CHAPTER FIVE

THE USE OF SYMBOLS IN MALAMUD'S NOVELS
CHAPTER FIVE

THE USE OF SYMBOLS IN MALAMUD’S NOVELS

The preceding chapters make it clear how Bernard Malamud follows the fundamental patterns of allegory in the different modes of characterization in his novels. First, all his protagonists are Jewish Schlemiels, representing every man. Secondly all undertake a journey, whether physical or mental, towards a better existence. Thirdly, Malamud employs the allegorical mode of objectification of conscience by the protagonists and the other characters. On the whole, Malamud is able to achieve his didactic purpose successfully with the emphasis on human values such as love, compassion and mutual understanding, with the skilful manipulation of these allegorical modes. In this chapter, a brief attempt has been made to analyse Malamud’s use of symbols, another effective allegorical device, for penetrating into the real nature of the characters, exposing their thoughts and inclinations, and opening the avenues for their reformation and a better existence. Malamud is able to voice forth his message through the use of symbols, that mankind, which is on the verge of destruction, can still survive, through love, compassion and mutual understanding. It is imperative here to make a brief definition of symbols and their relationship to Allegory.
It is beyond controversy that symbols form an integral part in Allegory, enabling the writers to convey the intellectual and abstract concepts through visual and concrete images. The distinction between symbols and Allegory is that while symbols are static “with all the ramifications of meaning focussed within” (Clifford 11), Allegory is mainly concerned with the narrative movement. As Levi Bruhl points out, Symbolism expresses a mysterious connection between two ideas; Allegory gives a visible form to the conception of such a connection” (Fletcher 17). Though symbols by themselves cannot initiate or promote the narrative movement of the story, they are a vital component in Allegory, and the effectiveness of an allegorical work depends largely on the writer’s discrete use of them in his work.

Gay Clifford proceeds to say that for a good allegorical work, the meanings of the symbols “must refer back to the over-all purpose and certainly not conflict with it” (The Transformations of Allegory 12). It is clear from this definition that symbols should be related to the theme of the work and contribute “towards the fulfillment of which the narrative moves” (Clifford 15). Thus symbols used in allegories help to present the writer’s theme in a lively and emphatic way without disturbing the narrative coherence of the work. While allegorical writings necessarily use symbols as symbols are fundamental to Allegory, it cannot be said, too, that all symbolic writings are allegories. When T.S. Eliot deliberately brings in many disconnected symbols or images in his poem “The Waste Land” to present the decayed condition of Eastern Europe, it is altogether different from the techniques of Allegory. In Allegory,
symbols are not disjoint, but they are used in such a way that there is a narrative continuum. Everything pertaining to the characters, beginning with their names is symbolic, pointing towards the writer’s main purpose. Even the physical environment surrounding the characters abounds in symbols, related to the theme of the story.

As an effective mode of allegorical characterization, the use of symbols in the characters, and the physical environment surrounding the characters has enabled Malamud to bring out the persistent inner conflict within the protagonist to the surface, and ultimately his theme of human redemption through compassion, mutual understanding and meaningful suffering. When Malamud builds up characters, even minor details such as their names, occupations, and physical characteristics are symbolic of their inner nature, their abilities and disabilities, along with their strength and weaknesses. These positive and negative aspects in the nature of the characters are gradually revealed through their conversations and attitudes as the novel progresses. Sometimes the symbolic names really suit the characters, and sometimes they are ironical, pointing to the opposite.

_The Natural_. Malamud’s first novel, establishes how the names of some characters are symbolic of their nature, relating to the focus of the novel. The two names of the protagonist, Roy Hobbs have different meanings. The first name ‘Roy’ means ‘a King’, ‘Hobbs’ means a bumpkin, an awkward person with uncouth manners (Helterman 10). Though both the names sound
contrary, they indicate the two different tendencies in the same individual. There are many references in the novel to prove that Roy Hobbs is fit to be a king not only in the game of baseball, but in real life as well, if he reforms his life accordingly. When Roy is defeated in the game of baseball at the close of the novel, a woman who sees him passing by, remarks, “He could a been a king” (The Natural 222). It is true because Roy exhibits his ability in his playing and behaviour as a true hero, exercising great influence over others. Earlier, when he confesses his past life to Iris Lemon, he says. “If I had started out fifteen years ago like I tried to, I'da been the king of them all by now”(147). For that Iris Lemon asks, “The King of What?” (147). She believes that Roy can be a king not only in the game, but more important than that, in actual life as well. She tries hard to convince him that life is more precious than the game of baseball. She means that Roy has to learn from his past mistakes, and the consequent suffering, to become a king or exercise power over others. As the second name, ‘Hobbs’ implies, the protagonist acts like a country bumpkin in his foolish associations with Memo Paris and Harriet Bird, the emblems of evil. He makes himself ridiculous by getting shot in the gut by Harriet Bird, and by receiving “a black eye”(117), due to a car accident in Memo’s company. His clumsy behaviour as a fool is apparent in his greedy appetite at Memo’s party just before the crucial game with the Pirates. Getting sick at the party, he has to be admitted in ‘a small maternity hospital” (180), to deliver “unbelievable quantities of bilge” (180). Malamud deliberately brings in the maternity hospital for admitting sick Roy Hobbs to present him as a clownish character, bearing the consequences of his lack of control and animal
passions. Thus the two names of the protagonist reveal the two different aspects of his character—the heroic and the base. It is evident from the novel that Roy Hobbs is a curious blend of heroism and lack of determination, as his name suggests. His heroic nature seems to take the upper hand as he finally repents for his folly with the determination to reform himself.

Iris Lemon, who directs Roy Hobbs, towards regeneration, has two symbols associated with her name, a flower and a fruit. Generally flower and fruit are two powerful positive symbols in Malamud's novels, representing true love and life-giving fertility. Iris Lemon spreads fragrance and pleasantness wherever she goes, playing a major role in shaping the protagonist, Roy Hobbs towards maturity and self-understanding. According to Jeffrey Helterman, Iris Lemon is a symbol of sacrifice as “she had given up her shy persona so that Roy would have an object upon which to project his ego” (Understanding Malamud 29). By fixing his attention on her, Roy Hobbs is able to free himself from the prison of self, to care for the weak and the downtrodden. She stands up with a smile in the midst of the audience, and Roy Hobbs realizes that “her smile was for him” (139). The reason of her standing is “to show her confidence in him” (139). Her presence fills the air with “unbelievable fragrance” (139), and Roy is encouraged greatly to hit the ball with all his strength. Actually that was a gloomy period of hitlessness in his life. He feels his responsibility keenly when a person, named Mike Barney begs him to hit a homer in the game for his son, Pete, a fan of Roy. He says that Pete is injured in an accident and he will revive if Roy hits a homer. When Roy is confused beyound measure due to his slump at that time, Iris Lemon's standing up in the
midst of the crowd is a source of inspiration and comfort for him. All his selfishness and egotistic ambitions vanish, giving place to selfless, sacrificial love. He hits the ball with determination and wins. Malamud presents Roy’s success rather effectively when he says, “everybody knew it was Roy alone who had saved the boy’s life” (139). Thus Iris Lemon, as her name suggests, becomes a life-giving force not only to Roy Hobbs, but also to others through him, till the very end of the novel.

Some characters are paradigms of evil in The Natural, and their names are symbolic of their nature. Memo Paris, the destructive woman who corrupts Roy Hobbs, leading him to evil and greed, has two symbolic associations in her name. The first part of her name “Memo” indicates memory. When Roy wants to forget his guilty past, involving his association with the evil woman Harriet Bird, Memo Paris revengefully stirs his memory. She represents everything Roy wishes to forget, leading him towards a total moral collapse, through the betrayal of his own team. The second part in her name “Paris’ brings to mind, the lover of Helen of Troy, the fickle minded woman who leaves her husband Menelaus and runs after her lover ‘Paris’ in the Greek Legend. Memo Paris does not truly love Roy, but only deceives him through her unfaithfulness. She always talks about her dead lover Bump, saying “I am strictly a dead man’s girl” (90), even at the time of professing her love for Roy. Thus the name ‘Memo Paris’ indicates memory of guilt and unfaithfulness. Indeed, the name suits her character as she revives Roy’s memory of his own guilt and failure. Her unfaithfulness to Roy is evident in her lingering attachment for her dead
lover. and her wrong association with Gus Sands, the Bookie, who is very rich and old enough to be her father. At the expense of Gus Sands, she hosts a grand party to the Knights, and even promises to give herself to Roy that night. Deceived by her false promises, Roy succumbs to greed and gluttony at the party, and loses his pennant-winning game with the Pirates. Even at the time of his sickness, she is inconsiderate towards him and instigates him to accept the corrupt contract with Judge Goodwill Banner, the unjust owner of the club of the Knights, saying that if she has to marry him, they need money for a comfortable home. Hence the name itself corresponds to the evil nature of Memo Paris who exercises her power in pulling the protagonist downward to his moral deterioration.

As pointed out in the Introductory Chapter, Judge Goodwill Banner, the major stockholder in the Knights’ club is another evil character whose name suggests the opposite of his nature. Malamud deliberately gives the name “Goodwill” to this character with an ironical meaning to point out his ill-will towards Roy Hobbs and Pop Fisher, the good manager of the team. Though he knows that Roy Hobbs is a very talented person, he is very unsympathetic towards him, and treats him with contempt. He wants the team to face utter defeat and shame so that he can sell away his shares. He even tries to corrupt Roy Hobbs by a tempting offer of thirty five thousand dollars for dropping the pennant-winning game with the Pirates. The other name ‘Banner’ for this character also has humorous allegorical implication. Judge Goodwill Banner does not proclaim his good-will towards others, but only malicious hatred.
through his words and behaviour. When Roy’s fans object to his getting “a rock-bottom salary” (90), the judge does not care for their good-will, and simply refuses to raise his salary. Roy bitterly tells the Judge, “I wouldn’t exactly say you were building my goodwill for next year” (96). Surely the Judge does not build anybody’s good-will towards him, but only their anger and irritation towards him. Hence the Judge’s name denotes the opposite of what he really is. His dark mind without any trace of sympathy and understanding towards his fellowmen is illustrated through his words to Roy Hobbs, “I much prefer a dark to a lit room” (95). At the close of the novel, Roy feels even “the shadow of the Judge and Memo fouling the air” (218), when he realizes their evil influence. The evil image of the Judge with selfishness and guile is brought to the focus when Malamud says that the Judge “blew out a black fog of smoke” (95), with his cigar, creating more darkness in his dark room.

Max Mercy, the sports-writer in the novel is another evil character whose name is associated with his nature in an ironical way. Max Mercy has no mercy at all, and he is inconsiderate towards Roy Hobbs, sparing no means in his merciless treatment of him. He mercilessly searches out Roy’s horrible past, which Roy always wishes to forget. From the very beginning, he has no concern for Roy’s feelings, but he insults him with his words. When Sam Simpson introduces Roy Hobbs to Walter Wambold and Max Mercy in the first part of the novel, Max Mercy expresses his contempt for Roy Hobbs with the mocking statement, “keep up with the no hitters, kid”(21). In the second part
of the novel, he wants to make Roy Hobbs a laughing stock before others by trying to snap him with a black eye, but unfortunately he fails miserably in his attempt. His lack of compassion is evident when he refuses to give alms to a beggar who pleads with him saying, “All I ask is a Buck” (99). Max Mercy responds to him harshly with the words, “Go to Hell” (99). Though Roy revokes his initial corrupt compact with the Judge, Max Mercy does not forget his mistake so easily, but he proclaims it in the newspaper, saying “Suspicion of Hobbs’ Sell out” (223). He also publishes Roy’s guilty past with Harriet Bird entitled, “Hobbs at nineteen” (223). All the time, Max Mercy tries to suppress the hero with his merciless attitude. Thus his name sounds ironical as it implies quite the opposite of the person concerned.

Sometimes, the physical characteristics, possessions and the actions of the characters are symbolic in Malamud’s novels. For example, “when a hero injures his eye, he loses his moral as well as physical perspective” (Helterman 10). When Roy Hobbs injures his eye in a car accident due to his close association with Memo Paris, it indicates his moral degradation in keeping company with an evil character. This incident happens just before his losing the pennant to the Pirates due to his gluttony. Gus Sands, the Bookie has one weak eye which also indicates his lack of moral perception. With Judge Goodwill Banner and Memo Paris, he forms a diabolic group, and these three try to corrupt the hero from his noble ideals. The Judge warns Roy that he will lose Memo to Gus Sands if he does not agree to the corrupt compact. Thus Gus Sands is noted for his lack of morality, whose very presence is used to
blackmail the hero to deviate from the path of morality, and his weak eye is symbolic of his weak moral attitude. Just as the physical traits of the characters are symbolic of their inner nature in *The Natural*, the possession of the hero, his bat ‘wonder boy’ hewn from a lightning-blasted oak tree also serves as a symbol of his potential for rebirth. With it, Roy Hobbs is able to do wonders, and rejuvenate the team. The broken bat into two halves at the close of the novel marks the end of Roy’s baseball career. He has to give place to Herman Young berry, his successor as he has replaced Walter Wambold and Bump Bailey earlier.

It is also clear from *The Natural* that Malamud not only creates symbols in his characters to suit the allegorical mode of characterization, but he also presents the physical environment with so many symbols. These symbols do not stand in isolation, but they are related to the mood of the protagonists as well as the other characters. For example, the seasons presented in *The Natural*, while reflecting the mind of Roy Hobbs with his high ambitions and longings, also express the real situation in the game of baseball, along with the attitudes of the other players. The novel begins in the early spring when Roy leaves for Chicago at the age of nineteen. It indicates his tender youth throbbing with great expectations for the future. Then he becomes “the sticken hero” (39), by Harriet Bird’s silver bullet and wastes fifteen years before he joins the team of knights. When he enlists himself in the team, there is a setback in the game of baseball, which is indicated by the dry season. Then the knights get victory after Roy’s arrival and the weather is also better, with rain “to keep the grass a bright green” (80). While Roy suffers from a slump, the
team members witness the signs in nature: “They saw leaves falling and
shivered at the thought of barren winds of winter” (165).

Like the seasons, the objects in the physical environment are also
symbolic of the nature of the characters. The train which takes Roy Hobbs to
Chicago in the beginning of the novel has “a cracked mirror on the wall” (17),
indicating Roy’s imperfect nature with so many flaws. In fact Malamud brings
in so many cracked objects in his novels to present human imperfection.
Harriet Bird’s “crumpled white rose” (15) and Memo’s “black strapless gown”
(101), may indicate their lack of love and consideration for others. The locker
room in which sports uniforms are kept is “tomb like quiet” (49), exposing the
absence of life and creativity in the game. Judge Goodwill Banner’s empty
Mahogany desk is an indication of his empty brain without any compassion.
Thus even the objects in the physical environment are symbolic of the nature
and attitudes of the characters.

As in his first novel, The Natural, Malamud uses symbols in the
characters, and the physical environment surrounding the characters, in his
second novel, The Assistant. Even the names of the protagonists bear close
resemblance to two historical persons, corresponding either to their ideas or
principles. For example, the main protagonist, Frank Alpine is closely
associated with the great saint, St.Francis of Assisi by name and by some
amazing aspects in his nature. St.Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth
merchant of Assisi. When he met Christ, he turned his back on wealth and
possession to embrace poverty. He became a strong follower of Christ and became a model for many young followers of Christ. In the novel, Frank Alpine is greatly attracted towards St. Francis of Assisi who “gave everything away that he owned, every cent, all his clothes off his back” (34). St. Francis also said that “poverty was a queen and he loved her like she was a beautiful woman” (34). For Frank, St. Francis is a source of inspiration, and he wants “a fresh view of things” (34), like him, shaking off the old, corrupt life. He has to strive hard to give up his old sinful life and start a new, selfless existence. In fact, he is referred to as the “assistant” (95), by Malamud to bear a remarkable similarity to the great saint, St. Francis of Assisi (Helterman 67). Jeffrey Helterman further says that Frank’s restraint of his evil nature is “not a negative or limiting attitude, but is converted into a positive activity, feeding the poor which he learns from the example of Bober” (Understanding Malamud 39). He identifies himself with the great saint by helping the poor, needy people and also by feeding the birds. His great love for the birds is exhibited through his surprising affinity with them in the park: “when the man rose, the pigeons fluttered up with him, a few landing on his arms and shoulders, one perched on his fingers, pecking peanuts from his cupped palm” (142). So, Frank Alpine resembles St. Francis of Assisi in his attachment with the birds and in his identification with the poor and needy. According to Abramson, Frank Alpine abstains from material wealth and physical comfort by gradually suppressing his passions and physical desires, and substituting for them “an outgoing love for the poor, for humanity as a whole” (Bernard Malamud Revisited 31). Sandy Cohen goes a step further when he compares Frank Alpine’s
statement” “I’m always hungry” (The Assistant 60), to the spiritual hunger of St.Francis of Assisi, and says, “Frankie suffers a spiritual hunger, which, like the saint’s will stop when Frankie is beyond caring for physical comfort” (Bernard Malamud and the Trial by Love 43).

Morris Bober, another protagonist of the novel is reminiscent of the renowned Jewish Philosopher, Martin Buber. It is obvious that the name “Morris Bober” is somewhat similar to the name ‘Martin Buber’, but what makes the protagonist, Morris Bober, a representation of the great Jewish philosopher is the startling relationship of his Jewish principles with Buber’s “I-Thou relationship” (Abramson 33). Despite Malamud’s statement that he had only a very general acquaintance with Buber’s work when he wrote The Assistant and did not intend to identify Morris Bober with the renowned Jewish Philosopher’ (Qtd. in Bernard Malamud and the Critics 228), there is a close similarity between Buber’s Philosophy, and the correct way of life explained by Morris Bober to Frank Alpine in The Assistant. Martin Buber stresses for equality among all human beings, and the realisation of each person’s responsibility for the other. Morris Bober practically follows this principle in his life, treating all human beings equally. He treats Frank Alpine as his son, and wants the best for him. Despite his wife Ida’s repeated plea to send him away, because he is a non-Jew and a threat to their family. Morris refuses to do so. He is very broad-minded to treat all men equally, and according to him, a real Jew is the one who shows love and compassion
towards his neighbour. Thus Morris Bober resembles Martin Buber both in name and character.

Another character whose name is symbolic, of the physical as well as the mental characteristics is Helen, the daughter of Morris Bober. As the name suggests, Helen stands for love and beauty. She is Frank Alpine’s main source of admiration. Like the beautiful Helen of Troy who ran after Paris which caused the great Trojan War, according to the old Greek Legend, Malamud’s heroine Helen is rather unsteady in her love. She goes out with Nat Pearl, a Jewish law student often, and with Louis Karp, the son of a wealthy liquor shop owner at times. Both fail to satisfy her innermost longings though they are Jews outwardly. To Nat Pearl she says in her frustration, “You’re you. I’m me” (14). She tells her father about Nat Pearl, “I don’t think we see things in the same way” (23). To Louis Karp also, she says: “I want a larger and better life” (49), indicating her dissatisfaction and frustration. She finds an identical soul in Frank Alpine gradually, and begins to love him deeply. Yet she is very rash in her judgement of him as a man of very low morals. She fails to understand the cause of his misbehaviour towards her in the park, and simply refuses to listen to reason. In spite of his selfless love and sacrifice on her behalf, she considers him as a total stranger for a long time. Her love for him returns, when she accidentally catches a glimpse of his tired, overworked face as a counterman in another store, working for her. So long Frank has been watching her and now she begins to watch his actions. Like Helen of Troy who is said to have realized her mistake after the Trojan War, Helen Bober slowly
realizes her mistake. She falls into a reverie after meeting him, “He had kept them alive. Because of him she had enough to go to school at night” (293).

Thus the name ‘Helen’ is symbolic of the physical as well as the mental state of the character. She is beautiful, and though her love is unsteady in the beginning, it gradually changes to a steady love with understanding.

As the name of Frank Alpine suggests his close affinity with the great saint, St. Francis of Assisi, some of his physical characteristics are also closely associated with his nature. He is referred to as “the broken faced stranger” (157), and also as a man with a “crooked nose” (157). These traits may indicate his moral immaturity and his unsteady pursuit of goodness and honesty in his life. He commits so many mistakes, and even comes to the stage of being rejected by Helen who has started loving him deeply. Then a marvellous change happens in him as he begins to discipline himself. He patiently stays on in the profitless store and makes amendment for his mistakes even after the death of Morris Bober. Helen herself is amazed at his staying power and feels tender towards his changed face—“a bony face with sad regret”, (293), for the mistakes. This change in Frank’s face owing to his inner conviction greatly influences Helen who forgives him, and begins to admire him for his endurance and compassion. His accidental fall into the grave at the time of Bober’s funeral symbolizes the death of his old self and the beginning of a new one. Finally he undergoes the Jewish ritual of circumcision which is really an outward symbol of his complete inner transformation. Thus outward actions are symbolic representations of the inner change in the protagonist. Truly he
rises from a level of hatred, selfishness and lust to the higher level of altruism, true love, and sacrifice.

As in the characters, Bernard Malamud creates symbols in the physical environment, too, to suit the mood of the characters in The Assistant. Seasons play a prominent role in mirroring the inner condition with the psychological tensions of the main characters. The novel begins in early November when Morris Bober suffers a long winter of destitution, passionately longing for the spring. The grocery store is on the decline, and he waits in vain for a suitable buyer. When he talks about an expected buyer, he says, “If this man comes here, he will see with one eye the store is dead, then he will run home” (20). Even their dwelling place is not comfortable, and Helen once remarks that the place is awful to live in. Thus in the beginning of the novel, the Bobers are in a gloomy mood in accordance with the winter season. As the winter season is the predecessor of the spring, they hope for something better to happen in the near future. Helen has illusions of spring as early in February itself. She says, “I went for a walk at lunch time and it feels like spring has arrived” (193). For that Frank replies that it is still February and asks her not to be deceived. The illusory appearance of spring makes her hopes also illusory. Actually she wants to meet Frank with true love in the park and express her affection for him with her decision to marry him, but the accidental appearance of Ward Minogue, the rogue, turns down her expectations upside down. All her hopes are shattered when her love for Frank turns to indifference and hatred due to his violent thrust on her, when he rescues her from Ward Minogue. Again in April,
the actual time of spring, there is a renewal of love, corresponding to the blooming season, when Helen understands Frank’s true worth and happily reconciles with him, forgiving and forgetting his past errors.

Malamud’s characters generally find the objects around them, a psychological mirror for their mental and emotional states. Morris Bober’s grocery is imaged as “a long dark tunnel” (3), and a place where he is “entombed” (4), symbolizing all his physical and mental sufferings. Yet this tomb of the Bobers becomes a haven for Frank Alpine, the place of his painful rebirth. He willingly takes up a back-breaking burden on himself, attains purgation through selfless service, and he is reborn into a new man. Symbols of cracked objects occur in The Assistant too, indicating the moral imperfections of the characters. Frank Alpine washes before “a cracked mirror” (28), after robbing Morris of fifteen dollars. He is able to see only a distorted face, which symbolizes a warped personality. Torn by aspiring dreams and harsh realities, by lofty ideals and low fleshly desires, he fails to see himself clearly. The partial glimpses he does catch intensify his inadequacies and frustrations. Flowers symbolize the renewal of love. At the close of the novel, St. Francis of Assisi changes the wooden rose Frank made for Helen into a real rose and gives it to her. She accepts it from the saint “although it was with the love and best wishes of Frank Alpine” (297). Thus the rose symbolizes Helen’s love and acceptance of Frank. Again, Birds are positive symbols for Malamud. When Helen meets Frank in the park, he is seen feeding the birds like St. Francis of Assisi. This act symbolizes helping
and caring for others. Frank Alpine rises to the higher level of helping and feeding the needy in spite of his poverty and miserable life. Thus Malamud’s theme of human redemption through helping and sharing with the needy is effectively conveyed through the use of symbols in his novel, *The Assistant*.

In Malamud’s *A New Life*, a novel dealing with the academic world, the names of various characters have symbolic implications exposing their inner nature either directly or ironically. First the protagonist’s name, Seymour Levin is symbolic of his nature. According to Jeffrey Helterman, Levin’s name “suggests his priestly function” (59). The Levites were the descendants of Israel, who were entrusted with priesthood. They were not entitled to material possessions of their own, according to the Bible, but they were given the charge of presenting the offerings of the people before God and making supplications for them. As such, they were responsible for creating law and order among the tribes of Israel. Levin’s name is closely connected with the Levite, and it has positive as well as ironical import. It is true that Levin desires to create law and order in Cascadia College, He does bring about some change in the educational system, especially in having the old text book, *The Elements of Grammar* “kicked out after thirty years” (*A New Life* 315). Anyhow, the name is ironical in that Levin seems to lack order in his own personal life. He has sexual affairs with many ladies during his stay in Cascadia, even trespassing the rules and regulations of the college. Mr. Fair Child, the Chairman of the English Department warns him even in the beginning that he should not have connection with girl students or the wives of
the faculty. Ironically he involves himself in so many affairs during his stay in
the College. His affair with Pauline Gilley provokes her husband, Gerald
Gilley who reproaches him in the end, saying "You god-damn two-faced, two-
assed. tin-saint hypocrite, preaching reform all the while you were committing
adultery with my wife!" (A New Life 295). These words, though cruel, aptly
judge Levin's weak nature, contrary to his name and profession. According to
Sandy Cohen, "Levin is an archaic word, meaning lightening, it is also a
Hebrew Word meaning 'East' indicating light" (57). Cohen feels that Levin is
the light from the East travelling towards the West, as in the novel he travels
from Eastern New York towards Western Easchester, to Cascadia College.
Through Levin's name itself, Malamud ironically presents the West which has
been consistently identified with America's Edenic ideals (Alter 29), with so
many faults, and says that light has to come from the East to the West. Levin
hopes to find a better life in the West, but he is disappointed with the false
ideals propagated by the West, and the absence of true freedom to proclaim
one's views. The situation in Cascadia satisfies the petty minded educators
who want an easy-going comfortable life without any pain or responsibility.
Levin feels very miserable to find out that Cascadia College never encourages
liberal arts and literature. It is mostly a science and technical institution. The
departmental objective stated by the Chairman of the Department is "to satisfy
the needs of the professional schools on the campus with respect to written
communication" (39). As a light from the East, Levin tries to reform the
College. Though he does not succeed completely in his attempt as he says in
the end to Pauline, "I failed this place" (315), he is responsible for eradicating
the boring grammar book from the syllabus, and for softening the attitude of the faculty members towards literature. As his name suggests, he is a light from the East, lightening the people of Cascadia College of the West towards a better understanding of the prevailing situation there. Iska Alter further points out the symbolic indication of the first name of the protagonist, ‘Seymour’ as ‘see-more’ (50). Of course, Levin does not see things at the surface level, but he has the tendency to see more, to take a deeper view of things and bring about reforms.

C.D. Fabrikant is another character in the novel whose name itself is symbolic of his nature. He is Levin’s colleague at Cascadia College, and Levin finds in this man, great intellectual potentialities along with liberal views like himself. He considers C.D. Fabrikant, a suitable alternative to Gerald Gilley for Chairmanship after Fairchild, the existing Chairman. C.D. Fabrikant also tries to reform Cascadia, but he is not willing to take the risk of losing his promotion. He is a Puritan bachelor who is not bold to voice forth his good liberal views for the good of the college and the society around. His very name is symbolic of his inadequacies. He is “the maker who can’t as well as the maker of cant” (Alter 42). He is unable to talk about his merits in a convincing way to get the support of the other faculty members. Though he is intelligent and experienced, he leads a very quiet life outwardly without showing his discontent at the existing educational system at Cascadia. He prefers isolation to hospitality and friends, and as a result, he becomes unpopular. When he competes for Chairmanship, his unsociable nature is a great stumbling block.
Levin who wants to support Fabrikant realizes the sad fact: “Almost everyone complained Fabrikant was not very sociable. He never went to anyone’s house and invited no one to his; he never appeared in the coffee room” (253). When Levin wants Fabrikant to go upstairs and talk with the men to get their votes for his Chairmanship, Fabrikant is conspicuously reluctant to do so, saying, “Let them come down here” (253). Thus Fabrikant’s unsociable nature with his eccentricities and inability in getting support from others as revealed through his behaviour, is denoted by his name itself.

Orville Fairchild, the Chairman of the English Department is another character whose name itself is symbolic of his nature. He is “anything but fair, and only a child” (Alter 33), in his thinking and always marked by a lack of maturity. Thus the word ‘Fair’ has an ironical implication, as the Chairman is not fair in his attitude towards literature. He says that scientists are more important than literary men who can not construct roads or dams. Also, he is not fair towards Leo Duffy, Levin’s predecessor, when he condemns him as “irresponsible and perverse” (41). It is true that Leo Duffy was a radical who could not approve of the educational system at Cascadia, but he is neither irresponsible nor perverse as Fairchild calls him. Fabrikant and Pauline Gilley appreciate his radical views. The second word ‘Child’ in his name also denotes his nature, in the sense that it does not reflect his innocence, but only his immaturity. His lack of maturity is evident in his description of Leo Duffy’s appearance in his house to Levin. It is not only humorous, but it also exposes Fairchild as a funny, ridiculous figure. He says that when he was taking bath,
Leo Duffy entered his house and shouted so much before his wife and another lady, Mrs. Freeny, that he came running into the living room in his “birthday suit” (44) meaning that he was without any dress, which made his wife throw her tea cup on him. Thus the name ‘Child’ is indicative of his immaturity which makes him a comic figure, whereas the word ‘Fair’ denotes his unfair attitude.

Another character Mr. Labhart, the President of the college behaves exactly as his name suggests. According to Abramson, “his very name implies a heart joined to technology and not the humanities” (Bernard Malamud Revisited 47). He is a miserly, unforgiving, hard-hearted administrator who is quick to expel any one who questions the administration of the college. He does not have any soft attitude towards humanities as his heart is set on concepts like science and technology. Even in the Department of English, he has followers who support him in all he does, like Fairchild and Gerald Gilley.

Joseph Bucket is another fellow instructor with Levin whose name ‘Joseph’ is used rather sarcastically. He has so many children, indicating his physical fertility, but unfortunately his intellectual sterility is evident in the fact that thrice the concerned authorities reject his doctoral thesis. Thus he is a contrast to the Biblical Joseph who is noted for his God-given wisdom and intelligence. His lack of wisdom and courage is also evident in his hesitation to support any reform in the educational system of Cascadia College.
So the names of all these educational instructors at Cascadia College have symbolic connotations. Perhaps Malamud delineates these characters with a double purpose to show the state of intellectual barrenness of the educational institution at Cascadia, and the false sense of satisfaction and security of the administrators and educational instructors there. He seems to say that unless there is some reformation in the existing educational system and the attitude of these instructors, there is no scope for intellectual creativity and the development of a humanitarian culture. Even without realizing that they are responsible for the intellectual as well as the emotional sterility of the times, these educators presume to guide the students too in the dreary Waste land of intellectual dullness through monotonous written work. Except Levin, all are content to live at Cascadia, Easchester. The name of the place Easchester itself has symbolic associations. The first part of the name denotes ease and comfort without any pain or responsibility. The second part ‘Chester’ indicates ‘a camp’ or ‘fortress’, giving the residents a sense of security. Malamud seems to treat the place as the land of the lotus eaters, which has the disastrous effect on the residents of the place. The faculty members of the college have the tendency towards ease and comfort even at the point of sacrificing their desire towards the intellectual and aesthetic aspect of life.

As the names of the characters are symbolic of their attitudes in *A New Life*, the physical environment surrounding them is also presented with so many symbols. Flowers and fruit, as positive symbols, abound in this novel. Pauline Gilley brings along with her “the familiar Malamudian symbols of
fruitfulness and fertility, lemons, oranges, and the smell of flowers” (Helterman 55). Levin brings with him a copy of the book *Western Birds, Trees, and Flowers*, from New York, which shows his association with the positive symbols of nature. He finds Pauline Gilley in the forest when he goes there for bird-watching. He is very much attracted towards the rich atmosphere of “fir, cedars, in green skirts touching the ground, blue spruce, and even hemlock, the trees in profusion, their branches interlaced” (171). The mystery of the woods continues to impress him with an endless charm.

In *A New Life*, too, Malamud presents the seasonal cycle to suit the different mental states of the protagonist. When Pauline decides to share her life with Levin, he falls into a reverie, tracing his past life with reference to the four seasons:

> He drove the seasons away after hounding them to appear; winter sniffing the icy wind for the scent, the breath, of spring; yet a time of flowers drove him wild; amid summer foliage, in ascetic heat, he obsessively hunted dead leaves and found them under every bush; autumn inspired his own long death. This went on too many years to remember. (313)

His deep realization of the meaninglessness of his life, and his longing for a fruitful existence are aptly revealed through the symbolic description of the seasons. When he leaves with Pauline at the close of the novel, he sees
“the trees in full leaf, arched above the narrow streets, shading the green lawns” (315), corresponding to his excited mood. Thus Malamud creates symbols in the characters and the physical environment surrounding the characters in *A New Life* to bring out the different attitudes of the characters, emphasizing the need for love and concern in human life.

In Malamud’s episodic novel, *The Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition*, the name of the protagonist, Arthur Fidelman is deliberately chosen to mean the opposite of what he really is. In Latin, ‘Fidelis’ means ‘faithful’ (Helterman 10), but Fidelman is not faithful as his name suggests either in life or work. In all the six episodes presented in this novel, Fidelman is presented as a man of inconsistent motives and unfaithful associations. His relationship with the women, Annamaria, Esmeralda, and Margherita never go beyond mere sexual attachments. He simply displays his incapability to show sacrificial love, which gives itself to others. In this profession too, Fidelman does not stick to one job, but simply jumps from one job to another. He starts as a research student in “Last Mohican”, tries his hand in painting and carving in the succeeding chapters, and ends up as a blower of glass in the last chapter “Glass Blower of Venice”. Many episodes in his life show him as a thorough misfit in life and art. He is not faithful in spending the hard-earned money sent to him by his sister, Bessie, but spends it in buying presents for the faithless woman Annamaria who despises him as much as he loves her. Though he professes to be a faithful follower of Christ-like Susskind in “The Pictures of the Artist” and throws away his brushes and paints into the Dead Sea, he again
runs out to buy paints, brushes and canvas like the faithless Judas, who betrayed his master. Fidelman’s faithless nature is revealed in all these incidents, and it seems that Malamud has used the name in a sarcastic manner, to present emphatically as well as humorously the modern Man’s imperfect, aimless life both in art and personal life.

Yet there are some signs of awakening from a purposeless life and moving towards redemption in Fidelman’s life. The greatest sign of regeneration is his readiness to give his spare suit to Susskind after much conflict. This regeneration follows his realisation that without kindness and compassion his research work on Gioto is a waste. Another redemptive trait in his character is the renunciation of his useless pursuit of art and taking up the useful craft of blowing glass. Sandy Cohen points out that Fidelman’s blowing a huge glass bowl just before his leaving Venice shows the potential for redemption in him (103). Thus there are some positive qualities in Fidelman which shows Malamud’s hope in an individual beset with so many weaknesses. He affirms through Fidelman that an individual can become better through mutual love and compassion. It is interesting to note here that Malamud’s pseudonym for some twelve years was ‘Fidelman’ (Cohen 93). Also Malamud’s mother’s maiden name was ‘Fidelman’, as he himself says, “I used my mother’s maiden name because I needed a name I liked” (Qtd. in Bernard Malamud Revisited 76).
In Malamud's novel *The Tenants*, the main protagonist's name 'Lesser' itself is symbolic of his lack of good qualities. Harry Lesser's capacity to love and understand others is less, and his selfless suffering towards others is less—lesser than what is expected of him as a Jew. Abramson, in this regard, points out that Lesser's name is aptly chosen to show his inability to love, and his neglect of his aged father and the Jewish girl, Irene (93). He postpones his visit to Chicago to meet his aged father and he prefers his writing to Irene Bell. He is unable to understand the sufferings of his landlord Levenspiel who pleads with him to vacate his dilapidated building so that he can pull it down and buy another house. He is unsympathetic towards Willie Spearmint, the black writer and criticizes his work in a rather harsh manner. Thus the main protagonist is lesser than what he is expected to be, in love, compassion, and mutual understanding, and his very name is suggestive of these inadequacies.

The other protagonist Willie Spearmint's name also has symbolic associations. The name Willie Spearmint is closely connected with William Shakespeare, the great Elizabethan dramatist, but paradoxically Willie’s writings lack form and eventually cease to be art at all, much contrary to the writings of William Shakespeare. Unfortunately Willie is not able to find a suitable form to express his bitter experiences adequately, and Lesser finds Willie’s rhetoric “florid, false, contradicting the simplicity and tensile spareness of his sensibility” (*The Tenants* 124). He also finds Willie’s language, “a compound of ashes and glue” (124), lacking in energy and vitality. Willie Spearmint’s pseudonym is “Bill spear” (64). Abramson feels that this
name “combines overtones of literature, violence and the physical (the phallic)” (95). Though Willie is a hard working writer of novels, he is rather aggressive and sexy. He is not polite towards Harry Lesser even in their first meeting. When Harry criticises his work, Willie flings the chapter at the wall, where it hits “with a crack, the yellow page flying over the floor” (126). When Harry reveals his affair with Irene Bell, the effect is terrible. He wounds Lesser and belts Irene in the eye, creating a lot of commotion. It is also evident that Willie is interested only in his sexual affair with Irene, but he neither wants to love her nor take up any responsibility. When Lesser exhibits his Jewish sense of responsibility, saying that the woman he gets involved with may want to marry him, Willie says plainly, “Stay away from that type” (32). Thus the black writer reveals his irresponsible nature, and he is noted for his aggressive, sexy aspects as his name suggests.

Irene Bell, the mistress of Willie Spearmint who later becomes Lesser’s lady love, represents earthly beauty by name and person. When Lesser first meets her, he finds her “verging on beautiful” (37). He is very surprised because he did not expect a blackman’s girl to be a beauty. Her physical beauty attracts him towards her and gives him relaxation in his boring, loveless existence. Willie, on the other hand, produces worthless writing in keeping himself distant from the embodiment of beauty, Irene Bell. Lesser too, is not able to maintain his relationship with Irene Bell for a long time because he gives prior importance for writing, neglecting her. Malamud subtly presents the deplorable condition of the two writers, who keep themselves at a distance.
from the emblem of beauty, Irene Bell, destroying their creative tendency to produce a worthy piece of art. Evelyn Avery points out that Irene Bell is a typical Malamudian female, and if “Harry had been more like Levin, he might have sacrificed his freedom and career, married Irene, and accepted the responsibilities of a family man” (Rebels and Victims 74). It is sad that Harry rejects the emblem of beauty and persists in the aimless pursuit of selfish motives, leading to his own destruction.

Levenspiel, the landlord of the dilapidated building in which the two writers choose to stay to write their novel, has symbolic association with his name. Actually his name is “close to the yiddish ‘Libin Spiel’, playing life, something from which Harry keeps his distance” (Abramson 94). Levenspiel earnestly pleads with Harry Lesser that he can enjoy life by moving to a nice, comfortable apartment in the neighbourhood. He says that Lesser has ruined his health through his hard and strenuous labour, and all he needs is some rest, and a nice, clean and airy place to pursue his work. As such, Levenspiel represents all the good things that life offers--health, happiness, and peace of mind. Unfortunately Levin rejects his plea and chooses to stay in the ruined flat to continue his writing and ends up in failure. According to Sandy Cohen, the name ‘Levenspiel’ means ‘a bolt of lightning’ (117). In the egotistic, aimless life of Harry Lesser, the heart-rending cry of Levenspiel for vacating his apartment comes as a bolt of lightning. It is Malamud’s plea for a better life through compassion and mutual understanding, which strikes the reader as a bolt of lightning.
Malamud sardonically presents the crumbling tenement in which both Lesser and Willie work, as a symbol of death and dissolution. Lesser hears “mournful winds, Aeolus’ bag” (24), and “graveyard music” (24), from the dilapidated building. He is always conscious of “murder” and “end of the world” (25), when he works hard at his novel, and hopes to finish his last word before the end comes. Willie also chooses the same desolate place for his writing, and his presence is always associated with “the sulphurous smell” (28), indicating the racial antagonism between the Whites and the Blacks. This racial hatred continues till the very end of the novel, when both of them attack and destroy each other.

Malamud also uses colour symbolism to point out the existing Black-White dichotomy rather emphatically. White Lesser and Black Willie are the only tenants in the crumbling tenement. White and Black images are constantly juxtaposed in the novel to reinforce the racial conflict. Irene Bell is a white Jewish girl with a black hair whereas Mary Kettlesmith is a black girl wearing a white mini at the party. In his fancy, Lesser sees “black cats with white hats, and white ones with black hats” (41). Also, he imagines himself on “a floating island” (41), with Willie and other friends, while people on both shores “wave red white and black flags” (41). Even in the second ending of the novel which Lesser fantasies, he a white man marries the black Mary Kettlesmith, while Willie, the black man marries the white Irene Bell. When Lesser examines the unfinished writings of Willie entitled ‘Manifested Destiny’, the words ‘Black’ and ‘White’ occur alternatively in the beginning,
then the word ‘White’ is gradually reduced to ‘whit’ ‘whi’, ‘wh’, ‘w’, and finally it disappears completely as the word ‘black’ occupies the rest of the work, even expanding to ‘blackness’. It shows Willie’s fanatic attitude towards his own Black race as against the White race. In his short poem, he says:

White has to glow
No light for white
Black is true glow
Is lit from in. (155)

These lines show Willie’s keen antipathy towards the whites in favour of the Blacks. At the close of the novel, in the dark atmosphere in which they kill each other, a faint light glitters, suggesting light and dark images.

Seasonal phases too play a very important role in The Tenants. For the most part of the novel, the season is winter which metaphorically denotes Lesser’s inability to love and understand others. The novel begins with winter when Harry Lesser finds “Yesterday’s snow standing seven stiff inches on the white street”(10). On his way back from the grocery store, “in wet sneakers” (10), Lesser is afraid to meet the landlord or one of his men waiting for him in “somebody’s wet doorway” (11), or crouching behind “a snow-roofed car” (11), to persuade him to vacate the dilapidated apartment. There is much “unshovelled snow” (11), in front of his house. When Willie meets Lesser in his tenement one early morning, it is severe winter. Willie’s goatee is
“laced with ice or snow’ (34), and “he beat his wet hat against Lesser’s door to knock off the snow” (34). Thus winter is associated with indifference, lack of love, and unsympathetic nature on the part of Lesser and Willie. When Harry Lesser begins to show love towards Irene Bell, the season slowly changes to spring. Lesser notices the branches of a maple tree “swollen with buds” (116), supplying “a fluent breadth to his emotions” (116), for creative writing. Spring has started, picturing the true love between Harry and Irene, and Lesser feels very relaxed. When he fantasies a double wedding, the season is warm summer denoting unity and harmony. The tribal chief conducts the wedding ceremony of Lesser and Mary on a “cool tropical summer’s morning” (157). The bright summer indicates Malamud’s hope and vision that one day, the Blacks and the Whites will live in harmony, forgetting their differences and animosities. The atmosphere in which the two writers meet and kill each other is presented with “huge ferns, saw-toothed cactus taller than men, putrefying omnivorous plants” (175). Thus the natural scenery is suggestive of the murderous tendency in the two writers.

In Malamud’s novel Dubin’s Lives too, the names of some characters are symbolic of their inner characteristics. To start with, the protagonist, William Dubin’s name itself is associated with his nature. According to Iska Alter, the first name is a pun on his own nature, “Will-I-Am” (178), meaning that in his every action, he is motivated by his steely will power. In spite of his father’s objections, he has married a goyish widow, Kitty. His love towards Kitty is also “willed rather than felt, as he has willed so much of his
experience” (Alter 178). He tells Kitty that there is “a will to love” (Dubin’s Lives 369). He emphatically says, “I will waking up, for Christ’s sake. I will my god-damned work. There are times I will living” (369). Dubin’s remark clearly shows how he does everything, even living with strong will power. So the first name ‘will-i-am’ adequately pictures his strong willed nature. The second name ‘Dubin’ is very close to ‘Dubious’ which presents him as a person of dubious nature. Dubin’s actions are often ambiguous to his wife Kitty and his mistress, Fanny. Kitty does not understand till the very end of the novel the reason for his impotency with her, and his affair with Fanny Bick. Dubin loves Kitty and the children, but he often runs after Fanny. Kitty fails in her effort to heal him of his impotency towards her. She tells desperately: “we live side by side but not together. We live in the same house, but I can float around for days yet not make contact with you” (371). Fanny too is not able to understand Dubin. He says that he loves her, but he is simply not able to share his life with her. Fanny often wonders why he stays married to Kitty in spite of his strong attachment towards her. Perceiving his ambivalent nature, she advises him to stay three days with her, and four days with his wife. Dubin objects to that idea saying that Kitty won’t agree to that. Fanny is baffled by Dubin’s double life. In spite of her persuasion to stay with her, at the close of the novel, he gets up quickly and runs towards his wife with love. Though his behaviour is seen as the result of his realization of the obligation towards his wife and children, his sudden movement towards Kitty after making love to Fanny baffles not only Fanny, but the reader too. There is doubt about the protagonist whether he will stick to his obligations or return to the mistress of his passions, as he has done
often in the novel. Thus the very name ‘Dubin’ implies that he is a man of doubt and questions. Throughout the novel, he is not able to decide between his wife, Kitty and mistress Fanny. Also he is a man, producing doubt and uncertainty in the minds of both his wife and his mistress. More than all, his action creates suspense for the reader too, because the reader himself is not sure whether Dubin’s decision to stay with Kitty is real and final.

Also Dubin’s profession of writing biographies is symbolic of his analytic nature. He is often referred to as the biographer who is concerned with the lives of the great men he writes about, comparing them with his own life with conflict. This profession helps him to discover his own nature as he reflects on the lives of others, and hence it is symbolic of analyzing his inner self. He tells Kitty: “In my work I’ve discovered how to discover. You see in others who you are” (147). Hence Dubin reveals that his profession as a biographer is symbolic of his own analysing nature, which helps him to discover himself, the divisions within his own being.

Another character whose name bears an ironical relationship to the real nature is Fanny Bick, Dubin’s young mistress. She is named “after Fanny Price in Mansfield Park” (45), as she herself tells Dubin in the novel. Fanny Price is the upholder of traditional moral values and sexual standards in Jane Austen’s novel, Mansfield Park, and Malamud deliberately assigns this name to this character to present her entirely opposite role. As a contrast to Fanny Price, Fanny Bick is profligate in her sexuality and irresponsible in her
relationship with so many men. Her reckless attitude in sexual escapades is evident in offering herself to Dubin who is old enough to be her father, when she works as a part-time servant in their house. She does this during Kitty’s absence, and Dubin refuses to accept her offer. Yet she has a continuous hold in his life, causing so much distraction from performing his duty towards his wife and children. Her words too reveal her careless attitude towards sex regardless of the consequences. She tells Dubin: “I think we’re entitled to have sexual pleasure any way we want” (41). Thus Malamud deliberately reverses the role of Jane Austen’s character, Fanny Price, in his characterization of Fanny Bick to give a sarcastic effect in his novel.

Daniel Fuchs brings out the symbolic meaning of the second name ‘Bick’ in Fanny Bick. He says, that “Bick is Yiddish, suggesting bovine” (Studies in American Jewish Literature 206). Generally the adjective ‘bovine’ indicates stupidity. Dubin himself considers ‘Fanny’ as “a foolish name” (35). Really Fanny is stupid to waste Dubin’s time in Venice, and she also makes him foolish by kindling his passions and wounding him by her careless, irresponsible attitude. We see her in the height of stupidity when she has a sexual affair with a young gondolier in the hotel room of Venice and blames Dubin for her thoughtless sexual affair with the stranger.

Malamud uses seasonal cycle in Dubin’s Lives too, to emphasize the mood of the protagonist Dubin who undergoes “two winters of depression and internal suffering, two springs of hope and possibility, two summers of relative
contentment and two autumns of uncertainty” (Hershinow 111). Even in the beginning of the novel, when it is August, Dubin thinks of the winter. He “beats his arms across his chest and shoulders as though he had unexpectedly encountered cold, clouds have darkened, a snow storm threatens” (8). He considers August as “a masked month” because it “conspired with fall” (8). Dubin’s anticipation of winter suggests the fear of depression and gloom. He remembers his marriage with Kitty on “one cool day in spring” (58), symbolising his cheerful mood. When Dubin expects to have a nice time with Fanny in Venice, it is “a fine autumn day” (59), denoting his uncertainty about the success of his relationship with Fanny. It is severe winter Dubin has to face when Fanny disappoints him in Venice. His restless mind corresponds with the unbearable cold which “struck him like a blow of a fist” (149). When Dubin is in an excited mood as his daughter, Maud comes home, the season is spring: “May showers brought May flowers: Yellow trollius, feather-cupped red tulips, iris, white and purple” (212). The state of contentment is always associated with summer when he leads a life of contentment with Kitty: “They made love on a sunny Sunday morning, the morning white curtains enfolding warm light” (250).

Flowers and birds, as positive symbols of love, are used in Dubin’s Lives too. Kitty spends her time in her garden where there are so many flowers. Dubin makes love to Fanny in a field of wild flowers. According to Jeffrey Helterman, the difference in Dubin’s love for Kitty and Fanny indicated by the difference between cultivated flowers and wild flowers (Understanding
Malamud 97). Kitty kindles Dubin’s love with responsibility in a proper channel, while Fanny stimulates his uncontrollable passion. His straying after Fanny makes him impotent and ineffective, preventing his obligations towards his wife and children. When he realizes this, he willingly moves towards the path of duty for his own good and the good of his family.

Bird symbols are used in Dubin’s Lives to warn Dubin and bring him towards the right path. In the winter, he sees a flying black bird falling into the snow and dying at the mere threat of a stranger, pointing out a non-existent gun. The death of the black bird is a warning to Dubin that if he wanders like the black bird, getting himself out of tune with nature, he will be attacked by deadly forces towards his own destruction. When he is caught in a blizzard after his disappointment with Fanny, he sees a white owl at the other side. As he is confused and is not able to find the right direction to come out of the blizzard, the white owl showers on him and flies in one direction. Dubin follows its example and is able to find the way out, where his wife rescues him at the other end. In his exasperation, the only one sentence he manages to tell her is “I saw a white owl” (172). Thus the white owl is a symbol of protection and redemption suggesting that Dubin should put himself in harmony with nature (Helterman 104).

The ‘mirror’ symbol is very effective in Malamud’s Dubin’s Lives, indicating his inner self. Dubin often beholds himself in a mirror, and recognises his ugly self. He abhors himself when he looks at his reflection and
wants to change for the better. When he falls down on the steps accidentally while looking for a restaurant, after his ridiculous affair with Fanny in Venice, he feels very miserable and looks at a mirror. In the mirror, he beholds a strange and indifferent face reproaching him for wasting his time in Venice. His reflection itself seems to abhor him for his evil, lustful nature. When he gets reconciled to Kitty and leads a peaceful life, it is said that “he was at peace with his mirror” (114). When he is deeply attached to Fanny, even to the neglect of his wife and children, he looks into a mirror and curses himself. Thus the ‘mirror’ symbol enables Malamud to bring out Dubin’s realisation of his own ugly nature rather clearly and emphatically.

In *God’s Grace*, the protagonist’s name ‘Calvin Cohn’ is a fantastic combination of Protestantism and Judaism. Calvin is the name of the great Protestant reformer (*Understanding Malamud* 109). ‘Cohn’ is taken from the Hebrew Word “Cohen” which means ‘Priest’ (*Critique* (Spring (1995) 166). He resembles the Protestant reformer in that he tries to reform the chimps and improve their way of life in the island. He teaches them many good principles that they should abstain from greed, lust and selfishness, and that they should not waste food. He establishes a school tree and becomes their instructor. Thus the name ‘Calvin’ is related to his task of reforming others. The second name, meaning ‘a priest’ is appropriate in that he offers himself willingly as a sacrifice at the close of the novel for the welfare of the chimps. (*Critique* vol 36 (Spring 1996) 166). His act of offering himself clearly relates to the priestly function in the Jewish history.
The other characters in *God's Grace* though animals, their Christian and Jewish names have symbolic associations. Cohn names the gorilla, 'George' after his Jewish father-in-law, a dentist who was an avowed humanitarian in his loving treatment of his patients. The gorilla’s saddened eyes reflect Jewish suffering. Though it suffers from severe cold one day, it refuses to accept medicine from Cohn. The other names are given by Buz, Cohn’s adoptive son, and the first chimp he rescued from destruction. The name ‘Buz’ is given by Cohn himself, which suggests noise and haste, and these traits are evident in the chimp’s nature. It always offends George and does not obey Cohn’s instructions at all. It is ungrateful towards Calvin Cohn, its adoptive father who teaches him so many good things, and brings the other chimps to murder Cohn’s gifted child, Rebekah.

The names of the other chimps also have symbolic associations. All the names are Biblical. Buz gives the gentler chimps New Testament names, and the most aggressive chimp, the Old Testament Jewish name, ‘Easu’ (Abramson 120). The ferocious chimp ‘Easu’ is full of lust, sexual jealousy, and wants everything for himself. He is presumptuous to kill his fellow creatures and the new arrivals, the baboons, and he even starts eating them. He is really like Easu, the elder son of Issac, one of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament, who is a glutton, becoming a heartache to his parents by his sexual perversions. Another chimp named, ‘Saul of Tarsus’ is cast in the image of the unrepentant Saul, before his conversion as Paul in the Bible. Saul is in fact an Old Testament name, given to a Jew in Tarsus of the New Testament period. He
killed so many Christian believers before Jesus Christ appeared to him and convicted him of his mistake. He repented deeply and became a staunch follower of Christ. Later on he is referred to as St. Paul. The chimp, Saul of Tarsus is deliberately named after the old Saul before his conversion, to indicate his murderous nature of killing his fellow creatures. It assists the ferocious chimp, Esau, in the merciless killing of Cohn's precious child, Rebekah. The tender female chimp is named Mary Madalyn, after the young woman of the New Testament who followed Jesus with so much dedication and love. The female chimp. Mary Madalyn is affectionate and faithful towards the protagonist, Calvin Cohn, who is responsible for the well-being of the chimps' community in the island. She tells Cohn that she has kept herself a virgin for his sake, without yielding herself to the other male chimps who advance towards her. With Cohn's assistance, she brings forth a female baby, "a humanoid infant" (God's Grace 165). Cohn hopes that she will be "the mother of a newer race of men" (165), and there will be a new community with good-will and peace. Unfortunately his hopes are never realised as the infant is mercilessly murdered by the chimps.

Some actions in the novels are symbolic of Malmaud's deep moral vision of life. For example, Cohn's offering of Kaddish for the dead is a symbol of Malamud's respect for life. He feels that "the Dead must be acknowledged if one respected life" (God's Grace 41). When Cohn has the tendency to blame God for the recent flood, God descends on a pillar of fire and says:
I am the Lord Thy God
Who created man
To perfect himself. (127)

Cohn’s encounter with God is a symbolic manifestation of Cohn’s guilty conscience seeking to blame God for man’s imperfection. Cohn has yet to learn that it is Man’s Sin which has provoked the wrath of God and brought about the Second Flood.

Flowers and fruit, abounding in “Cohn’s Island”, are deathless, indicating Malamud’s hope in this hopeless existence. Cohn finds plenty of yellow banana trees, mango trees, fig trees and orange trees in the island which supply food for the inhabitants. Cohn realizes the mercy of God in supplying him with so many good things. Hence flowers and fruit symbolise the love and mercy of God. There is a gradual change in the physical environment too, when Cohn gradually realizes the mercy of God in letting him live, providing him with excellent things to enjoy. In the beginning, Cohn is a lone man, drifting along in the oceanography vessel, Rebekha Q. and the atmosphere is gloomy with “the dull sky”, and “a black oily rain” (11). When he finds Buz and the other chimps, and begins to settle in an island, the dull atmosphere too changes to bright green where “trees and flowers bloomed and bloomed” (45). Cohn feels elated when Buz teaches the other chimps how to talk. Without any operation on the larynx like himself, they are able to communicate with one another. This surprises Cohn beyond measure. At that time, Malamud portrays the season of spring to suit the excited mood of the protagonist:
Anyway it was a beautiful early spring. The bright green grass was ankle-high. Fragrant flowers, astonishing ones were scattered everywhere. Mimosa were abloom in flaring yellow. Oleander was white and bougainvillea royal purple. Each colour seemed deeper, more livingly intense, than its ordinary colour. (101)

Thus the beautiful spring season is presented in all its vitality and freshness to suit the protagonist’s elated spirit. When Cohn establishes himself as an instructor to the chimps, his state of contentment is reflected through the summer, “the sun shone golden, and a summer breeze blew an armada of long white clouds through the cerulean ocean sky” (169). Thus Malmaud presents the changes in the seasons suited to the mood of the protagonist and the prevailing situations in his life.

So far, Malamud’s use of symbols in the characters and the physical environment surrounding the characters have been briefly discussed and it is clear from the above discussion that Malamud’s symbols, whether they are in the characters or in the physical environment surrounding the characters, do not stand in isolation, but they are deeply incorporated within the thematic structure of each novel giving it form and vitality. It is also evident that symbols are not mere embellishments in Malamud but they form the integral part of each novel. Malamud’s use of symbols is definitely one of the allegorical modes of characterization in Malamud’s novels, which he
successfully manipulates to emphasize the never-ending theme of suffering and compassion which are the essential traits of human redemption.