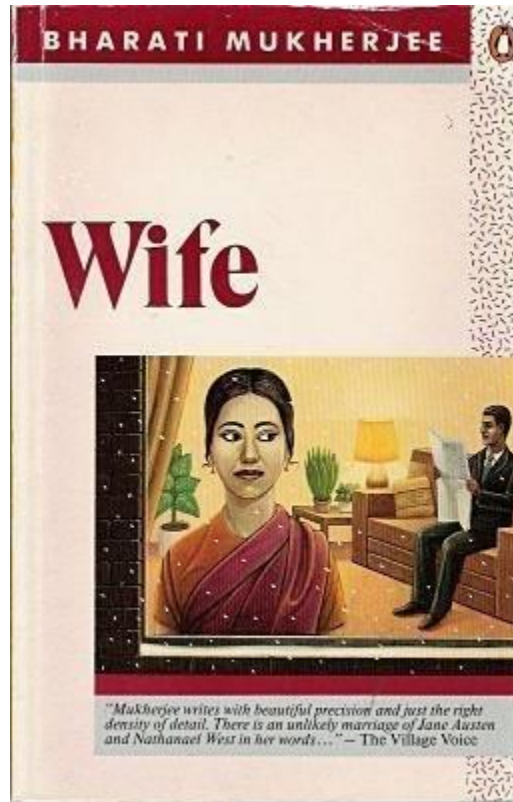


Feminist Perspectives in Bharathi Mukherjee's *Wife*
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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to make an analysis of feminist perspectives in Bharathi Mukherjee's novel *Wife*. Before taking up a discussion of the history of feminism, it is essential to arrive at a definition of what a "Perspective" means. In the words of Susan Wendell "perspective is a pattern of thought, emotion, perception, expectation, and motivation" (284). Feminist perspective underlines the need to look at problems concerning women from the angle of woman's point of view of woman's self-discovery. The fundamental goal of feminist perspective is to understand woman's oppression in terms of race, gender, class, sexual Z's preference and how to change it. Feminism is a concept that women as a class have been suppressed, subordinated and oppressed in all spheres-political, social, economic, religions, legal, artistic, and domestic – and assigns roles and functions according to gender. It considers the social fabric as a construct of man, for man and of man.

Bharati Mukherjee

Bharati Mukherjee is a novelist and short stories writer. He often reveals contemporary themes and concerns. One of these is the culture conflicts and immigrant psyche. Born in 1940 in a Bengali Brahmin family of Calcutta but married to a fellow Canadian student Clark Blaise at the University of Iowa. The following are the major works Bharati Mukherjee has to her credit. **The Tiger Daughter (1972), Wife (1975), Jasmine (1989)**, etc. And two collection short stories. She has co-authored with her husband two non-fiction works *Day and Night in Calcutta and the Sorrow and the Terror*. The titles of the novel **Wife** interpreted as common nouns with no articles attached to them have an extended meaning. They stand for the expatriates and immigrants experiencing conflict of culture and the consequent tension. In the following pages an attempt is made to make a study of the diasporic experience encountered by the women protagonist of the two novels.

Dimple, a Forlorn and Accommodated Self

Bharati Mukherjee is concerned with characters that strain and struggle for the articulation of their repressed and stunted voice in order to carve out vision of their life. Dimple in wife, symbolizes the tight spot of a voice without enunciation and without a vision. She is visionless because she is voiceless; she is rootless because she is basically human. She gives vent to her feminine sensibility in her frantic desire for an authentic communication with the self as well as the society. Dimple is an instance of the forlorn and accommodated self of an Indian wife finding herself out of depths in foreign country with an alien milieu this situation of "Culture shock" is too to need analysis but essentially it is the agony of a voice struggling for identity and getting stifled repeated.

Pliant, Docile, Obedient and Submissive

Dimple, the pliant, docile, obedient and submissive daughter of a middle class Bengali family marries Amit Basu, an ambitious Engineer, chosen by her parents about to migrate to the U.S. Dimple; herself is still a child because she has not been initiated in to the mysteries of woman hood. "she thought of premarital life as dress rehearsal for actual living". Delay in marriage had made her very nervous and anxious so when she is married ostensibly to a worthy groom by the Indian standard of marriage, his chance of happiness ought to be high. Dimple happened to set a high store on marriage. "Marriage, she was sure, would free her, fill her with passion. Discreet and virgin, she waited for real life to begin "(wife13). She hoped that marriage would offer her a different kind of life. She constantly imagined her future husband to be the very embodiment of the virtues of the commercial society.

Trying to Obliterate Her Own Body and Appearance

She borrowed a forehead from a body builder and shoulders and 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 (*Wife* 23). We very often see her ideal man and her life against her dream and finding both of them wanting in many respects. Dimple Basu does everything she can to obliterate hers. She even induces a miscarriage so that she does not have to bring a child conceived in India in to the new world. She does "not want carry any relics from the old life". The description of self-abortion is very poignant and touching. She had skipped rope until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned; then she had poured water from the heavy bucket over

her head, shoulders, over the tight little curve of her stomach. she had poured until the last of the blood washed off her legs: then she had collapsed. She never repents for the cruel death she had committed.

Her abnormality reaches the climax when she skips her ways to abortion, conflagrations of the psyche and hysterical fits of passion. This leads her to do violent act. Symbolically, by revoking her motherhood, Dimple liberates herself from the role of a Hindu wife of just bearing and rearing a child. Like the western feminists, she asserts her will but her abortive act abortive act is a kind of ‘moral and culture suicide’. Her killing of the niece which looked pregnant also suggests that she does not feel at ease with her pregnancy. She becomes almost hysteric in killing that tiny creature without rhyme and reason. This act of killing is a manifestation violence smoldering inside her. Dimple’s psychic defect is implied in her name, significantly the meaning of the word “dimple” taken from oxford English dictionary is ‘any slight surface depression’. With this psychic defect, she naturally reacts in a peevish way to all the things around her.

Far from Being a Normal Person

From the very beginning we feel that Dimple is far from the normal girls. The lake reminds her of death.” She hated the lakes, thought of them as death”. She does not like her new name ‘Nandini’ either. “The name just doesn’t suit me’. Her flat is horrid”. Dimple is a psychic study of an abnormal woman. She wants to note the angry faces of men by purposely dropping on them “bits of newspapers, hair balls, nail clippings, down on to the heads below to make them jerk upward in anger.” Dimple’s problems lie within her. She would remain a foreigner where ever she is to go. She has isolation is rooted not merely in loneliness, in isolation or cultural difference but in her own inner estrangement from her own past and her own inner being.

After marriage, dimple does not feel easy at her husband’s residence at Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road. She doesn’t like Amit’s mother and sister also. However, Dimple thinks that all these problems are temporary and with the confirmation for migration they will eventually come to end. The furious outbursts of dimple show her accumulated frustrations. She is suffering from inferiority complex and thinks that she is not able to win her husband’s love and affection. Amit may also be blamed for his ignorance of female psychology. He thinks that providing creature comfort is enough. The idea of murdering Amit also come side by side. Dimple has always lived in a fantastic world, a world which is built by herself. Dimple has the marks of an existentialist in her she feels alienated from the environment from herself and from existence itself to quote swain.” Dimple’s self-alienation breeds a terrible anguish in her and prompts her to murder her husband ‘(87). A lacerated and anguished spirit. Dimple is nowhere a woman, in a questing for an identity. Dimple is entrapped in a dilemma conflict between American culture and the tradition bound Indian society surrounding an Indian wife between a feminist desire to be assertive independent and the Indian need to be submissive and self-effacing.

To Conclude

Bharati Mukherjee’s novel *Wife* stands out as a unique fictional work by virtues of its insightful probing into its heroine’s psyche. A Wife is normally portrayed as a woman, calm quite, submissive, duty conscious and so on. Mukherjee focuses her attention on the negative

aspects that are to be discouraged by feminists. She rings cautions alarms to every other wife of the female world on psychological depression.

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