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Bharati Mukherjee's Wife: A Psychological Aspects

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Abstract

The story of Wife begins with Dimple Dasgupta, a young girl who like all other Indian girls, wants to marry of her dream hero. Her parents were very much hurried and worried about her marriage. They were looking for an engineer because Mr. Dasgupta was an electrical engineer and his neighbours were also engineers, but Dimple wanted to marry a neurosurgeon. Dimple has a belief that marriage bring us freedom, love and big parties so she wishes to get married soon. To make her body slim, beautiful, fit and fair she starts using cosmetics. First Mrs. Dasgupta was not much worried about her marriage but when Dimple got sick, her mother found that her sickness symbolises that now her body has been prepared for marriage. As Dimple was student, she was preparing herself for the university exam. But she got the rumour by her best friend Paramita Ray that the university exam had been postponed. Everyone likes to call Paramita Ray as Pixie. She was very fond of novels, films and magazines. She believed that, "Love had to be more than films stats holding hands on a tear- stained page."

Keywords: Bharati Mukherjee's and Psychological Aspects

Introduction

Dimple believes that love would come magically on her wedding day, she only thought about marital things or how to become a good wife. The rumours becomes true, the university exam had been postponed for several weeks. She was not happy with this news because if she does not get graduate degree than how will she get a decent husband and in India, university exam is not more important than cricket match. She likes watching image of Indian bride and to get herself indulged into the world of fantasy. Thus her approach towards life was unreal. She discusses about marriage arrangements with her best friend, and said, "I do believe in short engagement. She took to sewing made own choli blouses." Time passed, she decided to give her exam and on another side her father found a perfect boy for her. He told every details about him:

Amit Kumar Basu, consultant engineer with 7 years' experience; son of late. Ajoy Kumar Basu (outward Bills Department of The chartered Band, Calcutta). Dependents: widowed mother and younger brother studying physics Honours in Presidency College.

Her father also told that Amit had applied for immigration in Canada, U.S.A and Kenya and he (Amit) had one elder sister who has already married. Her father decided to arrange a meeting for both the family. Dimple has told everything to Pixie and her feeling of nervousness. Her mother takes a leave for a month to work in the house before they came.

Finally, the family get together was arranged. Amit's mother Mrs. Basu the Mother of the 'ideal boy' put two objective points for Dimple. First she did not like the name Dimple because it does not look or suit as Bengali and seconds was Dimple's Colour, was dark: "Dimple was not their first choice." Mrs. Dasgupta Convinced Mrs. Basu; "she is so sweet and docile and she will never give a moment's headache." After two weeks Mrs. Basu permitted for the wedding. The wedding date was decided the early February. Her father decided to arrange the marriage ceremony on the roof of his house (Rash Behari Avenue).

Dimple's dream comes true, "It was a perfect wedding. There were hundred and five photographs to prove that it was perfect." She had worn heavy sari and veil which was golden in colour. Mrs. Dasgupta told her everything which makes her life happier but when she heard that her groom is not tall and handsom as she was thinking, she became sad and started crying. It was her first desire to marry her dream hero but now her dream had been broken and it was her first exile from her home. But she had to go her new home which was on Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road. In her wedding night, Amit just talked about cricket and about

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His immigration letter which can come anytime. Dimple pretended to show that she was very happy but she was afraid to live outside country. Amit told that his mother did not like her name Dimple and she wanted to call her Nandini. Even Amit also wanted to call her Nandini. For him there is nothing in a name. But for Dimple her name was everything and she did not want to change because it was given by her parents and it was her own identity.

Dimple was not happy with her marriage because it was totally different from her dream. In Amit's home, she resents for basic amenities and most important was freedom. She blamed her father who did not tell her about small house without water or light and so on. She feels the pinch of being deceived by light itself. She had no sense of belongingness to her new home. She hates her in-laws and Amit also. Although she always tried to imitate him, she started wearing bright colour so she could please him, she had tried everything to make her mother in law happy but Mrs. Basu was not happy with her name and looks. Dimple becomes habitual of her name, 'Nandini'. She was so stressed, and likes to talk with herself in front of the mirror. She thought, "Happy people did not talk to themselves and happy people did not pretend that they had not been talking to themselves."

One day, Dimple was shocked to listen that Amit wanted to marry a tall and slim girl. She could not realized or understand him. So both of them were not perfect for each other. He also expressed his desire that the girl should be convent educated and fluent in English. Dimple could not do anything except standing and listening. She feels herself alone and sad, this was also one of the reason of her frustrated mind. Now she had started to make her body slim. She decided to take basic lessons of spoken English, she starts reading newspaper, magazines, especially about the topic- 'marriage'. Dimple hated Dhakuria Lake which was close to her house, she hated it because it was always surrounded by crows, vultures, pariah dogs. Amit loves to targeted them, he throws stone upon them and enjoy it, it shows his childish behaviour. But whenever she watched those things it made her depressed and reminded her wedding day.

Dimple wanted to decorate her room without anybody's interruption and permission. When she got pregnant Amit did everything to makes her happy. Dimple had a habit of taking aspirins when she had headache. Amit was worried because it was not good for the baby. Amit wished to have a boy and he wanted to make him a good doctor. But Dimple did not care about his happiness. As she thought, "She hated all the Basu; her body swelled violently with unvented hate. In her daydreams, neurosurgeons gave way to sinister abortionists, men with broken teeth and dirty fingers, who dug into her body in a dark, suburbangarge." Dimple did not like to do anything which was said by the Basu's for her, "Sleeping was worse than staying awake." Dimple feels happy to crush the body of mouse and cockroaches whenever she sees it in the house. Although she is pregnant but she feels relieved. Dimple likes to share everything with her best friend Pixie. Dimple was astonished to watch her new look. She got the job in All India Radio, she becomes working woman. Dimple also had a desire of perfect life as Pixie had. Dimple thought, "how perfect life would be if she could have a job like Pixie's and a telephone in her office, and hair styled at Eve's a boss to frown at her through the glass." She had a habit of making fake stories. Amit did not

like to listen it because he knows that these stories are related to her childhood memory or story. Amit was focusing on immigration and spends most of the time in writing applications, letters and drinking so many cups of tea.

When Dimple lost her baby because of her undesirable behaviour, Amit got hurt, he cried, "It was going to be a boy! I was going to teach him cricket! This must be a bad omen!" This was very sad for Amit, but finally, he heard the good news of immigration from the United States. Mrs. Basu feels sad because she would have been died before they come back. Before going to America Amit had a problem to live in America because he had no place to live and no job. So he wrote a letter to his friend Jyoti Sen. Who can arrange a room for both of them. Jyoti was his roommate at the Institute of Technology apartment. He will share the room until Amit could not find a good job. Dimple starts thinking about the way to manage to live with new person? "She had to learn to please him in new ways." Dimple did not want this unwanted child of Amit. She had tried everything to take out this foetus in her body.

America was also divided in racism; she thought if she got to close them, they may shoot or killed her. It created fear into her mind towards Americans. Both Jyoti and Amit decided to go to a party which was organized by Vinod Khanna. It was very big party where Men were in clean shaving look and women were in lots of gold. People only asked her about their arrival and what kind of job her husband do. But her answer does not matter for them, she was very sad in the happy environment. She understood that nobody was interested to listen to her words.

Meena was doing all the house hold works even she was pregnant. Dimple spends most of her time watching T.V, especially Captain Kangaroo. Day by day Amit got annoyed because nobody recognized his intelligence and gave respect to him. Dimple loved watching television, she watch complicated life of women, murdered, trial, death etc. She had learnt only the way of American life, how they behave, how they dressed but she had never learnt that how to make friends, especially with Archana. Dimple likes to read about scary and dead things. Through watching television and reading magazines she found that, "Discover your own grand passion and indulge it to excess. Then simplify the rest, throw out, be ruthless. That's the secret to happiness."

Now Dimple does not like to live in Sen's apartment anymore. She hated everything which was related to Sen's house and wanted to be free. When Dimple realized that her life is not running according to her way of thinking she started feeling shattered. She wanted her own apartment even she hated Amit and his habits. She hated everything which makes her happy. In New York Amit was living like those nice men who like to do watching T.V, cleaning, decorating etc. Dimple was unable to be friendly with Jyoti and Meena Sen. She hates Amit's friendly behaviour towards them, her main problem was her being single. She wanted from Amit that he should get a good job and after retirement they should have their own house in Ballygunje Park. Dimple was hungry for love, for attention and for respect by the people. Her condition was related to psychological rather than physical

Dimple thought, "Marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined." She had not got any compliment when she was living in Calcutta but

when she came to New York she started noticing by the people, like Milt Glasser, who offered drink in the party. Dimple sleeps nineteen to twenty hour, she just sleeps and thinks about, "Seven ways to commit suicide." In her rest of the time she like to do house hold works like cooking, washing, ironing and listening Amit's frustrated voice about the job interview. To calm the situation between Amit and Dimple, Jyoti had made a plan to go Jones Beach, "So Amit would not brood over his interview." Dimple has not seen the sea before in her life. Now she feels insulted to wear Sari, "Dimple kept seeing herself through Ina's eyes, or rather imagined." Finally Amit got a job, he is changed now. Dimple observed so many new words from his mouth, "Even the Bengali sentences were prepared with American words." Dimple started reading about better homes, gardens, furnished apartments etc. Because it was her dream to have her own house but reading makes her more arrogant. At one side she had Meena for doing house hold works but another side she breaks those things which she did not like or irritates her. She hated Meena's blue bed sofa, her plastic flowers were she spends her restless night.

Dimple was confused that what actually she wants, she breaks off plastic flowers and another side she feels guilty and crying, she takes those petals into her purse where she kept her important document and jewellery. Dimple was happy to get the new apartment. She was happy to find new place and Amit was also happy and enjoyed his job. Although he kept saying that the job was not challenging for him. Dimple started observing all things in the room.

Amit did not like that Dimple should remain in the house only, although he wants from her that she should do household works like other Indian traditional wife. Amit insists her to make friends and her friends should be Indian not foreigner. He had found four Indians in the same apartment. Dimple had no idea about the American wives, she had no courage to ask anything to them. She started feeling outsider, she did not understand how to manage the situation when she met an American wives or woman anywhere. Dimple's this situation somewhere related to Amit also because he did not give much time to her. There was lack of communication between them. S.P. Swain^[3] has commented upon this:

Lack of communication stifles and chokes her voice and disintegrates her sensibility. It takes away the sanity of her mind. She has nightmares of violence, of suicide and of death. She even has the sensation of being raped and killed in her flat.

After coming in a new apartment she stops dreaming about Calcutta but started writing a letter to Pixie only in her imagination. She becomes the fast losing identity. Dimple was aware of the fact that Amit was not the man of her dream. "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."

Dimple heard that Meena's friend died due to burning. Meena thought, she had committed suicide. This kind of suicide was one of the seven types of suicides which Dimple had thought. But Amit thought, it was not suicide, just an accident, "You woman are always so melodramatic." He suggest that women should wear cotton Saris in place of synthetic which they were coking, they should take precautions. In her new apartment she was busy to unpacked her suitcase and settle all things. Every day she opened her suitcase and take out new stuffs. It means, she did not take

interest in household work and her laziness. She used to wear Marsha's clothes which she had left. In depression she talked to herself as someone is in the room. Everyday Dimple wrote an imaginary letter to Pixie and suggested to come in New York because, "It's really the land of money, honey and opportunity." Dimple wanted to do those things which they both were like to do in Calcutta. She wrote each and everything to her.

Eating, sleeping and dreaming becomes Dimple's daily routine. When she did not sleep she listen various kind of voices which had come from the outside. She was overcome by loneliness which reflects her erratic eating habits. She had just let the rotten food materials accumulate in the kitchen. Her body's reaction was expressed by her eating habits, and starts dreaming that she is ill. Due to this behaviour, one day she cuts Amit's figure with the kitchen knife. She thought Amit was someone else who wanted to kill her so unknowingly she hurt him just to protect herself. She had created the habit of less talking to Amit. She started busy herself more in cooking and reading. She talked to him when she had to give him dinner or lunch etc. On television she likes to watch Khanna bulletin, which Amit hates.

Dimple found the news through her mother's letter that Pixie had married to a fifty- three year old movie star. Her parents were so angry because their son- in-law looks father rather than husband. Dimple's mother blamed her parents who permitted her to take a job like that. Pixie was doing all the things which Dimple wanted to do even it may be her dream.

Dimple feels shame and awkward in front of Ina's American friends, Leni. Dimple keeps busy herself in making coffee or just listening their conversation. Dimple loves her kitchen place where she goes to make tea for Ina and Leni. Apart from Ina and Leni, Milt Glasser also started coming. But during their absence she starts inventing more ways to die. She feels scared in the empty apartment. Ina was little different from other women, she had never consoled anyone. Dimple started doing all the things which helped her to forget about fear, "But the panic was still there." She started thinking about Amit also, "But she could not find him anywhere in the apartment, not in the bedroom closed which his new and \$140 American suit and sports coat hung with his two Baskat Ali summer suits, not even in the bathroom where the mirror was still flecked with his shaving cream or toothpaste and the last gab of sandalwood soap that she had brought from Calcutta was melting in a blue plastic soup dish."

Whenever Milt Glasser came in the apartment, his questions create curiosity which makes her scared. She feels bad because she could not give him any satisfactory answer. Milt did not like to listen much about Ina Mullick. Dimple wanted to tell everything to Amit, "But her imagination, inflated by too many hours in front of the T.V, pictured what might have been."

Amit did not know about their relationship, when he came at home he feels something wrong because Dimple hates everything which she likes before. Now, for her television becomes the, "Voice of madness." She just went into the bedroom and started chanting, "Her nine ways to die. A tenth way eluded her." One day she was trying to freeze herself in the cold but Amit came and saved her. Dimple started fighting and blaming him that, "you want me to die. I know: you're just waiting for me to die." Amit cares for her and tries to help her to come out of the situation. When she

had tried to kill herself, Amit treats her with extra concern. Amit thought that every Indian wife faced the problem of cultural shock. Amit was also overwhelmed by the settling problem in new society and job but he started taking care of Dimple seriously. He promised to take her to Calcutta so that she may feel better. Usha Bande ^[1] supports Amit and comments:

To be fair to Amit we must admit that he is not callous or careless. Nowhere in the novel does Amit seem to have ill-treated her by exploiting her or burdening her with household work. He cares for her, he is worried for her. He treats her with extra concern when she freezes in the cold. Though he is overwhelmed by the problems of settling down in his job, he makes sure to give her time and attention.

As Dimple was suffering from Insomnia. She lives in her imaginary life and created the scene into reality. She worked slowly which annoyed Amit. She thinks that everything was killing her. "Dimple had to agree that she was losing touch with what she was and what she thought she saw because she had seen it before on television." Dimple feels happy to go outside with Milt. It was small crime for her. But another side she hates herself for deviating from the path of virtue which she has set for herself. Guilt of seducing Milt and also of keeping everything a secret from Amit disturbs her. She was confused that whether she loves Milt or not. "Because Dimple told herself, she liked Milt Glasser. He was the only one she could talk to with the others, people like Amit and Ina and even Meena Sen, she talked in silence." Dimple wrote a letter to Miss Problem- Walla and tell everything, she asked to her that weather she was in love or not? But Miss. Problem Walla solved only beauty problems. She was unable to help her. She starts hallucinating the things while watching television, she sees a birdcage with a bird. It has a face of a human infant inside the cage. That birdcage symbolizes the cage of her domestic life.

Amit criticized her for overspending, he suggests her for cooking economically. Dimple listened to him and got irritated. Amit challenged her in her place of domain. "She noticed that Wheaties flakes on the counter. And sugar- he always spilled sugar on the counter. It was one of the little things that irritated her." In an utter state of irritation she took her vegetable knife cutely and stabs Amit seven times. She was mentally disturbing person. She wanted to marry a neuro-surgeon but she married to an engineer. Dimple lost her identity, she hates everything which can give her happiness but she wanted to escape. In Calcutta she was not happy, her main work to dream about America but she was not happy in America also. First she wanted to escape herself with Ina Mullick, then with Milt Glasser and at the end in the world of fantasy or the world of television. She has created dissociate personality for herself.

As her name Dimple, which signifies as, 'slight surface depression' was an immature girl, who always live in a dreams, first a dream of marriage with her dream hero. She makes a perfect image of him in her mind. She hopes that after marriage, it will bring freedom but her dream shattered when she got married to Amit who was totally different from her dream hero. This was her first unhappy moment in her life. Marriage is very important part in Indian society and one of the important pressures for parents. Marriage was the only dream of her life and for which Dimple keeps waiting. Waiting becomes part of her life, first she waits for marriage, for happiness, for freedom, for her husband and

for her own house. One by one her dream regarding marriage started shattering. When she went for America and lives with Sen's family, there Dimple feels same frustration and loneliness as she had felt in Basu's apartment, where she had to do nothing just tried to adjust herself. Her long habit of waiting becomes her part of nervousness and anxiety. Amit loves parrots; everyday he trained them to imitate his speech. Dimple compared her with parrot. Although Amit loves her but he wanted to make her domestic wife who follows his values and order like parrot. Dimple murdered her husband; her violent behaviour shows her powerlessness because she was unable to come out of the situation. Her killing act shows/ hints many things like she murdered because she was fail to differentiate between the real and imaginary things or she wanted to reject everything. It may be that after living a long life of depression, domination, mental disease, neglected from the society etc. it creates self- assertion into her and at the end she demands liberation. Amit stops Dimple every time. He did not like her to talk too much or should explain everything in detail. Amit's this behaviour makes her feel that she should remain silence forever. Ina Mullick's attitude and style gives her to think about freedom. She starts inviting Ina and her American friend Leni, in the absence of Amit. She was living double life; she did not know that she want to be like Americans or feels herself free and happy with the Americans.

Conclusion

Then she wants freedom but it was also not fulfilled and she has to spend her life in a tiny apartment with little things. She thought that her dream will going to be fulfil when she went for America, there she will buy her own apartment but there she has to adjust herself with other's apartment, this was also one of the other view point of her frustration and depression. She thought that after living in America she will become like Americans, people will recognize her, admire her but things were totally different from her thinking. At last she started making her own imaginary world. She spends most of the time in dreaming rather than reality. She likes to live her companion rather than her husband; she likes dead things rather than living things. She cannot differentiate between reality and imagination. Due to this unconscious habit she killed her husband unknowingly. In her life whatever she wished was not fulfil. She lost her sense as well as her identity.

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