CHAPTER II

THE EXPATRIATE SENSIBILITY IN

THE TIGER'S DAUGHTER AND WIFE

To be in limbo is to be trapped: trapped not only by the weight of personal circumstances but also by that of history, culture, tradition.

Kirpal Singh

The journey starting in 1961 from Calcutta to student-time in Iowa, romance and marriage American campus-style to Canadian citizenship in 1966 and immigration to the United States in 1980, covers 21 years in Bharati Mukherjee's life. It was life in Canada - fourteen years of it - that tested her spirit to the breaking point. It was there that she most felt the racism directed at new immigrants. She writes, "Many including myself left (Canada) unable to keep our twin halves together." Her essay "An Invisible Woman" is a blistering reflection on these years where she voices the impossibility of life as a Canadian citizen of colour and wife of a North American author, as well as the impossibility of being recognized as a Canadian author. Clark Blaise, her husband, was asked to join the Writers' Union of Canada but she was not. Mukherjee records:

In Montreal, I was simultaneously a full professor at McGill, an author, a confident lecturer, and (I like to think) a charming and competent hostess and guest - and a
housebound, fearful, aggressive, obsessive, unforgiving queen of bitterness. Whenever I read articles about... women committing suicide ... I knew I was looking into a mirror.²

If there was no welcome in Canada, the country of adoption, she found she could not really go home either no matter how many summers she spent with her family and friends. Her ambition, training, and marriage proved wrong for Bengali Brahmin uppercrust life. She had not only married a North American - a child of divorced parents - but also "stayed on for a Ph.D." These two factors, but especially the Ph.D., cut her off forever from "the world of passive privilege" that she had come from. In her Calcutta society, she writes,

An M.A. in English is considered refined, but a doctorate is far too serious a business; indicative more of Brains than beauty and likely to lead to a quarrelsome nature.³

These circumstances led her to see herself as an expatriate, as a transient with conflicting loyalties to two very different cultures.

In her lucid and frank introduction to her collection of short stories Darkness, Mukherjee explains how she had thought of herself "in spite of a white husband and two sons," as an expatriate during her years in
Canada. In her Canadian experience as well as in her fiction, expatriates "knew all too well who and what they were, and what foul fate had befallen them." This theme of expatriation is reflected in the early novels written during her years in Canada - *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) followed by *Wife* (1975). In *The Tiger's Daughter* Bharati Mukherjee models so well what Sudhir Kakar describes as "the deep and persistent undercurrent of nostalgia almost sensual in character for the sights, smells, tastes, sounds of the country of our childhood." Commenting on the protagonists Tara and Dimple, Sivaramakrishna says that the "retention of their identity as Indian is in constant tension with the need for its renunciation if they have to acquire a new identity as immigrants." In their desperate bid to belong, to be accepted, they not only lose their native country but fail to acquire the country of adoption. As a consequence these expatriates are portrayed as rootless.

The early novels explore the emotional challenges faced by women trying to bridge disparate cultures. The process of finding their identities becomes a matter of intense struggle; with the self, with tradition, with the wonders and horrors of a new culture, with growing aspirations, hopes, and desires. Moments of intensity, confession and desperation in the lives of Tara and Dimple who have broken away from their cultural and historical roots, are depicted with great sympathy and understanding. They are travels in what Sudhir Kakar identifies as the "Psycho-Social country" of
self shared by many other Indians studying, living, and working for long periods abroad in Europe or the United States. He further observes, "At some time during this self-chosen exile, a more or less protracted confrontation with the self as battleground becomes almost inevitable."

Duality and conflict are not a feature of the expatriate’s life merely in America. Mukherjee’s women are brought up in a culture that presents them with such ambiguities right from childhood. The breaking of identities and the discarding of languages actually begin early, their lives being shaped by the confluence of rich cultural and religious traditions on the one hand, and the "new learning" imposed by British colonialism in India, on the other. These different influences involve them in tortured processes of self-recognition and self-assimilation right from the start; the confusion is doubled upon coming to America. Cultural roots retain their hold in insidious ways. Though in times of fear and indecision Mukherjee’s westernized Indian women return to seek the comfort of traditional faiths, they increasingly discover them to be cold and so the quest for a new identity continues. It would appear then that by and large Mukherjee’s expatriates are bicultural but their biculturality is such that they are not at home in either of the places.

That Tara in The Tiger’s Daughter is the alter ego of the author is clear from the autobiographical details of Days and Nights. Commenting on her first novel Mukherjee observes:
The first ten years into marriage, years spent mostly in my husband's native Canada, I thought of myself as an expatriate Bengali permanently stranded in North America.... My first novel, The Tiger's Daughter embodies the loneliness I felt but could not acknowledge, even to myself, as I negotiated the no man's land between the country of my past and the continent of my present. 

The trials of Tara are also battles in the growth of the author's sensibility from that of an expatriate to that of an immigrant.

The Tiger's Daughter is Tara Banerjee, a Bengali Brahmin of Calcutta and daughter of an industrialist known popularly as Bengal Tiger. Belonging to a western-educated Indian family which no longer believes that girls should only be taught to keep house, cook, and pray, she is sent to a convent school for a proper education in the "English Medium." Prompted by pain and suspicion about Calcutta which was fast becoming a restive city, the father puts his only child, a girl of fifteen, on a jet for Poughkeepsie and the consequences prove rather terrifying. The decision completely ignores the limits of Tara's courage and commonsense. Vassar proves an "Unsalvageable mistake" and every atom of newness intensifies her longing for Camac Street in Calcutta where she had grown up. Little things cause her intense pain and grief. She senses discrimination if her room-mate does not share her mango chutney. The first semester at Vassar
she clings to the large leather suitcase bought for her in a hurry by her father and refuses to unpack. Cultural roots reveal themselves in unexpected ways and she grows fierce in her defence of her family and country. The prim nuns of St.Blaise's in Calcutta may teach Tara all about lady-like poise and self-control in the face of adversity, yet Tara sitting in her lonely room at Vassar a few years later, remembers the comforting array of little gods and goddesses her mother used to worship at home. She prays to Kali, the Hindu goddess of power, to help her tide over many awkward moments with the polite and inscrutable Americans. That first year abroad, as the girls around her prepare to go home, she suffers fainting spells, headaches, and nightmares and writes letters home complaining of homesickness. Her memory plays tricks on her during her prolonged expatriate experience in America - as memory often does. Miserable and lonely, she grows wistful and romantic with faint longings that nudge her consistently through her changing lifestyle to the extent that she hangs Indian scarves around her apartment to make it look more 'Indian'.

Salman Rushdie in Imaginary Homelands on being reminded of his past by an old photograph observes, "It is my present that is foreign, and the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time." Obviously, this is the nostalgia that Mukherjee is working against. There is no sense, she believes, in holding on to a past that does not qualify one's reality with meaning. Tara will feel herself to be an expatriate and an alien
for as long as she conceives of India as the only country she can really belong to and the only way the movement toward becoming an exuberant immigrant can be launched is by burying the ghosts of the past.

Unfortunately, this longing for her "desh" persists even after Tara's marriage to David Cartwright, an American, compelling her to attempt things Indian:

She had curried hamburger desperately till David's stomach had protested.... She had burned incense sent from home... till the hippie neighbors began to take an undue interest in her.

( TTD 34)

As a victim of a love match Tara misses the excitement and security of a traditional Bengali marriage. David proves painfully western and Tara remains dutifully devious in her marriage. She does not divulge her deep-rooted suspicions of foreigners, "Did they bathe twice a day? Did they eat raw beef? Did they too have to hiccup and belch?" (TTD 125) David's knowledge of India is derived from books and this pains and enrages Tara who feels "he had not understood her country through her, that probably he had not understood her either." (TTD 50) Feasts were not a matter for amusement in Calcutta but David is greatly amused at her parents' chronicle of birthday menus in aerograms and considers them almost obscene. He is vastly entertained when Tara describes her dog Rajah's
burial in a children's cemetery and is disgusted that a servant had been kept just to feed and walk a dog. He shows such poor understanding of Calcutta, of Camac Street, of the rows of gods her mother prays to, of the power and goodness of Tara's father, that one of Tara's letters to him from Calcutta reads, "Just be glad you're not part of this mess. I don't think you could begin to comprehend these problems." (TTD 130)

Drawn from such differing cultural backgrounds it is not surprising that Tara has her moments of suspicion, fear and insecurity. While in India she has visions of David with girls who profess to know all about Mormon Art and sculpture by Archipenko, girls committed to women's liberation, girls like Susie Goldberg. Feeling insecure she buys old issues of foreign newspapers and magazines in the hotel lobby of Catelli-Continental hoping the foreign news would bring her closer to her husband. The retention of her maiden surname by the protagonist after marriage not only underlies her failure to belong, it also symbolically reflects her subconscious mind which is still deeply rooted in her native land and has not been able to forget it in spite of the changed identity of a European adopted by her.

Sudhir Kakar writing about the identity crisis of the bicultural Indian states, "The expression of affect without restraint, the being in emotion, the infectious liveliness amidst squalor - in short the intensity of life - is a deeply yet diffusely seductive siren song for Indian Intellectuals." It is to seek the state of "being in emotion, the infectious liveliness," to hear
the "siren song" of nostalgia, that Tara comes to Calcutta after seven years abroad. She wishes to assess herself, to see whether she can rediscover herself in her native tradition, to understand how much she belongs and in what manner she is different. The journey begins in Bombay and concludes in Calcutta where she witnesses the fracturing of her city. She had expected to see,

Not the Calcutta of documentary films - not a hell where beggars fought off dying cattle for still warm garbage - but a gracious green subtropical city where Irish nuns instructed girls from better families on how to hold their heads high and how to drop their voices to a whisper and still be heard and obeyed above the screams of the city.\(^{12}\)

For years Tara had dreamed of this return believing that all hesitations, all doubts, all fears of the time abroad will be erased quite magically if she returns to Calcutta but "the return brings only wounds." (TTD 25) Once in India, the alien western culture which has almost become a second self to her is constantly in clash with the culture of her native soil. The clash is deeply felt in the psyche of Tara who finds it difficult to adjust with her friends and relatives in India, and sometimes with the traditions of her own family. She is often outraged and unable to respond to the changes that her homesick eyes take in.
The vacuity and desperation that Tara feels on her return to India are a result of her years in America. "Seven years earlier on her way to Vassar she had admired the houses on Marine Drive, had thought them fashionable," (TTD 18) but her stay at Vassar changes her outlook on Indian life and now the shabbiness of these same houses appal her. Bombay station looks "like a hospital; there were so many sick and deformed men sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks." (TTD 19) In the train to Calcutta, sitting in an air-conditioned apartment, her supercilious attitude makes her ironically observe her travelling companions, "The Marwari... a circus animal who had gotten the better of his master" and "the Nepali (who) was a fidgety older man with coarse hair." (TTD 20) Tara is convinced the two men together will undoubtedly make her journey to Calcutta an unpleasant one. Kipling's *Kim* finds it a fascinating experience to travel third class and benevolently views his companions as kind and helpful beings. For Kim the roads and railway tracks reveal plentitude of life and are exuberantly human, but Tara's reaction is revealing and different. She tells herself, "I have returned to dry holes by the sides of railway tracks... to brown fields like excavations for a thousand homes. I have returned to India." (TTD 21)

If Bombay station takes Tara by surprise, Howrah station fills her with outrage. Amidst the squalor and confusion "coolies in red shirts broke into the compartment and almost knocked her down in an effort to carry the suitcase. The attendant sneezed on her raincoat and offered to wipe up
the mess with his dusting rag." (TDD 27) Surrounded by a host of eager relatives, vendors with their wares, beggars rattling their cups and children coughing on tracks, Tara feels completely alone and experiences enormous disappointment and frustration. She finds herself wandering between two worlds finding it impossible to belong to either. The Tiger's Daughter may not be autobiographical as Mukherjee has claimed but some of Tara's experiences on her return to India are reflections of the author's own reactions upon returning home:

There were just so many aspects of India that I disliked by then. So a lot of my stories since are really about transformation - psychological transformation - especially among women.¹³

The expatriates need to discard their past and embrace their home away from home though the transformation may very often prove to be even a physical wrench.

During her visit to India Tara is the star of Calcutta, the talk of the town, more popular than the Hindi film stars. Ironically, her identity becomes a vexed issue. On the margins between "abroad" and "home", she occupies an ambiguous position. She is the "other" both in America and in India. As an Indian, her plurality - a Bengali Brahmin with an English
education and an American husband - makes her live on the margins. Calcutta society views her as "racially invisible," as a "foreign returned" woman married to a white man. This is amply borne out when Tara visits Aunt Jharna and her handicapped daughter. Her sincere attempts at being polite and sympathetic draws a sharp retort from the older woman, "You have come back to make fun of us, haven't you? What gives you the right? Your American money? Your mleccha husband?" (TTD 36) Tara's marriage to David Cartwright, forgoing the sacraments and ceremonies of a Bengali wedding, makes her an alien in her own land and to her own people. Confused and hurt Tara probes her mind to decide which was the exact point in time when the foreignness of the spirit had crept into her. Did it begin at St.Blaise where she was taught by the nuns to inject the right degree of contempt in words like "common" and "vulgar?" Or did the foreignness drift in at Vassar with the blonde girls, Protestant matrons and Johnny Mathis? Or did it set in at Madison one chilly morning in the spring of 1967 when she had fallen in love with David Cartwright? (TTD 37) There is no clear answer but the 'foreignness' remains a burden to her in India.

Similar antithetical feelings beset her in the company of her friends. Seven years ago it had been an easy association, she had played with them, done homework with Nilima, imagined herself in love with Pronob, and debated with them at the British Council. (TTD 43) Now after her return
to Calcutta "she feared their tone, their omissions, their aristocratic oneness." (TTD 43) The group that congregates regularly at the Catelli-Continental Hotel passes discreet statements of disapproval, considers her marriage to be an indiscreet one, "an emancipated gesture" (TTD 86) and feels that her years abroad have smothered all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature making her altogether "self-centered" and "European." Tara finds her companions, the "racial purists" (TTD 86) inhabiting a world that seems more secure, more predictable than hers. A Banerjee in that world is expected to be only a Bengali Brahmin and not someone who springs a nasty surprise by marrying an 'American mleccha'. Her friends still live surrounded by an impregnable wall of tradition, superiority and self-confidence but "through some weakness or fault, Tara had slipped outside and reentry was barred." (TTD 110) She discovers that she is different from them in ways that cannot be communicated even if they wished that communication, simply because the society that Tara rejoins is without a vision of the West. All America means to that society is film magazines and gadgets. Tara’s tact and politeness render her unable to articulate her differences.

If there was no heroism for Tara in New York, it appears there would be no romance, no admiration for her in Calcutta either. There is a strange fusion of the Americanness and Indianness in the psyche of Tara which are always at conflict with each other and strengthen her sense of rootlessness.
At times she even regrets her visit to India: "Perhaps I was too impulsive, confusing my fear of New York with homesickness. Or perhaps I was going mad." (TTD 21)

Even as Tara's relatives and friends leave her groping for her roots, Tara finds that within the family circle too where she is accepted she is unable to rediscover her identity. She is convinced of her "little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and center." (TTD 51) Her split personality makes her nervous over her mother's simple request to share piety with her family. Even as those symbols and icons that had struggled to sustain her from afar become real all over again, she realizes that the return is no idyll, and there are reasons for the 'prodigal' to feel trapped and abandoned both at the same time. Though the family she had been born into is gracious and welcoming still, she cannot any longer find the self that had once belonged to it. She fears she has forgotten many of the Hindu rituals of worshipping icons which she had seen her mother performing since her childhood. An outcome of this loss is ironically reflected in her inability to sing bhajans which she performed so easily in that house as a child. There also lurks a suspicion within her that her mother may be offended seeing her constantly in and out of the sacred room. After all Tara had wilfully abandoned her caste by marrying a foreigner and was no longer a real Brahmin.
While in America it was the violence and ghettos that had bothered Tara making her long for her native country:

New York ... had been exotic ... there were policemen with dogs prowling the underground tunnels. Because girls like her ... were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings .... 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. (TTD 33-34)

The trip to India is therefore nostalgically planned in search of the Indian dream. What Tara expects to see is the Bengal of Satyajit Ray, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats despairing in music rooms of empty palaces. She tells Sanjay:

... how much easier she thought it was to live in Calcutta. How much simpler to trust the city's police inspector and play tennis with him on Saturdays. How humane to accompany a friendly editor to watch the riots in town. New York, she confided, was a gruesome nightmare. It wasn't muggings she feared so much as rude little invasions. The thought of a stranger... looking into her pocketbook, laughing at the notes she had made to herself, ... transform(ing) shoddy innocuous side streets into giant fangs ... (TTD 69)
As things turn out, Tara’s expectation of a ‘Sonar Bangla’ is shattered. Calcutta unnerves her as much as New York did. What confronts her is a restive city which forces weak men to fanatical defiance or dishonesty. An appetite for the grotesque seems to have overpowered the city:

Tragedy was not uncommon in Calcutta. The newspapers were full of epidemics, collisions, fatal quarrels and starvation, stretching before her was the vision of modern India.

(TTD 117)

Calcutta appears to be like Conrad’s Heart of Darkness with riots in the city, buses burning and workers surrounding the warehouses. Disillusioned she admits, "It was so vague, so pointless, so diffuse, this trip home to India" (TTD 130) Maya Manju Sharma observes that the fact that Tara’s name alludes to Gone with the Wind is probably deliberate and certainly important. Social disorder has done to Calcutta what Sherman’s army did to Atlanta: more to the point, the Naxalite riots, like the American Civil War, are not some catastrophe coming from outside, but the inevitable consequences of systematic social injustice. Tara and her friends seek refuge in Hotel Catelli - Continental where over cups of tea they exchange views on the relevant situation and view from behind the protective balcony life of the side-walk dwellers and the protest marchers on Calcutta’s Park Street. The hotel described as the "navel of the universe" (TTD 3) becomes an important symbol of rootless existence, a symbol of Tara’s expatriate sensibility.
The gatherings at the hotel, at the homes of friends, at the Chamber of Commerce's Annual Charity Carnival, the earth tremor and snake at the picnic, the Darjeeling episode of insult and exposure to the unsanctioned eyes of young toughs on holiday, and Tuntunwalla bent on satisfying "heart's matters" in Nayapur - these experiences traumatize her by bringing her closer to the touch of the masses. In America, Tara's nostalgia for the old Bengal was a form of "visionless knowledge." Back in India in pursuit of a dream and in search of her identity, her eyes are opened to the epiphanies of "mystery and death," and poverty. She learns to free herself from the soft vision of a protected past. She had always been sheltered, as a child, young adult, and woman. Now she learns that the good life of the few is based on immense suffering, and that all that is born must die and be consumed.

David Cartwright, the absent American husband is a constant point of reference in the novel. Tara clings to the thought of him in an attempt to maintain her identity in Calcutta changing beyond all recognition. Disillusioned beyond measure she decides to go back to America. After all, her apartment on the edge of Harlem would be safer than Hotel Catelli-Continental in Calcutta. She summons her friends to the hotel to inform them that she is returning to the United States. It is here that Tara witnesses her first and last demonstration when the marchers riot under the balcony. At the end of the novel Tara sits shivering in the Fiat surrounded by a mob, wondering whether she will ever see her husband again. One hopes that she survives.
In her study of the expatriate sensibility Sudha Rai quotes V.S.Naipaul’s response to his first journey to India: "It was a journey that ought not to have been made. It had broken my life in two." In Tara’s case too the gulf between the world of Western liberation and the world of tradition and conservatism is not bridged and her psyche remains split up as in the case of other expatriates. Like the transplanted Indo-European spirit in Nirad C.Chaudhuri’s The Continent of Circe Tara too is a troubled spirit belonging nowhere in the end. And belonging is all important.

Mukherjee’s second novel Wife published three years later is yet another work on expatriation but so different in treatment from The Tiger’s Daughter. Rootlessness and unreal existence are once again the "centering nodes." However, Wife also explores the intense inner space of a neurotic and solipsistic individual. As Roshni Rustomji-Kerms remarks, "Some of the more violent and grotesque aspects of cultural collisions" are presented in this novel.

Dimple Dasgupta is a product of Calcutta’s middle class that values docility and submissiveness in women. Consequently, it is the story of the agony of an individual struggling for identity and getting stifled repeatedly. Anita Desai’s Maya in Cry, The Peacock is a study of tormented consciousness but in spite of her morbidity she is able to associate all her happy sensations and pleasant emotions with birds, plants, flowers, fruits
and poetry. On the other hand, Dimple who too feels trapped lacks a positive vision of any kind and loses herself in a private world of daydreams and nightmares. Her morbid psyche is presented through a series of grotesque images. At her parental home, waiting anxiously to be married off her mind is completely dominated by the colourful romance projected in the advertisements and stories of magazines. Indulging in sexual fantasies with cricket stars, young cabinet ministers and heroes from cheap paperback romances becomes a favourite pastime which sets her on a long journey of unreal, meaningless and morbid existence. One often finds her lost in violent erotic fantasies:

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.¹⁷

She is so obsessed with the inadequacies of her figure and complexion that she seeks advice from 'Beauty Experts' and pens a letter to Miss Problemwalla, C/o Eve’s Beauty Basket, Bombay, seeking advice for an ‘undeveloped bust’. Her parents remain flat characters, neither intruding nor aware of the inner reverberations of their daughter’s mind. To her mother Dimple’s restlessness, despair, and anguish "were a part of getting married." Dimple herself is convinced that "marriage would free her, fill her with passion," and waits "discreet and virgin... for real life to begin." (Wife 13)
Dimple's preference is for a neuro-surgeon but her craving for affluence and plentitude prompt her to marry Amit Basu, an average middle-class unimaginative consultant engineer who is ideal husband material because he has already applied for immigration to the United States. Marriage brings in its wake resentment, indignation, grief, peevishness, spite, and sterile anger. She had all along imagined her future husband to be the very embodiment of the virtues of commercial society:

She borrowed a forehead from an aspirin ad, the lips, eyes and chin from a body-builder and shoulders ad, the stomach and legs from a trousers ad and put the ideal man by herself in a restaurant on Park Street, or by the side of a pool at a five star hotel. He wore blue bathing trunks, there was no ugly black hair on his back and shoulder blades as he leaped feet first into the pool while she stood on the edge in a scarlet sari with a gold border, behind wrap-around sunglasses, and trailed her toes in the water. (Wife 23)

In an obsessive fashion Dimple often measures her husband against this ideal man and her life against her dream and finding both wanting in many respects, she is disappointed and filled with despair. These fantasies suggest neurosis. Erich Fromm discussing the characteristics of a neurotic person observes:
A neurotic person can be characterized as somebody who was not ready to surrender completely in the battle for his self. To be sure, his attempt to save his individual self was not successful, and instead of expressing his self productively he sought salvation through neurotic symptoms and by withdrawing into a phantasy life.18

Dimple's life with Amit does not fulfil her dreams of living in "an apartment in Chowringhee, her hair done by Chinese girls, trips to New Market for nylon saris." (Wife 3) Instead her days with Amit in the choking milieu of the narrow flat propel her to hysterical ruminations with her dreamy self. The apartment appears 'horrid' and she particularly hates the grey cotton curtains in her room. In the magazines that her friend Pixie brought her, newly married couples always went to the decorators to select "their" bedroom colours - "That was supposed to be the best part of getting married: being free and expressing yourself." (Wife 20) Instead Dimple feels stifled and struggles to find an identity. When Amit takes her to Kwality she feels

... he should have taken her to Trinca's on Park Street, where she could have listened to a Goan band play American music to prepare her for the trip to New York or Toronto or to the discotheque in the Park Hotel, to teach her to dance and wriggle. (Wife 21)
She feels cheated as her romantic adolescent mind cannot grasp the reality that freedom too has certain limitations. Amit fails to feed her fantasy life and mute anger swells up in her. At this stage the resentment is passive merely and Dimple despairs the lack of courage and passion in her. She can only attempt to anger her husband by disapproving of his dress, spilling curry on his shirt front, and condemning the gifts he offers her. Her "unvented hate" for the family she has come to live with finds expression in her dropping "bits of newspapers, hair balls, nail clippings, down onto the heads below to make them jerk upwards in anger." (Wife 33) Sleep proves worse than wakefulness for then "she was sucked into the center of cone-shaped emotions that made her sweat, cry loudly, sit up in bed." (Wife 34)

She feels completely uprooted from her family and familiar world and projected into a social vacuum. There is no sense of belonging.

Through Dimple in Wife Bharati Mukherjee seems to portray the hollowness of Indian institutionalized marriage. Mukherjee herself had objected to the stereotyped pattern of a conventional Indian marriage and preferred the new world of Iowa:

I must have been a disappointment in the sense that my parents expected me to marry into the same kind of family as ours, and they had found the perfect Bengali groom for me. I was almost 21. I hadn't seen the man's picture, I didn't know
his first name. But I knew as soon as I landed in Iowa that I wanted to stay. The old world no longer excited me in the ways that the new world did.¹⁹

This appears to be Dimple's assertion too. Disillusioned on all planes - physical, mental, and emotional - only the thought of a possible journey to America makes her sanguine. In America she dreams of being completely free from the shackles of caste, gender, and family.

Tara Cartwright in The Tiger's Daughter returns to India to recover her roots; Dimple Basu does everything she can to obliterate them in India. After the passionate assertion that she would like to experience all the pain and loyalty of Sita, Dimple should have welcomed the prospect of motherhood. Instead she treats that "tyrannical and vile" thing deposited in her as an outrage on her body. Nobody had consulted her "before depositing it in her body." (Wife 31) She has a macabre picture of her unborn child and thinks of it as "one with wrinkled skin like a very old man's and large head filled with water." (Wife 41) Her earlier vision of neurosurgeons "dressed in spotless white, peering into opened skulls" (Wife 3) now enlarges into a sinister vision of abortionists, "men with broken teeth and dirty fingers who dug into her body." (Wife 33) She induces miscarriage by skipping rope so that she does not have to bring a child conceived in India into the New World, since "it cluttered up the
preparation for going abroad." (Wife 42) Dimple responds to her pregnancy as a woman bent on self-fulfillment, unwilling to restrict herself to a role of a wife and mother. She looks on immigration to America as a chance to refashion herself, perhaps by taking evening classes and becoming a librarian. The impulse towards self-destruction is a negative outcome of her neurotic craving for affluence and autonomy which she firmly believes she will discover in the West. It is ironic that America leaves her more lonely and desolate.

One should not erroneously conclude that Dimple has no qualms, no apprehensions about proceeding to the West. Not quite westernized in her ways and with just a smattering of English, thoughts of living abroad terrify her. Ratna Das, the actress, strikes a warning note when she tells her, "You may think of it as immigration, my dear, but what you are is a resident alien." (Wife 46) However exhilarating or exciting the foreign experience may appear or however disappointed and rootless Dimple may feel in Calcutta, it is difficult for her to completely sever her links with the past:

Leaving Calcutta for good was still unreal to her, sometimes she wanted to take everything she owned, even the violet monkey Pixie had given her. At other times she wanted to walk onto the plane carrying just a small purse and nothing else. (Wife 45)
Amit Basu successfully migrates to America and Dimple who accompanies him is generally supportive of his intention to break away from the pettiness of their middle-class existence in India, but obviously she is not the docile wife her rather traditional spouse expects her to be even in the new country. She arrives in America, naive and untrained, certainly, but psychologically prepared to broaden her perspectives. She is in the gripping quest for a new female American identity, for the remaking of the self in terms of the new immigrant aesthetic. Mukherjee has stated:

... the kinds of women who attract me, who intrigue me, are those who are adaptable. We've all been trained to please, trained to be adaptable as wives, and that adaptability is working to the women's advantage when we come over as immigrants.... For an Indian woman to learn to drive, put on pants, cash checks, is a big leap. They are ... exhilarated by that change. They are no longer having to do what mothers-in-law tyrannically forced them to do.²⁰

Dimple is certainly expectant, eager, and exhilarated but soon with the exhilaration come fears, trepidations, disappointments, doubts, mistakes, and violence - both psychological and physical. Life in the West proves an uphill struggle and Dimple does not have the required mental resilience. In fact her very name which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as 'a slight surface depression' symbolizes her essential shallowness.
On her very first day in America Dimple feels like a star collapsing inwardly. She had imagined apartments in America to resemble the sets in a Rajkpoor movie:

... living room in which the guests could break into song and dance, winding staircases, sunken swimming pools, billiard tables, roulette wheels, baby grand pianos, bars and velvet curtains. (Wife 64)

Instead, the Sens with whom the Basus move in hardly have much in the living space occupied by them; wall to wall carpet, TV, a combination tea trolley and warming tray, stereo set, bookcase with eight engineering books, transistor radio, tape recorder, and plastic flowers. Since there are no chairs we realize that the Sens never entertain Westerners in their home, a point confirmed in conversation noting their disgust with beef eaters and American insincerity, insecurity with the English language, and projected losses on expensive furniture for those returning home. This is the world in which Dimple Basu is expected to live: one of complete isolation from American culture except through the medium of television, which terrifies her so much with endless accounts of violence.

Dimple also has to cope with the pain of disappointment with life, especially with married life. In Calcutta the commendations and remarks of her friends and mother had drawn her attention to her husband’s virtues
and qualities. She had visualized him in America wearing a Macy's suit sitting next to Johnny Carson or in an Esquire ad smiling up at her from a typewriter and asking her to get him a Grant's. She had been so sure his intelligence and integrity will be magically rewarded with first class jobs that she is totally unprepared for "the actual process of circling ads, ironing shirts, putting on a tie and jacket, and interviewing bosses." (Wife 69)

Amit's temporary joblessness in America makes him lose his erstwhile infallible, intractable, godlike position in the family. While on one hand Dimple tries hard to adjust to Amit's wishes and be a dutiful wife, she is never quite unaware of the fact that he is not the man of her dreams:

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, color TV, cassette tape recorder, stereo, in their order of convenience. (Wife 113)

Moments of feverish introspection reveal her loneliness and despondency in the New World:

Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a chimera ... she was furious, desperate, she felt sick.

(Wife 156)
Dimple's mental aberrations cannot bridge the hiatus between the dream-world of imagination and the drab world of reality. The choice of Amit as a husband was her parents' decision governed by the social determinants of the Indian Bengali community. When she married him, she thought it was a proper choice but did not realise it was not her choice. The realization is felt in New York. In a free society like America, the repressed feelings and forces come to the surface. The realization of her shattered dream-world is an emotional threat to her which creates anxiety and the dormant destructive tendencies emerge.

Amit's own problems partly turn him apathetic towards Dimple's piling mental and emotional turmoil. He struggles hard to retain proper authority in the marriage, insisting that television, other Indians, and a baby are enough to keep any wife occupied. We begin to understand that he is, in fact, utterly irrational. Although he does not want Dimple to wear pants he persuades her to drink beer. He urges Dimple to go out and meet other Indians but will not permit her to accept a job offered by one. It is interesting to note why Amit is what he is. Like anybody who has made pragmatism a way of life he is unsentimental, quick and decisive in gestures, cautious in approach and meticulous in planning for the future. Had it not been for his carefully cultivated pragmatism he would not have married the flat chested, short and wheatish Dimple who can hardly manage to speak English. The culture he is born into requires of him to earn and provide for future whatever be the cost and he withdraws his love.
and other emotional attachments from his wife in pursuit of the cultural aims. The following observation by Freud may help us understand the plight of Amit and Dimple better:

Since a man does not have unlimited quantities of psychical energy at his disposal, he has to accomplish his tasks by making an expedient distribution of his libido. What he employs for cultural aims he to a great extent withdraws from women and sexual life. His constant association with men, and his dependence on his relations with them, even estrange him from his duties as a husband and father. Thus the woman finds herself forced into the background by the claims of civilization and she adopts a hostile attitude towards it.21

One sees a tragic irony in the title Wife. Modern Indian society, like the American, gives little honour to wives. The gap between the romantic fanciful Dimple and the matter of fact, down-to-earth realist Amit widens day by day. The cumulative effect of all these experiences or rather the lack of them render her "incapable of love and leaves her a neurotic, a taciturn introvert." (Wife 131)

When the outlets to relate to people around her get blocked Dimple's personality indicates fragmentation. She suffers from insomnia which is a
direct result of the feeling of insecurity and fear. This development in her character indicates a lag between social and psychological evolution in which the psychic needs could no longer be satisfied by the usual role in the stratification of the society. The role of a daughter-in-law which gives a definite function in the rigid society of Calcutta is absent here. She cannot find a confidant in whom she can confide as she could with Pixie. The old middle-class-oriented virtues have a diminishing value in the modern western and westernized Indian society in America.

In her loneliness Dimple turns to Ina Mullick for comfort and companionship. A graduate in Physics from Calcutta University, she has like Dimple been forced into the role of "the good Hindu Wife" but has refused to be trapped by it. She chainsmokes, goes to night school, and is seemingly Americanized. Her wild exploration of American lifestyles is an object of ridicule in the Indian community and demonstrates the kind of forbidden freedom available only to a Bengali wife whose husband has not looked after her properly. For Dimple, frustrated beyond measure, Ina functions as an opposing parameter to the constraints imposed by that section of the Indian community in America that never ventures forth into the larger culture. Dimple realizes the difficult task ahead of her - she must steer a course between these role models, neither of which is suitable for her. As she discovers later, Ina despite her attempts at becoming "a total American" and her apparent affair with Milt Glasser, is bitterly unhappy.
The thought of the possibility of greater happiness with another man had always been a lingering desire with Dimple. Dimple writes to Miss Problem-Walla in India after her own relationship with Milt Glasser grows complex. Unfortunately, Miss Problem-Walla deals only with beauty problems, not with human relationships. As letters to the editor imply, in Indian society, societal roles are spelled out and the ideal celebrated. Other problems should not exist for a married woman and if they did, they should be resolved as Sita resolved hers - with chastity and absolute faithfulness. Writing about her problem to the American institution of Anna Landers, as an alternative, is out of the question for Dimple who has not yet ventured into American society. Choosing Miss Problem-Walla is the ironic act of a young woman who is still trapped within the expectations of polite Bengali society, yet wrestling with options offered by American society.

The magazine ad which exhorts, "Discover your own grand passion and indulge it to excess. Then simplify the rest, throw out, be ruthless. That's the secret to happiness," (Wife 87) fascinates and inspires Dimple to strike an illicit relationship and indulge in an afternoon's extramarital digression with Milt 'a genuine American' in a quest for a new female American identity. Milt in his blue bikini briefs is casual in his attitude to sex and Dimple looks at them through Marsha's sunglasses in order not to be embarrassed. The purple-tinted sunglasses are a disguise, borrowed from the West, just like Marsha's 'American' clothes and the 'American'
apartment in which Dimple is now living. Her borrowed disguises do not keep reality away but force her to see her situation for all of its intolerable emptiness. Judging herself by the Indian standards of marriage and womanhood, she is uneasy about her extra-marital relationship with Milt Glasser. Despite her pleasure at the escapade, prudence still warns her that she must not "do it again." (Wife 202) Given the right opportunity she might have confided in Amit but Amit's inattentiveness blocks the outlay:

He ... 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... 

(Wife 212)

That Dimple has reached the end of the rope is quite obvious.

Significantly, Dimple is troubled by the fact that she does not dream about Calcutta any more, is unable to preserve old frienships, and is unable to write home. Amit does not grasp the danger of this discarded past, he is relieved that she is no longer fretting and teasingly warns her about becoming "too American." (Wife 112) To Tara and Dimple continuing to be Indian would necessitate a return to being the kind of daughter, sister, wife, and widow that tradition demanded of them - decorous, submissive, and loyal - but it seems highly incongruous in the contexts of their present lives: becoming an American presented the possibility of power to change
their fates. Such a possibility is always heady and it is easy to see how the exhilaration of the moment can successfully hide the underlying anxieties, especially when it is those anxieties that are driving the women to seek the power of change. Ultimately, it is not the traditional role models that the women reject, but the fact that they can no longer reconcile the models to their circumstances. What drives Dimple then to despair and a sense of rootlessness is her frustration at other people's inability to understand her changing needs and desires, now that she is no longer confined to the social and cultural patterns of her past. For Dimple, the future is bleak, the present dull and boring, and the past too remote to be connected. The continuous pressures of fear, hatred, and anger lead to shortness of breath, nausea, sharp pains in back and stomach. This is a foreshadowing of despair in the form of physical sickness. Santosh, in V.S. Naipaul's In a Free State suffers in a similar manner. The susceptibility to illness in the case of Dimple happens not as a by-product but as a direct result of social disorientation. The thoughts about suicide haunt her and she thinks only about different ways of committing suicide.

Trapped between two cultures Dimple aspires for a third imagined world - the world of television. Living in her social vacuum she is not unlike hundreds of men and women in America who believe and are betrayed by the promise of fulfillment offered by the media and who choose the solution suggested by a violent environment. New York, the highest crime-prone city in the world appears to prove particularly destructive to Dimple. Right from
the very first day of her arrival in New York all that she hears from people, sees on the TV, and reads in the newspapers is about muggings, rape and murder - an aspect of the New World that seems to hold an inexplicable but unending fascination for her. She spends all her waking moments watching TV:

The woman on television led complicated lives, became pregnant frequently and under suspicious circumstances, murdered or were murdered, were brought to trial and released. (Wife 73)

Violence proves Dimple's fundamental experience and she aptly observes that in America, talking about murders was like talking about the weather. Alone in the dark apartment with Amit returning home late in the evening her TV watching becomes "a diabolical trap, a torment without hope of either release or relief." (Wife 127) Screaming police sirens in the night remind her of the dangerous world beyond her apartment. Her "gallery of monsters" includes alcoholics, dope fiends, black men in leather jackets, small dark Hispanics, and Puerto Rican girls in tight clothes. (Wife 120) Dimple's first overt act of violence against Amit is to lunge at him with a paring knife because she imagines him to be a burglar sneaking up on her. On one occasion a man whom she has seen on the elevator slips into her apartment uninvited, horrifying her. Even Americans seem aware that theirs is a violent society. Milt Glasser invites Dimple to a show called "The
Bull's Eye," in which a man runs around in circles in Madison Square Garden while spectators throw darts, javelins, and arrows at him. Though Milt points out that the intention is to redeem a violence-ridden society by estranging the audience from violence, it can feed the violence as well. Ultimately, Dimple gives up watching TV - "It was becoming the voice of madness." (Wife 176). It gets more and more difficult for her to understand what she had seen on TV and what she had imagined. It is chiefly because of this pervasive ambience of crime that Dimple suffers from insomnia.

Dimple's predicament, her rootlessness, seen as solely due to her failure to measure up to the demands of American life and her assertion of independence from her overbearing husband, is too simplistic. She is a psychically depressed person. Wife thematically resembles Arun Joshi's Foreigner in which the protagonist Sindi Oberoi finds his life dogged by an eerie sensation of rootlessness. He communicates, but to his wounded psyche, his sad and subdued self. Significantly, Dimple's problem does not lie 'out there' but it is within herself like the problem of Maya in Anita Desai's Cry, the Peacock. Mukherjee delves deep into the inner recesses of Dimple's psyche who moves from a state of mute resentment to an escalating disgust and intolerance which finally culminates in disaster. The stages of Dimple's disenchantment with her situation in America - frustration, the onset of neurosis, the gradual but perceptible building up of mental tension till the final link with sanity is snapped - all these have been depicted with great skill by the novelist.
The various stages of Dimple's psychic depression show the progressive cracking up of an essentially neurotic sensibility fed with popular advertisement fantasies. She becomes terribly apprehensive of imaginary dangers, entertains premonitions and begins to gradually lose touch with reality:

Everything scared her: the sputtering of the radiators, the brown corduroy sofa with depressions... the needles in the rug, the ironing board...the leger prints... the cactus that had not flowered the way it was supposed to, the smudgy wide windows behind the dining table. (Wife 155-156)

She often finds herself doing things without her conscious will. One such incident is quite enlightening. It happens after Leni has offended her:

After Leni removed her cup, Dimple kept on pouring, over the rim of Leni's cup, over the tray and the floating dentures till the pregnant-bellied tea pot was emptied and Leni and Ina were standing and shaking her, "Dimple, Dimple, stop it!"

(Wife 152)

Dimple can afford to be immediate and physical in her reactions with others like the above. With Amit she cannot be so dramatic. She has to repress a good deal of anger which keeps simmering in her at all times. Her
frustration finds expression in verbal retorts against Amit, groundlessly blaming him of wanting her to die, and occasionally daydreams of killing him. Her inability to communicate with others and even with her own self leads to a temporary withdrawal from the world which is symbolically presented in the novel in the scene in which she retreats to a bench in the playground and stays there for many hours. At a further remove, Dimple begins to experience a split personality, sees her body and soul apart, manifests extreme self-consciousness and acutely suffers from imaginary illnesses.

More importantly, Dimple now begins to experience death in myriad forms. Sleepers look to her more like corpses than as people under temporary suspension of consciousness. Her friend Ina Mullick appears in her dream as dead which means that Dimple fervently wishes herself dead. It is a plain displacement contrived by dream-work:

That night she had a new dream: she was walking on the beach. A crowd had gathered just ahead. Something strange had been washed up on the beach. A whale, a porpoise, a shark, she heard people say. She fought her way through a crowd that suddenly disappeared. At her feet lay Ina Mullick, in Dimple's sari, a thin line of water spilling from her mouth.

(Wife 103)
Soon she leaves all pretensions and begins to view herself as already dead:

An after dream persisted when she woke up: someone had murdered her the night before and concealed her corpse among the Bedouin brasses and baskets of indoor plants. (Wife 185)

She not only sees herself as dead but sees also the post-mortem performed on her body. She even wonders what Amit would do if she dies in New York. Will he cope with it as well as he could in Calcutta?

Dimple sits down to list the reasons for her morbid obsession and finds her mind going blank:

1. The plants were dying
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. It was no use (Wife 180)

Unable to discover the exact cause of her misery and loneliness, she turns with full force to self destruction and devises at least ten different ways of ending her life; getting her head caught in the oven, slicing open her jugular vein, consuming pesticide, getting suffocated in a garbage bag,
starving, falling on bread knife, getting her head hit with shovels, and finally getting mugged and killed in the laundry room in the basement after midnight. It may be interesting in this context to consider Gayatri C. Spivak's suggestion that the regulative psychobiography for Indian Women was "sanctioned suicide."\textsuperscript{22} Mukherjee has this to say on the idea:

... Dimple, if she had remained in Calcutta, would have gone into depression, and she would have found a very convenient way out for unhappy Bengali wives - suicide.\textsuperscript{23}

Dimple, in fact, enacts many metaphorical murders upon her own senses. In the margins of these tiny crucifixions lies the story of the struggle to evolve into a whole new entity. When asked, "Do you see immigration as an experience of reincarnation?" Mukherjee has answered, "Absolutely! I have been murdered and reborn at least three times."\textsuperscript{24} Dimple is murdered and reborn many more times, until she needs to murder in order to be reborn.

Caught in a whirlwind of traumatic emotions, her tradition questioning her outrageous adultery, her present confused self wishing to become American by any means, Dimple finally kills her husband Amit to suppress her guilty conscience and also to feel very American almost like a character in a TV serial. In an interview with Geoff Hancock Mukherjee states:
Dimple's decision to murder her husband is her misguided act of self assertion. If she had remained a housewife living with her extended family in India, she probably would not have asked herself questions such as, am I unhappy, do I deserve to be unhappy. And if by chance she had asked herself these questions, she might have settled her problems by committing suicide. So turning to violence outward rather than inward is part of her slow and misguided Americanization.  

The murder itself occurs in a free floating dream-like state and is rendered by the author in a virtually delirious state:

She sneaked up on him and chose a spot, her favorite 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 lightly and let her fingers draw a circle around the delectable spot, then she brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice, seven times, each time a little harder, until the milk in the bowl of cereal was a pretty pink and the flakes were mushy and would have embarrassed any advertiser, and then she saw the head fall off - but of course
it was her imagination because she was not sure anymore what she had seen on TV and what she had seen in the private screen of three A.M. - and it stayed upright on the counter top, still with its eyes averted from the face, and she said very loudly to the knife that was redder now than it had ever been when she had chopped chicken and mutton with it in the same kitchen and on the same counter, "I wonder if Leni can make a base for it; she's supposed to be very clever with her fingers."

Women on television got away with murder. (Wife 212-213)

Dimple's "misguided Americanization" begins when she raises the question of individual happiness as a Western ideal she has failed to measure up to, or a right she has been denied. In fact, both husband and wife see marriage securely, as a means towards individual happiness, so there is no need for faithfulness. Maya Manju Sharma remarks that from a Hindu religious point of view, Wife shows the illusory nature of Dimple's idea of happiness and the hollowness of her American dream. The Hindu sees no real point in someone like Dimple being so anxious about her individual happiness in this one life of many, making herself so much more unhappy. It is obvious that the very structure of Mukherjee's imagination is essentially Hindu and essentially moral as the novelist herself records in an interview:
I was born into a Hindu Bengali Brahmin family .... I believe that our souls can be reborn in another body, so the perspective I have about a single character's life is different from that of an American writer who believes that he has only one life.27

In an interview with Bill Moyers, Bharati Mukherjee stressing the similarity between the experiences of all expatriates from the Third World asserts that America offers "romanticism and hope" to those coming out of cultures of "cynicism, irony, and despair." The United States, she insists, offers the opportunity to "dream big" and "to pull it off," actions that are not possible in a traditional society. Yet, expatriates lead dangerous lives; they cannot take shelter in traditional values, but neither do they know the rules of the dominant culture. Thus, expatriates lead "raw, raucous, messy lives," which contrast strongly with the "small crises" of settled, suburban lives.28 Dimple Basu is greatly tantalized by the possibility of passion which she mistakes for love and self-expression in the West, being deluded by the impression of America as a freeland, a veritable dreamland for all Indian girls. As she cannot come to terms with her own culture or the American culture, she finds herself at cross-roads and visualises her life as a "dying bonfire." (Wife 119)

Mukherjee's expatriates strain and struggle for the articulation of their repressed and stunted voice in order to carve out a vision of life.
Whether it is Tara in *The Tiger's Daughter* or Dimple in *Wife*, they symbolize the predicament of a voice without articulation and without vision. Closely following Naipaul, Mukherjee adopts irony as the style of the aloof expatriate writer in *The Tiger's Daughter*. She uses "a mordant self protective irony" which allowed her "detachment from and superiority over those well-bred post colonials ... adrift in the new world wondering if they would ever belong."³⁹ This is not the case with her second novel *Wife*. Mukherjee remarks:

> The wife was going through feminist and immigrant crises.  
> The style was distinctly American in that omniscience was no longer natural to me. I was closer to my character and the material was more passionate. I had sacrificed irony for passion.

³⁹

The focus of the story narrows down to a single character as Mukherjee chooses to depend more on the psychology of the protagonist than on the fictionalization of facts.

*Wife* traces the psychic breakdown of an Indian wife in America and the concomitant deep culture shock leading to neurosis. A lacerated and anguished spirit Dimple like Tara is the rootless woman belonging nowhere in the end. She is neither of India nor an American but a stunned wanderer between these two worlds yet to attain a distinct identity. She fails to
belong to the make-believe world of TV either or to the world of reality and keeps shuttling between the two. She is yet to release herself from the hallucinatory world, yet to get out of her schizophrenic self. Dimple's quest is a quest for a voice, a quest for an identity.

The character of Dimple becomes interesting to follow not because it is fascinating but because it is convincing. It is an absolute archetype of those 'wives' who find no outlet to their growth of personality as their husbands disapprove of their working outside. The rigid mores which solidify their life in the native land hinder the process of communication in the other country. The stages in the development of character are followed closely and marked with appropriate psychological bearings. The disorientation of an expatriate wife from sanity to insanity is authentic and pathetic. Kalpana Wandrekar observes, "Bharati Mukherjee explores the psychological recesses of an immigrant in such a systematic way that Wife becomes more a clinical study than mere fiction."

Mukherjee's third celebrated novel *Jasmine* (1989) is the culmination of a literary trajectory initiated by *The Tiger's Daughter*. Unlike the earlier novels which explore the conditions of being an Indian expatriate *Jasmine* is a novel of migrancy and belonging. It is an ebullient work that offers a spiced up version of the classic recipe of assimilation into the dominant culture. It demonstrates Mukherjee's evolving belief that "expatriation (is) the great temptation, even the enemy, of the ex-colonial,
once-third-world author.\textsuperscript{32} The following chapter demonstrates how Jasmine, the protagonist, unlike the expatriates Tara and Dimple, accepts the role of an immigrant and consents to be part of that long procession of people who have over the years redefined America. Jasmine is a novel about dislocation and relocation even as Mukherjee rejoices in the idea of assimilation.

2. Ibid., p.39.

3. Ibid., p.36.


The subsequent quotations from the novel are from the same edition and page numbers are mentioned in parentheses.

