

SENTIMENTS AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN BHARATHI MUKHERJEE'S NOVEL 'WIFE'

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Abstract

Bharathi Mukherjee narrates modern woman who was rebellious, however she adapted to all tradition and therefore she leads her life audaciously. Her novel Wife is a unique work by exploring into heroine's psyche. Dimple, the protagonist set an example of whole class of women in India. She was ill-treated by her husband like an inanimate object and subsequently lost her identity. She was afraid of change, because egos cannot control change.

Introduction

Bharathi Mukherjee is a diasporic novelist and non-fiction writer. She explores the process of migration, accumulation, resistance, adaptation and transformation in her novel. Usually diasporic writer had experience of identity crisis. Bharathi also search of a concrete identity in her own culture. These writers often used to indicate religious or national groups living outside their homeland in their work.

Bharathi was born in an upper-middle class Hindu Brahmin family in Calcutta, India. She planned to become a writer since childhood. She went to the University of Iowa to attend the writer's workshop. She intended to study there and return to India and to get married to a bridegroom of her caste. Fortunately, at lunch break with Clark Blaise had changed her plan and transferring herself into a split of two cultures. After marriage she moved to Canada. In many interviews, she spoke about struggle of her life. She wrote her novels like 'The Tiger's Daughter '(1971) 'Wife '(1975) when she was working as professional status at McGill University, Montreal. She reflects her sentiments of cultural separation in her short stories in Darkness (1985), Jasmine (1989) and Leave it to me (1997). Since, she has different experiences throughout her life, she had been lived through several phases of life, as a colonial, then post colonial Indian in Canada. After tolerating the antagonism in Canada, her family moved to United States in 1980. Here, she worked at various colleges and university of California in America.

She was a celebratory of the immigrant in the United States. She lived in many countries like India, England, Canada and America. She collected all experience of her several lives and created 'New immigrant' literature. Her inspired writers are Bernard Malamud, Henry Roth and Issac Babel.

Analysis of Conflict in 'Wife'

Wife, the story of Dimple Dasgupta, who was born in a Brahmin family with secured atmosphere, set her mind to get marrying a neurosurgeon but her father mismatch her life with an engineer in America. Then and there, some comic events took place in her life such as chasing a mouse, comparing her pregnant with mouse and so on. She longs for sensual pleasure from her husband. But Amit always scolds her for immature behaviour which she inherited from her father and also unable to face reality of life. He is rather showing in difference to his wife and had no sentimental attachment between husband and wife. Unlike in traditional cultures, people did not separate feeling and thought like modern man.

In traditional Hindu families like ours, men provided and women were provided for. My father was a patriarch and I a pliant daughter. The neighbourhood I'd grown up in was homogeneously Hindu, Bengali-speaking, and middle-class. I didn't expect myself to ever disobey or disappoint my father by setting my own goals and taking charge of my future. - Bharati Mukherjee (Wife novels' Quotes)

Like Bhrathi, Dimple also suffers at great pains to free her from traditional constraints. Her happiness completely ruins due to martial relation with Amit. She waited for real life, which she expected from her husband but marriage has not given her all the colouring things of the life as she imagined. Perhaps she hates her husband Amit.

In New York, life appears to be struggle for Dimple. She lost her sentimental nature and experience a multi personality and suffers unconsciously. Now that ego gives her relaxation when Milt Glasser seduced her in her own bedroom without Amit's knowledge. She wishes to kill Amit with a kitchen knife. It was almost like dream- like state. If so, for this act society never forgives her and even she cannot escape by contempt of Law. Here, Mukerjee brings out the outburst of woman's emotion and fighting for self identity. In that case, Dimple is a weak character moreover there is a wall in between her words and her husband. Hence, there is an indifference of power between male and female.

Disaster that made Dimple's mind to indulged in violent act. This can be justified by Foucault analysis of madness. Dimple's murder of Amit can be seen in the angle of 'unreason' and 'reason' which leads to an act of violence. Mukerjee pose the Dimple as an insanity simultaneously it help to finds her identity by killing her husband. This point juncture, both cultural and sentimental perspectives are clearly identified in this novel Wife.

When Ina Mullick spoke in English to Dimple, she was struggling to articulate the language to express her emotion. It reveals her fear of the social world. It also contradicts herself image and experience of the 'other' language as a significance of culture. In fact, culture denies her right to express own feelings. Dimple unable to prove her identity even after, she ventured out and meeting people in America. She feels isolated and idle by spending time by reading books and watching television. She had happiness by an imaginary line of kisses, she touched the mole and circle around it .Perhaps, due to impact on watching television. Dimple's madness is because of her isolation in America and its culture. It rises her to heightened when her seduction by Amit's friend.

By contrast, 'The Holder of the World' plays an opposite story. Here a young American women travel to India to search her ancestor. But she becomes a wife to Indian king. This story deals with the issues of colonialism and war. Also it was about conflict of cultures between India and U.S.A.

Usually, her novels always distinguishes between reality versus fantasy and eastern versus western cultures to exploring for the identity. Bharathi's novels were well received and most popular especially among Asian women who enjoy themselves in a sexually and economically liberated America.

Mukerjee has often praised for style which is playful and developed language. Her work is a celebration of her emotions and theme was narrating the condition of Asian immigrants in North America. The novels like 'Wife' 'Jasmine' reflects the cultural conflict between India and US and her personal feelings in crossing culture in her work. In 1975 novel 'Wife' for example, a Bengali woman's isolation in New York City and madness drives her to commit suicide.

Conclusion

Though women are fragile physically when compared to men but they are strong enough to overcome and bear silently all the troubles created by men. The term 'Feminist' uprooted in the society leaves the evidence that women raised their voice and words against men for their rights. This thesis deals with the problems and difficulties of women in terms of shift of culture due to marrying a bridegroom who resides in foreign country. Dimple felt so difficult to adapt the foreign culture. Though she tries to that alien culture and as a result she threw herself between two worlds. India is especially known for its cultural heritage. Thus in the novel 'Wife' Bharathi Mukerjee proves that the cultural conflicts isolates a woman from the whole of society and implements all sorts of sufferings to the women kind.

Bharathi's novel 'Wife' stands as a better example to show up the reality that remains hidden in the roots of cultural barriers. As a victim of cultural conflicts, Bharathi let the world to know about it through her writings. In that case, woman who remains suppressive to the cultural conflicts what would be the end. Do they come out? or Do

they dump in ?This doubt arises when reader reads her novel. It is time for the womankind to think deeply with more consciousness to stay out of their comfort zone and fly out with bright colour sparks. The suppressed woman with such a type would remain idle. How many of us want to be a feminist? That's why people say 'think before you act'.

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