

## Multiculturalism and its Impact in Bharathi Mukherjee's Wife

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### Abstract

*This paper attempts to explore the general concept of Multiculturalism with a particular focus on Asian American Diaspora and Indian Diaspora which is used to explore the positions of the female characters within the framework of migration in the U.S. These concepts are then related to the concept of double consciousness and the issue of gender, particularly in relation to Indian diasporic women, to investigate the interrelation of Indian migrant women. The main characters in the novels express agonizing moments through their struggles to integrate themselves to the American society. Indian tradition affects their adaption process. Perpetual engagement with Indian tradition inevitably has created an ambiguous situation for these female characters. Bharati Mukherjee in her novel Wife shows the relation between literature and society is reciprocal, both serve as cause and effect to each other.*

### Introduction

Bharati Mukherjee is one of the most committed Indo-Canadian writers who constructed the inner consciousness of Indian women immigrants. In the writing of Bharati Mukherjee, there is a consistent assertion of fact that woman as an immigrant undergoes serious challenges of life because women immigrants have an innate religious consciousness for their national culture and its associated variables like myths, religion, moral values, personal relationship and the haunting nostalgia of homeland.

Bharati Mukherjee's fiction truly reflects the temperament and mood of the present American society as experienced by immigrants in America. One of the significant themes of modern literature is the depiction of cross-cultural crisis, a subject which has assumed a great significance in the present world of globalization. Bharati Mukherjee develops a woman-centric poetics to decipher the complex idiom of cultural diversities in her well known novel 'Wife'. She focuses on the issues of 'dislocation', 'nostalgia', 'national consciousness', 'dilemma of cultural conflict' and the faith in Indian moral values and personal relationship. Identity has become the process of migrant

uprooting and rerooting. Regarding her purpose in the creation of immigrant women.

### Multiculturalism and Its Impact

Bharati Mukherjee shares the suffering of woman in the multi-cultural society of America. The novel 'Wife' is divided into three parts, modeled on the changing phases of Dimple's life. The first part of the novel traces Dimple's getting married to Amit Basu and learning to live in the joint family with Mrs. Basu, her mother-in-law. The second part of the novel traces the Dimple's migration to U.S. with her husband. In Queens they live in another joint family in the flat of Amit's friend, Jyoti Sen. In fact Dimple and her husband Amit never live independently from their friends, always having to rely on their help and hospitality. The third part of the novel describes their temporary moving to a sophisticated part of New York, Manhattan. They live in a luxurious apartment that belongs to Jyoti's friend, Prodosh and Marsha, who are away on sabbatical. In this apartment, Dimple and her husband were free from joint family life for a while.

In the novel *Wife*, Bharati Mukherjee portrays the sadomasochism of a Bengali Indian wife, Dimple who migrates to America in the hope of a more luxurious,

emancipated and glamorous life against the conventionality of Bengali families where the consciousness of conventions is a burden to the identity and freedom of Indian woman. Dimple's self-development are signified by their ambivalent effects of retaining their 'old' characteristics as Indian woman and at some other time internalizing the new values of the new host land. As migrant women move out of their nation, they carry particular marks which are the part of their identities. This identity embeds typical characteristics of a group of people in a certain region. These typical characteristics are constructed through race, nation, language and culture. They further can be comprehended as the 'inborn' identity which is most recognizable and identifiable to any within the context. Identity, in this sense is traditionally defined through similarity and sameness. Her resistance against the multi-cultural society of America makes her crazy to the extent that she loses control over her own conscious self and in a state of temporary insanity kills her own husband Amit.

Prof. Asnani in *'Identity Crisis in the Nowhere Man and Wife'* evaluates Dimple's problem as 'dilemma' of cultural conflict. The instinct of self-preservation against cultural hostility leads to an unpredictable perversion in her behavior. Bharati Mukherjee agrees, "Wife is about a young Bengali wife who was sensitive enough to feel the pain but not intelligent enough to make sense out of her situation and break out" (Days and Nights in Calcutta: 268). In the novel *'Wife'*, Bharati Mukherjee with the exceptional sensitivity of feminine psyche, focuses on the psychological fear of Dimple. The extreme suffering of Dimple represents an urge for freedom against the burden of traditionalism of typical Brahmin origin, the usual weaknesses associated with the responsibility of family ties in the form of wife, mother, friend and other relations. K.S Narayan Rao in *Contemporary World Writers* aptly presents the crisis:

The novel raises an important question: was the Indian wife happier in India with her limited freedom and greater docility or does she achieve happiness in her painful search for more individual freedom and in the process of maturing, (475)

the novel *Wife*, it revolves round the life of Dimple, twenty years old, timorous, middle-class Bengali girl who is eagerly waiting to be married. She has multihued dreams about marriage. Dimple has fixed her heart on marrying a neurosurgeon or an architect. The responsibility of choosing the appropriate bridegroom belongs to her father, Mr. Dasgupta, an electrical engineer in Calcutta Electric Supply Company, who is inclined to looking for engineers in the matrimonial advertisements. J. P. Singh in *Recent Trends in Feminist Thought* points out that, "the majority of marriages in India are still fixed or arranged by parents or elders on behalf of and with or without the consent of the boy or the girl involved" (143). Many girls are in fact not in a position to choose their partners, due to "the restriction placed on free interaction between a boy and girl in India" (Singh, *Recent Trends in Feminist Thought*, 143). Thus they have no chance of knowing a bit of each other's nature, temperament, sentiments, feelings or aspirations. This is not only restricted to one caste, it is the feminine duty of a woman in a male dominated society to vanquish her feelings and desires to the will of her father.

Thus she dreams that marriage is a sanction in camouflage which will bring her sovereignty, kismet and great happiness. She is too acquiescent to ask for in her own family. But the anecdote of girls belonging to middle class is different. They are sent to school and college and requisite to help senior ladies of the family in the kitchen and other household work in their free time more as a part of their training. They get romantic ideas about love and marriage, but have no clear-cut idea of the person, who, they think, would be compatible with them or who they would like to marry. After their school or college education is over, begins the period of waiting for them (husbands). They wait till some boy from amongst the various boys sent the proposal of her marriage to say 'yes, I will marry her'. They feel happy to see the relief in their parents' faces and feel happier if the boy happens to be fair and handsome, is well qualified and has a good well paid steady job. Arrange marriage she has no hesitation in her absolute surrender to her male partner who should be a young man with moustaches, dressed in spotless white, peering into opened skulls. At this stage, she is not conscious about her individuality, female identity and basic

urges of womanhood. Dimple brings up the dream, "marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, fund raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love" (3).

It highlights Dimple's inherent insecurity, her dependence on male support and the lack of awareness about her own identity and dignity. She is highly conscious for her good physique and beauty to attract a "Divine Husband". Mrs. Dasguptain 'Wife' often asked her daughter: 'Just wait and see; your father will find you an outstanding husband' (4). Mukherjee herself seems to be disapproving of this practice, since in the novel she reveals that, "in mid-January, when the weather had turned quite chilly and Dimple had to use a quilt in bed, Mr. Dasgupta announced that he had found his 'ideal boy' (14). The cold, the quote marks and the stress on "his" suggest an ironical tone criticizing how an Indian daughter may not have her own autonomy to choose her bridegroom.

Family control, has the purpose of ensuring the bride marries the chosen man from an equal caste and class, as it is understood that matches would be arranged only within same caste and general social class, although some crossing of sub castes is permissible if the class positions of the bride's and groom's families are similar. Dimple is confident in her belief that without being good looking and without being a B.A. she won't be able to get a decent husband. She even plans cosmetic surgery in the West and in extreme depression thinks about suicide and calls good photograph as a "half battle" for marriage.

After her extreme waiting, she enters the wedlock with AmitBasu, an engineer who is "short, dark Prince Charming" (17). Amit's opportunity to emigrate to the U.S. was one of the considerations Dimple's family took into account when selecting him as bridegroom. In this case, migrating to the U.S. is considered to be an opportunity to improve one's life. Ganguly in *Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood* points out that "immigration has given them [migrant men] the opportunity to obtain financial security and also dignity, not merely back home, [but] as well as secured him a better life there" (35). Dimple's family and her best friend, Pixie welcomed the marriage. Pixie comments: "What a lucky girl you are! You'll be in America before you know it. I'll still be slogging

away at my typing and shorthand" (16). Dimple is a touchy, young girl, who undergoes a great mental ordeal born of her marriage to a much older, business-like, matter of fact Amit Basu.

AmitBasu, is numb towards her physical and emotional requirements and thus there is considerable divergence in their attitudes. Ironically, although Mr. Dasgupta is satisfied with the marriage arrangements, the bridegroom's mother and sister, Mrs. Basu and Mrs. Ghose, "had made their point: Dimple Dasgupta was not their first choice" (15). She doesn't like Amit's mother and his sister. Because after her engagement Amit's mother wanted Dimple to change her name as Nandhini. She finds the name Dimples is too frivolous and unbengali. Dimple seeks freedom in marriage but in fact she is bound to lose control ever of her own body. Amit's mother wants to call her "Nandini" after marriage.

After getting married, Dimple comes closer to reality which shatters all her dreams. She has always lived in an implausible world, a world which is created by Dimple. Dimple gets strong resents on her inability to participate in the selection of her husband to be, the arranged marriage has negative consequences for Dimple. Dimple's feelings were totally ignored. Arranged marriage seems to treat the union of husband and wife not as a scared moment but as a property exchange. It is shown in the family's objecting to Dimple, the parents are afraid that the flaw would prevent Dimple from getting a proper husband and the chance of migrating to the U.S., something which will elevate the status of the family as well.

Mukherjee makes her view on the issue known by stressing the demands faced by Dimple. For example, since her mother-in-law, Mrs. Base does not like her name, Dimple has to go by the name of 'Nandini', which Dimple finds strange, "old fashioned and unsung" (31). Dimple is focused to take her name. In Amit's family Dimple finds everything contrary to her dreams – the congested bedroom, traditional taboos and absolute dependence on the family. She reveals her pain to her friend Pixie, "The name doesn't suit me" (33). Bharati Mukherjee with meticulous details exposes the helplessness of her female protagonists to make her own spaces against the norms of patriarchy. Dimple has no choice of food, private bedroom,

no power of decision making and even no right to adopt a name of her own choice. She tackles the hard realities of life the feathers of her imagination are clipped. Bharati Mukherjee defends Dimple's case but does not fail to notice the female dependence is the result of economic and educational subordination of female on male desires.

Moreover, since the possibility of knowing the bridegroom is quite limited in an arranged marriage, Dimple avoids worrying Amit since she finds out that he seems to be restrictive and neglectful. She feels that:

Amit would always be there beside her in his shiny, ill-fitting suits, acting as her conscience and common sense. It was sad, she thought, how marriage cut off glittering alternatives. If fate had assigned her not Amit but some other engineer, she might have been a very different kind of person (127).

Dimple also feels that Amit has taken over all decision makings about their apartment, something which make Dimple unhappy. She complains that "the apartment is h-o-r-r-i-d" (19), and the water has to be carried up in buckets and stored since "the tap in the bathroom is broken" (21). Unable to get to know him before marriage, she finds out too late that Amit has disappointed.

Dimple's younger brother-in-law, tell that he has started giving math lessons to a twelve-year-old boy on Rash Behari Avenue so that he can meet his personal expenses without disturbing parent. Dimple has her first disturbance of mental sufferings that she has not taken the university exams seriously. Though she is educated, she had no idea of trivial not serious routine works like measuring temperature in a thermometer. She innocently exhibits herself has "I'm too stupid about these mechanical things" (25). Amit dominates Dimples, when he looks dimple with a newspaper in her hand, he becomes annoyed and expresses his strong angry in her failure to provide him lime water. His accusation gives birth to a sense of guilt in her life. She thinks that Amit was not the man she has imagined for her husband. Bharati Mukherjee expresses her keen sensibility to typical female experiences and through their position demonstrates that a woman has her own distinctive life different from a male.

In general, pregnancy is a fortunate thing for Indian women, but Dimple is particular in that she thought of ways

to get rid of. The novelist presents an elaborated description of the nausea vomiting with a mixed response of excitement and nervousness. She had a panic grip in her mind and she perceives pregnancy as a hurdle in her fantasy of 'freedom' and 'immigration'. She decides to lapse her pregnancy. Dimple thinks on the ways to get rid of undesired pregnancy, "she thought of ways to get rid of..... whatever it was that blocked her tubes and pipes" (34). This is her first act of allegation marks the instigation of her evolution. She frees herself from the traditional role of a Hindu wife by rescinding her motherhood. In this place Bharati Mukherjee approach was progressive and radical. Her helplessness transforms into rebellion. Amit and his mother are excited at the pregnancy but Dimple feels deceived.

Bharati Mukherjee successfully exposes the intensity of her restlessness through the incident of how Dimple managers to kill a pregnant mouse. She chases the mouse, kills it with her broom and after its death, she feels exceptional satisfaction. Further, her idea of skipping, using the rope, and arranging slips in the bathroom to terminate her pregnancy are suggestive of the fact that she craves for a life beyond the myth of ideal motherhood. As soon as abortion takes place, she feels no pain and only thinks about the baby as unfinished business. This extreme step has been criticized by the critics but the reality can't be overlooked – that every woman possesses an inherent urge for freedom and the traditions of patriarchy can govern it but can't control its pace indefinitely. While she is excited about going abroad, she does not want to,

Carry any relics from her old life and wants everything to be nice and new In order to get rid of the vile fetus she skips her way to abortion. She had skipped rope until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned; she had poured until the last of the blood washed off her legs; then she had collapsed. (42).

Dimple accepts a life of tameness for herself. Dimple's assessment of her relationship with her husband points to be unhappy. To her, married life becomes agonizing and droning, as it moved in a fixed pattern. Initially, Dimple tries to fulfill his desires by being a duty sentiment Indian wife, but when she finds that he is

insensitive towards her emotions and feelings, she becomes quiet and flaccid. Dimple gradually transforms into an individual with her own identity and initiates to lead a life on her own stipulations and circumstances.

Mukherjee highlights the way partners suffer if each other feel he/ she as incompetent, Amit feels dissatisfaction with dimple; he says, "I always thought I'd marry a tall girl. You know the kind mean, one meter sixty-two centimeters, tall and slim. Also convent educated, fluent in English" (26). In other words, the novel highlights that in this kind of union both partners suffer. Dimple is especially discouraged, feeling that "there was nothing she could do about her height except stand straight and dress wisely. But what excuse could she offer him for her spoken English?" (27).

Although initially she thinks that marriage "would free her, fill her with passion" (14), it left her "as someone going into [an] exile" (16). Tracing Dimple's story in the second and the third parts of the novel, marriage arguably leads her into exile. Emigrating to the U.S. alienates her, and living in an extended family itself is another form of exile for Dimple. Dimple's status as a daughter-in-law in an extended family isolates her, since tradition determines that a daughter-in-law is an alien in the household. The practice of joint family living is taken for granted within an Indian household, this tradition, to some extent, also restricts a woman's capacity to have her own decision on managing the household and be independent.

When Dimple and Amit gets married, they move to a three-story building on Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road, a place where they live with Mrs. Basu and Pintu, her brother-in-law. Dimple does not feel comfortable joining Amit's family, rather "she felt there were too many people in the apartment on Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road, too many people to make demands on her, driving her crazy" (26). Aside from this emotional and psychological response, she does not like how things are arranged in her mother-in-law's house. She wants to arrange things as she wishes, according to her image of normal "young married" [who] were always going to decorators and selecting 'their' colors, especially their bedroom colors. That was supposed to be the best part of getting married. Living together with her husband's family constrains Dimple. She thinks that she would like to

be back of her "own room in Rash Behari Avenue, on a bed cluttered with broken-backed books" (31). Mukherjee introduce the issue in order to critique it, and personally has long spoken out against the traditional idea of wifehood. Mukherjee's rejection of tradition, particularly in the case of widow burning (sati) as a form of wife's devotion to her husband is especially evident in this section.

Furthermore, Dimple's role as a wife to Amit is not only limited to serving him: she also must care for his mother, who is sick. Unfortunately, Mrs. Basu seems to be reluctant to get close to Dimple. Indeed, Dimple's effect to take care of Mrs. Basu is misunderstood as her way of taking over things in the house. Dimple faces her mother-in-law's frequent abuse: "Watch it!" Mrs. Basu exclaimed. "You almost smothered me with that net! You want to kill me so you can get my gold bangles!" (25). Mrs. Basu's statement is a means of controlling her daughter-in-law but also reveal that she fears that her authority as the head of the house will be taken over by Dimple. Like wives and daughter-in-law, the mother-in-law too has a particular position within Hindu households.

Mrs. Dasgupta has to be highly respected and served especially by her daughter-in-law. She dominates the arrangement of the household. Daughter-in-laws are expected to devote their life fully to serve their mother-in-law. This often creates disputes between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in an Indian extended family, since "daughter-in-laws are considered major disputants" (Singh, *Recent Trends in Feminist Thought*, 139). Significantly, the domineering presence of Dimple's mother-in-law still echoes during her migrant's life in U.S. Tradition has truly configured Dimple's identity as a Bengali woman. Tradition determines not merely Dimple's life as a teenager and wife in Calcutta but also later as an Indian migrant woman in U.S. Tradition suppresses Dimple's diasporic life in the form of Amit's demand on Dimple to be a submissive wife.

After the migration to U.S. with her husband, Dimple and Amit live in Jyoti Sen's apartment in Queens, along with his wife and daughter, Meena and Archana Sen. Queens is described as having an atmosphere that "is really like a little Ballygunje" (174). This area is quite well-

known among the Indian migrants as “[the] receiving areas for newly arrived immigrants” (176).

As an immigrant, luggage is very valuable to Dimple. Mukherjee clearly shows how Dimple frets about her belongings upon her departure to U.S. The packing moments in *Wife* significantly focuses that has particular meaning of the whole journey and define the characteristics of migrants. As it is her first time going overseas, she is overwhelmed. Sometimes “she packed and unpacked her suitcase several times” (46) but “at other times she wanted to walk onto the plane carrying just a small purse and nothing else” (50).

Rosemary Marangoly George in ‘*At a Slight Angle to Reality*’ asserts, “over and over again, in the literature of immigration and exile, there are scenes that (either lovingly, as a matter of fact or in despair) catalogue the varied luggage that immigrants carry over” (173). In the case of Dimple, like a soldier, she arms herself with a full package of Indian goods brought from Calcutta. This luggage and its content are the packages of her identity as a Bengali woman and render her different to others. To a certain extent, the luggage represents her survival of adapting herself to the host land. Her mother’s straightforward advice establishes her nature as a Bengali by reminding her to treat her hair well and undervalues the Americans knowledge about dealing with hair:

Don’t forget to pack two or three good combs and a packet of big hairpins. Also coconut hair oil, Mrs. Dasgupta said on the phone. “Americans have rotten hair. They don’t know anything about her oils.” Dimple obediently went to the store and bought five combs, two packages of study, black hairpins and three bottles of coconut oil, then wrapped them in a cotton petticoat and put them at the bottom of her suitcase (ibid).

Coconut oil particularly defines Dimple’s identity as a Bengali as it is typical of Bengali women’s hair treatment. Bringing coconut oil to the U.S. reflects the extension of Dimple’s migrant’s time.

Arriving in New York, Dimple and Amit stay with JyotiSen and his family at their apartment. Although Dimple has migrated to the U.S., the nature of joint family living pursues her. Joint family as a Hindu tradition has simply carried over to her life in U.S. Susan Koshyin *The*

*Yale Journal of Criticism* points out, “the constraints of the joint family are unexpectedly recreated in the suffocating proximity of the Indian immigrant community in New York” (72). However, while joint family restricts Dimple’s ability to manage her own household, living together with another Indian family in the ghetto strengthens her and her husband’s position in the U.S. as newcomers. Dimple moves from one form of joint family in India (with her big family and her mother-in-law) to another form of joint family in U.S. (with JyotiSen’s family).

In fact, living together with Jyoti in Queens is mutually beneficial to Dimple and to Jyoti’s family. Since Dimple and Amit have just arrived in America and do not know their surroundings, living with Jyoti’s family enables them to adapt to the completely new culture and circumstances. Besides, it is also good for Amit’s networking so as to find a job. Furthermore, joint family living enables Dimple and Amit to make friends with other Indians such as Prodoshand Marsha Mookerji, Bijoy and Ina Mullick and also Milt Glasser. Ina Mullick, Bijoy’s wife, has attracted Dimple’s attention because of her being more Americanized than other Indian woman. She is fascinated by Ina’s “wearing white pants and a printed shirt that ended in a large knot” (74). It never comes to her mind that an Indian woman (like Ina Mullick) might behave as most American woman does. To Dimple, the figure of an Indian woman should be a devoted one like Sita. This is quite understandable since “Dimple had been brought up to think of women only as beautiful, pretty or good mothers” (80).

Although neither Amit nor Dimple had ever travelled so far in their whole life, they have different perceptions of migrating to U.S. Mukherjee states that her male and female characters perceive the notion of migration differently. She remarks:

We’ve all been trained to please, been trained to be adaptable as wives, and that adaptability is working to the women’s advantage when we come over as immigrants. The males function very well as engineers or doctors or whatever, and they earn good money, but they have locked their heart against mainstream culture. They seem to be afraid of pollution. Their notion of India seems to

have frozen in the year in which they left India, and they don't want to change (American Dreamer, 19).

To Dimple, America with its 'bigness' seems to be "thrilling and a little scary as well" (52). On the other hand, Amit's perception is quite practical and realistic. As they listen to Jyoti's stories about America, it is quite clear that they are curious about different matters. Even small things like "the back seat of the Cutlass" (54), television and a vacuum cleaner amaze Dimple. She remains "concentrated on the skyscrapers, taller than anything in Calcutta, and on the enormous cars speeding in regimented lanes. She had never seen such bigness before" (54). To Dimple, these new things seem to be different, both attractive and alienating. Amit, however, sees America as a gold mine in which he can get a job and good salary that can improve his financial status and his respectability as the breadwinner in the family. He does not seem to care about the bigness of America that Dimple so admires at Rather, Amit "wanted to know only what kind of job he might expect to get. He asked questions on starting salaries, rents for apartments in Queens where the Sen lived, food costs and gasoline shortages" (56).

Dimple also startled by the new form of English she encounters in the U.S. notably the way JyotiSen speaks English with a Bengali mix. The English itself is not 'pure English' but it is blended with the speaker's first language. In the context of migrant people, adapting to the language of the host land may take unique pathways since "the language is appropriated, taken apart, and then put back together with a new inflection, an unexpected accent, a further twist in the tale" (Iain Chamber's, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* 23). This also suggests that it carries over the thrives side by side with the original identity, though it is intertwined with other aspects of the host land.

Dimple's relationship with the English language is complex and before she migrated to the U.S. Dimple had already had problems with her English, and Amit even complaint about her English proficiency. Dimple is supposed to be familiar with the English language as, "knowledge of English is a characteristic of postcolonial Indian immigrants to the United States, which distinguishes them from most other Asian or Latino immigrants" (Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An*

*Immigrant Community in New York City*, 46). Speaking English with Americans, and even with her Indian friends, often is a frightening experience for Dimple. She feels discouraged when she hears "all Western music, raucous singing. [she] was already sorry she'd come. Her English had grown less confident since she'd arrived in America" (74).

One other moment that also evokes Dimple's awareness of her poor command of English happens when she goes shopping with Meena. Dimple fills her early days by going out shopping with Meena. This can also be considered as an 'informal' education for Dimple to get along with the surroundings of Queens. Meena deliberately tests her by asking Dimple to buy her cheesecake from Schwartz's Deli while she waits outside with Archana and the groceries. To Dimple who is still 'green' and inexperienced in getting along with the Americans, this request feels like a punishment, since she is not comfortable with her English. She reacts to Meena's request with a moment of panic, reflecting inwardly:

She wished she had not mentioned anything about buying dessert. If she had known she would have to go into the store by herself and tell the salesman in English what she wanted and count out the change, she would have kept quiet (58)

Her first encounter with Americans shocks her. She views the shop man's words and reception as a racist attack on a Bengali woman like her. Dimple suddenly flings herself back to the Lake Market in Calcutta, where she always went for shopping. She tries to think logically about the shop man's reception towards her. To Dimple, buying from any race in Lake Market is a common thing. Her effect of recuperating nothing wrong with her and her money. Buying from American or Muslim, or Bihari is all the same to her.

Dimple's comparison of the Schwartz's Deli and at Lake Market outlines her feelings toward those two places. Since it is her first experience of shopping in a place like Schwartz's Deli, she is anxious. This is of course quite different from her experience at Lake Market, a place that is quite familiar to her. Another form of Dimple's attachment to her Indianness is learning to knot her husband's tie using Indian instructions. Accompanying her husband in America, Dimple has to adapt herself to the patterns of America. Although Dimple did not get a

Western education from her parents, in America she is forced to learn it herself.

This skill becomes important when she moves to the U.S. since Amit has underlined that “wives count for a lot when it comes to hiring and promotion in this country [Dimple] might have to meet the bosses” (43). Dimple’s mother has never knotted her father’s tie. Dimple thinks that it is necessary for her to know how to knot “the Windsor or the half-Windsor” but she feels much more comfortable to learn it from the Indian instructions. She says that “she liked Indian instructions; they were always so explicit” (43). Dimple’s command of English can be the reason why it is easier for her to learn to tie a knot following from the Indian instructions. The experience also reveals how Dimple integrates her Indianness to carry out her duty as a wife in the host land.

As an Indian wife she believes that she ought to behave normally like other Indian women. But the moment an Indian immigrant puts herself in a difficult situation. This happens once to Dimple at Ina’s party, the hostess tempts her to have a gin and lime. Dimple knows that as an obedient wife and daughter-in-law, she should not accept this offer. But soon it becomes quite obvious that she is torn between her duty to be an obedient wife and daughter-in-law and her desire to appease Ina as the host. The fear of being a disgrace to her family haunts her. Accepting Ina’s offer of a gin will complicate her relationship with her husband and also her ‘original identity’. India remains quite strong within her but she resolves the dilemma of wanting to find a place in America by compromising, promising herself, maybe a very weak one, next time. Dimple negotiates between not rejecting Ina’s offer and disrespecting her own husband. She is caught between satisfying the two sides of herself, one formed by Indian traditions and the other by her present situation in New York.

### Conclusion

Thus consolidating the dominant discourse of the state, where forms of national identity are exclusionary, homogeneous and unitary, this all too neat and ordered model of a multicultural society fails, as Mukherjee’s narrative suggests, to engage with the exchanges, crossings and complex identity “routes” set into play by

diaspora, when different groups of people come to live and interact together, sharing one nation.

Thus, while Grewal in *Feminism and Nationalism in North America* actively devotes himself “to shap[ing] and reshap[ing] the tropical confusion” (30) of the island’s “exotic” terrain, Mukherjee conveys the signs of the complex heterogeneity of national space. It is the ambivalent. Bharati Mukherjee depicts dilemma faced by expatriates; the clash of culture and associates with alienation and identity crisis. Cultural clash takes place in search of identity though deviation from, native root culture exists assimilation occur in host culture which is genuine need for comfortable survival. Hence the cultural encounter between two culture – eastern and western constructs a hybrid culture.

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