He replies her bluntly: “it’s probably because you eat so little” (Ibid). He does not have even a word of encouragement or sympathy. He was completely indifferent to mounting tensions of Dimple. This non-challenged and callous attitude of Amit made her feel enraged and violent. This part of her behaviour resembles Maya’s behaviour. Dimple 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” (Ibid). 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.
After him (Amit) had left the room. She gave herself what she thought was probably half an hour, then switched on the table lamp, took a piece of paper and a ballpoint pen out of a drawer in the night table and listed the reasons why she was unhappy.

1. The plants were dying.
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

It was no use…… (179-80)

Amit thinks that the remedy to her sickness lies in making friends. He suggested that “she ought to go out more often to make friends with the other women in the building …” (111). But Dimple is unable to interact with others. As a neurotic, she desired that others should give her much value, which she actually did not get, hence her anxiety goes on deepening, “how could she live in a country where she could not predict these basic patterns, where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignorant exposed to ridicule in the elevator?” (112). 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 provider of material comforts. He could not comprehend the emotional needs of
Dimple. Her need is warmth, love and a few words of encouragement. Additionally, she needs physical comforts too.

The novelist presents the world of Dimple as a world full of daydreams and nightmares and her morbid psyche through a series of images. Dimple’s morbidity is rooted in her sub-conscious right from her childhood days at her parental home. She is allured to the material, colorful life style. Her parents treat her as a sweet and docile girl.

She is so often angry with Amit but she suppresses it. The suppressed anger keeps seething in her unconscious all the time. She thinks of dying. She desired to destroy herself. She devised at least ten different ways of ending her life like she got her head caught in the oven sliced open her jugular vein, consumed pesticide, got suffocated in a garbage bag, starved, fell on the bread knife, got her head hit with shovels and finally got mugged and killed in the laundry room in the basement after midnight. In this context, Dimple differs from Maya. She at no point of time tries to traverse a normal path of life, as she “wanted a different kind of life”(3). Amit’s job in the USA and her association with Ina Mullick and Milt, fail to make her thinking
healthy. It is this psychic decay that compels her to explore several ways 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. Kalpana Wandrekar writes: “The sick mind contemplates only death and destruction. Death can be inflicted on the self or the cause of disorientation” (1996:74). Maya loves life passionately. She was not fed up with the world. She says, “The world is full-fill, Gautama O you know what that means? I am not bored with it?” (118). Maya thinks that since she has an ardent longing for life, she has the right to live and if one of the two must die, it should be Gautama. However, the fear of death, destruction and annihilation keeps on haunting her mind till the end. Maya tries to save herself from the clutches of death because she loves life and it is because of her hypersensitive nature that she considers her existence is threatened, therefore, she resorts to kill Gautama. This is how her neurosis degenerated into psychosis. Dimple, too becomes a psychotic because her contact with reality is completely severed and she finds no way to continue her survival in this world. Already a neurotic, she looses balance of mind and begins to suffer severe mental disorder. She
began to betray her husband. She seduces Milt. Milt is the brother of
her landlady. She allows Milt to enter her bedroom. Milt takes all
liberty with Dimple: “Milt bent over Dimple and put his huge hands
on her shoulders and brought his face very close to (she noticed that
he had acne scars on his nose) and she stood very still, leaning slightly
against the wall, not sure if he was about to kiss her and what she
should do if he did kiss her on the cheek or mouth” (168). Dimple very
carefully and tactfully hides from Amit her dalliance with Milt. Amit
is very much puzzled with a sudden change in the behaviour of his
wife. That night Amit looks up from his crossword puzzle and says,
“You used to a lot of fun, you used to pester me to take you out and get
a pizza or a gaucho pie. But now you just want to stay at home and you
don’t have to watch television. What is wrong for God’s sake?” (176).
But Dimple gives Amit an evasive reply, “there was nothing wrong”
(Ibid). Beyond this Dimple did not say anything. Her betrayal of Amit
was more deliberate than spontaneous. Concerning Dimple’s
indulgence in such extra-marital relationship, Freud’s opinion appears
correct. Freud thinks that when neurosis becomes more pronounced in
a person, the ethical considerations, concerning sex become almost
negligible. Dimple feels directionless. She dreams of herself as being dead:

An after dream persisted when she works up: someone had murdered her the night before and concealed her corpse among the Bedouin brasses and baskets of indoor plants. She wrapped her blue bathrobe tighter around her breasts and hips and did all the things. She normally did between seven and eight weekday mornings, but she knew that she was dead and that Amit would record from her as soon as he sat down at the table for his wheaties and two fried eggs (185-186).

She further dreams that she is not only dead but the post-mortem of her body is also being performed. She asks Amit once if he can help himself if she died in New York. Amit gives her a usual reply, which is not understood by Dimple. This lack of understanding on the part of Dimple leaves her directionless. Her neurotic tendency becomes more pronounced and in a fit of imbalanced state of mind, she does not kill herself but she kills Amit, in a manner in which only an extremely neurotic person can do:
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 stabled the magical circle once, twice, seven times, each time a little harder, until the milk in the bowl of cercal was a pretty pink and the flakes were mushy and would have embarrassed any advertiser, and then she saw the head fall off – (212).

Dimple’s mental instability could be due to various reasons. Rajeshwar points out:

The psychic development in Dimple has been variously but uncritically viewed as her desperate effort to forget her Indian roots, necessitated by the demands of American life and as her assertion of independence from her overbearing husband (1996:90).

Another reason would be her unimpressive figure and complexion. At time, this complex frustrates individuals. The influence of excessive violence that is being shown over American Television inspires her and makes has feel confident. It gives her a feeling that one can get away with crime with much ease. Sivarama Krishna notes, “This pervasive atmosphere of crime dulls the edge of her own guilt” (Krishna and Mukherjee : 1982:80).
Dimple’s character is a fit case for psychoanalysis. The aspect of immigration shrinks in size, as far as the reasons of her mental decline are concerned. It is the basic temperament of Dimple and Maya that causes their mental depression.