Chapter 5
Metamorphoses

Metamorphosis is interpreted in the present dissertation as any marked change in character, appearance or condition. In Magical Realist fiction, metamorphosis is a relatively common event. It is the threshold stage between the real and the fantastic, and its description places the readers at the transitional, uncertain, intermediate stage between the two realms. It facilitates a narrative mode that juxtaposes the real and the surreal, treating the fantastic event as if it were a matter of course. There is a crossing of the border between the realistic and the fantastic, between the real and the surreal. The beginning of The Satanic Verses describes the metamorphosis of one of its protagonists, Saladin Chamcha, into a goat. In Magical Realism there is fantastic transfiguration of humans into animals, into figures of degradation and disgust.

This self-contradiction between the factual impossibility of the metamorphosis and the matter-of-fact, objective voice which confirms its reality creates a logical tension. There is an ever-ambiguous dualism, a suspension of the reader’s perception in an uncertain realm at the borderline between belief and disbelief and this is the main feature of Magical Realism.

In the present dissertation, metamorphosis means also any kind of physical or psychological mutation deviating from normality. It need not be as overt as Kafka’s Gregor Samsa metamorphosing into a
cockroach. It can even be the enablement of Saleem to hear voices of the midnight’s children, a thousand in number.

It is the metamorphosis that transports the readers from realism to Magical Realism. With the metamorphosis of Gregor Samsa into a cockroach, his realistic vision changes and he sees things through his Magical Realist eyes. But what has to be borne in mind is the fact that the metamorphosis takes place so very methodically and convincingly that it looks natural. In Magical Realist novels such ‘metamorphoses are a relatively common event’ (Faris 178).

In Midnight’s Children, when Aadam Aziz attempts to pray, he hits his nose against a frost-hardened tussock of earth. “Three drops of blood plopped out of his left nostril, hardened instantly in the brittle air and lay before his eyes on the prayer-mat, transformed into rubies” (MC 10). When conversing with his mother, Aadam finds her “turned into a lizard on the wall of the corridor and [sticking] her tongue out at him” (MC 22). Such metamorphic flings of comparison drive home the point well and create Magical Realism.

The ‘watery Caliban’ Tai refuses to metamorphose, in the face of changes that have come over the Kashmir valley. “Nobody could remember when Tai had been young. He had been plying his same boat, standing in the same hunched position, across the Dal and Nageen Lakes...forever” (MC 14). He is so very ancient that he claims to have seen “Isa, that Christ, when he came to Kashmir” (MC 16). His insistence to resisting change is so obstinate that later he refuses to wash and, as a consequence, starts stinking, killing all the flowers
and driving away the birds of the valley. Tai is to be seen as a symbol that resists metamorphosis with his insistent resolution to stay unchanged. He provides a foil to Aadam Aziz who changes according to time and its requirements.

Saleem expands and grows in an abnormal rate that matches into the country’s explosive story after Independence:

> From my very first days I embarked upon an heroic programme of self-enlargement (As though I knew that, to carry the burdens of my future life, I’d need to be pretty big.) By mid-September I had drained my mother’s not in considerable breasts of milk. A wet-nurse was briefly employed but she retreated, dried-out as a desert after only a fortnight, accusing Baby Saleem of trying to bite off her nipples with his toothless gums. I moved on to the bottle and downed vast quantities of compound: the bottle’s nipples suffered, too, vindicating the complaining wet-nurse. Baby–book records were meticulously kept; they reveal that I expanded almost visibly. (MC 124)

Saleem’s fever gets serious and incurable. Dr.Schaapsteker treats him with krait poison that would either kill or cure him; it is diluted vinene of the King Cobra. Saleem survives after six hours but it affects his growth rate that lost its phenomenal aspects. He records this change thus: “Typhoid attacked me; krait-poison cured me; and my early, over-heated growth-rate cooled off” (MC 154). From one phase of life, he moves into another.
The washing chest accident gives him telepathic powers.

By sunrise, I had discovered that the voices could be controlled--I was a radio receiver, and could turn the volume down or up; I could select individual voices; I could even, by an effort of will, switch off my newly-discovered inner ear. (MC 164)

As Saleem becomes the voice centre of ever so many individual voices, he gets to know their feelings, longings and ambitions. Thus he gains telepathy: “Telepathy, then: the inner monologues of all the so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike, jostled for space within my head” (MC 168). This telepathic power helps him to cheat in class, pick information out of other minds. His voyeuristic transformation is recorded thus:

With the eclectic spirit of my nine years spurring me on, I leaped into the heads of film stars and cricketers--I learned the truth behind the Filmfare gossip about the dancer Vyjayantimala, and I was at the crease with Polly Umrigar at the Brabourne stadium; I was Lata Mangeshkar the playback singer and Babu the clown at the circus behind Civil Lines... and inevitably, through the random processes of mind-hopping, I discovered politics. (MC 174)

Saleem seeks refuge from grown up voices in the clock tower where he sets up his own kind of radio station.
The disfiguration of a Delhi beggar girl called Sundari is a cruel form of metamorphosis. She was born with such a beauty that those who beheld her face were blinded. So her great aunt “took her into her bony arms and slashed her face nine times with a kitchen knife” (MC 197). This has to be seen, for enhanced understanding, in contrast with the cosmetic surgeries that the affluent undergo--'revirginisation' for instance.

Saleem undergoes a significant transformation in Aunt Pia’s house; “while I stayed in the Marine Drive apartment, my testicles, forsaking the protection of pelvic bone, decided prematurely and without warning to drop into their little sacs. This event, too, played its part in what followed” (MC 241). With adult attitudes, he started caressing Pia, which caused his expulsion from her house.

‘Exile’ has its own advantages; one can leave behind his problems as well. “In Pakistan, [...] the existence of a frontier ‘jammed’ my thought-transmissions to the more-than-five-hundred; so that, exiled once more from my home, I was also exiled from the gift which was my truest birthright: the gift of the midnight children” (MC 284). As he is away from his companions, they do not get into his thoughts to disturb him.

The brass monkey is transformed into Jamila singer when Emerald demands; “come on, Jamila, don’t sit there like a melon, sing us a song like any good girl would!” (MC 293) and this triggers Jamila’s transformation from a monkey into a singer. The inborn talent bursts out and blossoms and she is catapulted into fame.
The draining of Saleem’s inflamed sinuses effects the “breaking (of) whatever connection had been made in a washing chest; of depriving me of nose-given telepathy; of banishing me from the possibility of midnight children” (MC 304). The draining of his nose frees Saleem of his nagging, oppressive connections and he breathes and feels easy. After Saleem reaches Karachi, he becomes an expert in the general theory of smell. Blindfolded he can distinguish various drinks and identify their brands. He is able to classify smells by colour. Thus the move gradually towards his canine form.

As a lad of sixteen, Saleem starts longing for women and he goes to meet prostitutes. Tai Bibi in particular appeals to his imagination as she can impersonate anybody’s smell; “whispering the secret of her eccrine-and-apocrine facility, she asked if he’d like her to imitate anyone’s smells, he could describe and she could try, and by trial-and-error they could” (MC 319). Tai Bibi can metamorphose herself into any person by smell with some concentration and she claims that she has been doing this for five hundred and twelve years.

Saleem metamorphoses into a man-dog and joins CUTIA-Canine Unit for Tracking and Intelligence Activities— as a replacement for the sniffer dog. He is nicknamed ‘Buddha’ for he is very calm and serene, because “there hung around him an air of great antiquity” (MC 349).

In Bangladesh, after the defeat of the Pakistani Army, he becomes a prisoner of war. He is transformed into an invisible spook and is hidden in Parvati’s wicker basket; he “climbed into the basket
of invisibility” (MC 380). Thus he manages to cross the frontier and reach India safe. He is born again falling like a baby out of Parvati’s basket, which is a kind of womb. He is able to feel again and, hence, need not know things only by smell hereafter.

Whenever Saleem approaches Parvati with sex in mind, he finds her metamorphosing into Jamila Singer. This leaves his sexual desires unconsummated.

Parvati-the-witch was waiting for me on the pavement; I did not tell her that there was a sense in which I’d been glad of the interruption, because as I kissed her in the dark of that illicit midnight I had seen her face changing, becoming the face of a forbidden love; the ghostly features of Jamila Singer replaced those of the witch-girl; Jamila who was (I know it!) safely hidden in a Karachi nunnery was suddenly also here, except that she had undergone a dark transformation. (MC 396)

Saleem’s obsession with Jamila superimposes itself on Parvati and thus the metamorphosis is made possible.

Shiva’s metamorphosis from an urchin in the slum to Major Shiva is astounding. His ‘knobbly knees’ make him very powerful. He joins the Indian Army and continues to practice violence but in an organised manner. Moreover, he curries favour with the politicians of the day, especially Congresswalahs and this makes him a Major. He becomes “a notorious seducer; a ladies’-man; a cuckold of the rich; in short, a stud” (MC 408). As a result, “he sired around the capital an
army of street-urchins to mirror the regiment of bastards, he had fathered on the begums of the chandeliered salons” (MC 411).

He backs Mrs. Gandhi’s sterilization programme ably enough. He guards the Widows’ Hostel;

Four hundred and twenty, imprisoned by widows; and there is one more, who struts booted around the Hostel--I smell his stink approaching receding, the spoor of treachery!--Major Shiva, war hero, Shiva-of-the-knees, supervises our captivity. (MC 436)

Strange changes occur. But sometimes, on the contrary, necessary changes are arrested. In Shame, Omar Khayyam’s life is both preceded and succeeded by certain irregularities. He “entered life without benefit of mutilation, barbery or divine approval” (21). His mother refused to permit whispering of the name of God into his ears, shaving of his head, and removal of his foreskin. He is “afflicted, from his earliest days, by a sense of inversion, of a world turned upside-down” (S 21). This makes him view and conceive the world differently. His vision is not that of normal people since his angle of perception is unique.

The mother ‘triplets’--Chhunni, Munnee, and Bunny--have their individual identities only when they are together. When they are divided by Omar’s birthday wishes, they change grotesquely. Rushdie describes it thus:

the result was that they divided up in the wrong way, they got all mixed up, so that Bunny, the youngest, sprouted
the premature grey hairs and took on the queenly airs that ought to have been the prerogative of the senior sibling; while big Chhunni seemed to become a torn, uncertain soul, a sister of middles and vacillations; and Munnee developed the histrionic gadfly petulance that is the traditional characteristic of the baby in any generation, and which never ceases to be that baby’s right, no matter how old she gets. In the chaos of their regeneration the wrong heads had ended up on the wrong bodies; they became psychological centaurs, fish-women, hybrids; and of course this confused separation of personalities carried with it the implication that they were still not genuinely discrete, because they could only be comprehended if you took them as a whole. (S 40)

Omar turns a voyeur when he goes to school. He “took vicarious pleasure in the activities of those around him” (S 45). He spies “on the couplings of the postman Ibadalla with the widow Balloch, and also, in another place, with her best friend Zeenat Kabuli” (S 45). This voyeurism brings about a change in Omar’s attitude towards life and “revealed to him both the infinitely rich and cryptic texture of human life and also the bitter-sweet delights of living through other human beings” (S 45).

The change that comes over Bilquis is astonishing, from the daughter of Mohamed Kemal to the wife of Raza Hyder. “As a woman who was unclothed by change, but who wrapped herself in certainties;
or as a girl who became a queen, but lost the ability possessed by every beggar- woman, that is, the power of bearing sons” (S 67-68).

The metamorphosis of Sufiya from a ‘boy-intended’ to a ‘girl-born’ is vital to the story. Raza Hyder expects his son who died in the womb to be born again. But some miraculous metamorphosis has occurred within and Sufiya, the girl, is born. Even after the birth of the girl is reported and the sex confirmed, Raza refuses to believe it saying “Genitalia! Can! Be! Obscured!” (S 89). Raza’s belief in botched reincarnation ends up as metamorphosis.

Sufiya as a child contracts brain fever and that turns her into an idiot. Despairing of military and civilian doctors, Bilquis turns to a local Hakim for the treatment of her daughter. He prepares “an expensive liquid distilled from cactus roots, ivory dust and parrot feathers” (S 100). This saves the girl’s life but as the potion is filled with elements of longevity to retard the progress of time, Sufiya’s progress of growth also is curtailed.

Omar changes into a reputed and distinguished doctor from being a lousy, dreamy, uncertain youth. “Age has treated him well, silvering his hair and goatee beard […]. He is also the top man at the city’s leading hospital, and an immunologist of no small international renown […]. He is fat and ugly but he dresses now with some distinction” (S 126-27).

The metamorphosis of ‘the beauty into the beast’ is complete when Sufiya sleepwalks all around and beyond the wall into Pinkie’s courtyard where Pinkie rears many turkeys. She “had torn off their
heads and then reached down into their bodies to draw their guts up through their necks with her tiny and weaponless hands” (S 138).

‘Sharam’, Shame that hides in her unconscious self has expressed itself in the form of violence. Again, on the wedding day of Talvar-Naveed, the somnolent demon possesses her and brings out violence.

Omar Khayyam Shakil spotted what was going on, but too late, so that by the time he shouted ‘Look out!’ across that catatonic gathering the demon had already hurled Sufiya Zinobia across the party, and before anyone moved she had grabbed Captain Talvar Ulhaq by the head and begun to twist, to twist so hard that he screamed at the top of his voice, because his neck was on the point of snapping like a straw. (S 170)

Sufiya rushes to Talvar, grasps his head, twists it to pull it off and bites off a morsel of skin and flesh before all around rush to the rescue and stop the atrocious act. Even the combined effort of all around could not stop this monstrous act.

When Sufiya is unwilling, even hypnotism cannot control her: “Sufiya Zinobia’s metamorphosis must have been willed, because even an autohypnotist cannot ask herself to do what she could be unwilling to do” (S 244). As Sufiya’s metamorphosis into a beast is the manifestation of shame, it is willed and accepted by her. She willingly metamorphoses to set right things, to overcome the ‘shame’ that has engulfed her family.
As time progresses, the metamorphosis of Sufiya into a beast gets complete. Rushdie presents the transformation thus:

On all fours, the calluses thick on her palms and soles.
The black hair, once shown by Bilquis Hyder, long now and matted around her face, enclosing it like fur; the pale skin of her mohajir ancestry burned and toughened by the sun, bearing like battle scars the lacerations of bushes, animals, her own itch-scratching nails. Fiery eyes and the stink of ordure and death. (S 254)

Omar Khayyam and Raza Hyder are transformed into ‘women in veils’ to save their life after their fall from the peak of power. They undergo the embarrassing ordeal of being teased by workmen: “At once the bus load of gas-miners and bauxite quarrymen starts up a racket of wolf-whistles, dirty laughs, obscenities, ululations, songs; hands reach out to pinch the hijra bottoms” (S 268). When the ‘duo’ reach ‘Nishapur’, the metamorphosis reaches its climax. The triple mothers metamorphose into avengers; Chhunni with an antique blunderbuss, Munnee with a fierce looking scimitar and Bunny with the shaft of a spear. They chase Raza into the dumb waiter and pull the trigger. The hidden stilettoes do the job perfectly and cut Raza into pieces.

Sufiya also transforms into a complete montecore and this is an excellent piece of metamorphosis on the lines of Saladin Chamcha changing into a goat.
She was there, on all fours, naked, coated in mud and blood and shit, with twigs sticking to her back and beetles in her hair. She saw him and shuddered; then she rose up on her hind legs with her forepaws outstretched. (S 286)

Her hands reach out to her husband Omar and clip off his head and pull out his guts. After performing this gruesome act, she transforms again into an innocent girl blinking innocently.

The theme of metamorphosis continues in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* also. The Cama family is cursed with pre-mature whitening of hair. “Aurora was snow-white at twenty” (12). Thus the whole ‘Gama’ family is afflicted by pre-mature aging and growth that finds its culmination in Moraes Zogoiby, the Moor. He ages at double the speed.

Aires, Aurora’s uncle, is inclined to homosexuality. On the day of his wedding he

ignored his terrified and scrawny young bride who lay virginally quaking in the bed, undressed with slow fastidiousness, and then with equal precision slipped his naked body (so similar in proportions to her own) into the wedding-dress which her maidservant had left upon a tailor’s dummy as a symbol of their union, and left the room through the latrine’s outside door. (MLS 13)

He leaves his wife thus to be with ‘Prince Herry the Navigator’, his ‘partner’. Perversity is very much present in all the members of the Cama family.
Francisco’s conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism is a great shock to Epifania. Francisco’s architect, the French Le Corbusier, constructed buildings according to Protestant architecture. So, all “Jesus and Mary lockofied in the box-room along-with” (MLS 25). After the death of Francisco, Epifania brought back all the statues and, along with them, Catholicism.

Belle, in the absence of Camoens, who has been imprisoned for his involvement in the freedom struggle, “started dressing in men’s trousers, white cotton shirts and Camoen’s cream fedora” (MLS 43). She inspects fields, appoints trustworthy managers, charms banks to lend her money and bullies departed customers to come back. She starts being a man in a way. This metamorphosis has made her invulnerable.

Aurora, after leaving Cochin for Bombay, “grew into the giant public figure we all know, the great beauty at the heart of the nationalist movement [...] according to persistent rumours, mistress-of Pandit Nehru” (MLS, 116). Her involvement with the National Movement was so intense that “people began saying that Aurora Zogoiby was the new Chand Bibi [...] she spent two years in Dehradun District Jail” (MLS 116). Her imprisonment shoots her more into fame and she emerges from the jail as a national figure.

Lambajan whose leg gets crushed under Aurora’s car, metamorphoses from a dock worker to Aurora’s gate keeper. “She brought him home and changed his life. She had diminished him, subtracting a leg and therefore his future in the navy” (MLS 135).
The Moor, Moreas Zogoiby, is born with a curse of ageing doubly quick. Added to that he has a “deformed right hand like a club” (MLS 146). Thus he is doubly handicapped. He is deprived of normal life due to his ageing factor. Hence he cannot go either to school or college and he fails to get educated.

Vasco Miranda of Loutulim in Goa arrives penniless at the gate of Aurora, identifying himself as a painter. Lambajan denies him admission and cudgels him away. He, with repeated requests and mails, seeks entrance into Aurora’s house and becomes her home painter. Vasco’s metamorphosis initiated thus takes him to great heights of international fame and he ends up in Benengali, Spain.

The Moor grows into “a megalopolis, a shirt ripping, button popping Hulk” (MLS 188). He is the Gulliver among the Lilliputians. No school is willing to admit him and, as a result, he has to be educated at home by Dilly Hormuz, with whom he becomes licentious and gets interested in ‘extra curricular’ activities. Dilly helps him mature into an adult.

Lambajan teaches the Moor to box. The Moor metamorphoses into a boxer, fulfilling his father’s prophecy, “You’re going to knock the whole world flat with a fist on you like that” (MLS 194). The ugly stump of a hand is transformed into a mighty weapon which will be put into use later when the Moor joins Raman Fielding’s service.

Ina becomes “a silent goddess of sex, prepared to wear the most exhibitionist garments designed by the new breed of radical young designers” (MLS, 208). She becomes the sex siren of that day. With
Jimmy Cash, she forms a music troupe and elopes to Tennessee. From the ordinary girl Christina, she changes into Ina, a popular singer like Vina of *The Ground beneath Her Feet*.

The Moor’s sister Minnie (Inamorata), “enamoured of no less a personage than Jesus of Nazareth himself” (MLS 210), becomes a nun and becomes a little mother. She joins the fold of the Gratiaplena nuns. She applies her mind assiduously to the service of God. Mynah (Philomina) becomes a feminist and an advocate. Thus all the three sisters of the Moor change into extra-ordinary beings.

Abraham Zogoiby, after taking over ‘Siodi Corp’, becomes “Mr Siodi—the brilliant new entrepreneur behind the House of cashondeliveri,” and after that some of his business partners mistakenly begin to call him ‘Siodi Sahib’ (MLS 240-41). With this newly acquired name, he paints a new layer over his own past and grows powerful in Bombay.

Vasco Miranda, from a vagabond, turns into a house painter and grows into an international celebrity. Even Aurora’s works never travel abroad. She enjoys only the local market but Vasco’s pictures decorate many transit lounges. This helps him amass wealth and “he was spending more than the combined lifetime income of the entire community of Indian artists” (MLS 253).

The Moor’s family is filled with perverts. They are abnormal. Uma Saraswati, in her conversation with the Moor, points this out:

I hate to speak badness about your loved ones but I am not the person with one crazy sister already dead, another
seeing talking rats in a convent and the third trying to
untie the cord of her lady-friends’ pajamas. And please:
whose father is up to here in dirty business and under-
age tarts? And whose mother--forgive me, my love, but
you must know it--is currently having not one, not two,
but three different love affairs? (MLS 256)

Uma has undergone many metamorphoses: a student in Puna
where her father was a high ranking officer in the police force;
consumes pills to control repeated mental aberrations; has the gift to
take on radically different personae in the company of different people;
tells manipulative lies about having affairs with certain faculty
members which lead to separations and divorces. Her marriage to
Suresh Sarasvati, a retired deputy commissioner of police who was
her father’s acquaintance and his consequent death that rendered her
a widow- a celebrated sculptor, the Moor’s lady love--she changes
much and too often in her life. She also has had a rough past like
Vina Apsara of The Ground beneath Her Feet.

After aligning with Raman Fielding, the Moor becomes a
hooligan and thrashes people mercilessly. His deformed limb is
brandished with pride. “Henceforth I would be my fist; would be a
Hammer, not a Moor” (MLS 295). The Moor drifts in life, having no
permanent interest or aim after he has been excommunicated by his
mother.

Even Gods are subjected to mutation and metamorphosis. This
helps them fit into the context better.
Lord Ram was an avatar of Vishnu; Vishnu, most metamorphic of the Gods. The true ‘rule of Ram’ should therefore, surely, be premised on the mutating, inconstant, shape-shifting realities of human nature—and not only human nature, but divine as well. (MLS 351)

In The Ground beneath Her Feet, Rai stresses the need for the knack for invisibility and says, “to penetrate the defining instant of their being-in-the-world and get my fucking picture. On many occasions this gift of dematerialization has saved my life” (13). He understands that a photographer has to change into a ghost to become invisible, to escape problems.

Due to the cricket mishap--Darius, provoked beyond endurance by the hooting audience, pulls the ball to the fence and it hits Ardaviraf on the head and renders him unconscious--“Virus retreated into an impassive silence [...] had become a photograph of himself accompaniment” (GHF 37) and transformed “into a zip-lipped zombie” (GHF 48).

Cyrus, unable to brook the joyous melody of Ormus who is full of life, attempts to smother him to death with a pillow.

Cyrus Cama was woken in the middle of the night by the sound of little Ormus, with whom he still shared a room, singing in his sleep, so sweetly that birds had woken, thinking the dawn had come, and gathered on his windowsill to listen. This sleeper’s melody contained such joy in life, such optimism and hope, that it drove Cyrus
Cama insane, and clutching his pillow in his hand he went to Ormus’s bed, intent on murder. (GHF 49)

This drives him, as a punishment, to the Templar School in Kodaikanal. The strict discipline of the school “helped him to develop into a full-blooded psychopath he afterwards became” (GHF 49). Cyrus develops into a full-fledged serial killer with many pillow murders to his credit. He comes to be known as the ‘pillow man’ and ends up in Tihar Jail, where he prefers to stay till the end in order to restrain himself from killing.

Ormus Cama thinks of his brother Gayomart, who died in the womb itself. “Born in his dead twin’s shadow, Ormus Cama turned out to be what the ancients called a psychopomp, one concerned with the retrieval of lost souls, the souls of the beloved dead” (GHF 57). Ormus often feels as if he is Gayomart and “In Gayo, Ormus found the other into which he dreamed of metamorphosing, the dark self that first fuelled his art” (GHF 108).

Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama try to erase the past and conceal their origins to emerge as new-born pop-singers. “For much of their public lives, they chose to conceal their origins, to shed the skin of the past” (GHF 100). They do not want their past to stain their new ‘avatars’.

Vina takes many ‘avatars’. Born as Nissa Shetty and ditched by her Indian lawyer-father, she becomes Nissy Poe after her mother marries John Poe, the builder. After Helen, her mother, murders all the children and Poe and hangs herself, Nissy Poe goes to live with her
mother's relatives and becomes Diana Egyptus. Then she is sent to India and she becomes a Doodvala. Breaking away from the clutches of Doodvala she becomes Vina Apsara. The many metamorphoses speak for her hard life in the past.

Ormus, along with his mother, leaves India. While travelling in the sky, he,

for a terror stricken instant glimpses miracles through the gash, visions for which he can find no words [...] he intuits that every bone in his body is being irradiated by something pouring through the sky-rip, a mutation is occurring the level of the cell, of the gene, of the particle. The person who arrives won't be the one who left. (GHF 277–78)

Ormus lands in the west as a thoroughly metamorphosed singer who has almost severed his ties with the east.

An idea, a mental form, metamorphoses into a woman and appears beside Ormus on his flight to London:

A young Indian woman materialises, a stranger, squatting by his aisle seat [...]. Here I am, darling, she says, surprised to see me? He confesses that yes, he is indeed a tad taken aback. Don’t tease me, she cries, making a move [...]. The woman has perched herself on the arm of his seat. I would watch you sleep and even your breath was music, she reminisces. I would bend over your body, my nakedness a beat away from yours and so on, and I
felt your melody waft against my skin and so forth. I would inhale your lazy odours and drink the rhythms of your dreams. (GHF 280)

Ormus’ dark desires burst out of his forced abstinence from sex and women and present themselves in the form of Maria, the nymphomaniac.

The car accident enables Ormus to see different things. Hawthorne and Emerson, the sons of Mull Standish who is instrumental in shooting Ormus into fame, die in the accident. Rushdie writes:

Ormus, tumbling dreadfully in the confined space of the car, glimpses rag-doll Waldo lolling in the front passenger seat with his mouth open; and then the driver, Hawthrone Crossley, floats into view, heading wide-eyed for the windscreen. Hawthrone exhales violently, like a madman’s laugh, hahaaa, and Ormus sees a little white cloud fly out of his mouth and hang there for a moment, like a speech bubble; and disperse (GHF 337).

The accident occurs by the well engineered plans of Mul’s wife. This makes Ormus remain sequestered for three and a quarter years after which he emerges as a man with a special vision.

Ever since he re-opened his pale left eye he has started seeing things he can’t understand, things he needs to understand. It’s as if his two eyes are looking into slightly different worlds, or rather two variations of the same
world, almost the same and yet utterly separate. Double vision. (GHF 356-57)

Ormus’ blue birth mark on the left eye disappears and Gayomart stops disturbing him. He is able to be himself at last.

Vina grooms herself into a professor. She feels the need to share, converse and motivate people.

I certainly remember her amazing years as a lecture tourist [...]. She went on the college circuit with her “chautauquas” [...]. Her chautauquas were really improvised monologues, whose close closest cousins were the oral narrative sessions of the great Indian storytellers.

(GHF 372)

Vina, after her death, metomorphoses into Mira Celano, or at least, Ormus believes so. “Vina. It’s Vina, returned from the dead” (GHF 571). Vina is believed to have been reborn in the form of Mira. But “this Vina is no more than twenty years old” (GHF 572). Age cannot defy concept and hence Mira fits in well.

Cyrus, after the death of Ormus, changes into a good man. Because of the efforts taken by Marco and Madonna, Cyrus has every possibility of coming out of the Tihar Jail. But he rejects release. His letter is very impressive and indicates the change that has come over him:

On the video I watched my brother closely, and observed that he has already departed this life. Look in his eyes. He is dead and in Hell. So you see there is no longer any
requirement for me to kill him, I am set free from the
imperative of a lifetime. For me to commit other murders
in this changed circumstance would be the height of bad
taste, and so I will remain happily here in jail. Thanking
you, Miss Madonna, and goodbye. (GHF 624-25)

Cyrus’s reply is majestic and honourable. He metamorphoses back
into a genuine, loving soul. His perturbed mind is at rest at last.

Instances like the metamorphosis of Saleem into man-dog, the
urchin Shiva into major Shiva, brass monkey into Jamila singer, Sufia
Zinobia into a blood thirsty spook, the Moor who ages in double
speed, Ormus-Vina transformation into Pop idols and Vina’s rebirth
in the form of Mira are looked into. Thus metamorphosis is shown as
a device employed by Magical Realists to present enhanced and
believable visions of human aberrations.