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## The Psychic Patterns In The Protagonist Of Bharati Mukherjee's Wife.

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### ABSTRACT

*Intense reactions are noticed in the characters emigrating to the U.S.A. due to the wider gap in affluence as well as behavioral pattern. The degree of psychic tensions heightens in the outsiders settling in the U.S.A. WIFE depicts such characters. Dimple Das Gupta enters into arranged marriage with unrealistic notions of life, love and marriage. After her wedding they go to America. Once abroad, she understands that life is not a glamorous as she had imagined it to be. Cultural shock, alienation, incapacity to form friendship with her neighbours, continual viewing of violent soap operas and her husband's long stays at office further complicate the basically morbid of Dimple. It makes her neurotic to the extent of imaginatively killing her husband in grotesque manner.*

### Keywords : emigrating, neurotic, morbid, grotesque

Immigration can be considered as a stage in the evolution of human kind. Here the sensibilities of a human being are affected not by one pattern of culture but many. The strong minds succeed in absorbing the best of both - the native and alien – and grow into 'international citizens'. But the weaker ones succumb to psychic illness. Crossing national border is sign of growth of an individual as it indicates his independence and his breaking the protective orbit. The native land gives him all love whereas the adopted country provides him with a patriarchal structure indicating adventure and growth which are essential for adolescent individuation.

Immigrant experience has become dynamic and it has the characteristics of changing, damaging, and destroying; but in a few cases it also rebuilds amazingly. In majority of the cases expatriate experience has developed the stresses which have resulted in the break-up of traditional societies bringing about a change in the ethos and man's psyche. Under the pressurized new circumstances the characters become sometimes neurotic cases. Such cases are ubiquitous in Indian fiction in English as well as in the contemporary world literature in English including Commonwealth literature.

But Dimple's sufferings increase after her arranged marriage as she had to marry a man with the job that she dislikes – engineering. Moreover, her previous desire of marrying a neurosurgeon is of her forthcoming neurotic symptoms. She constantly feels that she is betrayed in her marriage and is made devoid of 'all the glittery things she had imagined'. The parties, fund raising dinners for noble causes, freedom and love which were desired earlier - all have remained unsatisfied to the extreme. Amit does not fit into her dream – 'god like, but with boyish charm'. This unsatisfied lot of appetencies brings her closer to frenzy and psychic upheavals.

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 and herself in a restaurant.....p. 23.

Such neurotic symptoms had thus started earlier in Calcutta itself prior to her migration with Amit to America. She does not

belong to the world of reality anymore. What ought to have been real is not real to her. Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote, 'all power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity.' These words encapsulate Dimple Das Gupta exactly.

She is not clear about the concepts of freedom and love. This ambiguity underlying her mental make-up defines incompleteness of her very being. She is so obsessed by the thought that the pressure mounts into a sharp pain in the chest which she is unable to locate. This is also due to her belief that pain is reserved for married women. She seeks an answer to her problem by writing to Miss Problemwalla. She is a girl who awaits and experiences but never takes it. This suggests the dislocation of sensibility. The mind and the body lack total harmony. Such symptoms lead to schizophrenic.

Dimple's reaction to natural occurrences is not normal.' Vomiting is real to her but pregnancy is not.' When she is pregnant and starts vomiting, she is fascinated by vomits but dislikes being pregnant and hates her husband. Motherhood to Dimple is an encumbrance.

She thought of ways to get rid of... whatever it was that blocked her tubes and pipes. Her insides were like logged drain. She would pour some cleaning powder down her throat- if the powder was advertised as destroying rotting food, fallen hair, grease, it could surely burn its way through muscle, fiber and tissue? She spent her time cataloguing ways to rid herself of it. p.31

The vision she conjures up for her unborn baby, 'one with wrinkled skin like a very old man's and large head filled with water,' is so cruel. p.41. She could not give vent to her hatred in reality. This she satisfies only in her imagination. She considers that a child will be a deterrent to her migration to America. In her mad exuberance, Dimple induces an abortion by violently rope-skipping. This destructiveness is intrinsic in Dimple. It becomes a constant lingering tendency in her which awaits an opportunity to be expressed. She hopes that her new life will begin in the new world. 'I want everything to be nice and a new', she informs Pixie on the phone.p.41. Such neurotic symptoms had thus started earlier in Calcutta



itself and aggravated when she is displaced in America after her marriage. Killing of a mouse with an unreasonable ferocity symbolizes her own pregnant self. To Dimple the dead mouse looked pregnant. This incident also hints at the homicidal tendency of Dimple that makes her readers apprehensive.

During the first week of her stay with the Sens she decides to buy a cheesecake and enters a meat-shop by mistake. When she asks for a cheesecake, the shopkeeper stares at her angrily and directs her to the German across the street. Dimple reacts very strongly by imagining that the man would take out the gun and shoot her.

'She was caught in the crossfire of an American communalism. She could not understand. She felt she'd come very close to getting killed on her third morning in America.' p.60.

This encounter with an alien system is enough to cause a rupture in her consciousness which is prone to incur strong response even to minor problems. The experience makes her aware of the displacement from the stable positioning in its cultural tradition. It frightens her. Failure to relate herself to outside situations starts the withdrawal process and as a result insecurity is felt by Dimple.

She is further shaken with the knowledge that America with all its outward glitter allows Indian wives only to create 'little Indias' around them but does not allow them either freedom or fulfilment as evident in the case of Ina Mullick who, despite her attempts at becoming 'a total American' remains a frustrated individual. After this disturbing realization Dimple sinks into a world of isolation, unable to welcome the bright prospect of setting up a new home even after Amit gets a job.

The art of communication between husband and wife is essential for marital happiness. After getting exposed to the alien culture, Amit and Dimple fail to properly communicate with each other. This has a telling effect upon their relationship. This failure in communication develops a breach between the couple which gets widened day by day and ultimately ruins their relationship. She has to live within the four walls of an apartment. TV is all her cosmos where she watches endless scenes of violence and murder. Being an incurable fantasizer and addict to the bright colourful world of advertisements, Dimple falls an easy victim to the various magazine and T.V. ads so much that she loses the ability to distinguish them from the world of reality.

She indulges in a sense of nostalgia thinking about her peaceful life at Calcutta with her friends. She finds it difficult to share her inmost heart even with her husband. She is "bitter that marriage had betrayed her, had not provided all the glittery things she had imagined". P.101. Born out of this frustration is her seven ways of committing suicide in Queens. From her suicidal thoughts springs the idea of murdering her

husband. Thus she suffers from abnormality of mind and insomnia at night.

Dimple is thus left to her own strategies of survival in the new environment. This evolution is reflected in the modulation of her response to the conduct of Marsha's brother, Milt Glasser, who hugs, embraces and even lifts Dimple onto the top of the kitchen counter as their acquaintance progresses. She is at first embarrassed and uncomfortable with him, but slowly she discovers in him a source of emotional support and even a recognition of her identity, which she had missed in Amit.

America has outwitted her and now she is gripped by a sense of nostalgia. Dimple experiences loneliness at every quarter of her life. It is beyond her understanding 'how could she live in a country... where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignorant, exposed to ridicule in the elevator?' p.112. Dimple's disgust with American English and American system gets accentuated even by small things. She is afraid even to operate the self-service elevators.

Dimple's psychological imbalances, her immoderate daytime sleeping, her nightmares, her indecisiveness - everything remains unknown to him up to his dying day. Dimple has to cope up with her traumatic mental condition all alone. She turns towards Ina and ultimately Milt Glasser in her moments of crisis. Ina and Leni fail her as friends. Milt proves to be a temporary transgression. The rebel in her is devising new means and ways to commit suicide. She is an alienated being undergoing the supposed after effects of alienation - psychosis, psychosomatic disorder, delinquency and contemplation of suicide.

Dimple is emotionally sick. She leads her life in despair under an inexplicable psychic pressure that makes her rethink over her married life. And she eventually concludes that her married life has resulted in having merely some trivial material comforts. The destructive impulse in her is a passion which will try to find an object outside or else will be directed to the self. She takes a knife from a kitchen drawer and stabs her husband seven times until his head falls off and stays upright on the counter top, with its eyes averted from her face.

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