Chapter - 5

TECHNICAL VIRTUOSITY - I

Point of view and Irony
The Indo-Anglican fiction is one of the many literatures in India which is a measure of Indian thought and emotions in English. So it differs much from all other English literatures in themes, local colour, and spirit of thought. The Indo-Anglian writers have evolved a form and technique for their subject matter by submitting themselves to the English discipline of expression and courting English graces of expression. The Indo-Anglian literature has become a better guide than any other Indian literature to show the different facets of Indian life not only to foreigners but also to the countrymen. Technique plays an important role in rendering the work of these writers “Indian”. Though it is not in itself enough to make any story memorable it enables the narrator to establish a quick rapport with the reader, as well as make a deep impact on him. The writer can use the form of the story, the narration, dialogue, characterization and other elements in an efficient way. The Indian short story writer adopts the form of ancient tale and fable to suit his purpose. As C.D. Venugopal says, 

The Indian short story writer in English generally adopts the form of the ancient tale and has normally refuses to experiment with the style of narration and presentation and has, on the whole, stuck to well-established techniques except in his use of language where he has fairly well succeeded in evolving a kind of English termed by Mulk Raj Anand as 'pigeon Indian' to bring out the peculiarity of the Indian ethos. 

The relationship between the stories, the reader and the storyteller are known through narratology. Every story will have a storyteller. He may announce in his tone or may not but he has an impact on the story, and he controls the story someway or the other. 

There are two possible points if view through which the writer of a short story conveys his themes. They are omniscient point of view, or third person point of view and the first
person narration. Firstly in omniscient narration there is no limit to the knowledge of the story teller. His power ranges widely over whatever he chooses to tell. The storyteller knows what the men know and more. He can be in two places at once, in many minds enjoying many perspectives. He shares his freedom and knowledge so that the reader as well can take a broad overview. Thus the omniscient narrator is free to bring his own views into the story. But it has its limitations also. In this kind of narration our experience therefore tends not to be intimate or intense.

In the first person narration one does not have access to the sprawling quality of the omniscient. In this point of view the reader is told what he knows by a ‘person’ who speaks in his own voice. The reader knows only what the person knows and when he knows it and tells it. The reader cannot see what the narrator has not seen and cannot see them from angles the narrator does not provide. The first person narration has an air of authenticity in that the reader feels the touch with the characters and what he is telling. In the first person the words come to us with the force of the narrator’s commitment. In this the closer the narrator is to the story, emotionally and physically, the less certain he is the less reliable an interpreter he is to the reader.

The third person narration provides a double vision. The reader not only observes the main character he is also intimately involved with the character’s feelings and thoughts. This creates a tension between what the storyteller tells and the reader understands and what the character knows, between external action and internal reaction, between the grossness of gesture and the refinement of thoughts, between what really is and what the character thinks.
Third person narration intimate can be flexibly adapted to a writer’s intentions. Henry James made many contributions to the craft of fiction among which two are important. Firstly he believed that the writer should ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’ the reader, that every thing should be dramatized. Secondly the most effective point of view for a story was to submerge the storyteller into a character he called the ‘central intelligence’. As the character sees, the reader sees and as he knows, the reader knows.

The focus of this chapter is on how the four short story writers Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Bharathi Mukherjee, and Salman Rushdie have used different narrative techniques for telling their short stories.

Raja Rao the pioneer of the genre of short story has his own peculiarity in his use of techniques. In his two volumes of short stories, The Cow of Barricades and Other Stories, The Policeman and the Rose he has used different narrative strategies. The narrative strategies used in the first volume of short stories depict Raja Rao’s experiments which he has already used in his novels. As M.K. Naik says, “The form which he employs in this volume is folk tale of the popular legend with all the simplicity and credulity, its myth-making power and the strong moralistic substratum on which it is in its popular wisdom, often grounded.”

Raja Rao uses the ‘I’ oriented technique of narration in two of his stories “Javni”, “Akkayya”. The story “Javni” starts with a quotation by ‘Kannakadas’. The reader at times confuses the narrator for the author because the narrator is a young Brahmin boy like Raja
Rao. The narration does not have the sprawling quality of the omniscience and the narrowness of the direct observer. It has its limitations. The reader is conveyed only what the narrator has personally seen and speaks in his own voice.

In "Javni" the narrator Ramu who is none other than the author himself describes his sister's relationship with Javni and describes the caste system that prevails in the remote villages of Malkand, Karnataka. The story starts as

I had just arrived. My sister sat by me, talking to me about a thousand things — about my health, my studies, my future, about Mysore, about my younger sister— and I lay sipping the hot, hot coffee that seemed almost a nectar after a ten-mile cycle ride on one of those bare, dusty roads of Malkand...

(TCB, 1)

The story "Javni" is a favourite story of Raja Rao. Kanakadasa is a household name in the Kannada countryside from which Raja Rao hails. The epigraph presents Raja Rao's source of nourishment as a writer the rich, complex Indian tradition, poetic-philosophic, to which Kanakadasa belonged four hundred years ago. Through the character of Javni the author presents the peasants' unflinching faith in God going back to times immemorial because to the author Javni is part of the tree, river and sky. The story ends with a note in which the writer compares Javni with a large tree. The narrator, Ramu says, "In my heart I seemed still to hear her sobs. A huge papal rose behind her, and, across the blue waters of the river and the vast, vast sky above her, she was one of them— much more at least, dear reader, than you and I."(TCB, 22)
Even in the story, “Akkayya” Raja Rao uses first person narration. The narrator is again a Brahmin boy in a joint family. The whole story is narrated from the point of view of the narrator tracing the action from his childhood to his young age. The story starts with the mention of the main protagonist “Akkayya”:

I, nor do I think any of my cousins, never knew what she was actually called. Everybody in the family called her Akkayya, elder sister, and we simply followed the example of our parents and aunts. I have, nevertheless, a faint remembrance that when they were talking to the Brahmin about the obsequies, they called her Venkatalakshamma, Subbamma or Nanjamma one of those old names which meant all that a virtuous woman ought to have that is, virtue. (TCB, 70)

The narrator tells about his sense of attachment to Akkayya from his childhood till the time when he leaves the house for higher studies. The whole life of Akkayya is depicted in the words of the narrator, about her marriage to which she agrees to, for the benefit of her father, and about how she became a widow and finally how she has come to his house to settle as a servant maid-cum- nurse to the diseased and as the nurse-cum-mother to the children. Through this powerful first person narrative Raja Rao captures a child’s reactions and responses to an old lady’s love and affection as much as unfolding the psychology of a neglected old widow which reminds us of Premchand’s story, “Boorth Kaki”. The curiosity of the child to know the meaning of widowhood is presented in a quite natural way through the first person narration elaborately. The technique of recollection of the past of the narrator’s childhood days presents the pitiable life of childless Akkayya. About Akkayya, As Narsingh Srivastav says,
The individuality of her character is found in her devotion to the narrator’s family as much as in her special life for him whom she waited for all the time till she breathed her last. The social realism of the curse of widowhood and the support of a widow in a joint Hindu family as well as the general indifference of the younger generation towards her and the emotional realism of her love for all and especially for one have been held together to produced the intended effect of profound pity.

It is the narrative method which makes the story immortal. She has been remembered forever by the writer who presents all her worries and joys in her life in detail as one of the members of the family. It is a tribute to Akkayya paid by the narrator himself.

In the second volume of short stories, *The Policeman and the Rose* Raja Rao employs the first person narrative in stories like “Nimka”, “India a Fable”, and “The Policeman and the Rose”. The theme of the story, “Nimka” is international and perhaps it is the only story attempted by the writer of such a theme and it reveals Raja Rao’s penchant for the metaphysical motif. The narrator of the story is an employee in the Central Intelligence and contemplates the sadness of Nimka as she is transformed into an ethereal beauty by her virtue and fortitude and by the purity of her love. The narrator thinks that Nimka is in love with him but she cannot marry him because there is a lot of difference between him and Nimka. The narrator on the other hand is also not in a position to love Nimka. The failure of the narrator’s love to Nimka is narrated very suggestively in a riddle. “The Indian is too simple in his depth- if there’s no concierge and the cat, there’s no goodness. Success is sin. Gandhi is poverty. The Maharaja is proof of truth. Truth is naked. Love is unsaid. So, Nimotcvhka fell in love with Michel.” (TPR, 101)
As M.K. Naik says,

In handling his themes, Raja Rao employs several techniques drawn from both the East and the West, and adopts short stories, for instance, he combines the vernacular strategies of narration with the Western techniques of fiction. The focus of interest in these stories is impressionistic rather than naturalistic, in the sense that the narrative emphasis falls on the inner individual, and how he responds to the events and circumstances of the outer world. There is, of course, a good deal of technical virtuosity in all this; Raja Rao’s evocation of the scene, manipulation of the incident, and character and, above all, his style drawing inspiration from the vernacular sources, make the stories breathtakingly interesting and refreshingly autochthonous.  

In “India-a-Fable”, Raja Rao presents himself as the narrator and narrates the Luxemburg Park in which he meets a boy of four years who comes to the park along with his nanny. Though the story is narrated in first person narration Raja Rao successfully makes it a fable. As M.K. Naik says,

It is presented as a meaningful parable which treats the cognate themes of discrimination between illusion and reality and the contrast between Indian and the West. The actual narration frame work of the story is rather slight but whatever little happens in it produces in every single telling detail unmistakable reverberations of ulterior significance. 

In the world of reality Raja Rao depicts the mystery, which starts as reality and ends as a mystery. The author sat under the statue of Anne of Austria (1629-1687). However, the question mark at the end of the date makes the reality into fancy, leaves it to the readers to
decide whether it is reality or fancy, Did Anne really died on that date? Did she die at all? Is it the question mark that belies it? A later detail of the presence of Pierrat dragging the wooden camel is the reality. The story starts with simple patronizing questions and answers between the narrator and the child. The two dream pictures conjured up by the narrator and the child, of camel, Arabia, Oasis, Sand, Prince, and Princess on one side and elephants, India, forests, rivers, Maharaja, Goddess with four hands on the other side, are linked up with the long journey which they take up to India, which is a concrete realism. To the child it is a fable but to the woman in the arms of a young man it is an exotic picture of reality. Raja Rao introduces himself as the prince, “Raja” in the story to the young boy. Pierrot is playing with a wooden camel when ‘Raja’ asks about the camel then the French boy replies that it is a wedding present from Rudolfe, the prince of the Oasis to the princess of Katherine. He describes his world of fantasy. The narrator describes his own world of fancy and impresses the boy too. The desert of the boy is contrasted with the forest of India, the Oasis with the river Ganges, the prince of Oasis, Rudolfie with the Indian prince, the camel with the elephant, Princess Katherine with two Goddesses of day and night. Instead of the wedding of the desert there are two weddings of day and night. Impressed by the two Goddesses of day and night Pierrot wants to forget his own world of fantasy and throws Kiki into the garden pool and imagines himself riding an elephant whom he names, ‘Titi’ and attending the wedding of the prince until it is time to go home. After several days they meet again in the same year, now Pierrot is in his navy suit with gold buttons, his nanny is also changed, a new nanny who is middle-aged follows him. Even the ending of the story conveys Raja Rao’s mastery in transforming the fantasy into reality. The boy answers to the narrator, “I know now”, he said, ‘I am a maharaja. I ride the elephant. The wedding is over.” Even the epigraph
to the story is a pointer to the theme of the necessity to discriminate between illusion and reality." (TPR, 112). M.K. Naik says about the title of the story,

The title of the story India- A Fable, indicates that the narrative illustrates in tabular form how his spiritual quest has successfully been achieved in India when the thrust of the epigraph and the title is understood, the symbolism of the story, begins to fall into proper place, revealing an intricate mosaic of meaning. 

In the story “The Policeman and the Rose” also Raja Rao follows the ‘I’ oriented technique to describe man’s quest for self-realization. It is presented as a parable. The action of the story takes place in an unspecified time. The narrator who has no name is arrested when born, with a policeman who follows him through life and even through incarnations. The story starts with ‘I’, narrator, who begins the story by declaring that “all men are arrested the moment they are born, each by his policeman and the name is your name, his address your address.” (TPR, 113) Though it starts with first person narration it is a pure fiction. Even the sub-title ‘a true story’ paradoxically helps to underline it. Like “India- a Fable”, there is no reality in this story; there is no known fact. The reader is left at the mercy of the narrator. The narrator describes the story of several rebirths of his past lives since the days of Ramayana until the twentieth century. There was a contemporary of Rama and Ravana in Tretayuga. As he says,

I remembered Rama and “Ravana of Lanka. Of course I did. I was once a contemporary of Rama and Ravana, and had been a trivial grass that Rama trod on in the principality if Kishkinda. I knew sita, for she used to be the in the Kulapati pond, and I was the twin-eyed weed by the footpath. She was beautiful. Rama was seeing itself. Ravana was like me – he was all arms, eyes, foot sight, sound, odour, audition and tactility. He had a mysterious jungle-
tingle in his being, that sang and tingled to sight, sound, touch, tasted in tranquility and smelt in periphery, and which was aimed at Rama every time he made battle. It was like a telescope – Rama looked without looking and saw-and fought. The jungle – tingle made the story of the world. . (TPR, 115)

He was a contemporary Rama and Ravana as a trefoil grass on which Rama trod on in the principality of Kishkinda. As a youngman he goes to Paris, opens a shop of ‘Hindu eyes’ which becomes a roaring success. He becomes fashionable and is honored as Legion d’Honner, second class, becomes famous as the policeman of God. Being encouraged by this success, he wants to become pukka God he returns to India, falls sick, has sores all over his body, and is treated by the district hospital. He then realizes that he is under arrest and the policeman receives his uniform and his service number. He returns to France and finds that his reputation has risen beyond his wildest dreams. The French have erected his statue declaring him deceased. They make his life difficult because it becomes inconvenient for them to carry on their activities and compel him to leave. Then he returns to Travencore where he finds his Guru, a retired police commissioner. He puts the petals of Rose at the feet of his Guru but the rose petals turn into Lotus petals. Thus the two stories “India-A-Fable”, and “The policeman and the Rose” have added a new dimension to the English short story.

Besides the first person narration Raja Rao employs omniscient narrative technique. He can go wherever he wants and can see whatever he wants and can choose whatever he likes. He knows more than what the characters know. He can be at two places at once and in many minds enjoying the perspectives. He shares his views and the freedom and knowledge so that the reader can take a broad overview. Raja Rao employs this technique in some of his stories like, “The True Story of Kanakapala”, “In Khandesh, “Companions” Though like any other
major Indian writers, he adopts the omniscient method of narration. His characters also speak in the story. These stories are based on snake myths and read like parables. Except for a few, all the stories open with an omniscient description. In the story, “Kanakapala” the story starts with the description of the name and details about its relationship to men.

The serpent is a friend or an enemy. If he is a friend, he lives with you, guarding your riches, protecting your health, and making you holy, and if he is an enemy, he slips through the kitchen ... unless of course there is a barber in the village who is so learned in the mysteries of animal wisdom that he stands near, a jug of water in one hand and a cup of milk in the other, chanting strange this in strange voices with strange contortions of his face, and then Lord Naga slips through the gutter, tiles or eaves, exactly as he went out, and coming near the barber like a whining dog before its frenzied master, touches the wounded man at exactly the spot where he has injected his venom, and sucking back the poison, spits it into the milk-cup, and like a dog too, slowly, first timidly, hushed, he creeps over the floor, and the further he goes the greater he takes strength, and when he is near the door, suddenly doubles his speed, and slips away-never to be seen again... (TCB, 53)

The original narrator of the story is an old woman, Venkamma, plantation Subbayya’s sick mother. The story is retold by the author. But the narrator uses most of the words spoken by old Venkamma. The omniscient description of the snake is a popular superstition among the village folk. As Narsingh Srivastava says,

Based on the myth of the snakes, it is a true story. As the title emphasizes human elevation and degradation both, telling how money may be saved for a pious use by a man like vision Rangappa and how it can be criminally grabbed by evil ones like his own descendants. Kanaklapala the snake protector of gold becomes a veritable embodiment of gold itself, as
both a sacred family – treasure and an object of greed and a source of evil. It is in this respect that the serpent is both a friend and an enemy.7

The serpent can be a friend or a foe. As a friend it guards our riches and as an enemy, it might bite us. The stripes on its hood indicate its power of poison. As the number increases, the power of the poison increases. This introduction about the snake is suitable for the story of miracle, vision, and curse the theme of the story is summed up by old Venkamma who is a neighbour of the vision, Ragappa.

Kanakapala, a big cobra, is the protector of the ancestral gold gathered by an ancient South Indian Brahmin family. The gold has been gathered by a saintly ancestor who wants to go on a pilgrimage to Bananas who has been prompted by this a vision in which he sees God. But unfortunately more than hundred years later his unworthy heirs try to grab the gold from the sanctum where it is kept and protected by the cobra, Kanakapala. The two brothers murder the third one, Seetharamu and the cobra who fails to protect the gold kills itself leaving a curse on the family. The narrative strategy here is to adopt the whole narration to the character of the rustic old woman who is the narrator. A close analysis of this seemingly artless and straightforward narration is to show that a definite point of view that of the narrator is meticulously followed. For example the description of the village and the changes that have take lace in the village during all these years, and the first appearance of the snake Kanakapala after hundred years.

Over a hundred years have now passed; and things have changed in Kashipura as all over the world. People have grown from boys to young men, from young men to men with children and then to aged grandfather and some
too have left for the woods to meditate, and other have died a common death, surrounded by wife and children and children's children. Others have become rich, after having begged in the streets; while some have become villains, though they were once the meekest of the meek. And some—Shiva forgive them! - are lying eaten by disease though they were strong as bulls and pious as dedicated cows.

(TCB, 59)

The author, as in a puranic tale and fork-lore, weaves a descriptive account of the flow of time through all sorts of changes, the births, deaths, epidemics, elopements, and marriages during the period of hundred years before the appearance of the snake again in Hosakre Rangappa's house. The folk-tale style narrative technique employed by Raja Rao adds life to the theme and the life style of the village people a century ago. As a typical parable realistic in its attitude and moralistic in its purpose the second part of the story tells us how the previous priest Ramakrishnayya died leaving behind three sons and a widow daughter and the snake Kanakapala. The second part tells us how the evil brothers of Seetharam kill him by pushing him into the river. The fable eloquently tells us how greed maligns the human heart and turns men and women into devils. It also shows how the family quarrels represent the all pervasive conflict between good and evil, between selflessness and greed. The evil brothers kill the noble hearted, obedient, and respectful Seetharam. It is clearly narrated in the words of Old Venkamma,

"We are living in Kali Yuga. And don't they say, for every million virtuous men there were in the first Yuga, every hundred in the third, there is but one now? Unrighteousness becomes the master, and virtue is being trodden down. Oh, when our grandfathers were alive how happily we lived. We bought a khand of rice for half a rupee and seven seers of ghee for a
rupee. And now... And now... You must beat your mouth and yell...Oh, to 
live in this poor, polluted world... (TCB, 65)

The narrative technique followed by Raja Rao suits the woman very well in putting forth the endless garrulous narration of the series of incidents that have taken place in the house of vision Rangappa. The repeated use of words, phrases, and the construction of sentences create an impression of unending, continuous flow of the narrative as is seen in,

every day he calculated how much money the would be in the holy pot - it would be a sin to open it!- and every day he said to himself that in one year, in nine months, six months, in three months or may be in two fortnights, he would leave this little village and start of on his great pilgrimage. (TBC, 55)

The method reflects the rhythm of traditional Indian story telling as every time the old woman says, “listen” to the author. As C.V. Venugopal says,

Apart from the echoes the classic, RajaRao’s Indian ness is mainly reflected his experiment with the folk-tale form of narration. Nowhere is this better seen than in the way he opens and ends his stories. But for the fact that the actual phrase, ‘once upon a time ... isn’t seen at the beginning, Raja Rao’s stories do not get going in a much different way. A simple statement beginning with the phrase can be conveniently prefixed to a story -opening. 8

Thus, the narrative technique of Raja Rao has all the virtues of folk tale and successfully captures all facets of Indian life. In the story, “Companions” also Raja Rao employs the same technique of narration.
Raja Rao experiments, not only in the use of fable and parable but also in the use of the technique of stream of consciousness in relating an event or an idea. He uses this technique in his short story, "In Khandesh". Stream of Consciousness is a technique in which the author attempts to create a semblance of the flow of thought or reverie in a person's mind. Reality thus represented is marked by apparent triviality and by detail and lack of order. In this story Dattopants has a bad night. He suffers from an acute pain in his stomach and is quite disturbed by the noise of the children near him, breathlessness, funeral processions, death dreams, temple and tropes, and mimicking monkeys. He gets no sleep. He also hears the hooting of an owl and at last when falls asleep in the early morning he gets a nightmare:

Then the owl changed into sheep, the sheep grew long, twisted horns and become a buffalo. A black rider sat on it, a looped serpent in one hand. The buffalo put its muzzle' on Dattopant, licked his flesh, sniffed-then with a dart flung into the depths of the raging clouds and was lost. Dattopant too was lost. A souse was round his neck. The black rider was dragging him.... dragging him... Where? Oh, that eye-shutting abysm! 'Ram Ram', 'Ram Ram', he yelled in his sleep, 'Ram Ram, 'Ram Ra,'. (TCB, 143)

The drumbeat also plays an important role in Dattopant's life. It impinges on the consciousness of Dattopant and the reader gets the same feeling. There is an ominous expectancy in the air, there is an uneasy trembling in the heart, there is a vague feeling that what appears on the surfaces hides something sinister underneath. The unpleasant nightmare of Dattopant is the best example of the technique which most of the critics describe as sick consciousness:
From the opening in the roof, the sunshine poured like boiling pus-thick, steaming, and white. The whole heaven is a hellish white bubo, he used to say. How it pours and pours—nothing but pus... It rains pus. And the earth—it drinks the pus, imbibes it eagerly avidly sucking. (TCB, 145-46)

The ominous tone set by this nightmare is supported by the drumbeat. In the dreams of Dattopant the earth is baked dry before the rains which is sinister:

In Khandesh the earth is black. Black and grey as the buffalo, twisted like an endless line of loamy pythons, wriggling and stretching beneath the awful beat of the sun, Between a python and a python is a crevice deep as hell's depths, and black and greedy and forbidding as demons' mouths. They seem to gape their mouths to gobble you.... To grapple you like crocodiles on a blazing day and drag you to the bottom of cavernous depths. (TCB, 146-47)

Thus, the story begins with a terrifying account of Dattopant's nightmare and ends with his death which the dream foreshadows.

In the remaining three stories “Narsiga”, “The Little gram shop”, “A Client” Raja Rao makes use of third person narration. In the story “Narsiga” the narrator is an orphan child, Narsiga who is cared for by Master and his wife. Through this child Raja Rao has successfully depicted the child-mind that too the rustic Indian mind. The uneducated rustic orphan comes to know of the freedom struggle and about Gandhiji. The orphan child blends his awareness of freedom struggle effortlessly with his acquaintance of ancient Indian legends and puranas. This is very well expressed when he comes to know that the Mahatma is released:
But you don't know, the Mahatma is going in the air, with his wife Sita, and in a flower-chariot drawn by sixteen steeds, each one more beautiful than the other. And they will fly through the air and the heavens will let fall a rain of flowers. (TCB, 118)

In "The Little gram shop", the story starts with

Everybody hated him, hated him.' That swine of a bania,' they would say, spitting and thumping on the floor, 'that son of a prostitute, he'll soon eat mire and vomit blood. Oh! You son of a donkey!' They would spit again, draw a puff from the tip of the hookah and continue searing and blustering (TCB, 23)

Then again, Narsimha, a class fellow of Ananda describes the decline and fall of Bania, Motilal the moneylender in the village. Later Ananda observes the decline and fall of Motilal after he has become a great man and earned a lot of money in life. As K.R.Rao says, "The decline and fall of the brittle dream of Motilal is projected through the experiences of Ananda, the curious but understanding young boy. Raja Rao fills the physical framework of the narrative with circumstantial detail which lends a sense of solidarity and destiny to the background." His narrative expertise is remarkable. Anita Desai’s themes are similar to those of Raja Rao but unlike Raja Rao’s characters her characters are well educated and urban men and women. She uses first and third person point of view to tell her tales. Sometimes she uses mixed point of view in some stories. In an interview with Srivastava she says about her art of writing:

I am afraid of speaking out about the art of writing, the mechanics of my craft. I have an intuitive and deep fear that by speaking of something
subterranean and subconscious, I will destroy it — it is something so very frail. This is a feeling I cannot subject to reason. I cannot explain it. But I know that creative act is a secret one. To make is poetic, to scrutinize it in the cold light of reason, is to commit act violence, possibly murder. It is something that must remain secret and silent. This will shock professors and critics whose existence depends on making conscious and articulate this dark unreasonable and unpredictable all of creation obviously then, this is what separates writers from critics and professors.10

In the same interview she also confesses that she has been greatly influenced by D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Henry James, and Proust more strongly and also by the novels of Japanese writers Kawabata. The poetry of Rimbaud, Hopkins, and Lawrence also influenced her the most. Anita Desai does not give much importance to narratology as she changes the mode of narration from one to another in a single story. In the first volume of short stories Games at Twilight the first story “Games at Twilight” is written from the third person point of view. It is about a young boy Ravi who is engaged in a ‘hide and seek’ game with his friends. He wants to win the game but he must overcome his fear for the hiding place. As he dreams of his victory over the others his fear for the hiding place decreases. But unfortunately he fails to act in time. By the time he comes out of his hiding place all the children have forgotten about him and are engaged in another game. The story starts with the description of a summer day in Delhi and how the children and parents are confined to indoors during the daytime and are released in the evening. The description comes from the third person point of view.

It was still too hot to play outdoors. They had had their tea, they had been washed and had their hair brushed, and after the long day of confinement in the house that was not cool but at least a protection from the sun, the children
strained to get out. Their faces were red and bloated with the effort, but their mother would not open the door, everything was still curtained and shuttered in a way that stifled the children made them feel that their lungs were stuffed with cotton wool and their noses with dust and if they didn’t burst out into the light and see the sun and feel the air, they would choke.

Desai describes the struggle of Ravi to overcome the fear for his hiding place in an engaging manner. The final outburst of Ravi out of his hiding place is described vividly:

The Bougainville had lost its lividity hung in dark bundles that quaked and twittered and seethed with masses of homing sparrows. The lawn was shut off from his view. Could he hear the children’s voices? It seemed to him that he could. It seemed to him that he could hear them chanting, singing, laughing. But what about the game? What had happened? Could it be over? How could it when he was still not found?

Desai’s description of the nature and psychology of children is very authentic and engrossing. The child’s sense of disappointment when what he anticipates fails to happen is portrayed very realistically.

The story “Private Tuitions by Mr. Bose” is written from the third person point of view. She depicts the happy life of Mr. Bose who teaches Sanskrit and Bengali verses to a Brahmin Boy and a young girl. He supports his wife and child with the little amount he earns from these tuitions. Desai starts the story with the description of the place where Mr. Bose takes his classes,
Mr. Bose gave his private tuition out on the balcony, in the evenings, in the belief that, since it faced south, the river Hooghly would send it a wavering breeze or two to drift over the rooftops, though the washing and the few pots of tulsi and marigold that his wife had placed precariously on the balcony rail, to cool him, fan him, soothe him. But there was no breeze it was hot, the air hung upon them like a damp towel, gagging him and, speaking through this gag, he tiredly intoned the Sanskrit verses that should, he felt have been roared out on a hill-top at sunrise. (GT, 11)

Desai’s description of the summer day in Calcutta from the third person point of view is authentic, as she knows of a summer day in Calcutta.

In the story “Studies in a Park” Desai employs first person narration as the whole story is delineated from the point of view of a young college student, “Suno”. The narrator in this story is vexed with his family life. The story starts with the description of a disturbance created in Suno’s family.

Turn it off, turn it off, and turn it off! First listens to the news in Hindi. Directly after, in English. Broom-broom-broom- the voice of doom roars. Next, in Tamil. Then in Punjabi. In Gujarati. What next, my god, what next? Turn off before I smash it into his head, fling it out of the window, do nothing of the sort of course, nothing of the sort. (GT, 20)

.Suno’s first person narration is central to the story because it focuses on his internal monologue regarding the pressures his family has imposed on him to study for the exam, and the distractions they cause which make it hard for him to study.

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Study,' I said, and found I croaked. 'I know I out to study. And how do you expect me to study-in this madhouse? You run wild wild. I'm getting out,' I screamed, leaping up and grabbing my books, 'I'm going to study outside. Even the street is quieter,' I screeched and threw myself past them and down the stars that my father had just paid no attention to the howls that broke out behind me of 'Suno, Suno, listen. Your milk- your studies-your exams, Suno!'

Desai gives a vivid description of the psychological struggle of Suno, which leads to an internal transformation. Desai employs the technique of Stream-of-consciousness or internal monologue to describe this transformation through a vision in the park,

Hidden behind an oleander was a bench. A woman lay on it, stretched out. She was a Muslim, wrapped in a black borkha. I hesitated when I saw this straight, still figure in black on the bench...She was very young. Very young, very pale, beautiful with a beauty I had never come across even in a dream. It caught me and held me tight, tight till I couldn't breathe and couldn't move... I had never seen a hand move so gently and tenderly... They never looked at anyone else, only at each other, with an expression that halted me. It was tender, loving, yes but in an inhuman way, so intense. Divine, I felt, or insane. I stood, half-hidden by the bush, holding my book, and wondered at them. She was ill, I could see, dying. Perhaps she had only a short time to life.

This internal monologue provides the reader a view into Suno's inner struggle and his renewed sense of the meaning of his life. At the end of the story he declares that,

Yes, it is a search, a kind of perpetual search for me and now that I have accepted it and don't struggle, I find it satisfies me entirely, and I wander about the park as freely as a prince in his palace garden. I look over the benches; I glance behind the bushes, and wonder if I shall ever get another
glimpse of that strange vision that set me free. I never have but I keep hoping, wishing. (GT,32)

The vision “describes the gradual awakening of a young boy into self-hood through the rejection of a system of education where competition and comparison are standards of maturity.”

Shifting of narration from one point of view to another is the unique style of Desai. In stories like “Surface Textures” and “Devoted Son” she employs the same technique throughout. In the story “Surface Textures” Desai starts the story with the description of a dining table and the fruit melon on the table from the point of view of Shaila but in the middle of the story the focus of narration shifts from Shaila to Harish. Though this type of shifting weakens the theme and results in a lack of unity in its structure it suits the story. But the story remains a unique achievement in its form. It resembles the stories of ancient India, the Upanishads. From the ordinary layers of surfaces, which remain hidden forever and which having been discovered once do not lose their hold on us.

The second volume of short stories Diamond Dust consists of nine stories and exemplifies Desai’s unique technique of narration. In these stories also she employs first person and third person narrations. The first story, “Royalty” starts with omniscient narration describing the preparations made by a retired diplomat and his wife to go to their summer house in order to escape from the blinding heat of summer in Delhi.

All was prepared for the summer exodus: the trunks packed, the household wound down, wound up, ready to be abandoned to three months of
withering heat and engulfing dust while its owners withdrew to their retreat in the mountains. The last few days were a little uncomfortable—so many of their clothes already packed away, so many of their books and papers bundled up and ready for the move… (DD, 1)

Desai gives a hint at the very beginning of the story that something odd is going to happen in the house thus providing a scope for a sense of suspense. Just when they are about to leave the house a letter comes from an old friend of both Sarla and Ravi. It is hinted in a skilful way that it raises suspicion in the minds of the readers that something is going to happen in their house.

The second story, “Winterscape” is another best example of Desai’s narrative technique. The story is written in third person point of view. It begins with a scene in London and moves back and forth between the past and the present. The story starts with the description of a scene very common in every house with small children and a mother engaged in looking after them.

She stands with the baby in her arms in front of refrigerator, and points at the pictures she has taped on its while enamel surface, each in turn, calling out the names of the people in the photographs. It is a game they play often to pass the time, the great stretches of time they spend alone together. The baby jabs his short pink finger at a photograph, and the mother cries, ‘That’s, Daddy in his new car!’ ‘Susan and Cousin Ted, on his first birthday… (DD, 24)

The whole story is about the two mothers of Rakesh, narrated in by Rakesh to his wife Beth.
So he began to tell her, 'They are both my mothers, Beth,' he said: 'I have two mothers.' There were three years between them and those seemed to have made all the difference. Asha was the first child in the family. So delighted was her father that it never crossed his mind she should have been a son... he was so pleased with his daughter: it could have been other wise, but he said,' A pretty daughter is an ornament to the home. (DD, 27)

Desai employs the old Indian method of oral story telling as Rakesh describes the story of his two mothers and the circumstances of Punjab state in his childhood days. At the end after the description of the story of the two sisters the story shifts from the point of view of the two sisters to the third person.

In the next story “Underground” Desai employs the fable form of narration. The story starts with the description of a holiday in Cornwall in omniscient narration,

In that small town, clustered around and above the bay, every third house was a boarding house, while hotels were strung out along the promenade, stolidly gloomy all through the year except in summer when wet bathing suits hung out over every windowsill and sunburnt children raced screaming across the strip of melting asphalt and onto the shining sands, magnetised by the glittering, slithering metal of summer seas. (DD, 64)

After this description, Dessai introduces two characters, Jack Higgins and Meg who are on holiday to Cornwall in third person narration. Their story is narrated from the point of view of Jack Higgins but by the time when they reach the Whitehouse Hotel to find out whether any accommodation was available suddenly the point of view shifts from Jack to Bob McTaggart, a widowed house keeper of the Whitehouse.
As he puts his hand out to press the shining brass doorbell, he glanced upwards: something had caught his eye - the slight movement of a white muslin curtain upstairs. Someone had been holding it aside, watching him, and now let it drop... Bob Mc Taggart turned away from the window, knowing he had been seen. He would have to go downstairs and open the door. He padded softly down the corridor, his footfall silenced by the grey carpeting. 'On either side of the corridor, doors stood shut... (DD, 67-68)

. The story of Bob Mc Taggart within the story of Jack and Meg reminds us of the stories within the story in Indian fables. Then the story shifts from Jack to Bob. Desai uses the stream of consciousness technique to describe the musings of Bob for he constantly keeps returning to the past, to remember his attachment with his wife. At the end of the story, again there is a shift from Bob to Jack Higgins and Meg: “She comes close enough to snatch at a bit of crust but, before she did, she too glanced in his direction, so secretively, that the look could scarcely be discerned, and ‘Hey, Helen,’ he whispered, ‘here, Helen,’” (DD, 81) Though the shift is so abrupt, and confuses the reader, it does not affect the unity of the story.

In the story, “The Man Who Saw Himself Drown” also Desai employs the same technique. The story starts with the third person narration but after two pages, the narration changes from third person to the first person. The story starts as,

Paying off the taxi in the portico in front of the hotel: he went up the step, nodded to the doorman, picked up his key at the desk where the receptionist was talking dreamily on the telephone, evidently to a friend not a customer, and took the small elevator up to the second floor... (DD, 83)
Desai introduces the protagonist of the story in third person narration but when the main story starts, then she changes the mode of narration from third person to the first person.

He found himself, along with the others, in a circle around it, standing over it and peering down... The body lying in the mud on the bank was of course sodden, and water ran from it in streams, but it could not have been in the water long, it was intact, and what I saw was a man fire feet ten inches tall, with straight black hair that the river had swept off his face: a face that was square and brown, that had a cleft in its chin, a somewhat flat nose, and a mouth that parted slightly to show his teeth.... (DD, 87)

So the shift of narration from one to another suits her stories very well. In describing the psychological struggle of the protagonist after seeing his replica in the dead man, Desai introduces the stream of consciousness technique.

While the stories of Raja Rao and Anita Desai are set in India the stories of Bharati Mukherjee are set in Canada and U.S.A. Her two volumes of stories Darkness and The Middleman and Other Stories, depict the life of Mukherjee in Canada and U.S. as an Asian immigrant. Most of the stories have the American themes with Indian characters with American background. As her characters in her stories are immigrants who go through transformations in America so also her style of narration has changed according to the themes of her stories because of her Americanization and acculturation. In the essay, “Four Hundred Years Old Women” Bharati Mukherjee writes, “My literary agenda begins by acknowledging that America has transformed me. It does not end until I show how? I (and the hundreds of thousands like me) have transformed America.”

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She employs the familiar American narrative techniques in order to transform the Asian immigrants and make them transformative. In an interview with Alison B. Carbe, Bharati Mukherjee describes V.S. Naipaul as an expatriate while calling herself an ‘American mainstream writer’. Bharati Mukherjee has achieved this to the maximum extent. The two volumes of short stories Darkness and The Middleman and Other Stories, illustrate Mukherjee’s present position as an American Asian writer in contradistinction to that of expatriate writers.

The narrative art of Mukherjee betrays too much of Americanization or acculturation on her part. In her earlier novels we find the use of Omniscient point of view with a good deal of irony because of her education in British convent schools in Calcutta, but later when the volume of short stories, Darkness was published she seemed to have adopted American English as her language and her technique changed to authorial point of view as she herself says, “I write some stories from the very authoritative third person point of view with others I use an intimate textured style and a first person point of view.”

In some stories of the first volume Darkness, she uses the first person narration and in some stories she uses the third person narration. The first story, “Angela” is narrated in the first person narration. Angela tells the story of an immigrant girl from Bangladesh who can only think of domesticity, love, and babies and all the comforts a doctor’s wife can enjoy. The story starts with the protagonist Angela’s account of a situation at the hospital,

Orin and I are in Delia’s hospital room. There’s no place to sit because we’ve thrown our parkas, caps and scarves on the only chair. The sides of
Delia’s bed have metal railings so we can’t sit on her bed as we did on Edith’s when Edith was here to have her baby last November. (D, 3)

The story is narrated in a back and forth technique. Angela narrates the story of her past, the atrocities of the military, and the happy days that have been spent with her parents. There are so many reminiscences of the past as she fondly remembers how she became a sister to Delia:

I’ve been her sister for less than two years, but we tell each other things, bad and good. I told her about the cook at the orphanage, how he’d chop wings off crows with his cleaver so I could sew myself a sturdy pair of angel wings. He said I was as good as an angel and the wings would be my guarantee... (D, 9)

Mukherjee clearly and skillfully handles the technique to present the pathetic lives of Angela and her friend, and destitutes like her in the hands of the military,

Then it is the lavender dust of tropics. Delinquents and destitutes rush me. Legless kids try to squirm out of ditches. Packs of pariah dogs who have learned to gorge on dying infants flesh, soldiers with silvery bayonets, they keep coming at me, plunging their knives through my arms and shoulders (D, 19)

The second story “A Lady from Lucknow” is also written in the first person narration. The narrator of the story, Nafeeza Hafeez, is a Lucknow based Pakistani who has gone to America after she had married Iqubal, working for the I.B.M. at Atlanta. The story starts with a surrealistic picturing of a broken heart from the point of view of a small and possibly shocked girl of four:
Mukerjee develops the theme of passionate love into a major cultural paradox as the Muslim protagonist matures into a young and voluptuous woman who dares having an affair with an aged American to satisfy her inner passionate self and to show that she is free to do anything she likes as against the Muslim traditions. Nafeeza’s life in Atlanta is a good example of the double edged situation that most of the Asians face in America, at cultural, ethical, and personal, and moral levels. Nafeeza develops an intense desire for an adulterous relationship with an elderly 65 year old White American confused by the logic of love-punishment and death of her neighbour, Husseina. But unfortunately whatever starts as revenge ends with the humiliation of Nafeeza. She is finally sent back to her beautiful deck-house by a cab.

The same theme is also seen in the story “Saints” in which the protagonist is a teenage boy. This is the only story in this volume in which Mukhejree delineates the story from the point of view of a young boy who is deprived of the affection of his father. This story seems to be a continuation of the earlier story, “Nostalgia”. The story starts with the protagonist’s remark made by his mother about his father,

And one more thing”, Mom says, “Your father can’t take you this August.” I can tell from the way she fusses with the placemats that she is interested in my reaction. The placemats are made of pinkish linen and I can see a couple of ironing marks, like shiny little arches. Wayne is coming for dinner. Wayne Latta is her new friend. It’s the first time she’s having him over with others,
but that’s not why she’s nervous.” That’s okay,” I tell her. “Tran and I have plans for the summer. (D, 145)

Through the character of Shawn Patel Mukherjee wants to proclaim the greatness of Indian culture with regards to showing parental affection in comparison with the Western culture where no importance is given to parental affection and family life. In the case of Shawn though he is a schoolgoing child he is asked to lead life individually and independently. She also describes the transformation from teenage to adolescence that takes place in the boy who is in his teens through the character of Shawn. She also delineates how children are spoilt and misguided due to the separation of the parents. While Shawn’s mother is busy making calls to her new friend Shawn is found to be busy making calls to his girl friends.

The stories, “Hindus”, “Tamurlane” “The Imaginary Assassin” are also written in authoritative authorial narration. The story, “A Father” is written in third person narration. In the first paragraph Mukherjee describes the busy life of America:

In Wednesday morning in mid-May Mr., Bhowmick woke up as he usually did at 5.43 a.m, checked his Rolex against the alarm clock’s digital readout, punched down the alarm (set for 5:45), then nudged his wife awake. She worked as a claims investigator for an insurance company that had an office in a nearby shopping mall… (D, 59)

Mukherjee, in third person narration presents how the three characters father, wife, and daughter are treated in America. She also pays attention to the ways in which the characters try to embrace American culture. The clash of two cultures is presented through the point of view of the main protagonist, Mr. Bowmick.

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In the story, “Visitors” Mukherjee presents the story in third person narration, the struggle of Vinita, the protagonist, of being a pukka Indian in America, and at the same time the importance of getting assimilated into the host country through the character of Salien. In the story Vinita, a typical upper-class girl from Loreto college, Calcutta, marries Salien from Saint Stephen’s college, and they move to Manhattan. The story starts with details given by the writer about Vinita:

When Vinita lived in Calcutta, she had many admirers. Every morning at ten minutes after nine o’clock when she left home for Loreto College where she majored in French literature, young men with surreptitious hands slipped love notes through the half-open windows of her father’s car and were sternly rebuked by the chauffeur. The notes were almost always anonymous; when she read them in the class, tucked between the pages of Rimbaud and Baudelaire, the ferocity of passion never failed to thrill and alarm her.(D, 161)

Even in America her husband considers her as a symbol for his status and not as his wife. Salien always dreams of assimilation in the alien country as he tells his wife of his desire to have a son who can play in the Little League games. It means that he really does not want a son who can play in the Little League games but he wants to get assimilated into the American culture and wants to be called a pukka American whereas Vinita, who takes pride in being an Indian hostess and in making an authentic Indian Tea, finds herself trying to live in two worlds at once. This conflict of Vinita and eagerness of Salien to be called a true American show how so many Indians and South Asians struggle hard to get assimilate in the host country.
The other stories written in third person narration are "Nostalgia", "Isolated Incidents," "The World According to Hsu".

The last story, "Courtly Vision" is written in omniscient point of view. She has a special obsession for Mughal miniature art. The best example for this is her story "The Courtly Vision" Mukherjee says in an interview with Tina Chen and S.X.Goudie:

I have an obsessive love of Mughal miniature paintings, the miniature that speak to me most eloquently were painted during the reign of Emperor Akbar. I suppose that's because mine is a writerly love. Each of the Ahbari paintings that I'm mesmerized by is so crowded with narrative, sub-narratives sometimes meta-narratives, so taut with passion and at the same time so crisp with irony. Every separate "story" in the miniature matters; every 'minor character' hits a dramatic function. But all the strands and details manage to cohere, that's what's amazing...14

"The Courtly Vision" is the result of the inspiration, which Mukherjee received from one of the paintings that had attracted her particularly the one that shows an Emperor in a battle dress leading his massive battle-ready army out of his fortressed capital. The painting is about a victory and evokes a celebratory mood. Akbar, the historical figure won the war but unfortunately he had to abandon his capital city as he had built it in a drought hit zone. This made Mukherjee to write a story. As she says in the interview,

When I started "Courtly Vision" I was aiming to close with that epiphanic contextual irony. But before I finished the first draft the "frame" – converting verisimilitude into meta-narrative – had worked itself in. The “frame” made the reader witness to a painter's (via author's) re-presentation of history as evidenced in a slick Sotheby's catalogue, and through the inclusion of the
cheap estimated price, upped the finally irony into Europe's devaluation of Mughal art. 15

So through this story Mukherjee has described how Mughal miniature paintings have inspired her to write the story, "The Courtly Vision."

In *The Middleman and Other stories* Mukherjee uses the first and third person narration. In this volume almost all the stories express how energetic immigrants with divergent backgrounds have been altering the North American mosaic and thus a new, changing America is the theme of this volume. There is a tremendous difference in the mode of writing and in the themes in comparison. So in almost all the stories Mukherjee focuses on the American culture, the violence, the underworld life that is seen everywhere and the immigrants who are caught in them. The story, "The Middleman" exemplifies the plight of immigrants in America. The story "The Middleman" is written from the point of a view of a male American Macho operator in the rough-and-tumble world of smugglers in first person narration. The story is set in Central America, where the narrator is evolved in a gang war. When Runar Vignission asks a question in an interview about how the story got published in *Playboy*, Mukherjee says,

When I first sent the title story” The Middleman” to *Playboy* and they accepted it and said please tell Mr. Mukherjee we love his story.... The agent wrote back and said Miss Mukheerjee will be pleased. They didn't bat an eyelid......... The New Yorker, also, in the beginning thought that I was a male writer.16

She further explains why they think like that:

I think there are two reasons, perhaps, for my ability to take on other genders, other races. One is that I am a sort of mimic, an unconscious mimic. If I hear an Irish man in a room for fifteen minutes I am very likely, whether I want to or not, to end up talking like an Irishman. I have that ability. I have a very acute ear I guess. I'm nosey, as a writer. If I have decided to write about
a person from a particular region or class then I will make sure I have every
detail of speech, mannerisms, clothing, of trivia, sociology at my finger tips
in order that just the right detail comes out at the right time. Even if the story
may be only six pages long I have to have an entire mass of her or his life in
my head in order to get the right detail at the right time.17

So the story, “The Middleman “is written in a perfect male voice. The story starts with the
description of seasons in America:

There are only two seasons in this country, the dusty and the wet. I already
know the dusty and I’ll get to know the wet. I’ve seen worse. I’ve seen
Baghdad, Bombay, Queens- and now this moldering spread deep in Mayan
country. Aztecs, Toltecs, mestizos, even some bashful whites with German
accents. All that and a lot of Texans. I’ll learn that ropes. (TM, 3)

The narrator, Alfred Judah is the middleman, having listened to bad advice given by bad
associates, is in a dangerous extraordinary condition but hopes to come out of the dangerous
gangster-adventures with the help of Maria, the irresistible seductress and reckless
adventuress with an ambiguous identity. The narrator is a cynical person, a hustler like many
immigrants in Latin America. He supplies to the people any thing that they want guns, drugs
etc. Mukherjee also describes the violence, brutality, and dog-eat-dog conditions of Latin
America through the character of Maria. But finally her sincerity in love with her schoolmate
Adreas makes her kill Ransom than Alfie, her slave. The narrator, though, is in love with
Maria, feels too inferior to accept her love at the end. Mukherjee ends the story with Maria
and Andreas killing Bob Wilkins and leaving Alfie, the narrator to his fate. Again the narrator
is all alone in the streets of America running out of food taking him again into the same

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situation, because there is no other alternative for him and he cannot go beyond being a middleman:

In the next few days when I run out of food, I'll walk down the muddy road to San Vincente, to the German bar with the pay phone: I'll wear Clovis's Braves cap and I'll salute the Indians." Turtle eggs", I'll say." Number One," they'll answer back. Bud's truck has been commandeered. Along with Clovis's finer cars. Someone in the capital will be happy to know about Santa Simona, about Bud, Clovis. There must be something worth trading in the troubles I have seen.  

The second story, "A Wife's Story" is also written in the first person narration from the point of view of Panna. The protagonist is a Hindu woman who comes to America, a cultural colonist among other expatriates such as a Hungarian and a Chinese-American, finds herself so altered by the circumstances that she becomes a stranger to her husband who remains behind in India. It is an excellent example of encounters between cultures presented in a narrative of encounters between women and men. In this fascinating story Mukherjee surprises the readers by reversing the roles. It is the wife, not the husband, who has come to America and who is knowledgeable about the new home. The wife often protects her husband who is visiting her. The story begins in a theatre:

Everybody laughs. Imre laughs. The dozing fat man with the Barnes&Noble sack between his legs, the woman next to him, the usher, everybody. The theater isn't so dark that they can't see me. In my red silk sari I'm conspicuous. Plump, gold paisleys sparkle on my chest  

(TM, 21)
Panna is Indian enough to be disturbed by the easy stereotyping of India that is evident in Patel jokes and American popular culture. She is also American enough to stop wearing traditional jewellery for fear of muggers, to embrace a man in public, to buy tickets to her husband, and to navigate New York City streets. She feels as if she is an American, whereas to her husband she appears as one who has crossed the barriers implying the idea of losing her again. This is depicted in the inadequate way in which they deal with the public in the streets, with the American customs. Her husband still sees her as something to be protected, curiously vulnerable precisely because she is crossing the barriers between cultures. Every episode that follows is carefully situated in a stage like setting with a set of actors as in a theater as it contains the echoes of memory and nostalgia for the past, which plays a significant role in the writings of many South Asian-Americans like Mukherjee. The memory and nostalgia of the lost places and people of childhood is often encountered with their new life and the unfamiliar landscape of the people and places of the U.S. Mukherjee has successfully explored these two strands in this story very well by bringing one or the other memory or the excitement of novelty into the foreground to present her characters and to build a circular, winding pattern for her story.

Though Mukherjee declares that she belongs to the Euro-American traditions of American literature there are certain aspects which suggest that she imbued the Indian tradition of storytelling as is evident in her presentation of her story within a story. This technique of winding stories and embedding stories within stories dominates the Sanskrit epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and much of Indian Literature. Mukherjee presents the story of Charity Chin within the story of Panna. The characters speak not only of themselves but
also of others’ experiences which reflect the oral traditions of Indian literature. We can hear Panna telling us not only stories of her life in India and New York but also stories of the people she introduces to us.

In another story, “Fighting for Rebound” the narrator of the story is an American male. He relates his affair with one of the immigrants, the passionate Blanquita from Manila. He narrates his affair with her in the very beginning of the story:

I’m in bed watching the Vanilla Gorilla stick it to the Abilene Christians on some really obscure cable channel when Blanquita comes through the door wearing lavender seats and over them a frilly see-through apron. It’s November Thursday, a chilly fifty-three, but she’s hibachiing butterfly lamb on the balcony... (TM, 79)

Though a male protagonist narrates the story the whole story focuses on Blanquita. She comes from, like many other immigrants, a background of wealth and cultivation. She knows six languages and knows a lot about American culture but unfortunately does not fit perfectly into the American society. But Mukherjee presents all the male protagonists as weak. Griff is so weak and is incapable of evoking any passion in Blanquita. So she abandons him and goes with her boss seeking love, who, she mistakenly believes, loves her passionately. At the end of the story when Blanquita comes back Griff has to accept her though he does not believe that she would not leave him again as there is no other alternative to him as the Asian immigrants are so possessive and dominant.
Mukherjee’s husband, Clark Blaise talks about Mukherjee's writing with more than spousal approval after having run the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa from 1990 to 1998:

Her early work had a brittle, British quality to it," he said, "short, confident sentences from an omniscient point of view in which the storyteller is a distant voice, hovering in the clouds overhead." The work that brought her critical attention, starting with the story collection "Darkness" in 1985, is more American in examining the world through a single character, while still maintaining "a wide-angle-lens view of the world and history."

The change in perspective came when they returned to America in 1980 after 15 years of stay in Canada during which she never felt at home. As Blaise says, "Her new authorial voice emerged; when she realized that she was here to stay, not going to go back." It was "more urgent, closer to the bone, full of disturbing images and characters" whose stories addressed "the process of assimilation and loss of identity."

Thus in the collection, The Middleman and Other Stories Mukherjee writes more of an American writer than a South Asian writer. The characters, the situations, and the settings depict her understanding of America and her struggle to establish herself as an American writer rather than an Indian writer. The same thrust is also seen in her character in the story, "The Tenant" is written in third person point of view. It establishes Mukherjee as a successful writer. The protagonist, Maya Sanyal, is a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, teaches World Literature at the University of Northern Iowa with the motto 'a person has to leave home. Try out his wings. Mukherjee wants to present Maya as a person tugged between the two cultures.
suffering from a sense of rootlessness. The story starts with the description of Maya after her arrival to Iowa:

Maya Sanyal has been in Cedar Falls, Iowa, less than two weeks. She’s come, books and clothes and one armchair rattling in the smallest truck that U-Haul would rent her, from New Jersey. Before that she was in North Carolina. Before that, Calcutta, India. Every place has something (TM, 97)

Mukherjee presents the protagonist’s struggle to become an American and to mix up with the American melting pot through the omniscient narration. She struggles to prove her status as an academic woman, her independence, and her promiscuousness in the American society. But unfortunately she never feels at home in America as she is constantly drawn to East Indian Culture and it is also evident from her not having any close friends. Her inability to fit into the new world is reflected in her constant shifting of her residence and counterparts. Finally she wants to marry Ashoke Mehta, again, an Indian. Thus Mukherjee wants to prove from this story that since alienation is in the very psyche of the immigrant women like Maya are incapable of establishing a permanent relationship with Americans. Once a tenant, always a tenant.

Thus of the eleven stories, six are from a male's point of view, and five from a female's. The nationalities of the protagonists vary from American white to Tamil, Ugandan and Trinidadian, along with a number of Hindus. Some of the stories depict the failure of the immigrants to come to terms with the cultural flux in which they find themselves. In all, however, Mukherjee wants to present the fact that the problems of post colonialism are universal, common to both the colonizer and the colonized. In seeing the commonality of the
immigrant experiences Mukherjee constantly shifts the ground of the attraction: The Hindu is attracted to the white, the Asian to the American, the African to the Hindu, and so on, forcing us to see the situation as universal.

While the stories of Mukherjee are set in America and Canada the stories of Salman Rushdie are set in India, Pakistan, and London. Rushdie tries to focus in his stories on two regions, the East and the West, but settles down finally in the highly interesting West. Out of the nine in the first part, 'East' three are set in India. The second set of three is set in the 'West'. The final set of three blends the East with the West.

The first story in the first part, "Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies", is narrated in third person. Rushdie narrates the story of a young Muslim woman Rehana seeking an immigrant visa to the U.K. But she deliberately botches up her interview with the Consular for she prefers to stay with the present employer. The story starts with the description of the bus which brings her from the city Lahore:

On the last Tuesday of the month, the dawn bus, its headlamps still shining, brought Miss Rehana to the gates of the British Consulate. It arrived pushing a cloud of dust, veiling her beauty from the eyes of strangers until she descended. The bus was brightly painted in multicoloured arabesques, and on the front it said, 'MOVE OVER DARLING' in green and gold letters: on the back it added 'TATA-BATA' and also 'O.K.GOOD-LIFE'. Miss Rehana told the driver it was a beautiful bus, and he jumped down and held the door open for her, bowing theatrically as she descended. (EW, 5)
Miss Rehana is one of the Tuesday women who come to the Consulate to get visas or permits to go to England. An old man, an advice wallah, Muhammad Ali who intercepts them, frightens them and then offers the necessary help in getting the visas, exploits them. Then relieved and grateful they often gave him five hundred rupees or a gold bracelet for his pains. The story ends in O, Henryish style as Rehana though succeeds in getting the visa refuses to take it because she is more satisfied with the present job than going to U.K. “Her last smile, which he watched from the compound until the bus concealed it in a dust-cloud, was the happiest thing he had ever seen in his long, hot hard, unloving life.”(EW, 16) So to Mohammed also it is the happiest scene to see, as he is also vexed with the people who always run after their visas to go abroad.

The second and the third stories in ‘East’ are written purely in the oral tradition of storytelling of India. The story, “Free Radio” is told by a retired village school teacher who spends his days under a banyan tree at the centre of the town, smoking his hookah and keeping his ears open for various tidbits of gossip. He narrates the story of a young rickshaw puller who undergoes a vasectomy operation for he mistakenly believes that he will be rewarded with a free radio. The story starts with the comments made by the village school teacher as an elderly man who always wishes good for everyone in the village:

We all knew nothing good would happen to him while the thief’s widow had her claws dug into his flesh, but the boy was an innocent, a real donkey’s child, you can’t reach such people...Exactly; nobody, certainly not a stonehead like Ramani the rickshaw-wallah. But I blame the widow. I saw it happen, you know, I saw most of it until I couldn’t stand anymore. I sat under this very banyan, smoking this selfsame hookah, and not much escaped my notice.  

EW, 19)
The school teacher with a hookah under the banyan tree reminds one of R.K. Narayan’s narrators. This is an ideal narrative voice to comment on the young rickshaw-wallah who is taken in by a widow with five children and who does not want any more and on an outdated piece of government propaganda that had initially been used to lure men into vasectomy by gifting a radio to each volunteer. The story is entertainingly written although it suffers from the overt authorial intrusion.

In the story, “Free Radio” we find only elements of spoken story, whereas in the last story, “The Prophet’s Hair” Rushdie follows the historical tradition perfectly. It contains mystery, magic, and more significantly, morality, as the theme. The story is narrated by the author in the traditional oral method.

Early in the year 19-, when Srinagar was under the spell of a winter so fierce it could crack men’s bones as if they were glass, a young man upon whose cold-pinked skin there lay, like a frost, the unmistakable sheen of wealth was to be seen entering the most wretched and disreputable part of the city, where the houses of wood and corrugated iron seemed perpetually on the verge of losing their balance, and asking in low, grave tones where he might go to engage the services of a dependably professional burglar.

Rushdie himself is very much attracted by the traditional way of story telling in India. As he says in an interview:

I’ve been very interested in two different things. One is the Western idea of the fable. The fable—which originally was a moral tale... the original
fables all had a rather neat moral at the end, and that's quite dull. But I thought, if you take away the easy motto at the end then the form of the fable is wonderfully flexible. It hits a very beautiful not somewhere between the real and the unreal, and allows you to speak very directly but often-in very strange ways. I like that. On the Eastern side; I was attracted by oral narration techniques. India is a country in which oral storytelling is still- particularly in South India- very much alive... I've been to some of these events and they are extraordinary because of the way in which the oral story is told; it is not a linear narrative. Universally there is some mythological source material. 20

In this story Rushdie follows the same old South Indian tradition of story telling to narrate the story of the theft of a relic from a mosque in Kashmir which is then found, and authenticated by the holy men of the place and returned to the shrine. Hashim, a rich money lender, finds the relic of prophet Mohammed encased in silver. He decides to keep it with him to add to his memorabilia whereupon all sorts of strange things happen. Eventually several deaths and miracles result in the family of Hashim. The relic does much evil than good. Thus Rushdie follows the intricate method of ancient mythological story telling in this story because it interested him much. As he says,

It is this kind of extraordinary, intricate form. What interested me about it is that it seemed to break all the rules that one is told about narrative. What you're told about narrative is if you do that, people get confused and bored and they switch off. Whereas in fact, the old stories of ancient custom in India have been there for a long time.21

The theme of the story is risky and Rushdie is not scared away by the Fatwa and the Islamic subjects. The ending is like that of a Jacobean tragedy.
In the second set of the stories, “Yorick” is written in a monologue form. Rushdie talks about ‘Yorick’, the jester in the Shakespeare play, Hamlet. In the first paragraph he tells that it is the tale of the vellum itself and the tale inscribed there on it. He describes the story of vellum as well as the story of ‘Yorick’ who marries an older foul-breathed Ophelia. He is a little squib aimed at Hamlet. After so much of description Rushdie disposes off the story as a cock and bull story at the end.

In the last story “The Auction of the Ruby slippers” Rushdie uses the authorial first person narration. The narrator of the story is Rushdie himself. He has written it in the form of magic realism. The Ruby slippers that Rushdie describes in this story are those worn by Dorothy in the film, “The Wizard of the Oz” to escape from the wicked witch of the West and return home to Auntie Bun. In his story Rushdie has placed the Ruby slippers in a bullet proof case at the centre of a nightmare society. Garan Holcombe comments on Rushdie’s use of ‘magic realism’.

Rushdie has challenged official historical truth, launched vituperative attacks on petty nationalism and the censorship of the state, all the while wrapping his readers in the magic realist swirl of dreamscape and fairytale in which the conventional is challenged with astonishing wit and intellectual daring.22

In an interview to Varsity Review, Rushdie says

Quite often surrealism or whatever one would call it is used just as a piece of acrobatics, and then that’s all it is... It is because it seems to me to be a way of saying something that I hope is truthful. I just thought that there is something in the air at the moment that people think everything is speeding
up, the pace of life, the rate of change; everything just seems to be going zooooom! And I thought that if there is this widespread sense of the acceleration of things, one way of crystallizing it was to make it happen in a very literal way. 23

The narrative is set in the future but written in the present so that it is clearly speaking of contemporary tendencies and incidentally, of the author’s own predicament. The society reverses the Ruby slippers because of their power, their affirmation of a lost state of normalcy which we have almost ceased to believe and to which the slippers promise us we can return. Rushdie here tries to present the nostalgia for the lost world of forties. Nothing is questioned not even the fiction or reality that is in the story. The narrator’s beloved, Gale is not entirely a real person. The real Gale has become confused with the re imagining of Rushdie. The possession of the slippers promises the writer the ultimate dream of the migration, a safe return to home. The story is broadly a socio-political satire, focusing on the current market-based free-for-all community. Rushdie here describes the society intentionally, keeping in mind the fatwa, and the story is directed at the author’s own consequent dread of the bunker mentality and at his fear of a world market economy that tolerates the intolerant, since its all good for business.

The story begins with an omniscient third person narration:

The bidders who have assembled for the auction of the magic slippers hear little resemblance to your usual saleroom crowd. The Auctioneers have published the event widely and are prepared for all comers. People venture out but rarely nowadays; nevertheless, and rightly, the Auctioneers believed this prize would tempt us from out bunkers… (EW, 87)
But the mode of narration shifts from omniscient to the first-person singular narration when the real story about Gale is narrated. The harsh impersonal satire is shifted to a discordant first person to describe the frustrated love affair between himself and his cousin, Gale. Garan comments on Rushdie's method of narration:

Rushdie's narrators are unreliable and intrusive: the "I" narrating is essentially an essayist, Rushdie's literary default setting. These narrators cajole and harry, taunt and tease with a thunderous irreverence; that the significance of fictions they ask, what purpose do they serve, what role do they play? Rushdie's belief is in the transformative power of fiction; stories posit an alternative reality they reclaim the past and through the smashing of convention via the element of the fantastical, author's vision of the future.²⁴

The last story in this section, "Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain Consummate Their Relationship" is a curiously powerful story with a pure narrative mode as in the traditional omniscient narration putting together the sequence of events- rather as in cinema, cutting from pictures of Columbus, giving not only his appearances and behaviors but his aspirations and frustrations as well..

In the last section there are three stories "The Harmony of Spheres", "Chekov and Zulu", and "The Courter". The first story is written in the first person mode and the second is written from the third person point of view, and the third story "The Courter" is written in the first person authorial mode. It is like an autobiographical tribute to a childhood nanny and her autumnal romance with an old East, European stroke-impaired building porter. Though its principal feature is the writers nostalgic recall of the British-American pop culture of the early 1960s, the story is melancholic, ravens by racial violence but sustained by shrewd
observation and a fine ear for dialogue. The narrator, a sixteen-year old boy from Bombay, studying in England is trying to find his identity in his enforced exile from his beloved country. The story starts with the introduction of the author's maid servant, Mary,

Certainly-Mary was the smallest woman Mixed-up the hall porter had come across, dwarf excepted, a tiny sixty-year-old Indian lady with her graying hair tied behind her head in a neat bun, hitching up her red-hemmed white sari in the front and negotiating the apartment block's front steps as if they were Alps… (EW, 175)

The story closes with the author's soliloquial tone declaring that he has ropes around his neck, pulling to the east and the west. The narrator makes the opposite choice and acquires British citizenship. On the whole the story poignantly describes the author's predicament of in-betweenesss, the homeland the adopted.

Besides the narrative technique, Irony plays an important role in constituting a successful short story. The short story writer uses irony to suggest the complexity of experiences, to furnish indirectly an evaluation of his material and at the same time to achieve compassion. The three types of irony, which are normally used by the short story writers, are the verbal irony, dramatic irony, and situational irony. Verbal irony, the simplest and the least important for a short story writer, is a figure of speech in which the opposite of what is intended is said, i.e., when a person says one thing he obviously means the opposite. The situational irony is usually the most important kind for the short story writer, in which he shows the discrepancy between appearance and reality, or expectation and fulfillment or which is and what would seem appropriate. In dramatic irony, the contrast refers to between what a character says and
what the reader knows to be true. The value of this kind of irony lies in the comment it implies on the speaker or his expectations. In all irony involves a contrast, a disparity, a difference between what is and what would seem to be.

In the short story, “Akkayya” Raja Rao makes use of the verbal irony while describing the unfortunate life of Akkayya. The irony is in the discrepancy between the horoscope, which predicts the most brilliant marriage for Akkayya but she was destined to become a widow very early and go though her long life with a vessel at her waist and a broom in her hand with her sick legs, bent down like a ‘plantain-bark.’ When she is hale and healthy everyone wanted her. However, when she falls sick and bedridden everyone starts to hate her. She also brings up all the children in the family but the irony is that she has no child of her own. She is a mother of all the children without being called a mother by any child.

In the story “The Little Gram-shop” Motilal earns a lot of money to bring back his ancestral father’s past glory. He has become rich, but that money does not bring any happiness to him. On the other hand, he becomes inhuman because of money. In the end, he is killed in a road accident because of his greed for money. He loses all his money by lending them to Nawab Sahib, the District Collector, and a Zamindar on a high rate of interest, but they are all proved fraud. Then Motilal becomes mad. Rati, the daughter-in-law of Motilal and his wife Beti Bai also suffer a lot in the hands of Motilal. Rati, who is born rich and who does not do anything at home has to do the entire domestic work in her father-in-law’s horse. Other than this, she is mercilessly beaten by her husband. The more ironical thing is, she has to go to the concubine’s house to call her husband. “Of what use was all the money her
husband had? What for? She had to patch her sari almost every week and she wore silver bangles instead of gold ones, she had in childhood." (TCB, 49)

In the story "Kanakapala, the protector of Gold" also Raja Rao uses situational irony to describe the decline and fall of the family of vision Rangappa. The sons of Rangappa are greedy of the gold, collected by vision Rangappa and his ancestors to go on a pilgrimage to Banaras. The gold is protected in the sanctum of the house by a cobra. The last priest in the house Ramakrishnayya dies leaving behind three sons, a widowed daughter, and the snake, Kanakapala. Seetharamu, one of the sons was learned, obedient, and was loved by Kanakapala. But the other two sons and the daughters are greedy and malicious and wanted to grab the gold from the sanctum. One day they closed the doors of the sanctum and when the cobra was away, began to dig the gold. The cobra, being helpless to save the gold runs to the temple, goes round the god and goddess and curls himself round, swallows its own tail and dies. The two sons of Ramakrishnayya do not find any gold in the sanctum. The irony is that the sin they commit is carried by them until their death:

Till seven times are they dead and seven times are they reborn. Soon 'child after child, new born child, new lisping child, young child, old child school going child, have met with mysterious untimely deaths. And no woman in her family can never bear a child for nine months and bring it forth, for the malediction of Naga is upon them. (TCB, 69)

The paradox is that instead of gold they gain curse and punishment.

"In Khandesh" Raja Rao depicts the ironical death of Dattopant. Dattopant wants to complain to Maharaja against the behaviour of the police who ill-treat him in his house. But
unfortunately, he is run over by the train in which the Maharaja is traveling. In the end, there are ironical statements by the villagers who comment on the death of Darttopant. “Govindopant did see the Maharaja. He was god-like Raja Shivaji.” (TCB, 163) The irony is that all the villagers suffer a lot while waiting for the arrival of the king who is irrational and who does not even care for them.

In the last story “The Policeman and the Rose” Raja Rao introduces dramatic irony. The narrator “I” in the story returns to France after his short visit to India in pursuit of youthhood. The French people declaring him deceased erect a statue of him. The irony is that they do not want to see the narrator alive again in France. Therefore they make his life miserable and drive him away from France. Thus, most of the stories end with thematically ironic note. Though Raja Rao’s handing of irony is not explicit it is seen in all the stories as an undercurrent element.

Anita Desai has a deeply aware of life that is concealed by seeming innocence and tenderness. In many stories she unveils this brutality through characterise irony. In fact in most of these stories the protagonists happen to be a young adolescence struggling to come to grip with the adult world. The stories capture those moment in their life when reality intrudes into their world of innocence like hot blast and destroys their complacent acceptance of what happens to them as something.

Anita Desai uses situational irony in most of her stories. In the first story “Games at Twilight” Desai employs situational irony. The protagonist Ravi is caught in a helpless
situation. He comes out of his hiding place unfound expecting a great victory over his opponent Raghu. If he had reached a little earlier and touched the ‘den’ then he would have won the game but unfortunately he had been forgotten long back and the other children have started another game as well in the mean time. Even then Ravi cries out that he has won the game. The fact is that his final victory over Raghu turns out to be redundant and so ironical. All the children have already forgotten about him because their mother has changed the game and they have eaten strawberries, helped their father clean the car and helped the gardener water the lawn. He has been forgotten long ago and the other children have been are playing another game. Even the children feel sorry for Ravi but Ravi who always wants to win over Raghu can not bear it, and does not join with the other children in the new game.

And the arc of thin arms trembled in the twilight, and the heads were bowed so sadly, and their faces tramped to that melancholy refrain so mournfully, so helplessly, that Ravi could not bear it. He would not follow them; he would not be included in this funeral game. He had wanted victory and triumph – not a funeral game.

The situation in which Ravi finds himself is paradoxical because though he has won the game he is lost and forgotten by the other children and his victory becomes null and void. His safe hiding place turns out to be the reason for his defeat over his counterpart, Raghu.

As Paul Sharrad comments, “Desai’s irony is exclusive and destructive though equally corrective in its creation one may not go beyond the world and still function in the mere and now as a human individual.” In the story, “Surface Textures” Desai presents destructive irony. Harish the protagonist of the story loses his job, leaves his family to fend for itself and
discovers his 'especial paradise' out side the town where each rock attracts him. He spends several weeks in observing the rough and silk-smooth stalks and reeds and leaves. It is ironical that Harish by observing the surfaces of the objects transforms himself into a swami. Desai employs situational irony here in the transformation of Harish into a Swami. In discovering the surfaces of different objects he loses his own surface. He achieves a kind of Nirvana in this world of complete oblivion. The women in the village call him a 'swami' and 'holier' than any other sanyasi and start worshiping him.

In the stories, “Sales”, “Pineapple Cake”, and “The Farewell Party” also Desai employs devastating and destructive irony. The story “Pineapple Cake” starts with Mrs., Fernandez struggling to prepare her son for a wedding party by coaxing him with the promise of a pineapple cake at the party. Victor gets ready quietly because of the promise made by his mother. He bears all the inconvenience throughout the wedding caused by his biting new shoes, with suspicion because his mother has promised him several times to buy pineapple cake, but every time she has postponed it. He remembers. “Victor hadn’t much faith in his mother’s promises. They had a way of getting postponed or cancelled on account of some small accidental lapse on his part. He might tear a hole in his sleeve – no pocket money.”(GT, 51)

Again the mother had to struggle a lot to catch a taxi to the Green house where the tea party was arranged. At the Green house too the same thing happened, as she had to wait to get at her favorite table. Throughout the process Victor remains a spectator. He is eagerly waiting for his pineapple cake. But a sudden death in the party awakens him to the grossness of life.
But his mother, forgetting all sense of decorum, forces him to eat his share of pineapple cake while eating it herself.

'Take it, take the pineapple cake', she urged him, pushing him towards the plate, and when the boy didn't move but stared down at the pastry dish as though it were the corpse on the red rexine sofa, her mouth gave an impatient twitch and she reached out to fork the pineapple cake onto her own plate. She ate it quickly. Wiping her mouth primly, she said, 'I think we'd better go now.' (GT, 55)

Desai here presents biting and bitter irony as the boy who has been bribed with the pineapple cake comes to hate it and looks at it as if it was a corpse while the mother who has been promising her son a pineapple cake forgets about her son and eats both the cakes. We wonder whether it was the mother or the son who was dying to eat the cake.

"The Accompanist", "A Devoted Son", "Pigeons at Daybreak" and "Scholar Gypsy" are also best examples of her use of pungent irony. In the story, "A Devoted Son" she presents ironically how too much of attention on part of the son on his father turns out to be hateful and disgusting to the father. Rakesh, Verma's only son a doctor takes too much care of his father. But the irony is that this extraordinary care by the son even with regards to his diet, makes the father hate his son and shout at his son to leave him alone because he does not want to take any medicines and wants to die peacefully as he is denied the food which he likes. Too many restrictions vex him. It is paradoxical that the son considers the dietary restrictions as conducive to the well being of his father while the father considers them as an unjust denial of a worthy son. The final protest of the father against taking tonics proves to be the best example of a powerful paradox. When his son approaches him with his usual tonics,
His face was so out of control and all in pieces that the multitude of expressions that crossed it could not make up a whole and convey to the famous man exactly what his father thought of him his skill his art... Then he spat out some words, as sharp and bitter as poison, into his son’s face. ‘Keep your tonic- I want none – I want none – I won’t take anymore of – of your medicines. None, Never,’ and he swept the bottle out of his son’s hand with a wave of his own, suddenly grand, suddenly effective. GT, 81)

In the second volume of short stories Diamond Dust also Desai uses situational irony and verbal irony in an effective way. In the title story “Diamond Dust” the protagonist, Mr.Das develops an intense attachment with his dog, Diamond that leads to his death. His little puppy grows into a big ‘badmash’, a wild devil that always chases the children out of the neighbourhood from the schools and all the people in Khaki uniform as if they have come to loot the house. Every November the dog will be on its escapades and Mr.Das after it. Though Mr.Das brings stronger chains and collars for Diamond the dog escapes from the house when the season comes. Mr. Das would go round in search of Diamond ‘like some forlorn lover whose beloved has scorned him and departed with another’. The irony lies in the fact that his intense affection for the dog brings his end at the end of the story. In his search for his pet dog he meets with his death. The dog in the dog-catcher’s van appears sinister, “Behind the bars of the window receding into the distance Diamond glittered like a dead coal, or a black star, in daylight’s blaze.” (DD, 63)

In another story, “The Artist’s Life” Desai presents situational irony. Miss Polly, the protagonist of the story wants to become a great painter inspired by her summer camp teacher Miss Abigail. Miss Abigail teaches her the ‘the real art’ at the summer camp. But
unfortunately her dream of becoming a great painter is shattered by her encounter with her tenant-teacher, Miss Mabel Dodd who represents the dark, violent side of art. Miss Mabel has taught art for the orphans in an orphanage home for twenty years who have come from broken homes, orphanages and some of them from prison. Miss Mabel used to bring those children to clean her courtyard. Polly is shocke, when her mother says that she has taught those orphan children art for twenty years. She opens her mouth in protest because,

She was not sure against what, but against something that had been presented to her, interposed between her and what she wanted and believed in – something objectionable, inadmissible, an imperfection. How was she to protest, to deny? Her lips stretched to form the word ‘How? But then she broke down and what burst from her was a surprising,’ Oh, Ma-ma.

(DD, 114)

Polly wants to become a great painter like Miss Abigail but paradoxically her tenant Miss. Mabel Dodd turns her dream into disillusionment.

Thus in almost all the stories of Desai we find devastating irony. In other stories “Five Hours to Simla or Faisla”, “Topoztlan Tomorrow”, “Rooftop Dwellers” also we find instances of biting irony employed by Desai to bring out the theme. While Desai’s irony is to some extent soft, the irony employed by Bharati Mukherjee is more disgusting and powerful. In the two volumes of short stories Darkness and The Middleman and Other Stories, Mukhejee employs sarcastic and biting irony to present the life of immigrants in America, Canada, and other countries. In her introduction to Darkness she confesses that,
I tried to explore state-of-the-art expatriation. Like Naipaul, I used a mordant and self-protective irony in describing my characters' pain. Irony promised both detachment from and superiority over, those well-bred post-colonials much like myself, adrift in the new world, wondering if they would ever belong, anywhere.

In the first story “Angela” Mukherjee uses mordant irony to tell the story of an immigrant from Bangladesh who always thinks of love, domesticity, babies, and all the comforts of a wife in the new world. Angela, the protagonist of the story regularly visits the hospital to attend on Delia convalescing from a surgery. There she meets with Dr. Vinny Menezies, a very successful, decent and respectable Indian immigrant. He is in his middle age and he wants to seek the warmth and companionship of Angela. As Angela recalls,

He's an old fashion suitor, an unmarried immigrant nearing forty. He has put himself through medical school in Bombay and Edinburgh, and now he's ready to take a wife, preferably a younger woman who's both affectionate and needy. We come from the same subcontinent of hunger and misery: that's a bonus, he told me. (D, 8)

Though she has got the opportunity to lead a comfortable life for which she has been struggling, she rejects his proposal to marry him because she believes in miracles than in chivalry. She decides to spend the rest of her life in serving the destitutes in the orphanage. She recalls how they are left dead by the military:

When I was six, soldiers with bayonets cut off my nipples. They left your poor babies for dead'. Sister Stella at the orphanage would tell me, and the way I might tell Ramona bedtime stories. “They left you for dead, but the Lord saved you. Now it's your turn to do Him credit. (D, 10)
The irony is that though the doctor is ready to marry her, she is not ready to marry him because she wants to sacrifice her life for the sake of destitutes just as Sister Stella, who was a Muslim before she converted herself into a Christian.

In the second story “A Lady from Lucknow” Mukherjee employs biting irony to describe the character of Nafeeza Hafeez. She is very much influenced by the story of a neighbouring Muslim girl who falls in love with a Hindu boy and unfortunately her father intercepts a love note from the boy. In a fit of anger he beats her to death. She learns this from her mother who describes how her father killed the girl. This makes the girl develop into a kind of rebel against tradition.

Mukherjee develops the theme of passionate love into a major cultural paradox as the Muslim protagonist matures into a young woman, who is married to an engineer-manager in IBM at Atlanta. Mukherjee through this story presents ironically the double-edged situation of the immigrants in America, one on the cultural, ethical level and the other on the personal, moral level.

Nafeeza is confused and puzzled by the punishment given to Hussenia and develops an adventurous relationship with Dr. James Beamish, an elderly 65-year-old White American intellectual. The story conveys the juxtaposition of repressive cultural orthodoxy and permissive cultural heterodoxy. As A.V. Krishna Rao rightly comments...
Mukherjee’s use of irony is indeed tellingly effective. At personal and familial level, it is ironical that the Muslim family which moved to Ravalpindi from Lucknow... should fail to preserve its cherished communal value system under the impact of an alien culture. In addition, the ironical detachment of Mukherjee is so complete that it enables her to provide the full opportunity for the character to grow and reach its limit naturally.

Nafeexa’s lust and love for Dr. Bheamish reaches the climax when the doctor’s wife catches them both red-handed. She even sheds all fear and shame even when humiliated by the middle-aged wife of the doctor. Mrs. Beamish sends her away to her dock house. The irony is that whatever has started as revenge on tradition and culture by Nafeexa ends up as personal vengeance and disgrace. As A.V. Krishna Rao comments further that,

Mukherjee seems to say with ironical chuckle that it is now left to the permissive Americans to turn the tables on the over-protective Asian expatriates. The message seems to be loud and clear; the cloistered virtue due to one’s excessive cultural conditioning is always vulnerable.

In the stories “The World According to Hsu”, “A Father” “ Isolated Incidents”, “Tamurlane”, “Visitors” also Mukherjee employs biting irony. In the story “A Father” she direct her attack at immigrant Indians who are sufficiently aculturated but fail to assimilate fully in the host country. The Bhowmick’s daughter Babli wants to have a baby through artificial insemination outside wedlock at the age of twenty-seven because she hates men and she has no faith in the traditional marriage system. The irony is that the Bhowmicks, who do not have any idea of their daughter’s intention, want to marry their daughter to a progressive American. But when they come to know of the truth they are unable to digest it. They want to know the name of the boy so that they can get him married to their daughter but when Babli
tells them that the father of her baby is not a man but a bottle and a syringe, they are shocked.

The mother cried out ‘like animals’ which annoys Babli and she screams,

Yes, yes, yes,” she screamed,” like livestock. Just like animals. You should be happy- that’s what marriage is all about, isn’t? Matching bloodlines, matching horoscopes, matching castes, matching, matching, matching…” and it was difficult to know if she was laughing or singing, or mocking and like a madwoman. (D, 73)

The story ends on an ironic note Babli who aspires to have a baby without marriage gets aborted when her father throws a rolling pin on her stomach. The Bhowmicks dream of marrying their daughter to a prosperous American is also shattered by the decision of Babli. Mukherjee through this story wants to uncover the paradoxical situation of the Asian immigrants who are caught up between two cultures, the adopted and the native. They neither accept the adopted culture nor reject the native.

In the story, “Tamurlane” Mukherjee presents the ironical situation of the immigrants in America. It is about an Indian restaurant in Toronto owned by Mr. Aziz. It is an asylum to all the illegal immigrants in Toronto. In the very beginning of the story Mukherjee presents how they guard themselves.

We sleep in shifts in my apartment, three illegals on guard playing cards and three bedded down on mats on the floor. One man next door broke his leg jumping out the window, I’d been whistling in the bathroom and he’d mistaken it of our warning tune. The walls are flimsy. Nights I hear collective misery. (D, 117)
Most of the immigrants run away from Canada to avoid punishment on petty incidents. As the racial discrimination is more in Canada the punishment given to the immigrants is also harsh so the Indians who are caught up in such accidents escape from Canada to America leaving behind their legal papers and properties. All such people gather at the restaurant of Mr. Aziz and try to get legal papers through undue means. They have to hide whenever the police come to the restaurant checking. They have been hiding successfully for all these days but unfortunately just before getting their legal papers the restaurant is raided. Before they could hide in their usual hiding places they are caught by the police. The story ends on a violent and ironical note when one of the chefs, an illegal immigrant, Mr. Gupta, is killed by the police just when he was about to get the papers.

In the second volume of the short stories The Middleman and Other Stories also Mukherjee uses mordant and self-provocative irony in almost all the stories. In three of the stories, “A Wife’s story”, “The Tenant”, and “Jasmine” Mukherjee concludes ironically that it is impossible for any Indian to adapt to life in the New world without sustaining some kind of wound to one’s self. The three women, Maya Sanyal, Panna Butt, and Jasmine struggle to establish their identity in the New World. Their struggle is both exhilarating and debilitating. As Arvindra Sant-wade comments,

The irony is that this refashioning of the self is both painful and exhilarating; hence, the terrible ambivalence of the women toward their own freedom – the freedom to become – an ambivalence expressed by these women in the midst of arduous change, in the powerful act of rejecting the past and moving energetically towards an unknown future.29
Mukherjee’s own comment on this double edged situation of protagonists in alien nation reads as,

We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries which are plagued by civil conflicts. We have experienced rapid changes in the history of the nations in which we lived. When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. Our lives are remarkable, often heroic.  

The irony is that they take such risk in their new adapted worlds which they would not have taken in their own comfortable countries.

The story, “A Wife’s story” depicts the ironical struggle of establishing one’s self in the adopted land. Mukherjee presents the contrast between Panna’s adaptability and Mamet’s mental blocks in an ironical juxtaposition. In the very beginning of the story Mukherjee presents the ironical situation of Indian women in America. Panna is irritated and gets angry over the play and the terrible line in the play about such Indians. She feels angry enough to write a letter to the playwright in protest. Though Panna protests against the criticism of the Americans on Indians she also adapts herself to their behaviour. She also notices how much she has changed when her husband comes to visit her. In America she feels free and wears the costumes of the adapted land. But she has to change into traditional Indian dress, the sari when her husband visits her. She recalls with a tinge of irony that when she was in India she had to know only about the taste of her husband. She was not given any importance, but when she has come to America she has got full freedom. She resents the Indian traditional
marriage system in which there is no scope for love and affection and the wife has no liberty to call her husband by name. But when her husband informs her of his arrival she again changes her dress into that of a traditional Indian woman. “I change out of the cotton pants and shirt I've been wearing all day and out on a sari to meet my husband at JFK. I don't forget the jewelry; the marriage necklace of mangalsutra, gold drops earrings heavy gold bangles. I don't wear them every day. In this borough of vice and greed, who knows when, or whom, desire will overwhelm.” (TM, 33)

Though she is dressed according to the wish of her husband she is blamed for not wearing his mother’s ring. Even during their tour of New York City, Mukherjee presents with incisive irony the contrast between the wife’s adaptability and the husband’s rigid mentality. He grumbles at the behaviour of a Lebanese at the counter and the informality of the guide. He is also suspicious of the Yugoslav who helps his wife to take photos. She is so vexed with her husband that at the end of the story, when her husband requests her to come with him to India she bluntly refuses that she cannot go with him leaving her Ph.D. Degree in the middle. But the irony is that she cannot use that degree in India as she is not allowed to go out to do job in India’s. So she simply pretends that nothing has changed. But in her heart of hearts she does not want to go back to India again.

In the story, “The Tenant” also Mukherjee presents the ironical struggle to rehabilitate in America. The protagonist is Maya Sanyal, a tutor in the department of English at the University of Northern Iowa. She leaves India to try her best in America as she believes that a person has to leave home, try out his wings. But the irony is that she only knows only to
take but not to give and hence she cannot establish good relationships with others as she
gives nothing. She accomplishes nothing. She changes her citizenship but she has not broken
through into the light, the vigor, the bustle of the New World. She is stuck in dead space. Her
situation in America is just like that of "Trishanku", she is stuck between the native country
and the adapted. She fails to rehabilitate herself in the new culture, as she has broken the
marriage with John, a student. It is only the beginning. She even fails to establish
relationship with the landowner and with Dr. Chatterjee, another Indian professor and then
Ashoke Mehta. The depiction of Chatterjee and his family is also ironical. Dr. Chatterjee, a
traditional Brahmin knows every thing about Maya and wants to take advantage of her
position. So Maya wants to avoid him quickly. Her unpleasant situation in America is that of
a 'trapeze artist as she has left the stability of a traditional culture and trying her best to
rehabilitate herself in the new culture. But the irony is that, she occupies an ambiguous
position in American community. Though she has become an American citizen, she does not
fully belong here either because she longs for a real companionship and love. So she goes to
the library and searches in the matrimonial column. She answers to the ad that declares:

Hello! Hi! Yes, you are the one I'm looking for. You are the new
emancipated Indo-American woman. You have a zest for life. You are at ease
in U.S.A. and yet your ethics are rooted in Indian tradition.... I adore
idealisim, poetry, beauty. Abhor smugness, passivity, caste system. Write with
recent photo. Better still call. (TM, 109)

But the irony is that when the opportunity comes to her to marry Ashoke Mehta she rejects
the proposal confessing her guilty life behind her. She decides to settle down with Fred, an
armless man but inertly she expects a call from Ahoke Mehta. She is not sure whether her
relationship with Ashoke would continue. The irony is that a tenant is always a tenant in an alien nation. So also is in the same condition as that of Jasmine in the story, “Jasmine”.

Mukjerjee is equally efficient in depicting ironical situations of the American counterparts in her stories. The stories, “Loose Ends”, “Orbiting”, and “Fathering” depict the ironical situations of the male counterparts in establishing relationships with their migrant counterparts. In the story “Loose Ends”, Jeb, the narrator is an American hitman. Jeb longs for the first Florida which was built by his grandparents, who worked hard for it, and reaped the fruits of it, but it is denied to the present generation. In the first Florida everyone was happy and the city was beautiful but the present Florida is in his words,

So I keep two things in mind nowadays. First, Florida was built for your pappy and Grannies. I remember them, I was a kid here, I remember the good Florida when only the pioneers came down and it was considered too hot and wet and buggy to ever come to much. I knew your pappy and Grannies, I mowed their lawn, trimmed their hedges, washed their cars. I toted their gold bags. Nice people- they deserved a few years of golf, a garden to show off when their kids came down to visit, a white car that justified its extravagant air conditioning and never seemed to get dirty. That’s the first things about Florida: the nice things. The second is this Florida is run by locusts and behind them are sharks and even pythons and they’ve pretty well chewed up your mom and pop and all the other lawn blowers and blu-haird ladies.

(TM, 49-50)

The irony is that though Jeb longs for the first Florida and always dreams of it, he lives in the second, consuming and moving like a locust. Jeb lives now in the America of locusts, pythons, and middlemen which had killed the America of the white Grannies and pappies. He
is unable to tell the old America, and how ‘we the people’ look like. He lives in the world of war, battle and little down enemy, self-hated racism disguised as nationalism, systematic class inequity disguised as some people’s lack of motivation and ability. He survives in the new world just as offspring and living in dead.

In the story, “Fathering”, also Mukherjee deals with the impact of Vietnam War on the life of an American Vietnam veteran who is divided between his present American life and his past Vietnam life in biting irony. Though Jason, the protagonist in the story, tries to forget the Vietnam War by putting it behind him ‘in marriage and fatherhood and teaching at high school’ it comes back to him through the appearance of his daughter that he had with ‘the honey –skinned bar girl with the tiniest in Saigon.’ Though his girl friend Sharon suggests that it would be better for him to deal with the past, advises him to bring Eng home her presence in their lives is not like what they had expected. Sharon thinks of Eng as crazy and ‘possessive about Jason’ which leads her to seek medical advice. On the other hand Eng is also distrustful of Sharon. As she says when she feels hungry, “I’m hungry, Dad.” It comes out as a moan...Dad; let’s go down to the kitchen. Just you and me... ‘Not her, Dad. We don’t want her with us in the kitchen.”(TM, 118)

Both Eng and Sharon demand Jason to choose. Sharon cries aloud in the doctor’s house to send his daughter out, but Eng on the other hand, pleads her father to keep away from Sharon calling her a bad woman. Jason finally chooses to be a father for a daughter sacrificing the peaceful life with Sharon. The irony is that he is caught in between the two
worlds, as a lover to Sharon and as a father to Eng, as a trapped symbol of the old Vietnam life.

While the irony of Mukhejree is mordant and biting, the irony of Salman Rushdie is satirical. In his short stories *Eat, West*, he uses situational and satirical irony to bring out his the themes in the stories.

In the story "Free Radio" Rushdie uses situational irony. The rickshawala, Ramani, undergoes a family planning operation, hoping that he will be benefited by two ways that is, he can marry the widow, whom he liked very much and who has laid a condition that she will not give any children to him and the second one is that he will get a free radio. But the irony is that he will never receive the free radio as the Government already withdraws the scheme. But Ramani, who does not know this, waits with hope for the free radio by holding an imaginary radio to his ear, mimicking broadcasts. The ending of the story is also so ironical that the rickshawala decides to go to Bombay with his family to become a film star. His friends do mislead him to get his favour and money by flattering him. But the innocent Ramani believes them, and decides to go to Bombay to become a film star. As the village teacher says,

> These armband youths were always flattering Ramani. Such a handsome chap, they told him, compared to you Shashi Kapoor and Amitabh are like lepers only, you should go to Bombay and be put in the motion pictures

*(EW, 22)*
It is ironical that poor Ramani, taken by the words of his friends goes to Bombay along with his readymade family of a wife and five children who are not his own by selling away his rickshaw. He sends a letter to the narrator via a professional letter-writer, accounts of his success as a film star and as to how he was earning a lot of money and leading a sophisticated life. But the narrator knows that all those are his delusions.

In the third story in the set of the stories ‘East’, “The Prophet’s Hair” Rushdie uses situational irony. The influence of the relic itself is ironical. The Prophet’s hair instead of bringing good, brings bad to those who possess it. It kills everyone in the family of Hashim, including Hashim, his wife goes mad by carnage, and it also influences the thief who steals it. The story ends with a touch of irony as the four sons of the king of the thieves regain their limbs when their father steals the relic from Hashim’s house. The thief has deformed his children when they were born so that they could earn their livelihood. As Rushdie says,

But before our story can properly be concluded, it is necessary to record that when the four sons of the dead Sheikh awoke on the morning of his death, having unwittingly spent a few minutes under the same roof as the famous hair, they found that a miracle had occurred, that they were all sound of limb and strong of wind, as whole as they might have been if their father had not thought to smash their legs in the first hours of their lives. They were all four of them, very properly furious, because the miracle had reduced their earning powers by 75per cent, as the most conservative estimate: so they were reined men. (EW, 59)

So the relic brings destruction wherever it goes.
In the third set of stories *East, West*, Rushdie uses mild irony. Rushdie concludes the story, “The Harmony of Spheres” ironically as he wants to effect the harmony between the east and the west by uniting Eliot and Lucy with the Indian couple Khan and Mala. But their relationship is not harmonized as Eliot, the occult writer commits suicide as he comes to know that his wife is having an affair with his friend Khan. His diaries indicate all this but Khan thinks all those were false dreams, he sees in a state of delirium. But the irony is that at the end of the story Mala confesses that the delirium of Eliot is not something unreal but it is true. The last lines are ironical. “So here it came; the collapse of harmony, the demolition of the spheres of my heart. ‘Those weren’t fantasies, ’she said.”(EW, 98) The harmony of his married life is ruined when Mala confesses that those were not fantasies, the truths.

In the story “Chekov and Zulu” also Rushdie brings an ironic end. Rushdie depicts how the forces of history have a noticeable effect on the lives of two boyhood friends, Chekhov and Zulu. As boyhood friends they share interests in every aspect especially in science fiction. They are particularly interested in Star Trek. It gives them their Indianized nicknames Check-off and Sulu. They both are virtually blood brothers Chekov displays bookish excellence and Zulu, athletic powers. After their education they both go to England as ‘diplomats’ where they continue their friendship. Chekhov works as Acting Deputy High Commissioner and Zulu, an intelligence officer, exploring new worlds and new civilizations like cosmonauts of Star Trek. Unfortunately the massacre of Sikhs after Indira Gandhi’s assassination alienates Zulu from Chekov. True to his profession Zulu hands over the information about the extremists and true to his conscience as a Sikh he resigns his post and returns to India but Chekov is rather selfish with regards to the massacre. He also returns to
India and rises in government service. Zulu on the other hand sets up a private security service. The irony is that Chekov is politically and socially a fairly high-up but the most unfortunate thing is that he is killed in the Rajiv Gandhi suicide bomber, whereas Zulu who is politically of no consequence and socially lower, survives and flourishes in life. Rushdie also wants to convey through the story that the morally better person is also the more fortunate.

Thus in all the short stories of Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and Salman Rushdie irony plays an important role. It is strong in Raja Rao’s and Bharati Mukherjee’s stories and rather weak and gentle in Anita Desai’s and Salman Rushdie’s stories.
References.


5. Ibid. p.124.


8. C.V. Venugopal, p.70.


17. Ibid, p.5


19. Ibid, p.52


22. Garan Holcombe, p.1


Chapter - 5

TECHNICAL VIRTUOSITY - II

Imagery and symbolism
Apart from the use of irony imagery and symbolism play an important role in unraveling the themes effectively. The dictionary meaning of 'imagery' is that, it is an expression, which produces pictures in the mind of people, reading or listening. And the symbolism is defined as 'the use of symbols to represent ideas, especially in art and literature. Different writers have used imagery in different ways in their works of art. Raja Rao uses tools of the imagery and symbolism with great expertise. It is one of the most effective devices adopted by Raja Rao.

In both of his volumes of short stories, *The Cow of Barricades* and *The Policeman and the Rose*, Raja Rao is found employing beautiful imagery and symbolism. In the first story, "Javni" Raja Rao describes how Javni eats her food, ‘She was swallowing mouthfuls of rice that sounded like a cow chewing the cud’ and to describe the typical Indian devil of Rangi he uses the image of a woman with ‘a white, white sari, her hair all floating.’ To describe the forbearance of Javni Raja Rao uses the imagery of the cow, ‘Javni, she’s good like a cow’. She is presented as the true image of an illiterate, simple, and credulous woman of an Indian village in the pre-Independence days. The cow might be hungry, she might show her bones through her skin but she always has an all-ending patience and gives her nourishing milk to all who want it. She is like the mother earth. Man treads on her, man misuses her and he even inflicts violence on her through his brutal behavior. Javni is also compared to a huge peepal tree, the blue water of the river, and the vast sky above hinging at general, magnanimous, comporting, and benevolent nature.

In the story, "Akkayya" the life of Akkayya is compared to the life of a deer. She always had to take care of many children and she treated them all alike. She was as happy as a deer. After falling seriously ill for over forty-eight days her legs, 'had lost their strength and they bent down like plantain bark.' But Akkayya felt very happy after her
illness just like a child that stands up for the first time. When she is sixty, the writer
describes her ‘as pure as the jasmine in the temple garden and her face is wrinkled like a
dry mango’. The last years of Akkayya are really tedious. She is bedridden, unable even to
going to the bathroom without the help of anyone. Her life is like death in living. Kittu, the
narrator, then comes home to see Akkayya in her last days. He feels, ‘as if death had
entered the house like a cobra.’ Death here is compared to a cobra. Prof C.D.Narasimhaiah
observes, “a symbol is what we make of it and no symbol is static to those who swear
pretext and make more custom or superstition for truth.”

The most important symbol which Raja Rao uses is that of a ‘prince’, but it is not used as
a literary symbol. The symbol is used to symbolize an adorable person; a man who is above
the common run and whom one looks up for inspiration. In the story, “Narsiga” Raja Rao
uses the symbol to present the master. Even in the story, “The Cow of Barricades” the
master is presented as prince. Narsa’s aunt tells him about Gandhi, “An old man – a
bewitching man, a Saint, you know! He had come from village to village, and I have beheld
him too,’ auntie said. He looks beautiful as the morning sun, and he wears only a little
loincloth, like a pariah.” (TCB, 105)

To Narsa Gandhi is Rama and Sita is mother India. When Gandhi is released there is no
limit to his joy. “The Mahatma, you know, is released. Leave the fields and rejoice. The
Mahatma, you know is going to fly in the air today Goddesses she was going back from
Lanka with her husband Rama.” (TCB 116-117)

In the story “The Cow of Barricades “also Raja Rao presents the symbol of cow. Gouri,
the holy cow is names after Goddess Gouri. As M.K.Naik rightly comments,
It is an expressive symbol of the Indian symbols – of what Nehru calls in *The Discovery of India* India’s power of carrying on the old tradition and yet ever adapting it to changing times. The sacred cow dedicated to a God or a temple and therefore inviolable, is part of the ancient Indian tradition; yet Gouri who dies of a bullet fired by a British officer during the freedom riots and thus probably saves the lives of many in the village is a martyr in the cause of the modern Indian freedom struggle. 

Gouri is the symbol of compassion infinite and true. According to Raja Rao,

> From the concrete to animal with a grace and reverent face it can become the essence of motherhood; it can encompass the eternal principle of feminity; finally it stands for ‘the first thing as thing; the primary is object. Hence the conclusion, ‘So when there is no cow there is no world.’

Again the master in the story calls her the vehicle of Goddess Lakshmi, which means that the cow is an expressive symbol of the feminine principle. Raja Rao also employs a beautiful image when the cow sheds tears at the death of the oppressed people by the British. Her tears are ‘as clear as a drop of the Ganges’. So the cow is the pure symbol of mother India and represents all human values and oneness of the country. So the story illustrates a beautiful balance of realistic narration with symbolism. The Cow is the symbol of Mahatma’s non-violence. She is the symbol of the mute, passive suffering expressed by a beloved village in India and that of Mother India herself. Finally it is the Cow which restores brotherhood and peace at the expense of its own blood.

The two snake stories, “Kanakapala, the protector of Gold” and “Companions” are pieces of moral symbolism. In “Companions” Motikhan and the serpent are the two aspects of the quality of non-attachment. Motikhan ultimately gives up his passion for worldly wealth and
love and the Brahmin in the serpent atones for his love of wealth. Even in “Kanakapala” Raja Rao employs moral symbolism. The serpent is an enemy and friend, an enemy to the greedy and a friend to the righteous.

In the story, “In Khandesh” the fear of Dattopant is conveyed through his dreams, which consists of different images. In his dream he sees “Trees indeed do grow in Khandesh. But they stand shaven and combed like widows before their husbands’ byre.”(TCB, 115-116) He also hears deep in his sleep the cry of an owl. He further sees, “the horse that galloped without neck or tail, the noise of the child near him breathless flight in the air.”(TCB, 142) The premonition of the death of Dattopant is conveyed through the images of a headless horse, funeral procession, and the cry of an owl. In “Khandesh” also Raja Rao conveys this premonition. “In Khandesh the earth is black. Black and gray as the buffalo and twisted like an endless line of loamy pythons, wriggling and stretching beneath the awful beat of the sun depths” (TCB, 146)

The earth is compared to a buffalo, loamy pythons, and the gaps between the cracks of the earth as the demon’s mouths. The cry of the owl, the drumbeats and the thudding sound of the train are symbolic of the death of Dattopant. From the world of dream, vision, and fantasy one is brought down to the world of actuality through convincing images.

the owl changed into a sheep, the sheep grew long twisted horns and became a buffalo. A black rider sat on it, a looped serpent in one hand. The buffalo put its muzzle on Dattopant, licked his flesh, sniffed — then with a dart flung into the depths of the raging clouds, and was lost. Dattopant was lost. A noose was round his neck. The black rider was dragging him against the amassed clouds ... Where? Oh, that eye-shutting abyss! Earth below and space nowhere ... “Ram, Ram’, he yelled in his sleep. ‘Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, (TCB, 143)
In “India- A Fable” Raja Rao describes the East and West with beautiful images. The West is represented as a Camel, Arabia, the sands, the oasis, princes and princesses horses of gold and the East as an elephant, India, forests, rivers, Maharaja, Goddesses with four hands and crowns of gold. Both India and Arabia are dream pictures. The two sets of pictures evoked, appear to be contrasting and antithetical but as the story progresses one merges with the other. At the childish level it marks fulfillment, on the adult plane it is the recognition of the metaphysical truth and at the bottom both mean the same. We see the child touching the bottom of the pond, a casual image, which can project the metaphysical meaning of the ultimate. When he steps into the water to look for his wooden camel and cries and cries like one who has a strange experience. At the beginning the symbolism of the setting of the story is clear that is the spiritual education of the protagonist starts in the garden the traditional associations of which are well known. So also the time mentioned is symbolic, it is spring, the archetypal time for renewal and rebirth. The narrator is shown as an able representative of Indian ethos, who is contrasted with the French boy Pierrot, the child. The difference in the age is also symbolic which indicates the spiritual maturity of India against the immaturity of the West.

Wedding is another key symbol in the story. The statue of Anne of Austria is an apt example of an unsuccessful marriage. The wedding in the story symbolizes the analogy of two persons in wedlock, the union of the individual soul with the other soul- an idea common in Indian devotional verse. Queen Anne was neglected by Louis XIII and pursued by Cardinal Rihelien and after her husband’s death she was dominated by Cardinal Mazerin to whom she was supposed to be secretly married. So also in the case of the protagonist Pierrot he lost his mother at an early age, and his father is the true image of a Westerner, a conqueror and colonize. In his descriptions also Raja Rao depicts symbolically the Westerns world of romantic illusion against a vision of the quintessential
metaphysical India in which romance is made a pathway to reality. The Ganges, the Indian forests represent abundant wealth of life as against the arid wasteland containing a small oasis of Pierrot's fantasy. The camel is symbolic of exotic trading caravans and the elephant is symbolic of divine associations. Just as Lakshmi is the Goddess of prosperity, the elephant is a sign of wealth. The Indian narrator represents the Prince Rodolfe. The two Goddesses further symbolized as one for the wedding of the night and the another for the wedding of the day. One who is dark as the bee and the other is blond as butter. According to Taitraiya Aranyaka purusha is being accompanied by his two wives Sri and Lakshmi symbolizing day and night as his two dimensions.

As M.K. Naik comments "The narrator's symbolic description of the spiritual 'Wedding' leads to the destruction of the Western's illusive world of gross fantasy." This is suggested by Pierrot's throwing of the camel into the garden pool. The ending of the story is also symbolic. The narrator after some time meets the changed Pierrot in "Navy suit" which suggests his appropriate quest for India. He has grown into a Youngman looking like the Maharaja. His maturity is suggested through the symbol of a new Nanny who is a middle-aged woman.

In the final story "The Policeman and the Rose" Raja Rao employs the policeman as a symbol for self-realization, which is clearly understood through a detailed interpretation of the events. The Policeman is a person who stands at the crossroads of civilization. Raja Rao's policeman is a person who recognized man's need of god when he conceded grudgingly.

If there is no God, you need to invent one but God, certainly in the sense in which Raja Rao responds to Him, was not the guiding principle of Voltaire's life or thinking. Or is it only Voltaire's resentment of 'chains.'
The rose has a known history but Raja Rao exploits its symbolism by receiving stimulus from his own culture for the extension of its full symbolic meaning. The reader is left at the mercy of the author in understanding who the policeman is. There is some confusion about the policeman whether he is different from the author or, is one and the same. If both are one there is confusion about the meaning of the following passage.

Every living man has a policeman, and his name is your name, his address your address, his dreams your dreams. (Of course in the dream, his name, force and function are other and inappropriate, but that is another matter). In the last life too he was a policeman – he always was a policeman.

(TPR, 113)

Further the policeman's Guru is described as the retired police commissioner. He is represented as 'two feet and a white rose' and 'truth standing on a lotus' the policeman offers a red rose to the police commissioner but it changes into a lotus flower. The policeman symbolizes the ego-sense of the man, the idea of private individuality superimposed by every person upon his inner self, the Brahman within. So his name is your name, his address your address, his dreams your dreams. Jeevatma is immortal while ego sense is mortal and death alone leads to self-realization, i.e. the union of jeevatma with paramatma. But it is the ego sense that comes in the way of self-realization because the policeman is a sin.

The eye symbol in the passage further describes the narrator's glory in the city of Paris. The eye with which the narrator is doing business is the eye of faith which represents the creed or ideology. As he says, "I opened a shop of Hindu eyes- I the policeman- and Oh, what chatter and a clamour was there. God, God is my business, I cried- Hindu Gods"(TPR,119)

The other eyes mentioned in the story are red eyes which symbolize the world's thrust towards communism. The entire world grew into a red beauty. Further reading biography symbolizes self-realization.
Then it was I was given a copy of my biography, a uniform and my police number 42177 M.P. I was now returned by medals, and my service book was read out to me, it wasn't so bad. I was a policeman that was all. At the District Hospital I was well looked after. I ate coconut fresh from the garden, and water of coconuts I consumed – I ate mango and cashew nuts, and much milk I drank. I improved quickly and I walked the earth again - I was thin and tall, clean and clear – I walked simply. I knew I was under arrest. I knew the Travencore Civil and Police code. I would be discharged when the time came. But now I must do my duty. Of an evening when the sun sat low and a lot of stars came up suddenly with the palm-trees and the temple music, I would open by biography and read it chapter by chapter and find it funny, and tearful. (TPR, 120-121)

The narrator after considerable wandering in America and Japan reaches Travencore. The narrator leaves behind his ego sense and comes to Travencore to offer a rose to his Guru. Here Rose is the symbol of the contribution of traditional western associations. The red rose is combined with the white rose and the white always indicates the smakhya philosophy. Further, the rose changing into a Lotus signifies Indianness and Indian philosophy. The story of the rose also symbolizes the three gunas in smakhya philosophy. As M.K.Naik observes,

Gunas are the essential constituents of the cosmic sustama (Prakriti) and Rajas manifests itself as restless, activity and passion. The word ‘raja’ came from the root ra (n) j, which means to be coloured, affected or moved. (Hence the redness of this rose)

When Raja becomes more predominant, human beings feel restless and strive for liberation and experience freedom from pain. This is described symbolically in the change of the colour of the rose:
It was born of the atom, became earth, air, ether, fire, and water, rolled into a pumpkin, grew into a tree, became a deer and frisked and frolicked in the forests of Virindavan, became white and a cow, all with stripes and eyes and cinnamon, and took the cowboys playing to the temples of Muttra-sang, suffered and died-died again and again, was born again and again married a monk, intellectual, army man, was carried off by the Muslim, and was given away in dowry, and heard in hand wandered by the Ganges. (TPR, 122)

It also symbolizes the pain and suffering of existence as it is called the ‘weeping rose’. Raja Rao substitutes the rose with the lotus as rose is not native to Indian mythology and legends. The lotus in the Indian mythology symbolizes eternal life, purity, and self-realization.

The imagery and symbols of Raja Rao are mostly from Indian Mythology and legends, and so are the images and symbols, used by Anita Desai. They pertain to urban and domestic settings. But her use of Indian imagery is slightly different.

Mrs. Desai uses Indian imagery generally in two ways. At times, the role of Indian imagery in her stories is instrumental to foreground the character’s psyche, while at others; its role is to create mainly an Indian atmosphere in accordance with the requirements of the theme. Imagery is a very flexible means of capturing the rhythm of local life. In an interview with Atma Ram, Desai says, “I use them unconsciously. I mean I employ metaphors and images which acquire significance and suggest deeper meanings than they state i.e. turn into symbols.”

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In her short story, "Private Tuitions by Mr. Bose" Desai creates a fictional world of sights. The rhythms of a poor teacher's life are caught in beautiful visual imagery of Indian scene.

When he could not bear it any longer, he turned his head; slightly; just enough to be able to look out of the corner of his eye through the open door, down the unlit passage at the end of which, in the small, dimly lit kitchen, his wife sat kneading dough for bread, their child at her side. Her head was bowed so that some of her hair had freed itself of the long steel pins he hated so much and hung about her palm, narrow face. The red border of her sari was the only stripe of colour in that smoky scene. The child beside her had his back turned to the door so that Mr. Bose could see his little brown buttocks under the short white shirt, squashed firmly down upon the woven mat.

The Bengali tutor's life evokes the ethos of the Indian urban existence through a routine day in his life. It is clearly seen in his timid creeping through the day's trials and tribulations and clinging tenaciously to his secret hopes and happiness. The value of private bliss of Mr. Bose in the ordinariness of most things is vivified in the configuration of the young tutor dredging through his shabby existence. The Brahmin's son, Upneet, the flowered sari, ruby ear-rings and shaming laughter, Calcutta balcony, over radio and rooftops, 'Oranges against his necessities of milk, medicines and clothes are contrasted with his daily life. The end of the day's work of the tutor is also presented in a vivid description of imagery as

But he could not continue – it was the foot, the sandal that carried on the rhythm as if he was still reciting. Even the radio stopped its rollicking and as a peremptory voice began to enumerate the day's disasters and achievements all over the world, Mr. Bose heard more vigorous sounds from his kitchen as well. There too the lulling pigeon sounds had been crisply turned off and what he heard were bangs and rattles among the
kitchen pots, a kettledrum of commands, he thought. The baby letting out a wail of surprise, paused, heard the nervous commotion continue and intensify and launched himself on a series of wails.

(GT, 16)

Thus in this story Desai vividly presents the daily routine of the tutor with beautiful imagery.

In the story, “Studies in the Park” the gradual awakening of a college going boy, Suno into self-hood through the rejection of a system of education where competition and comparison are the standards of maturity is presented through the pictorial image of a man and a woman, a Muslim couple whose relationship is undefined. His monotony of life and tension about exams are relieved when he views of the couple in the park

A woman lay on it, stretched out. She was a Muslim, wrapped in a black borkha. I hesitated when I saw this straight till figure in black on the bench. Just then she lifted a pale, thin hand and lifted her veil. I was her face. It lay bared, in the black folds of her borkha, like a flower, wax-white and composed like a Persian lily or a tobacco flower at night. She was young. Very young, very pale beautiful with a beauty I had never come across even in a dream... I broke away and hurried down the path, in order to leave them alone, in privacy

(GT, 30)

Suno, the young student is constantly goaded by his family and father to prepare for the examination and get first class. This oppressive nature of the ordeal is suggested through repetitions of the same exhortation with vivid images as,

My father laid his hand on my shoulder. I knew I was not to fling it off. So I sat still, slouching, ready to spring aside if he lifted it only slightly. ‘You must get a first, Suno,’ he said through his nose, ‘must get first, or else you won’t get a job. Must get a job, Suno,’ he sighed and wiped his nose and went off, his patent
leather pumps squealing like mice. I flung myself back in my chair and howled. Get a first, get a first, get a first- like a railway engine, it went charging over me, grinding me down, and left me dead and mangled on the tracks.

(GT, 28)

Desai compares the struggle of the protagonist, Suno to get a first class with a railway engine charging over him and grinding him to concentrate on his studies.

In the story, “Pineapple Cake”, the Pineapple cake itself conveys the power of instinctual urge over sophistication of human beings on this earth. The awakening to the grossness of life in Victor is conveyed through the image of a pineapple cake served to the guests after the death of one of the guests in the wedding. The pineapple cake appears to Victor as a corpse on the red rexin sofa. He never touches the pineapple cake. Desai uses penchant symbolism to describe the awakening of the boy to the grossness of life.

In the story, “Pigeons at Day Break” Desai uses pictorial imagery to indicate the natural beauty of the early morning. The emphasis is on the revelation of life through an aesthetic experience of Mr. Basu. He forgets the dull and drab existence, the pain of suffering of the night at the sight of the plight of the pigeons.

The old man lay flat and still, gazing up, his mouth hanging open as if to let it pour into him, as cool and fresh as water. Then, with a swirl and flutter of feathers, a flock of pigeons hurled upwards and spread out against the dome of the sky – opalescent, sunlit, like small pearls. They caught the light as they rose, turned brighter till they turned at last into crystals, into prisms of light. Then they disappeared into the soft, deep blue of the morning.

(GT, 107)
Though there is a light in the flat Mr. Basu does not want to go down because in the early morning he wants to see the flight of the pigeons, which reminds him of his companionship with his daughter's son. Throughout the suffering of the night he remembers his grandson, with whom he used to go out and watch the pigeon roosts. So though his wife advises him to go down he protests and remains on the rooftop to observe the flight of the pigeons.

In the last story, “Games at Twilight”, “Scholar and Gypsy” Desai uses rich imagery and symbolism to describe the life of two Americans in India. Pat, the wife of David, is appalled by the parties they have to attend in Bombay. She has been vexed with the behavior of the people in the party towards an American. Desai compares her position with that of a corpse after the party:

The guests all wore brilliant clothes and jewellery, and their eyes and teeth flashed with such primitive lust as they eyed her slim, white-sheathed blond self, that the sensation of being caught up and crushed, crowded in and chocked sent her into corners where their knees pushed into her, their hands slid over her back, their voices bored into her, so that when she got back to the hotel, on David's arm, she was more like a corpse than an American globe-totter (GT, 109)

Pat feels difficult to adjust herself in Bombay and Delhi, the heats, smells, congestion noise, filth and poverty, the behaviour of Indian women and their way of dressing. This is conveyed through a powerful pictorial imagery,

Oh, she was terrible, terrible,' Pat whispered, shuddering, as she thought of the vermilion sari tied below the navel, of the uneven chocolate-smooth expanse of belly and the belt of little silver bells around it...... She had never even looked at the woman’s face, she had kept her eyes lowered and not even able to any further than that black navel. If that was not primitive, what could David, a sociology, student mean by the word?
The 'Vermillion sari tied below the navel', symbolizes Indian primitive lust. It is quite surprising that Pat expresses disgust over the Indian women as she is raised in a society where bikinis and playboy pin-ups are as common as coca-cola.

In the second volume of short stories, *Diamond Dust*, Desai employs rich imagery and symbolism. The titles of all the stories are symbolic of their content. In the second story, "Winterscape", Desai uses the image of two mothers looking out at the snow to describe the old India and new Canada:

Together the two would open the refrigerator twenty times in one morning, never able to resist looking in at its crowded illuminated shelves; that reassurance of food seemed to satisfy them on some deep level – their eyes gleamed and they closed the door on it gently, with a dreamy expression.  

Beth, Rajesh's wife takes the photograph of the two sisters looking at the snowfall and the whitening of the stark scene on the other side of the glass pane. Later when she gets the prints she shows them to the two sisters they are both surprised to see the photo and ask her why she has not informed them of it. Then Beth says,

It was their posture that expressed everything, but them they would have wanted to know what 'everything' was, and she found she did not want to explain, she did not want words to break the silent completeness of that small, still scene. It was as complete, and as fragile, after all, as a snow crystal.  

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The feelings of longing, love, and irritation, captured in the very domestic world of a new family have conveyed through the photograph. It also conveys the communication gap between the two sisters and the new couple, Beth and Rakesh.

In the story, “Underground”, Desai uses the visual impression of Cornwall at the height of summer wonderfully with long descriptive and busy sentences, words, jostling with one another with few punctuation marks to slow down the imagery, adjectives pushing their way forwards to create a visual impression. In the very beginning of the story Desai describes the Cornwall with beautiful imagery:

In that small town clustered around and above the bay, every third house was a boarding house, while hotels were strung out along the promenade, stolidly bloomy all through the year except in summer when wet bathing suit hung out over very windowsill and sun brunt children raced screaming across the strip of meting asphalt and onto the shining sands, magnetized by the glittering, slithering...Sand dunes, dune grass, shells, streams trickling across the beach, creating gulleys, valleys and estuaries in exquisite miniature and shades of purple, sienna and puce. Boats, sails, surf boards, waves, foam, debris and light Fish and chips, ice-cream cones, bouncy castles spades, striped windbreakers, ...And a hinterland of blackberry bushed, rabbit warren, gold links, hedged meadows, whitewashed, slate-roofed farmhouses and the motorway flowing all summer with a droning steady stream of holidaymakers baking in their beetle-backed cars. (D, 64)

A lengthy description of the Cornwall gives us the total picture of the Cornwall in the month of August where Jack Higgins and his wife have come to spend the holiday. The same type of verbal imagery is used to describe a traffic jam on the way to Simla and Topoztlan in the past in the two stories, “Five Hours to Simla or Faisla”, and “Topoztlan Tomorrow”.

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Thus the imagery and symbolism used by Desai suit very well to support her themes and characters in almost all the stories in the two volumes, *Games at Twilight* and *Diamond Dust*. While the imagery and symbolism of Anita Desai depict the Indian scene and setting, the imagery and symbolism used by Bharati Mukherjee’s sounds native of U.S., Canada, and India. In the two volumes of short stories *Darkness* and *The Middleman* and other stories, Mukherjee uses rich verbal and pictorial imagery and symbolism to bring out her themes and characters. She also uses America and India as metaphors to show broken identities in the alien nations in many of her stories. As she says in her introduction to *Darkness*:

> Indianness is now a metaphor, a particular way of partially comprehending the world. Though the characters in these stories are, or were, “Indian,” I see most of these as stories of broken identities and discard languages, and the will to bond oneself to a new community, against the ever-present fear of failure and betrayal.⁹

So in many of her stories in the volume of stories *Darkness* Mukherjee presents India and Hindi language as metaphors for immigrants. She uses vivid pictorial imagery to depict the theme of rebirth and refashioning of her immigrant protagonists in her stories.

In the first story “Angela” she uses the image of a black tropical bat to visualize the grace of Angela. Dr. Menezies is attracted towards Angela when she comes to see her friend Delia who is in coma. When Dr. Menezies utters the word ‘splendid’ while treating Delia Angela attributes those comments to her and visualizes her beauty as,

> Splendid,” he agrees. But it’s me he’s looking at. “Very satisfactory indeed.” In spite of my bony, scarred body and plain face. Sometimes I visualize grace as a black, tropical bat, cutting through dust on blunt ugly
She does not like the looks of the doctor. At the end of the story Angela recollects the soldiers who harass them. She compares them with packs of pariah dogs gorging on dying infant flesh. She also recollects how the soldiers came towards her plunging their knives through her arms and shoulders. She compares the soldiers with the leeches who were gorging on the blood of her breast.

In the second story, "The Lady from Lucknow" Mukherjee uses striking imagery and symbolism to describe the adulterous affair of the protagonist, Nafeezah with an old man of sixty years, Mr. Beamish. The protagonist of the story, Nafeezah develops a repulsive attitude towards traditional marriage even from her childhood as she was very much influenced by the death of a young girl, Husseina, who lived in her neighborhood. She was only a small child when the incident had occurred. Husseina's father had beaten her with his leather sandals. The poor girl was distressed and her heart broke. Her broken heart is picturised by Mukherjee as, "a rubbery squeezable organ with auricles and ventricles – first swelling, then bursting and coating the floor with thick slippery blood." (D, 22)

This image of heart serves as an inspiration to the protagonist, Nafeezah to rebel against the tradition, and also instigates her to have an adulterous affair with an American. Her adulterous life, in search of love and passion is conveyed symbolically. "But who knows? One false thwack! Of their golfing irons, and my little heart, like a golf ball, could slice through the warm air and vanish into the jonquil-yellow beyond." (D, 12) Nafeezah confesses earlier her future adulterous life by comparing her journey with the thwack of the golf ball.
In another story, “A Father” Mukherjee presents her favourite goddess, Kali as symbol to bring out the immigrant psyche of Mr. Bhowmick in Detroit. She presents the image of the scarlet and saucy tongue of Kali Matha to warn Mr. Bhowmick about the oncoming sin that takes place in his house:

When he had come back to the shrine in the bedroom, he’d noticed all at once how scarlet and saucy was the tongue that Kali-Matha stuck out at the world. Surely he had not lavished such alarming detail, such admonitory colors on that flap of flesh.

(D, 62)

The premonition comes true afterwards when he is about to start to his office his neighbour sneezes in such a loud manner that Mr. Bhowmick cannot ignore it and continue his journey. In India it is a bad omen. It again reminds him of the tongue of Kali-Matha. As suspected when he comes back into the house to sit for a while and drink a glass of water, which is a belief in India, he finds that his daughter, an intelligent Electrical Engineer is still in the house. She is squeaking in the bathroom. Mr. Bhowmick understands that his daughter is pregnant and becomes nervous. His nervousness is symbolized as ‘the Goddess sticking out her tongue at him’. The premonition comes true when he comes to know that his daughter has become pregnant out of wedlock and the father of the baby is a needle and syringe. In a fit of fury he throws a rolling bin at her stomach and is arrested by the police. The last story “Courtly Vision” she uses her favorite image of Mughal miniature paintings. In her “A Four-Hundred Years Old Woman” she states:

Image of artistic structure and excellence is the Mughal miniature painting with its crazy foreshortening of vanishing point, its insistence that everything happens simultaneously, bound only by shape and Colour. In the miniature paintings of India, there are a dozen separate foci, the most
In an interview with Tina Chen and S. X. Goudie she says

The best example probably Darkness. I have an obsessive love of Mughal miniature paintings that speak to me most eloquently were painted the reign of Emperor Akbar. I suppose that's because mine is a writerly love. The story “A Courtly Vision” was inspired by a number of Akbari paintings, particularly one that shows the Emperor in battle dress, leading his massive battle-ready army out of his fortressed capital. The painting anticipates victory, and evokes a celebratory mood. The mood is historically tenable: Akbar, wise, tolerant, brave won his wars...

In the second volume of short stories, The Middleman and other stories Mukherjee uses sensuous and pictorial imagery and symbolism to bring out the theme of rebirth and refashioning of self in all the American stories. In many of the stories of female protagonists Mukherjee uses physical beauty as an image to describe the theme of rebirth and refashioning of one’s self. In the stories, “A Wife’s story”, “Jasmine”, “The Tenant” Mukherjee uses the physical beauty of the protagonists Panna Bhatt, Jasmine, Maya Sanyal to describe the struggle of the Asian women who want to establish themselves in an alien nation. In “A Wife’s story” Panna Bhatt is caught in between two cultures, the husband is trying to assert the traditional Hindu system while Panna is standing uncomfortably in the middle of the two systems. She says she cannot go back asserting that the academic program she is studying takes two years to complete but in fact the program is an excuse because she has broadened her horizons. This is conveyed through the pictorial image of a girl with wiry braids. “Then she starts to flap her arms. She flaps, she hops. The pigeons go crazy for fries and scraps.”(TM, 39). She has done more than that; she has assumed a new identity that does not part take completely of her roots, not entirely of American values.
Being caught in between the two cultures she has to make her own rules. And she has to cut off her moorings from a marriage that doesn’t free her but stifles. The second image which conveys the situation of Panna in U.S.A. is, “I want to pretend with him that nothing has changed. In the mirror that hangs on the bathroom door, I watch my naked body turn the breasts, the thighs glow. The body’s beauty amazes. I am free, afloat, watching somebody else.”(T.M.p.40). She wants to pretend before her husband that nothing has changed in her life. So that she can safeguard herself from her husband’s plea to go back with him. But when she stands before that mirror with naked body she clearly finds ‘somebody’ else in her. That somebody else in her is her new found self that has come out of the years of bondage and oppressive meaningless traditions of India.

In the story, “Jasmine” also Mukherjee presents the struggle of Jasmine to establish herself in the alien country with her choice of image of physical beauty is apt with reference to the women in her stories as Sant Wade rightly comments on her use of imagery as,

Mukherjee weaves contradiction into the very fabric of the stories; positive assertions in interior monologues are underlined by negative visual images; the liberation of change is underlined by confusion or loss of identity, beauty is underlined by sadness.12

Jasmine is compared with a blossom or flower by Bill, when she yields to him at the end of the story. “You are a blossom a flower… “You feel so good,” he said.” You smell so good. You’re really something, flower of Trinidad.”(TMP.138) She too feels very happy and forgets the dreariness of her new life, but she is too innocent that her new life will not continue for long because when Lara comes back she has to go back to her past life of a maid servant.
In the story, "The Tenant" also the protagonist Maya Sanyal is caught in a cultural flux. She cannot rely on anyone and when the question of choice comes, she selects the American colleague, Fran as friend. But while she chats with Fran she realizes that Fran is unable to receive these confidences because Fran cannot see that Maya is a woman caught in the web of two very different cultures. Maya is symbolized as a brave and bold adventurer who has made a clear break with her Indian past, but in reality there is no such thing as a 'clear' break in her life as in the end she decides to marry another Indian immigrant, Ashok Mehta. Not only Maya but another professor of Physics at her new university, Dr. Rabindra Chatterjee, a Bengali cannot forget his Indian past. When Maya is invited to his house, the arrangements made in the house remind Maya of the familiar signs and smells of Indian high tea to take her back to that other world of Brahmins. The image of the coffee table takes Maya to her Indian past:

The coffee table is already laid with platters of mutton croquettes, fish chops, onion pakoras, ghugni with puris, samosas, chutneys. Mrs. Chatterji has gone to too much trouble. Maya counts four kinds of sweetmeats in Corning casseroles on an end table. She looks into a see-through lid; spongy, white dumplings float in rosewater syrup. Planets contained, mysteries made visible.

(TM, 104)

The title of the story, "The Tenant" is symbolic because Maya, though her heart longs for permanent lodging, she is fundamentally rootless and she hops from one lodging to another. First it is John, then the Chatterjee family, then Fred and then Ashok Mehta. A sense of alienation haunts her and she is incapable of establishing a permanent relationship. So, once a tenant always a tenant.
Mukherjee also uses the image of America in many of her stories like "Loose Ends", "Orbiting", "Fathering". In her view America is everyone's dream, a place of luxury, as she says in her essay, "Days and Nights in Calcutta" that "America is sheer luxury being touched more by the presentation of tragedy than by tragedy itself."

In her imagination America is a place in flux a metaphor that represents freedom from Indian history as fate, because in Calcutta they haven't enjoyed the freedom, they are enjoying in America. But though she has been enjoying profound freedom it also has its price, as Drake says,

In Mukherjee's America, "home" says "freedom", "home" says "war zone" "Home" is no consolation, no place to rest. There are too many Americas and Indias for that.

The stories "Loose Ends", "Orbiting" and "Fathering" and other stories describe the ways in which her writing represents white Americans as willing and not-so willing immigrants to the "New World". In the story, "Loose Ends" Jeb, the white narrator, is an American hitman. He always hates immigrants who try to transform America:

That he belongs here and "they" don't that "they" are wretched and "we" are not, that the West is Paradise in its death throes and it is "their" entire fault. His life gives the lie to his narratives of coherence; the grammar of "we" and "they" won't parse; he's brought America's Vietnam home with him, recreates "America" in the image of "his" Vietnam, a war zone.

Jeb wants to recreate his old America where his grandparents were happy. He always wants to go back to the past. He lives in Miami, working for Mr. Haysoos Velasquez.

I like Miami. I like the heat. You can smell the fecund rot of the jungle in every headline. You can park your car in the shopping mall and watch the dope change hands, the Goldilockses and Peter Pans to off with new

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daddies, the dishwashers and short-order cooks haggle over fake passports, 
the Mr.Vees in limos huddle over arms-shopping lists, all the while gull 
guano drops on your car with the soothing steadiness of rain. 
(TM, 45)

Jeb lives in the America which has been transformed by the global travel, airports 
etc. Being confused and anxious because of the changes Vietnam War had brought Jeb tells 
the story of Alice in a Wonderland disappearing down the rabbit hole taking America with 
er. Jeb always longs for the first America but lives in the second, the America he sees in 
the motel room is like the America for which he waxes nostalgic than it is the America of 
locusts, pythons, and middlemen which he now inhabits and thinks of the America of the 
white Grammies and pappies. The example he gives is modern Florida,

Python turds, dozens of turds, light as cork and thick as a tree, riding high 
in the water. Once you’d seen them, you couldn’t help thinking you’d 
smelled them all along. That’s what I mean about Florida, about all the 
hot-water ports like Bangkok, Manila and Bombay; living on water where 
the shit’s so thick it’s a kind of cash crop. 
(TM, 49)

This image of Florida seems to have impressed Mukherjee the most. Jeb longs for the first 
Florida but lives in the second, consuming and moving like a locust, the second Florida 
makes much more sense to him now through he still worships the coherence of the first. He 
likes to pretend that he has a home and is self-possessed even though he knows that he has 
not any. On the whole Jeb is the offspring of America’s imperial violence. The image of 
America also plays an important role in the stories, “Fathering” and “Orbiting”.

Thus while the imagery and symbolism of Bharati Mukherjee depict the American 
themes and settings the imagery and symbolism used by Salman Rushdie depicts the
themes of Pakistan, India, and London. He uses a different kind of imagery and symbolism 
drawn from the myths and scriptures of religions and interweaves them with different juxtapositions. The themes from Islam and Hinduism are interwoven with figures from English literature. In the first story of the first set of stories, “Good Advice is rarer that Rubies” he explains symbolically that the East is always better than the West. Rehana, the protagonist of the story rejects her passport and willfully commits mistakes at the Consulate to remain with the family where she is serving as an ‘Ayah’.

In the second story, “Free Radio”, Rushdie presents how a Rickshaw-wallah is victimized by falling in love with a thief’s widow of five children. The burden of Ramani is symbolically made real as he carries his beloved and her children in his rickshaw. As the narrator says,

When I saw him now, there was a new thing in his face, a strained thing, as if he were having to make a phenomenal effort, which was much more tiring than driving a rickshaw, more tiring even than pulling a rickshaw containing a thief’s widow and her five living children and the ghosts of two dead ones; as if all the energy of his young body was being poured into that fictional space between his ear and his hand, and he was trying to bring the radio into existence by a mighty, and possibly fatal, act of will. (EW, 28)

His doom is symbolically presented as he draws the rickshaw with the widow and her five children including the ghosts of the two dead children. The phenomenal effort he is making to draw the rickshaw itself is symbolic of some thing evil is going to happen to Ramani. The narrator clearly sees the tiring effort of Rmani on his face.

The third story in the ‘East’ section, “The Prophet’s Hair” is a factually based story of the theft of a relic containing a hair of Prophet Muhammad. The relic, which is said to be
holy and authenticated, does much evil and very little good. The image of the relic describes the juxtaposition of its effect in the case of Rushdie also. It serves as a symbol of the catastrophe in the life of Rushdie after Khomeini had declared ‘Fatwa’ against him. In the story the effects of the relic are far from banal. Reverence for the relic is represented as hypocritical and socially catastrophic once it is removed from the safety of the shrine. The hiding of the stolen relic in Hashim’s collection of artifacts represents more than simple irreverence of bringing the sacred object into the profane space. The relic is at the end reinstalled in a shrine but one whose values are completely different from those which it originally symbolized. Hashim wants to keep the relic in his collection of antiques not because of its spiritual values but because he likes the vial in which the relic is kept. This protestation by Hashim allows us to think of the conventional moral lesson suggested by the juxtaposition of earthly and spiritual values. Rushdie symbolically suggests that the world is more particular of the materialistic values than the spiritual values as the protagonist of the story gives more importance to the vial than the relic in it. The hair of the prophet becomes one of the evidences of the collector’s mania. There are enormous glass cases full of impaled butterflies from Gulmarg, three dozen scale models in various metals of the legendary of Zamzama, innumerable swords, a Naga spear, ninety-four terracotta camels of the sort sold on railway station platforms, many samovars, and a whole zoology of tiny sandalwood animals which had originally been carved to serve as children’s bath time toys. By putting these items in one place Rushdie makes the reader reconstruct the meaningful contexts for them by looking outside the history. The Naga spear is an object of religious and military significance; the Nagas are a military subsect of devotees belonging to the Dadu Panthi Hindus of Jaipur vowed to celibacy and to arms. The sandalwood in which the toy animals are carved suggests religious incense, the ‘innumerable swords’ are probably Sikh and therefore of religious importance. The Samaras are objects used in
social ritual. Butterflies are a sign of destructive prophecy in his writings. So all these have the religious importance but all of them have been kept in Hashim’s collections and have lost their original religious significance. As Fiona Richards rightly comments,

The room where Hashim keeps his relics is a model of the appropriation of legendary military and religious treasures from several cultures within India...The looted items maintain a measure of their original cultural worth in addition to their material value. Their appropriation changes what they mean, both to their current owner and to their dispossessed previous owners; they become symbols of unjust appropriation, in addition to their original symbolic significance, and their claim to imminent meaning is consequently distorted and destabilized.15

The pieces of collections of Hashim have its own significance. These have acquired greater status and greater resonance because they were remains and fragmentations something nursing they acquired numinous qualities. But these relics when they are taken from their original situations they have severe effects.

In the second set of stories, ‘West’ Rushdie discusses such historical figures as Hamlet, Columbus and the magic Ruby slippers in the famous movie “The Wizard of the Oz” as visual images to represent the West. In the first story, “Yorick” Rushdie represents the Jester Yorick in the play, Hamlet as a hero who marries the older foul breathed Ophelia. Rushdie compares and addresses him with scull. And at the end he dismisses of the story as a cock and bull story. In the second story he uses the visual image of Ruby Slippers which helped the hero in the movie “The Wizard of the Oz” to reach home from Mars. So also he symbolically says that everyone at the auction wants to have the Ruby Slippers in order to go home. The immigrant psyche wants to seek the help of the Ruby Slippers in going back home. Rushdie uses magic realism in this story to bring out the effect of the Ruby Slippers. The magic slippers promise the wearer the ultimate dream of migration a safe journey.
home but the narrator notes 'home has become such a scattered damaged' because Ayatollah Khomeini issued his notorious fatwa against him on St. Valentine's day 1989 and throughout for nearly six years since then he became a target not only of religious zealots but of professional killers hired by ecclesiastical thugs and heads of state. He expresses his state of being in exile symbolically in the story as,

Exiles, displaced persons of all sorts, even homeless tramps have turned up for a glimpse of the impossible. They have emerged from their subterranean hollows and braved the bazookas, the Uzi-armed gangs high on crack or smack or ice, the smugglers, the emptiers of houses. (EW, 90)

Rushdie symbolically presents himself as a tramp who travels as a vagabond in search of a safe home and freedom. He remained in exile from his national and literary communities for many years. The Ruby slippers symbolically speak of his hope to get back to his 'home'. When the liberals want to have them to seek their homes, the fundamentalists want to have them only to burn them. Rushdie symbolically satirizes that every thing in this world is auctioned, bought, and sold, everything is turned into a commodity, even the great Taj Mahal, and the Statue of Liberty, the sphinx, nature, human desires, human beings, and any living things.

In the story, "Harmony of Spheres" Rushdie introduces surrealism to describe the occult practices of the protagonists, Khan and Eliot. Eliot suffers from paranoid schizophrenia. He and his wife, Lucy moves from Cambridge to Wales for relief. Lucy and Eliot are friends of an Indian couple, Khan and Mala. The four friends are occult practitioners. Rushdie symbolizes his mental state through the character of Eliot. As Khan comments on Eliot:

Exiles, displaced persons of all sorts, even homeless tramps have turned up for a glimpse of the impossible. They have emerged from their subterranean hollows and braved the bazookas, the Uzi-armed gangs high on crack or smack or ice, the smugglers, the emptiers of houses. (EW, 90)
But in Eliot's enormous, generously shared mental storehouse of the varieties of 'forbidden knowledge' I thought I'd found another way of making a bridge between here-and-there, between my two otherness, my double belonging. In that world of magic and power there seemed to exist the kind of fusion of worldviews. European Amerindian Oriental Levantine, in which I desperately wanted to believe. With his help, I hoped. I might make a 'forbidden self'

(EW, 141)

Rushdie, being away from his homeland and living in London, feels that he neither belongs to his host country nor his native country. Khan learns black magic, the hidden art secrets of pyramids and the mysteries of the Golden section and the intricacies of the Spiral etc. Both Khan and Eliot practice hypnosis. Rushdie uses surrealism to explain the occult practices of both the friends. As he says in an interview to The Salon, when a question is asked about his technique of arsenal he says that,

Yes, yes quite often surrealism or whatever one would call it is used just as a piece of acrobatics, and then that's all it is. .....The reason I do it is not fancy foot work. It's because it seem to me to be a way of saying something that I hope is truthful. I just thought that there is something in the air at the moment, that people think everything is speeding up, the pace of life, the rate of change; everything just seems to be going zooom! And I thought that if there is widespread sense of the acceleration of things, one way of crystallizing it was to make it happen to someone in a very literal way.16

Thus Rushdie uses surrealism in explaining the relationship between Khan and Eliot, symbolically explaining the relationship between the East and the West. The occult practice of the west is symbolically compared with the four Trances of Japanese spiritualism, 'Muchu' 'ecstasy or rapture'. The learning of the occult of the West by Khan is
symbolically presented through the crossing that takes the form of two inter-racial liaisons between Khan and Lucy, and Eliot and Mala.

In the final story of the third section Rushdie uses English language as an image to explain the immigrant psyche. The protagonist, a servant maid, Certainly-Mary in Rushdie’s family, has a problem in pronouncing the word ‘p’ in English but not in her vernacular. As any Indian/Easterner she is not at home in the west. That is why she calls the ‘porter’ as ‘courter’. Rushdie symbolically suggests the mismatch of cultures through English language. The East-West relationship is also symbolically presented through the relationship between the porter, a servant named Mixed-up and the maid Certainly-Mary. But their relationship does not continue for a long, as Certainly-Mary gets some heart problem. Even the doctors fail to diagnose the reason for her trouble, but she herself diagnoses has homesickness and insists on returning to India because she is vexed with the West. At last she is cured after her return to India and lives for thirty more years. She finds her native land as a source of happiness. Though Certainly-Mary happily returns to India and survives for another thirty years Rushdie who is away from his homeland cannot come to India. It is symbolically presented through the image of a rope pulling the writer this way and that way. The story ends with a proud declaration of neutrality between the East and West, a pregnant manifesto of neither-norness nor both-ness of hybridity and cultural miscegenation. He says

I too, have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, east and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, choose, choose […] Ropes, I do not choose between you. Lassoes, lariats, I choose neither of you, and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose. (EW, 211)

Though he likes to come to India he cannot do so and also he cannot choose the West but he has to live in the West as there is no other alternative to survive.
Thus the imagery and symbolism used by Rushdie is very appropriate to the themes of his stories. There is a similarity among all the four writers in their selection of Indian images and symbols to bring out their themes in their stories, though Bharati Mukherjee deviates from others to some extent.

Apart from the imagery and symbolism language also plays an important role in short stories. Different writers have adapted different means to express their ideas in their stories in English. All languages flourish in a particular environment. If any language has to flourish in a foreign land it needs alterations so as to come to terms with the cultural differences of that land. The non-native speakers face so many problems in depicting their thoughts and themes in a non-native language. Particularly when the Indian creative artist has to depict his theme and ethos in English he has to mould and alter the language to suit it to the Indian characters and situations. He/she cannot write like the British writers, because the traditional and situational differences come in his/her way. So the Indian creative writers have invented their own idiom and usage of English language to suit their creative needs. Raja Rao is one among those who had used English language with great innovation. M.K. Naik rightly comments on Raja Rao’s use of English language:

Having recognized the fact of the existence of verities of English, Raja Rao makes English a valuable vehicle to bring out the inwardness of Indian life and culture, by altering English idiom and syntax a bit, so that the world of sensations and the world of words penetrate each other. He thus projects the Indian images abroad successfully and faithfully in a language of his own making the idiom of which express the Indian mind though the corrections of English usage has not been violated. This creative process enables him to convey a vision of India- a recreation of the whole literary and cultural past of India.
Raja Rao is a constant experimenter not only in the field of technique but also in his use of the language. The flexible nature of the English language has helped him to express the Indian thought and tradition. His devotion towards the blending of form and substance had enabled him to record his vision. He has taken utmost care in the use of language. He has taken care of the emotional and mental make up of his characters and depicted them in English language with suitable imagery and symbolism. So he has succeeded in depicting the Indian thought and situation, and characters. He modifies language significantly but does not lapse into juggernaut English. He has evolved a distinct standard in English which has correct usage of English but it is strictly of Indian soul, colour, thought, imagery, and idiom. It is very easy to depict the spirit of Indian tradition in any Indian language but it is very difficult to present the Indian thought and tradition in English. In the preface to The Policeman and the Rose he says,

If I wanted to write, the problem was, what would be the appropriate language of expression and what my structural models – Sanskrit contained the vastest riches of any, both in terms of style and word wealth, and the most natural to my needs, yet it was beyond my competence to use. To marry Sanskrit and Gide in Kannada, and to further, would have demanded an immense stretch of time, and I was despairingly impatient. French, only next to Sanskrit, seemed the language most befitting my demands, but then it's like a harp (or vina) its delicacy needed an excellence of instinct and knowledge that seemed well-nigh terrifying. French remained the one language, with its great tradition (if only of Shakespeare) and its unexplored riches, capable of catalyzing my impulses and giving them a near native sound and structure. ’I will not write like English,’ I was to write in an introduction to Kanthpura, ‘I can only write as an Indian,’ I will have to write by English, yet English after all – and how soon we forget this – is an Indo-Aryan tongue. Thus to stretch the English idiom to suit my needs seemed heroic enough for my most urgent demands.18
In his ‘introduction’ to the novel, Kanthapura he rightly says of his intention to modify the English language in order to recapture the very spirit of India tradition. Most of the stories in the two volumes depict vividly the Indian life and the traditional mores of Indian life. Raja Rao knows the Indian villages thoroughly. So a perfect picture of Indian village life in thirties emerges in almost all the stories. In the story, “Javni” Ramu the narrator reaches the village by riding a bicycle. Raja Rao presents this experience in a vivid way:

I lay sipping the hot, hot coffee that seemed almost nectar after a ten-mile bicycle ride on one of those bare dusty roads of Malkad.... Outside the carts rumbled over the paved street and some crows cawed across the roof. A few sunbeams stealing through the tiles fell upon my back...

(TCB, 1)

A village crier, beating his drums ‘tom-tom-tira-tira’ carries on the village announcements. He makes all the important announcements through his drum beats to all the villagers. In the villages time also is not calculated by the clock and calendar but by significant landmarks either in the life of a community or in one’s own experience. For example, when a family comes to a village, his arrival to the village can be calculated by remembering as ‘the harvest was over and we were husking the grains, when they came’ or ‘that happened when our Ramu was going through his initiation ceremony.’ Religious beliefs, ignorance of the villagers and their credulity to superstitions are presented by Raja Rao in a masterly way. In “Javni” he reveals his belief in the concepts of Karma, rebirth, and transfiguration of souls in a very native expression. “If you don’t adopt me, I shall die now and grow into a lamb in my next life and will your buy it.”(TCB, 19)

Early marriages are also a rule in the villages. Akkayya in the story, “Akkayya” is married at an early age when she could not even understand the meaning of marriage. And she loses her husband, even before she understands what widowhood is. She enjoys the
festival of dolls-show without minding when some object to her putting on the vermillion 
mark on her forehead. A widow’s life is a pitiful tale of austerity, self-denial, drudgery, 
and misery as is presented by Raja Rao in the story, “Akkayya.” He also presented the 
superstitious belief about plague the villagers believed that the epidemic became a terrible 
Goddess from whose clutches there was no escape. The idea of hospital itself horrifies 
Rati, the daughter-in-law of Motilal in the story, “The Little Gram shop”. The villager’s 
opinion about the hospitals is presented, as “All that they did there nobody knew. They cut 
you, pierced your flesh and did a million unholy things. Death is better.” (TCB, 51)

Even when Rati tries to light the morning fire and when, it does not lit up she would say,

What a bad sign to begin a day with”, she said to herself and she resolved 
to bear quietly any threat or beatings from Motilal. A bad day for her 
meant just that… She cursed herself, cursed the fuel, cursed the calf and 
blowing air into the oven she say thinking of all that might happen that evil 
omened day – that dark day to be.

(TCB, 36)

Raja Rao also depicts the common practice of Indian husbands who beat their wives in 
the story in a realistic way by using the native expressions. Motilal beats his wife she cries 
“Ayyo... ayyo... ayyo... Mai, mother... ayyo... ayyo... ooo,” she yelled, then rolled forward 
and writhed.” (TCB, 33) His selection of words to express the agony of Beti Bai is quite 
natural and common in every village.

Besides describing the traditions and customs of India in English, Raja Rao also 
experiments with English language so as to suit his characters by mixing the Kannada 
vernacular and rhythm. The characters like Javni, a village maid servant, Akkayya, a child 
widow, the Bania Motilal, the professional matchmaker, Nanjundiah, the snake charmer,
the sadhu in his Ashram, the saintly pontifical Brahmin who has a vision of God etc all speak native-English mixed with Kannada idioms and phrases. He even coins suitable nick names to his characters like water-fall Venkamma, Front-house-Suryanarayana, Vision Rangappa etc. The characters speak typical Indian English. In the story “Javni”, Javni’s brother scolds her “Weep, weep,” he cried “weep till your tears flood the Cauvery. But you will not get a morsel of rice from me, no not a morsel.”(TCB, 16)

In “Narsiga” Rao uses the native expressions like “The bow-legged Rangayya , who worked on the Corn-fields-by-the Canal saw Narsa going into the woods with the sheep and said, He! You little monster! From when did you become an earning person? As though there were not enough of us wanting to live?”(TCB, 93) “Oh to earn for one like you Ramu, my son it would dispense one of Benaras.” says Nanjundiah” (TCB, 134-35)

The characters also make comparisons in typical Kannada to make their speech more natural and domestic. Naturally an Indian while using his native language finds comparisons from current life, or his cultural heritage, just as,’Javni... Sat like a bride beside the bridegroom, ‘she is good like a cow’, ‘a palm-breadth of shelter,’ eight joys of heaven and earth.’,” poor as cur.”,’ ‘eyes seated in their sockets like rats in a hole.’, ‘moonlight poured over like milk and butter libation.’, ‘face all wrinkled like a dry mango.’, as pure a thing as jasmine in the temple garden.’, ‘tears, clear, as a drop of Ganges.’, etc.

Raja Rao also employs native Indian expressions in English to describe the situations in his stories. In the story “Narsiga” the situation of India before independence is described as:

The country is big, a million million times as big as this ashram. But it is no more ours. The red man rules us. The red man rules us. He takes
away all our gold, and all our food, and he allows the peasants to starve and the children to die milkless. He has put the Mother into prison. But, my son, you must not hate him. He is not a bad man. But there is a devil in him. And one day when we shall have driven him out of the country, we shall be happy and beautiful and our Mother will rejoice in her freedom.

(TCB, 98)

In “Khandesh” the announcement of the village messenger about the arrival of Maharaja is described.

Tom-Tom...Tom-tom...Tira-Tira...Tira-tira...Tom-tom...Tom-tom...Listen, villagers, listen! Assemble at the Patel’s...after midday meal... Tom-tom...Tom-tom...Tira-tira...Tira-tira...Tira-tira...Everyone...All...Important...business...Important...Tom-tom...Tira-tira...Tom-tom...Tom-tom...

(TCB, 142)

Raja Rao’s use of language with sounds and images enables us to visualize before us. Raja Rao does not hesitate in using abusive words in English to suit his characters. ‘Monkey’, ‘donkey’s widow’, ‘donkey’s wife’, ‘prostitute’, ‘swine of a bania’, ‘son of a prostitute’, ‘dogs’, ‘curs’, and ‘pariah’s pig’s dirty dragon’, ‘whore’, ‘wench’, ‘devil’, ‘daughter of a prostitute’, ‘donkey’s whore’, ‘concubine’-etc. These and many other words like these have been used by Raja Rao to make his character’s speech appear quite natural to them in the given situations. These words and expressions neither sound artificial nor jar the sensibilities because of the careful selection of words to suit the situation. The abusive expressions serve smooth English renderings without sounding strange or unnatural. The mistress, sister of Ramu in the story, “Javni” loves Javni very much and calls her every time a ‘donkey’ or ‘donkey’s widow’. So also Akkayya, living her last wretched days which were really death-in-life does not and could not forbear using even the bitterest and most offensive of words to call young Naga:

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Naga, you wretch, Naga...Naga. I'll burn you to-day if you do not come,...and the little girl limped mechanically.... “You dirty whore, you dog-born, you donkey's wife... Oh, I wish I could tear up your skin like my sari. You dirty donkey whore.... throw me into the well and drink a good, hot seer of milk... you cur...

(TCB, 92)

The most important things about the use of these abusive words is that they make the contexts appear very natural as the abuses from loving lips do not appear really abusive, because love transforms them into words of endearment. Similarly abuses lose their offending power if they are the products of wretchedness. Thus these curses and abuses are very helpful in gathering an idea about Indian rural society in the 'twenties and thirties though the urban society too was not quite different.

Raja Rao's use of poetry is also remarkable. In the story "Javni" he uses the song of a cart man:

The night is dark;
Come to me, mother.
The night is quiet;
Come to me, friend.
The winds sighed. (TCB, 13)

In the story "India-A- Fable" Rao describes in a poetic way the forest of India and the wedding of two Goddesses of day and night.

He was somewhere very far, far, far, ass that Avenue de l'Observatoire, full of great forests of trees, pools and big buildings and rippling sunshine. The sun shines there. The moon is big there. There are many birds, all blue and sometimes transparent. There are many clouds. And the camels there are never thirsty... “One for the wedding of the
night, and one for the wedding of the day. One who is dark as the bee, and the other who is blonde as butter.

(TPR.

Throughout the story we find poetic sentences. Even in the story, “The Policeman and the Rose” almost all the sentences are poetic and the story reads as an illusion.

Thus commenting on the problems faced by the Indian writers in English, Raja Rao says in his ‘Foreword’ to Kanthapura.

One has to convey in a language, that is not one’s own, the sprite that is one’s own. One has to convey the carious shades and omission as a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I used the word alien. Yet English is not really an alien language to us. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us.19

Thus just as Raja Rao has done so much of research and invented his own style of language so also has Anita Desai in order to formulate her own style of language to suit her themes and characters. Born to a German mother and a Bengali father she spoke German at home and Bengali and Hindi to friends and at school. It was the English language she first learned to read and write and so it became naturally her literary language. In an interview with Pascal Seguet, about why she has chosen English as a medium of expression rather than German she says:

I know more German nursery rhymes and songs than English ones. And then we began to speak Hindi to our friends, to our neighbours, and I really learnt English only when I went to a missionary school. English was my first literary language, the first language I read. I had heard, German and Hindi all my life but I had not really read then English has always
remained with me the language of gooks and because I had done so much reading in English. I also wrote in English. I read English literature with so much love and such an obsessive feeling for it. My books reflect that, of course, I have not really read very much Indian literature. I have read some Hindi and some Bengali. But when it comes to choice, I find I am always choosing English rather than German or an Indian language. 

While commenting on the Indian writers problems she regrets for not having written her novels in Bengali. She confesses in an interview with Srivastav that,

Language is the universal whore whom I have made virgin...
According to the rule laid down by critics, I ought to be writing half my work in Bengali, the half in German. As it happens, I have never written a word in either language. Possibly I found English to be a suitable link language, a compromise. But I can state definitely that I did not choose English in a deliberate and conscious act. If it did not sound like a piece of arrogance, I'd say perhaps it was the language that chose me. But I am not aware of any act of choice. I started writing stories in English at the age of seven, and have been doing so for thirty years now without stopping to think why.

Though she longs to write in Bengali she confesses that she is too much obsessed with the English language and she finds it more suitable to her fiction. As she says,

English is at best an immigrant in India. It was not originally a native even if it is almost one now. It has never really taken root. It is like a plant one would like to raise in one's garden - a beautiful but difficult one. One plants it in the sun, it doesn't do well. One pulls it out and plants it in the shade it droops. One moves it to a damps spot near fatal. Thus to a dry one - equally bad. And so on and so on and so on. One moves it about hopefully, then crossly. It refuses to die but it never quite catches on either. It is a refugee in the land. Like a refugee it is astonishingly tenacious.
She knows how to live with English language and how to deal with the problems created by it and sometimes by ignoring them. She also quotes the famous words by Henry James to a French student of English:

One’s own language is one’s mother, but the languages one adopt as a career, as study, is one’s wife, and it is with one’s wife that one sets up house. English is a very faithful and well – conducted person, but she will expect you too not to connect infidelities. On those terms she will keep your house well.23

The two volumes of short stories, Games at Twilight, Diamond Dust exemplify her poignant use of English language. Her language is remarkably flexible enough to depict the Indian traditions and Indian scene, particularly of urban Indian. In most of her stories the setting for the action is urban and the characters are from the middle and upper middle-class. So the language which she uses also represents the language used by the upper middle and middle-class people. In the story “Games at Twilight” she depicts how the mid-summer is spent by the children in the upper and middle-class families. The children are not allowed to come out of the houses and the women in the families take care of everything in the family. The playtime of the children and the chatting time of the neighbouring women folk are presented in detail. So also the relationship of the parents and children is presented in this story. The petty quarrels among the children during play time are also depicted through suitable words, particularly when the protagonist of the story, Ravi struggles to win in the game of hide-and seek. The language she uses to depict the protagonist’s struggle confuses the readers as to whether the protagonist is a boy or a young man because her selection of word is beyond the standard of the protagonist:

To defeat Raghu – that hirsute, hoarse-voiced football champion – and to be the winner in a circle of older, bigger, luckier children – that would
be thrilling beyond imagination. He hugged his knees together and smiled to himself almost shyly at the thought of so much victory, such laurels.

(GT, 7)

The words like 'hirsute' and expressions like 'thrilling beyond imagination' make the of the readers wonder whether the protagonist is a child or a young man but it never confuses the readers and more over it appears as a feature of her language.

In the story, "Private Tuition by Mr. Bose" she depicts the domestic life of a teacher in an urban Indian setting with poignant language in terms of sights and sounds:

Mr. Bose gave his private tuition out on the balcony, in the evenings, in the belief that, since it faced south, the river Hooghly would send it a wavering breeze or two to drift over the rooftops, through the washing and the few pots of tulsi and marigold that his wife had placed precariously on the balcony rail, to cool him, fan him, soothe him. But there was no breeze; it was hot, the air hung upon them like a damp towel, gagging him and speaking through this gag, he tiredly intoned the Sanskrit verses that should, he felt, have been roared out on a hill-top at sunrise (GT,11)

The commonness of scenes in the urban areas is depicted in an uncommonly rich language.

In the story, "Studies in the Park" she describes the domestic kitchen setting in a middle-class family in realistic terms making the reader imagine and visualize the scene at firsthand:

She cuts and fries, cuts and fries. All day I hear chopping and slicing and the pan of oil hissing. What all does she find to fry and feed us on, for God's sake? Eggplants, potatoes, spinach, shoe soles, news-papers, finally she'll slice me and feed me to my brothers and sisters. Ah, now she's turned on the tap. It's roaring and pouring, pouring and roaring into a
Thus Desai presents the middle-class and upper-middleclass traditions in her stories in realistic terms. Not only the traditions and situations but also the characters in her stories speak in a polite way as all her protagonists are well educated and come from urban settings. So there is no need for her to use abusive terms and curses. But even while handling illiterate lower class people who are prone to use filthy language in their lives Desai proves to be too sophisticated to use them. She generally sidetracks such situations by employing words like ‘curse’ and ‘abuse’. She turns poetic while describing some situations in her stories. In most of the stories we find songs. In the story, “Games at Twilight” she uses poetry to describe the playtime of the children on one summer evening. Ravi hears the song sung by other children:

“The grass is green
The rose is red;
Remember me
When I am dead, dead, dead, dead...(GT, 9)

She also uses rhymes to describe the playtime of children as they suit very well to the situation. In the story “Private Tuition by Mr. Bose” she uses poetry to suit the situation. Mr.Bose as he is a Sanskrit teaches who teaches Sanskrit to a boy and Bengali poetry by Jibanandan Das to a young girl, Upneet is described in poetic terms:

Her hair was the dark night of Vidisha,
Her face the sculpture of Svarasti...(GT, 16)
There are lots of poetic connotations in this story, which show Desai’s love for poetry. In the story “The Farewell Party” she uses poetry at the end of the story. Dr. Bennerhji’s wife sings a song at the end of the party as,

Father, the boat is carrying me away,
Father, it is carrying me away from home. (GT, 99)

She has a special liking for Tagore’s poetry. So she uses lines from Tagore’s poetry to suit the situations. To a question asked on whether she writes poetry, she replies,

Writing poetry is really the highest form...I think I would like it, if I could come to a stage where I could write poetry. But I can’t write poetry because I think it contains all you want to say in its most concentrated form.24

In the second volume of stories, Diamond Dust she uses poetry in many stories like “Royalty”, Underground”, and “Farewell Party”. In the story, “Five Hours to Shimla or Faisla” the opening paragraph of description of summer season itself is the best example of Desai’s use of poetic language,

Then, miraculously, out of the pelt of yellow fur that was the dust growing across the great northern Indian plain, a wavering grey like emerged. It might have been a cloud bank looming, but it was not – the sun blazed, the earth shriveled, the heat burned away every trace of such beneficence. Yet the grey darkened, turned bluish, took on substance.

(DD, 115)

Her use of language is exquisitely poetic. She some times struggles to reflect Indian speech in some of her stories set in India. In the story, “Private Tuition by Mr. Bose” she says,
Pat, Pat, Pat. No, it was not the rhythm of the verse, he realized but the tapping of her foot, green-sandalled, red-nailed, swinging and swinging to lift the hem of her sari up...

(GT, 16)

Desai struggles hard to visualize the sound produced by the sandals of Upneet. So also uses expressions like ‘his white dhoti blazing his white shirt crackling’ etc. In another story, “Pigeons at Day break” Otima Basu reads the paper as, “Ah...ah...hmm she mutters as her eyes roved up and down the columns...Teri Meri kismant....the heart moving saga of an unhappy like...No, No, no Do Dost winner of three film fare awards....ah....” (GT, 99)

Desai here tries to visualize how old people read the newspapers. When her husband asks her to readout news, the entertainments column attracts first. Though the foreign readers do not understand words like ‘Teri Meri kismet, Do Dost” the titles of the movies, they lead to the authenticity of the story. There are so many such examples in the stories which have no place in English language and which are used only to effect Indianness. Words like ‘Gram vendor’, ‘Tampura’, ‘veena’, ‘jilebis’, ‘tabla’, ‘Bhai’, ‘gilli-danda’, ‘fishjhol’ etc for which she does not even try to give suitable glossary for the sake of foreign readers. In the story “The Scholar and gypsy” the theme is non-Indian and Desai uses pure British English though the protagonists of the story belongs to America like ‘this is the end Pat, my girl...and your are confused pat, you’re so muddled, so hopelessly muddled, My dear addled wife Pat’ Pats diction also sounds British because no American speaks ‘It’s going to be lovely,’ and ‘We mustn’t waste this lovely evening’etc. Both of them start with ‘do’ which is not the way an American speaks. But there are some words and expressions which reflect American English like’yeah’, ‘kids’, ‘crazy’, ‘hippies’, ‘they’re stoned’, ‘IT takes all kinds’, ‘bloody’, ‘lovely’, ‘mustn’t leant’, etc.
Apart from these Desai also often uses compound nouns with vernacular modes of expression, like ‘lala-ji’ ‘khaki-uniform leap down’, ‘calm down Sardarji’, ‘he is a Satan, a shaitan, a devil’, ‘you need to give him strength to go back to her badmashi,’ ‘What will you have beti? Lassi or Lemonade?’ In the first sentence the landlady though a tenant, considers Mayona as ‘beti’. If at all the word ‘daughter’ is used the whole realistic and natural Indian context is spoilt. The use of vernacular words by Desai may sometimes warrant an explanation for foreign readers who are not likely to be acquainted with them. But she does not use such vernaculars very frequently but limites them only to particular contexts. Sometimes she uses both the expressions in the vernacular and in English like ‘gram-vendor’, ‘khaki-uniform’, ‘thana’. While the vernaculars are revealing and pleasing to Indians they probably irritate the foreign reader. Sometimes these English expressions are illuminating to the native English speakers but they appear to be odd for Indians.

On the whole Desai does not seem to have faced any problems in using English language to present her themes and characters in her short stories. On the other hand she also modifies her language to some extent in order to give a natural local colour to her short stories and to suit the requirements of her themes. On Desai’s use of vernacular and the problems faced by the Indian writers writing in English, Meenakshi Mukherjee says,

Anita Desai is a rare example of an Indo-Anglican writer who achieves that difficult task of bending the English language to her purpose without either self-conscious attempt of sounding Indian or seeking the anonymous elegance of public school English.25

Just as Raja Rao and Anita Desai have used and moulded English language to suit their themes and characters and situations in their stories Bharati Mukherjee also uses English language in such a way as to suit her American and Canadian settings and situations and to
suit her characters by effecting certain modification in the English Language. Her primary education in missionary schools also has helped her in this regard. The Blessed Mary School in which she studied was more like a British school. At school in Calcutta the students had to learn Christian scriptures. Most of the students in that elite school were from rich Hindu families. It was a very prestigious school in those days. When a question was asked about her decision to write in English language she fondly remembers, (in an interview with Tirthankar Chanda that,):

I was sent to Loretto House which was a convent school and where we were taught to use English as a first language. In place of Bengali they made us do alternative English. It was in independent India that English became gradually – even more than when I was a child and went to school in England for a few years – the easy, automatic language of expression.26

She never felt any difficulty in using English language even from her childhood days. So the education in Christian schools gave her a good grounding in English language and literature. At school a man was employed to check the pronunciation of English language with sing-song accent. This helped her in reading novels and books by famous French and English authors. In an interview with Resell Schoch she says about her accent of English as:

It was very important to the west that we weren’t speaking?"Indian English with a singsong accent. It’s only lately that I’ve come to realize that this colonial underpinning of my education wasn’t simply to make us acceptable if we had to give speeches as the wives of Indian dignitaries in European capitals. In a way; it was instilling in us, ‘This is the right way to speak yours is the wrong’ and therefore coming to the United States has been very empowering for me. Here I’m not locked into thinking in terms of correct/ incorrect.’ here I can improvise grammar, accent, and language and still feel self-wrote.27
From her childhood she has been obsessed with the idea of becoming a writer and naturally as she was educated in the best convent school in Calcutta she picked up English as her medium of expression.

Having had a Master's degree in English and having planned to become a writer since her childhood she has naturally selected English as her medium of expression. Her stay in Iowa during the prestigious "Writers Work Shop" also helped her develop and perfect her language skills. As she confesses in an interview with Lane,

The recent burgeoning of Anglophone literature by writers of Indian origin, whether they live in India or live outside, is because we were given English as our stepmother tongue. When I am writing fiction I think and imagine only in English. Especially after India became Independents Indians ever remaining in India became more and more confident about the use of English language and 'Indianized it; they claimed it and changed it, without feeling they were doing a peter sellers number.... Whether we like it or not the language of power, particularly in publishing, is, at the moment, English...²⁸

But she has no such problems in her stories as all her stories are set in America and Canada. She did not have to struggle to depict the Canadian or American settings and situations in her stories as her use of language suited them. In her two volumes of short stories she uses two different types of English. In her first novel she is more British in her use of language than American but later when she wrote the two volumes of short stories, she became more of an American than British. As all the themes and situations are set in America and Canada she uses American vocabulary in almost all her stories. In the story, "A Father" she describes the beginning of the day in America as,
On Wednesday morning in mid-May, Mr. Bhowmick woke up as he usually did at 5:43 a.m. checked his Rolex against the alarm clock’s digital readout, punched down the alarm (see for 5:45), then nudged his wife awake. She worked as a claims investigator for an insurance company that had an office in a nearby shopping mall. She didn’t really have to leave the house until 8:30, but she liked to get up early and cook him a big breakfast.

(D,59)

She is well aware of the daily routine of the South Asians in America. Though they live in America they never forget the daily routine of their life in India and they continue to do the same in America, but with a slight difference. She also feels free in her use of words like ‘shopping mall’, ‘Eggs-cellent Recipes’, and expressions like ‘He definitely didn’t want to blurt out anything about the sick-in-the-guts sensations that came over him most mornings.’ In the story, “Isolated Incidents” she also uses expressions like ‘you can take the girl out of Canada’ and ‘She was nearly the girl in the jacket of cream in your jeans’, ‘You’ve gotta come out and visit’, etc. Though the Indian readers cannot understand the meaning of these expressions she never tries to give any explanation because they suit the description of the situations and she is sure that there are not out of place.

Even in The Middleman and Other Stories she uses American English to describe the situations and the settings of America. She uses suitable vocabulary to describe gang activities in America. In the story, “Loose Ends” the protagonist, Jeb works as a shooter to Mr. Doc Healy. Through the words of Jeb, Mukherjee describes the gang activities and the conditions that prevail in America:

Hey, what we have sounds like the Constitution of the United States. We have freedom and no strings attached. We have no debts. We come and go as we like... You can smell the fecund rot of the jungle in every headline. You can park your car in the shipping mall and watch the dope change hands, the Goldilockses and Peter Pans go off with new daddies,
the dish-washers and short-order cooks haggle over fake passports... IF
you want to stay alive,' Doc Healy cautioned me the first day, 'just keep
consuming and moving like a locust. Do that, Jeb, m’boy, and you’ll
survive to die a natural death.

(TM,

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The characters also speak English fluently as they are all well educated and skilled and
the Americans with whom the characters interact are also primarily middle class whites,
people who fit the old, white Anglo-Saxon ideal of Americanness. So Mukherjee never
finds it difficult to use English, either British or American. Even in the case of the
protagonists from lower middle class, gangsters, shooters, and underworld people she uses
language quite fit to the characters into their situations as in the first story, “The
Middleman” where the protagonist is a macho operator in the rough and tumbled world,
and Mukherjee uses American English suitable to the characters.

Christ, Al, here I’ve got this setup and I gotta beg her for it”
“Wanna come fishing? Won’t cost you extra, Al.”
“Sweetie, I asked you who gave you that filthy crow. (TM, 5)

She uses colloquial expressions like ‘gotta’, ‘wanna’, ‘Sweetie’, ‘Gringo’, etc, to suit the
characters. In another story, “Loose Ends” also she uses the language suitable to the
characters as, “I suck in my windbreaker before letting me in, and “You’re blonder than
you were. Blond’s definitely your colour... Hey,’ I yell I need a room for the night. Don’t
any of you dummies speak American?”(TM, 53)

She never hesitates to use wrong expressions and wrong words, particularly while
depicting the Indian characters. In the story, “The Tenant” Mr. Chatterjee speaks typical
Indian English
Mrs. Chatterjee has made some Indian snacks. She is waiting to meet you because she is knowing your cousin-sister who studied in Scottish Church College. My home is okay, no?

(TM, 103)

Though expressions like 'cousin-sister', 'is knowing', 'is okay no', are incorrect, it is ignored as the protagonists who speak them are Indians. She also uses some other Indian expressions like 'bapre bap', 'Hullo, hullo, hullo', 'many mens', etc, to lend an Indian colour.

As all the characters of her stories are from urban and semi urban settings and from well educated middle class families she never uses abusive words except in some situations where she depicts underworld activities in stories like "The Middleman", "Loose Ends" and "Isolated Incidents." Words like 'shit', 'whale shit', 'python curds', 'beagle', 'filthy crow', etc are used. She even uses jargons in some of her stories to suit the characters as in the story, "Angela", where she says, 'To irradiate the room with positive thinking.' Sometimes I visualize Grace as a black tropical bat, cutting through disk on blunt, ugly wings,' words like 'Gringo', 'Prego', etc. She also uses some slang words to suit the situations like 'its awesome', and clichés like 'love flees but we're stuck with Love's debris' which illustrate her linguistic level as an expatriate writer.

As she has picked up some French and German when she was in the European countries along with her parents she uses the French and German expressions in most of her American stories like "The World According to Hsu", "The Middleman", and "Loose Ends". She confesses in one of the interviews:
At the age of eight, I went with the rest of the family to Europe. We stayed abroad for three years, which meant that I had to go to school and live in cities like London, Liverpool, Basel and Montreux. That's how I first learned English and picked up some Swiss, German and French.29

About the non-availability of a formal language to write American fiction she says,

In the early eighties, when I started making fiction out of the urgency and the confusion I felt as a brown immigrant in black/white/red America, I suddenly realized that I had no models in the contemporary American stories and novels that I read for pleasure.... I did not have ready made community of reader who understood the motivations and the reasoning my characters were going through, how they struggled, secondly by second with language to express their feelings to English speaking America. I had to invent my own models. That was both scary and exhilarating.30

About the drastic change her language has undergone after her earlier works, she says,

When I thumb through pages of my novels in chronological order, I am stunned by the changes. Like Jasmine, like Debby, I have gone through several incarnations. For instance, my first novel, The Tiger's Daughter, could only have been written by an Indian Expatriate writer, still coming to terms with the homeland that she had left behind. The vocabulary, the wit and the sentences construction play on, or parody, the British English literarian that I was taught to admire unquestioningly by the Irish nuns in my Calcutta school.31

Though she likes poetry very much she never uses any poetic references in her stories. She likes Keats very much. In an interview with Tina Chen and S.X. Goudie she confesses:

I loved to read poetry out loud. Tagore and Keats, oh, they were so heady when I was a schoolgirl in Calcutta. I responded to the euphony first; then to the ideas. I didn’t know any Buddhists and came from a staunch Hindu family, but Tagore made me weep over the persecution of Buddhist converts in ancient India. Same with Keats; I’d never been to Greece, not
even seen pictures of the country, but I sure could visualize the friezescapes in the “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” There was something fresh about Keats because he was rebelling against the narrowness of British conventions. Though India was a sovereign nation when I first encountered Keats, my convent-school campus remained a very ‘English’ spot, you know, we had to sing Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic operas, that sort of thing, and we were expected to admire the logic and orderliness of the British mind. Keats was resisting those values in his poems. I suppose loving Keats’s poems for me was a quiet form of guerrilla warfare against my teachers.

So though she liked Keats and Tagore as a child, and though this liking continued throughout her life there are no poetic references in her short stories. On the whole she had to work hard in English language, in order to use it as medium of expression. In immigrant literature it is very difficult to incorporate the multicultural mosaic in the native language of a writer because it needs a language which integrates the old cultural vocabulary with the new one. So language becomes a metaphor of both belonging and of not belonging.

While Bharati Mukherjee uses pure American English Salman Rushdie uses chaste British expression. There is an effective simplicity and harmonious progression of mood and meaning in his English expression. The tone and tenor and flavor remind one of the eighteenth century fictional prose of Fielding and Sterne. His experiments with language are one of his remarkable achievements. No Indian writer has had the courage to handle English language with search gaiety and joyousness as had Rushdie.

His primary education in Cathedral and John Cannon school run by missionaries, introduced him to the Anglophone Indian educational system to the rhymes from Mother Goose, the adventures of Robin Hood, the stylistics of King James Bible, and the world of English classics because they happened to form the study material of the upper middle
classes. Within no time English has achieved a hegemonic status in India which far outdid Macaulay’s wildest expectations. At home Rushdie’s family used Urdu and at school English and so from his childhood he was a bilingual. When questioned about his interest in English language he replies,

I think it had to do with the fact that, when I was growing up everyone around me was fond of fooling around with words. It was certainly common in my family, but I think it is typical of Bombay, and maybe of India, that there is a sense of play in the way people use language. Most people in India are multilingual, and if you listen to the urban speech patterns there you’ll find it’s quite characteristic that a sentence begins in one language, go through second language and end in a third. It’s the very playful, very natural result of juggling languages. You are always reaching for the most appropriate phrase. 33

So consciously or unconsciously he had experimented with the English language and succeeded remarkably well in his experiments and innovations. While commenting on the problems faced by the Indian writers in writing in English he says,

...I was really trying to say that the way in which English is used in India has diverged significantly from Standard English. That India had made its own English the way America and Ireland and the Caribbean and Australian made their own English. But even though this is the way everybody speaks in India, nobody had the confidence, when I started writing, to use it as a literary language. When they settled down to write, they would do it in a kind of classical Forsterian English that had nothing to do with the way they were speaking. 34

But at school he was more independent and more forceful with his opinion, and his English articulation had changed from its original Bombay accent to the more superior sounding English that older Indians associated with the former British colonial officials. So he picked up chaste British English expression.
The achievement of Rushdie as also his contribution to the development of a native Indian idiom in English lies in his effortless synthesis of the enjoyably chaste English idiomatic expression with a native was of describing and representing Indian reality. It may be claimed against Rushdie that as he mainly deals with an impersonal historical reality he is not so much compelled and limited to express the subjective feelings, which requires a greater ring of authenticity. It may be clearly stated that as his movement from the historical to the ahistorical world of sensory perception is alternating, his English expression is equally at home in both the cases.  

Abundant felicity of expression and passionate interest made Rushdie's use of English more enjoyable. He has chosen English as a medium for recording and analyzing history, which is the outcome of his creative consciousness where English expression is instinctively synthesized without any deliberate effort with the Indian reality at various levels form its mythical past to the contemporary situation, with equal ease. He has achieved a greater success when compared with Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, and Mulik Raj Anand in using the English language to depict the Indian situation and setting. When Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan started writing the proportion of creative writing by the Indians itself was in a state of exploration and experimentation whereas when Rushdie started to write in English this has not only been answered but also that the capabilities and achievements of Indian writers in English have been fully established beyond any doubt. In one of the interviews he says about the growth and development of English language after the Independence:

It struck me very forcibly that if you look at the half-century before the independence of India, there really isn't any English-language writing worth a damn. If you were to make an anthology of the first half of the twentieth century you probably wouldn't include a single English-language
writer. So how strange it is that in the half-century after the British left that the language they left behind should have developed so rich a literature! It's of course true that in each of the other language you can think of one or two pretty good writers....

So he is more advantageously placed in that he is constantly exposed to the British English. But the only problem he faces is in depicting the Indian scene and setting. As he is living in a non-Indian English setting he has to find the Indian roots from outside. His agonizing expatriate roots in an English world adequately make his creative expression in English flawlessly and adequately perfect through his Indian imagination. As could be seen in his use of language in the stories, set in the ‘East’ part, in the volume of stories East, West. In the story “Good Advice is rarer than Rubies” he gives a vivid description of the scene in the buses on Pakistan Roads,

On the last Tuesday of the month, the dawn bus, its headlamps still shining, brought Miss Rehana to the gates of the British Consulate. It arrived pushing a cloud of dust, veiling her beauty from the eyes of strangers until she descended. The but was brightly painted in multicoloured arabesques, and on the front it said ‘MOVE OVER DARLING’ on green and gold letters; on the back it added ‘TATA-BATA’ and also ‘O.K. GOOD-LIFE’, Miss Rehana told the driver it was a beautiful but, and he jumped down and held the door open for her, bowing theatrically as she descended. (EW, 5)

Rushdie gives a vivid description of how the buses in Pakistan and other Asian countries are painted and coloured with appropriate words ‘move over darling’ and ‘Tata Bata’ etc, he also uses the words like ‘sahibs’, ‘pukka’, ‘bibi’, ‘Daddyji’ etc to convey the South Asian flavour. He uses a hybrid language – English generously peppered with Hindi terms to convey the themes that could be seen as representing the vast canvas of India and Pakistan.

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Rushdie concentrates all his creative endeavours in language to find the roots in a native soil through an alien medium, English. His mastery over English language with abundant creativity is surely his worthy contribution to the Indian fictional prose. The most striking achievement of him is his ability to create an Indian atmosphere and Indian world through the use of idiomatic British English without so painfully resorting to the practice of translation of Indian idioms into English or literally transporting the Indian physical world into the fictional world as done by other writers like Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. There is a kind of similarity between Raja Rao and Rushdie. Both of them are landmarks in Indo-English literature, and give an authentic delineation of Indian life and attitudes and if there is any variation it is because of the diversity of Indian life. Just as Raja Rao gives a Brahmanic Sanskrit flavour to the language Rushdie gives a Urdu flavour. In the story “Free Radio” he presents a typical Indian situation seen in the remote villages. It is done through the narrator of the story who is a retired schoolteacher who spends his days under a banyan tree at the centre of the town; smoking his hookah and keeping his ears open for various tidbits of gossip. As an elderly man in the village the narrator of the story tells the story of Ramani, the protagonist,

I say: who listens... Exactly; nobody, certainly not a stone-head like Ramani the rickshaw-wallah. But I blame the widow. I saw it happen, you know, I saw most of it until I couldn’t stand any more. I sat under this very banyan, smoking this selfsame hookah, and not much escaped my notice. And at one time I tired to save him from his fate, but it was no go. (EW, 19)

The description is typical of the Indian story telling. The language Rushdie uses is also typical of Indian expression. The words he uses, ‘stone-head’, ‘rickshaw-wallah’, ‘selfsame’, ‘no go’, and the expressions like ‘I saw most of it until I couldn’t stand any
more', to convey the meaning of helplessness are typical of India. A.K.Rao rightly comments on his Indianisation of English,

Rushdie is trying to de-colonise the language by tapping the interlingual syntactic resources and achieves a tremendous measure of success as Desani or Raja Rao has, in attempting to Indianise the language of the Empire. However he has an edge over them because he has looked at the whole problem of the language from the point of view of a Westerner who has had first-hand knowledge of the living idiom of speech, and its creative distortions and enjambments.37

Like Raja Rao and Desais, his mastery of the language is total and that he had decolonized English more effectively than the other writers. In case of Raja Rao the Indian English is deliberately sought to be built into the texture and idiom of the text and in case of Rushdie the Indian life roots itself as it were in the very atmosphere itself, created not so doubtfully by ‘translated idioms but by an abidingly natural idiom. In an interview with Dave Weich he says of the experiments he made in the field of language:

There’s a certain point at which I felt that I’d done enough of that, as I felt fresh. Your relationship to language shifts as you go though your books and as you get older. I though, Well, I know how to do that and, if I want to I can do that now, but it’s more interesting to look at this other thing to try to make the language more capacious, to try to bring into it every kind of material.38

His stories like “Free Radio”, “The Courter,” and “The Prophet’s Hair” give many examples of how marvelously he manipulates with the language. The diction he uses in each story is perfectly suited to the character’s voice which in turn is well suited to the story being narrated as in the case of the narrator of the story “Free Radio”. Almost all of his characters except those in the first two stories in the first set of stories are well educated
and know English very well. So he does not face any problem in depicting the characters in other stories. In the first story the protagonist Miss Rehana, though an illiterate speaks so well like an educated woman. "Miss Rehana," she told him. 'Fiancée of Mustafa Dar of Bradford, London...I see, Thank you."(EW, 8) Miss Rehana, though works as a maidservant in a house, speaks perfect English. English, Hindi, Urdu seem to be the three main languages used by the characters in his stories. In the story, "Chekhov and Zulu" there are so many references to Urdu and Hindi words like "Adaabarz, Mrs. Zulu. Permission to enter? ...No, how is it possible? Acting dipty’s tankha must be far in excess of Security Chief."(EW, 149)

Rushdie uses Urdu words in conversations and does not mind giving translations because they look natural to the vernacular of the characters. There are so many words like 'Arre', 'jalebi', 'begum sahib', 'Fataakh, Fataakh', 'bakvaas', etc which suggest that the protagonists are typical Indian Muslims. Even in the story, "The Courter" his protagonists speak Urdu words very frequently. Words like ‘Hai,’ ‘Allah-tobah’, ‘Abba’, 'banhomie', etc are used to suit the characters. He even discusses in detail how the Indians, particularly, the Muslims faced difficulty in understanding colloquial English and formal English in London. The protagonist’s father also faces so many problems in the streets of London and he is even slapped by a the sales girl in a medical shop.

Rushdie succeeds in making use of two aspects of verisimilitude in language the problem of conveying the flavour of the Indian idiom and of making clear what the characters are saying at any point of given time. In this respect both Raja Rao and Rushdie succeed in using authentic language as they have depicted a wide range of characters from different societies. Both of them have never cared to give relevant English words.
Rushdie's characters belong to a wider span of social classes it is difficult to make a clear distinction between those who can speak English and those who cannot.

Very often Rushdie is accused of writing 'unreadable' prose. But in his stories in *East, West* he proves that he can write readable prose and also in the realist mode as well if he wishes to. Though he writes bowdy, outsize, polyglot stories, he never uses abusive words in his stories. His characters do not utter abusive words. Though Rushdie likes music and poetry there are such poetic references in his stories except in the story, “Yorick”. A riddle comes out of the mouth of Yorick,

Nor liquid, nor solid, nor gassy air,
Nor taste, nor smell, nor substance there.
It may be turned to good or ill.
Pour it in an ear, and it may kill.(EW, 77)

Though he is not very particular about the use of poetry in his stories he likes music. So there are so many references to music in his stories, particularly to pop music, Rock and roll. He uses rock and roll in his novel, “Ground Beneath her Feet”

Thus Rushdie describes a world which is repressively colonized and he also engages with and celebrates a complex inner world in his stories. He produces an English language world which is not Anglo-centric. He explains in his *Imaginary Homelands* that,

those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it assisted by the English language’s enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers.
So throughout the essay he discusses using English language as a decolonized person which involves two continuous acts that a colonized person when he uses English he thinks that he is using his master’s language and secondly how one can express oneself in a largely Anglophone world. He further says “to conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free.”  

References:


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