

**BELLIGERENCE AND CARNAGE IN WIFE BY  
BHARATI MUKHERJEE**

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**Abstract**

Mukherjee's novels symbolize the contemporary modern women's defy to delineate and conquer a sovereign selfhood. Her female protagonists are at enormous pains to gratis themselves from dampening, traditional manacles. Mukherjee's women characters in her novels insurgent beside patriarchal community in order to survey their own latent or to subsist on their own provisos, regardless of the consequences that such an insurgence may have on their lives. In *Wife* the protagonist Dimple needs to rupture through the traditional taboos of a Wife. This paper scrutinizes *Belligerence and Carnage in Wife* by Bharati Mukherjee. This novel enlightens the saga of Dimple, a presumably meek young Bengali girl who is full of dreams about her married life. So she fervently waits for marriage and expects it will grant her freedom and ease. She is anticipated to proceed as the role of a perfect Indian Wife, dwell at home and keep the house for the husband Amit. But her aggravation is built up progressively by the situations. She loathes being wife in the Basu family and revolts beside wifedom in numerous ways.

**Keywords:** sovereign, dampening, belligerence, insurgence, dampening.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Bharathi Mukherjee has spotlighted on the subjugation of women in Indian society. For the depiction of the quandary of middleclass Indian women, their internal variance for identity, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship and marriage. *Wife* is the story of a middle-class

Bengali girl Dimple, who is married to Amit Basu, an engineer. She is so much frustrated from life that the words like loyalty, suffering and pain, on her husband's part, lost the meaning and instead she starts fantasizing to murder her husband. She has been already in sick led state of mind ever since she left India but the alienation from her husband, environment and the sham and outward glitter, futility and meaninglessness of American life drive to the fits of psychic depression and ultimate insanity.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Mukherjee crafts a solemn attempt to comprehend the inner facet of the female characters. She depicts the reader's attention to women's exploitation and prejudice. Suppression and marginalization are the vital factors in their lives. They are never regarded as sovereign beings. *Wife*, primarily the story of Dimple, the heroine holds many women characters, which symbolize diverse portions of women. The conflict between the protagonist's drive towards a revolt of self and her pose as a *Wife* and a member is illustrated in the sudden physical isolation that marks the beginning of Dimple's life in New York. Instead of the freedom she has allied with marriage and America, her life is restricted to the private space of the home much more than in Calcutta.

### **2.1. THE FIDELITY AND COMRADESHIP**

Dimple is born of a traditional Brahmin family whose father is a patron of culture representing cosseted environment. Amit is too rationalistic and mundane to bother about his receptive *Wife* and her corporeal contentment in living. He blames her father for her juvenile behavior and inability to contend with realities of life. She had just for life ruling gratification in nature and world. This is one of the rare insinuations when Dimple confronts and is aware of reality. He is no company for Dimple, they are miss-matched. The crucial humanistic principles which truss a man and woman into the bond of togetherness the fidelity and camaraderie are away from social world today. Men take pride in having affiliation before and after marriage but this thing they do not expect from their women.

Indian tradition rears a feeling among young girls that marriage is their door way to gladness and it will persuade all their emotional, materialistic needs. Parents often give diminutive freedom to their daughters. So they eagerly wait to savor the fruit of freedom after their marriage. Dimple Das Gupta, the protagonist of Mukherjee's *Wife*, is no exception to this stance. She has vibrant imagination about marriage.

“Marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, and fund raising dinners for notable charities. Marriage would bring her love”. (p1).

With these dreams after her fraught waiting finally, she enters the wedlock with Amit Basu, an engineer. Her mother-in-law wants to call her Nandini and not Dimple. She hates this attitude of her mother-in-law constantly. Gradually she realized that her world of fantasy is completely differs from the world where she lives which shatters all her dreams on martial life. When Dimple becomes pregnant, she indulges in self-abortion of skipping ropes. This act of abortion is a forfeit of deliverance from the traditional roles and constraints of womanhood.

## **2.2. PSYCHOSOMATIC DISORDER**

Dimple hates Amit as he fails to fulfill her dreams and she thinks he is not the man of her dreams. She tries to convey her fears and forebodings to Amit but neither does he try to understand her nor is he capable of rising above a mundane understanding. The two do not reside happily owing to their weak economic condition. Dejected Dimple leads a lonely life by watching T.V or reading newspaper. When she fails to relate to the real world, she tries to relate to the unreal world shown on the T.V. But this provides wrong solutions to the real problems. Dimple's psychological imbalances, her immoderate daytime sleeping, her nightmares, and her indecisiveness everything remains unknown to him up to his dying day. He fails to understand Dimple and he believes providing material comforts alone will make her happy. Dimple has to cope with her traumatic mental condition all alone. 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 psychosis, psychosomatic disorder, delinquency and contemplation of suicide.

The art of communication between husband and wife is essential to marital happiness. But in *Wife*, Amit and Dimple fail to communicate with each other. This stoppage in communication develops a breach between the couple which widens day by day and ultimately ruins their relationship.

“She is scared of self-service elevators, of policemen, of gadgets and appliances. She does not want to wear Western clothes as she thinks she would be mistakenly taken for a Puerto Rican. She does not want to lose her identity but feels isolated, trapped, alienated, marginalized”.(p10-13).

Amit may also be blamed for his ignorance of female psychology. He thinks that providing creature comforts is enough and hardly bothers for her emotional needs. He is always worried about her well-being. Therefore, they converse without communications; live together while remaining strangers. He takes her out of four-walls very rarely and goes on admonishing instead: “You must go out, make friends, do something constructive, not stay at home and think about Calcutta” (p111).

## **2.3 POIGNANT APPETITE**

In this state of psychological drift, she hits upon the idea of violence against herself as well as Amit. She is constantly hitting upon new ways of committing suicide, or killing Amit, though she never considers murder seriously. The latent propensity for violence in her, manifested in her Calcutta days in her killing the rat in her husband's house, and in her skipping rope to kill the fetus in her womb, is brought out and activated under the pressure of the new environment.

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 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. He too does sense her discontent, but makes no sincere effort to understand or help her out of her melancholy.

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It is his protracted indifference to her plight that makes her turn Milt as lover and seduce him one afternoon in their flat. She is untroubled by any sense of guilt at her infidelity, an indication of her drifting away from her inherited culture and its values, and the distance her psyche has travelled. She, thus, turns a rebellion and violates all stereotyped behavior of Indian Womanhood. At last she kills Amit, stabbing him seven times and making herself free from the marriage bond. Her illicit relationship with Milt seems her attempt to find an identity in America or in other words, her Americanized identity.

At the end of the novel Mr. Milt Glasser's frequent visit to her house changed her. She enjoys all the prohibited freedom. She starts going out with Milt. She is very much impressed by the character of Milt. She thought, in the hands of Milt she felt that she was safer than ever before. The violence she sees outside turns inside. She feels guilty of her extra-marital relationship with Milt and worries about her hiding the matter from her husband

### **3. OUTCOME**

The novel is steeped in violence. Basu behaves in a different way. He wants her to a docile and submissive. So Dimple hates Amit and his behavior. He needs her only for sexual harassment. She always thought marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns, and fund raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love, security and affection. But to Dimple's dismay, it happened just the opposite of what she had dreamt. Her excessive exposure to soap operas and violence on television warps her values and distorts her sense of reality. She frequently plunges into moods of depression, fantasizing about different ways of committing suicide or inflicting pain on her husband.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

Dimple has not been able to regulate to the familial conditions. She is alienated from her Amit who as a careerist, is craving after lucrative jobs. This isolation and poignant appetite starts the process of her psychological disintegration, which had been incipient even when she was in Calcutta. Unable to find love in her arranged marriage, she has an affair with Milt, an American boy. Her cultural values are eroded in Milt's company. Driven by remorse, fervor, and reprisal, she finally liberates herself by stabbing her husband to death. This act of self-empowerment makes her feel strangely American, like some character in a television show. She feels it's a sort guilty. Finally in her mentally upset state, she kills Amit in an act of self-liberation and eventually commits suicide.

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