Chapter - 6

CONCLUSION
Short story is as old as camphor, as old as the history of literature. It is a short narrative, usually fictitious almost always in prose which creates a mood, illuminates a character or two and develops a single series of events. The four short story writers, Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and Salman Rushdie are unique in exploring the tenets of the short story, the theme, characterization, plot, situation and technique. As Raja Rao says of writing a short story in English,

When you can’t write a book in English that will not stand the test of India in India, then it is not a worth writing. ¹

Raja Rao view the contemporary events of his times against the background of the cultural heritage of India, as C.V.Venugopal says,

Raja Rao’s stories however, are not merely an expression of an inner joy, they are that and something more mundane too … a desire to satirize, a desire to reform the social scene all around. ²

His contact with the Brahmins at Malmad Hills, his childhood education in Marassa-Aliya school provided rich material for his stories. Soon after the marriage he started writing stories in English, French and Kannada. His contact with Indian saints and Mahatmas had great impact on the themes of his stories. He also took an active part in freedom struggle. This became major theme in some of his stories. The writers like Shakespeare, Russian writer, Dastovasky, Kafka, Ignosio Silono Andre Guide Marlax, Romain Rolland have all influenced him.

In two volumes of short stories Raja follows the peculiar folk tale and epic legendary form with all the simplicity. He deals with variety of themes like alienation, human
relationships, and on various social problems faced by low-caste people and child widows and orphans. The content and variety of techniques make his stories memorable. The characters that Raja Rao depicts are predominately from rural India. They are simple and sans. They are not psychologically complex and are moved by primary emotions. Their actions are fully predictable and have a feeling of soul, share our hoys and sorrows with us. They are all innocent and their lives are happy or unhappy all lead by the circumstances but have incredible faith in divinity. The narrative technique, which he adopts in many of his stories, is omniscient method of narration and also uses the modern technique of stream of conscious technique in some his stories like “In Khandesh”. He also achieves remarkable perfection in using English idiom to translate Indian counterpart and is flexible enough to expect the nuances of Indian life and temperament. The abusive expressions used by him give smooth English renderings without sounding strange or unnatural.

Anita Desai’s two volumes of stories Games At Twilight and Diamond Dust depict the Indian themes, settings and characters. Being a creative writer she while writing is conscious of its true value, as she says that

This has become such a deeply ingrained habit it is like chain smoking. I chain-smoke with words, with books. There is a difference; of course what begins, as self-indulgence eventually became self-discipline.

Since her childhood she was conscious of being a writer. Writing is a part of her character, temperament, nature and life. Anita Desai started her literary carrier with short
stories. In her two volumes of short stories *Games At Twilight* and *Diamond Dust* she deals with themes of parents and children and of people in search of their selves within the context of the family. Though the world of her stories is limited it is quite interesting when compared with that of her novels. As Kung Bala Goel comments,

> Though Mrs. Desai’s range of characters is rather limited urban, ordinary, lower classes, uneducated people and villagers also figure in her stories. These would seem at times to represent the masses who have a closer contact with the evil and a deeper faith in tradition, unlike the sensitive alienated upper class characters.  

The narrative technique she adopts in many of her stories is first person narration, but in most of her stories she uses the mixed, a combination of the first and third person point of view. She also uses the modern technique of stream of consciousness and internal monologue narration in her stories like “The Man Who Saw Himself Drown”, and “Games at Twilight”. She also uses characteristic and situational irony in her stories like “Surface Textures”, “Sales”, etc. She uses destructive and devastating irony to project the instinctual desires in adults. Her use of imagery is flexible means of captaincy the rhythm of Indian local life. In some of her stories she also depicts the pictorial imagery. About her use of English language as a medium of expression she always feels proud, because English to her is a rich flexible, supple, adaptable, variéd and vital. She thinks that it is both the language of reason and instinct, sense and sensibility. It is capable of poetry and prose. She always thinks that English itself is created for her to depict her problems.

Unlike Raja Rao and Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee’s stories explore the themes and settings and character of America and Canada. As a child her favourite part time was to listen to Indian folk tales told by her grandmother. At the tender age she had also read
the Bengali translations of great writers like Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky. After her primary education at London she was educated at Loretto House in Calcutta, which is far more British than any other school she had gone in England or in India. So the education in Christian schools had given her good grounding in English language and literature and enabled her to write in English.

During her stay in Canada she started her literary career with the first novel, The Tiger's Daughter and Wife. Later she moved to America being vexed with the racial discrimination in Canada. She was ill treated badly by the Canadians because the Canadians are very particular of their racial purity. She had taken a permanent citizenship in U.S.

After her first novel she also wrote two volumes of stories Darkness and The Middleman and other stories. As she says about how important they are to her as,

I felt both Darkness and The Middleman were important books because I was writing about a group that hadn't been really written about in American fiction. Darkness, which was the series of stories about South Asian immigrants and degrees of acculturation, got a very good New York Times Review....I feel that this was an area that mattered to me, a subject that deeply, deeply concerned me. With The Middleman, I felt that I had made another sort of break-through where I was talking not just as South Asian immigrants trying on their new American identities but that I had grown as a writer or grown in confidence as a writer where I could just as comfortably automatically take on a male voice, white redneck. Southerner voice, a very elegant, expatriate Bengali woman's voice with remarkable flexibility.
So the stories in Darkness have the themes of the exploration of Canadian prejudice against South Asians. The racial intolerance she experienced in Canada compelled her to move back to the United States where she had settled down afterwards. The stories of The Middleman explore the themes and settings of America. She wrote them as a true citizen of America.

In most of the stories Mukherjee uses the American narrative modes in order to transport the Asian immigrants and make them transformative. She uses the authorial point of view to depict her immigrant themes. In the two volumes she brings deep understanding and sympathy for the plight of her characters, who find themselves caught between their new countries and the ones they have left behind. Though the characters in all her stories are aware of the brutalities and violence that surround them and are often victimized by various forms of social oppression, she generally draws them as superiors. As she says in an interview with Vignission about this struggle from her personal experience that,

> We are, having to invent new footsteps for ourselves because in some basic ways we are so different and the times are so much less hospitable to new comers like me with dark skin or different exotic, religious. I think that to some extent my characters, including Jasmine, are very often tough and they are superiors and they are hustlers. Wheelers and dealers like the title story in ‘The Middleman’ and that’s part of being a pioneer.
Mukherjee also employs the mordant and biting irony to depict the miserable life of the immigrants to Canada and America. She uses situational irony to present the double-edged situation of the immigrants in America, one on the ethnic and the other on the personal moral level. She uses Canadian and American imagery and symbolism to depict her themes. Her use of Indian and American metaphors to show the broken identities in the alien nations in many of her stories is unique in its kind. The language she uses is American as she confesses that she is more like a British in using English than an Indian immigrant to U.S. Unlike Raja Rao and Anita Desai she does not write in Indian English and about Indian settings.

Salman Rushdie depicts the themes and settings of Pakistan, London, and India. Rushdie though obsessed with the idea of becoming a writer since childhood started his literary carrier very late. As Peter Kadzes says,

As a young man, Salman Rushdie considered becoming an actor, but he stayed true to more primal ambition and became a writer. Today the world is his stage and although he may have wished otherwise— he has become perhaps the most famous writer in the world.7

After the publication of four novellas and some essays, his short stories, published in different literary magazines were collected into a volume entitled East, West, in 1994. It is divided into three parts of which each recapitulate Rushdie’s own migration from East to West. The first part depicts the themes of immigration, the theme of optimism in the face of futility and religion. The second set focuses on the three icons of western culture, Hamlet, The Wizard of the Oz and Christopher Columbus. The final set brings together the East and the West and focuses the crossing between them. James Harrison rightly comments on the hyphen in the title of the book that,
The hyphen had represented the earlier Salman Rushdie, the earlier
version of hybridity. The comma indicates a change in perspective – an
understanding of separate but connected worlds. Thus East, West mark a
new development in Rushdie's literary carrier. As the stories move from
East to West and then to East West a structure enclosing them merges.8

The predominant themes four writers RajaRao, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and
Salman Rushdie are alienation, human relationships, and in some stories they deal with
the social problems faced by the protagonists in the society. In modern art and literature
the theme of alienation is often explored to focus on the individual’s feelings of alienness
towards the society, the family, and towards oneself. Alienation and its concomitant
identity crisis, a contemporary malaise has become the theme of many of the stories of
many Indian writers in English including Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, and
Salman Rushdie. Most of the stories of these writers are in some way or the other
connected with each other in their handling of the theme of alienation. As J.P. Sharma
rightly comments on the treatment of the theme of alienation in the stories of Raja Rao
that,

In the post independence literature there is a loss of faith in the pre-
independence social and moral values. The individual and the society
appear to be at war with each other. But unlike the West, the theme of
alienation in India has been handled to explore the meaning of life in the
face of uncertainty, irrationality and an oppressive sense of sickness of
the society... Raja Rao is successful because he had made a deep study
of man not only in isolation but also in the context of the social milieu.9

Thus four protagonists Javni, Akkayya, Motilal, and Nimka are trapped in the sterility of
tradition and coarseness of custom and are victims of alienation. While Javni is
apparently a victim of social ostracism, Akkayya falls a victim to the destructive insularity of the puritanical tradition. The hardening of human heart within, results in indifference, hostility and a neurotic self-hatred. Motilal on the other hand is an exile from the place of his birth from his home, wife and son and neighbours. His life is bereft of all values. The alien character Nimka is abandoned by her husband and her son and even by her home country, Russia.

Just like Raja Rao, the stories of Anita Desai deal with the theme of alienation. The protagonists Suno, Artist, the Tampura player, Rakesh and Maya Sanyal, a nameless protagonist in the stories, Games at Twilight, are alienated by the society, families, individuals and self, as they are failures in developing good relationships. Suno wants to keep away from his family to avoid the acute pressure to study hard and get first class in his graduation and fulfill the dreams of his father. He runs away from home and seeks refuge in a nearby park. When he sees a Muslim couple in the park he feels liberated. This sense of liberation brings change in him and he does not care for his father, the members of his family, the examinations and the competition in the society. A feeling of alienation goes deep into his heart. So also a nameless painter struggles hard to run the family with his earnings through his art. His wife is hostile towards him because he is unable to run the family with his earnings from art. At the end his position comes down even to the level of a beggar, as he fails to impress the visitors who come to buy his paintings. The plight of the artist is so pathetic that the angry face of his wife keeps appearing in front of his eyes. He feels alienated by the visitors, his wife, even by his fate. Another protagonist Harish intensely preoccupied with the textures of objects. It is a question of identity. In searching the interesting surfaces he loses his identity and is alienated by his family, friends society and at last himself. Even the protagonists Mr. Das,
Anu and Asha, and a nameless protagonist, in the stories of *Diamond Dust*, suffer from the feeling of alienation. Anu and Ahsa are alienated from their only son Rakesh, who has settled in London. A nameless protagonist goes on an official tour to a city. At night while he is walking along the riverside sees some people bringing a dead body from the water, which looks like him. He is shocked to see his own body there. He begins to identify himself with the dead man. Gradually he feels alienated from the society. He loses his identity because he is no more alive, but his self does not believe this. His eagerness to reveal himself to his wife and family is wiped out when he sees his wife in a white sari, vacating the quarters of the office. With the feeling of alienation he walks towards the river and downs himself in it. Thus though the theme of alienation is not predominant in the stories of Anita Desai, there are few protagonists who have been alienated from the society and the families. As Choudhury Bindulata says,

Most of her protagonists, highly sensitive, seems to be more outsiders to a society alienated from human sentiment. The corresponding problem for her characters therefore, is to wrest some sort of meaning out of this.¹⁰

While the protagonists of Raja Rao and Anita Desai are alienated from the families, society and self, the protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee are the expatriates and immigrants to Canada and U.S.A. they are alienated from their own countries. Though the theme of alienation is rather weak in the stories of Raja Rao and Anita Desai, the theme of alienation is predominant in the stories of Bharati Mukherjee. The protagonists in her two volumes of stories, *Darkness* and *The Middleman and Other Stories* suffer a sense of alienation. They are the Asian immigrants to North America and Canada. Almost all the stories in these two volumes explore in various ways the theme of expatriation, alienation, and immigration.
Mukherjee had experienced the racial discrimination in Canada and this she depicts in many of her stories. She always considers expatriation as a self-defeating attitude in a writer and the expatriate writer makes a complaint, tries to express the pain of exile and always seeks refuge in solitude. The expatriates never feel comfortable both in the native and alien lands. They always experience some change or the other in the process of assimilation and it does not mean that they are denied their past but they let themselves lose their past in the process of assimilation and the rigid hold of the past gradually fade away. The protagonists, in most of the stories of Darkness are expatriates and immigrants and suffer from a strong feeling of alienation. Ratna works in the department of personality development in Toronto. Her husband Graeme accepts a job in Toronto without informing Ratna. But Ratna always likes to stay in Montreal rather than Toronto where she is merely ‘English’ whereas in Toronto she is an expatriate. She acknowledges this feeling of expatriation when she reads the label on the wine bottle ‘Cote de Cassandra.’ No matter where she lived, she would never feel so at home again. This symbolizes the sentiments of Westernized Mukherjee as well as the fact that she is most at home in a cosmopolitan English speaking milieu because assimilation becomes easier for her in the American environment than in the hostile Canada. The story “Isolated Incidents” depicts the Canadian attitude towards expatriates. Torontians are proud of their racial purity. So they are hostile towards the expatriates. The protagonists like Angela, Mr. Bhowmick, and Manna Patel suffer from a sense of expatriation in their host countries and are alienated from their home countries. In her second volume of stories, The Middleman and Other Stories Mukherjee is the middleman linking both the worlds. All the protagonists in this volume are adventurers, explorers, rather than refugees and outcasts, and they try to become part of a new, changing America. The middleman is a
macho operator in the rough and tumbled world of smugglers. He struggles to assimilate in America but always feels alienated. The protagonist Panna Butt leaves her husband and family to get a Ph.D. She adapts herself so well to the social and cultural milieu of America that she feels light almost free and the alienation from her country never bothers her. On the other hand alienation from her country has given her an opportunity to find a new self that has been set free from the bondages of Indian traditions and meaningless suppression of the marriage system. Just like Panna Bhatt Blanquita and Rindy also feel free in their host countries whereas some protagonists like Maya Sanyal, Mr. Venkatesan, a young hizra boy always feel alienated from their home countries. Though they struggle to assimilate in their host countries their expatriate psyche never allows them to assimilate fully in their host countries. They neither assimilate nor get back to their own countries; they remain expatriates, the position of 'trishaku’ in their alien land, as Manju Sampath says,

We see that in *Darkness* Mukherjee is closer to her host country for she declares here, The New World forces you to know what you really want-and what Mukherjee is striving for is assimilation. She definitely comes one-step closer to this goal in her next work - *The Middleman and Other Stories*. In this collection of stories Mukherjee writes about how energetic and diverse immigrants are altering American mosaic, as the new changing America is the theme of the stories of *The Middleman*. The fact that she uses the exotic of her Indian background to graduate into the American experience is clearly visible here as she gradually moves away from themes of expatriation and nostalgia to focuses on changing identities and formations of emotional ties to N. America.11

While the theme of alienation, expatriation, and assimilation run through almost all the stories of Bharati Mukherjee, the stories of Salman Rushdie in his *East, West* also depict the same but in some what in a different way. In his view just as tolerance, liberty and
freedom are associated with the West so too are illiberalism, misunderstanding to Islam. He has been cast into the exile not just from his first life, as a Muslim, born in Bombay, but also from his adopted life as an Indo-American writer educated at Cambridge, living in London. His collection of stories is a call, as to how to make a home for oneself in a state of exile. Though his themes are similar to the themes of Bharati Mukherjee Rushdie's treatment is fresh and appealing. The protagonists in the first part of the stories, 'East' are alienated form their families, society. Rehana is alienated from her husband, as she does not like to be alienated from her home country. She intentionally commits mistakes at the Consulate to stay back with the family where she is working as a maid servant because she prefers the freedom in her own country to enjoying the benefit and status of being married woman to a wealthy person in London. East is always the best to her than the west. Another protagonist, Ramani, is also alienated from his society and from the village he has been living since his childhood, for two reasons, first he feels betrayed when he fails to get a radio after undergoing vasectomy operation and the second one is being mislead by the words of his friends he goes to Bombay to try his luck as an actor, but unfortunately he never feels at home in Bombay. He writes letters to the village schoolteacher boasting of his success as a film star only to overcome his sense of alienation in the new place.

Rushdie’s sense of longing for the homeland and for his family is clearly depicted in the story “At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers” in the section ‘West’. Multitudes who gather at the auction place want to buy the slippers to go back to their homelands. So also Rushdie who has been exiled from his homeland wants to satisfy his sense of alienation by creating a surrealistic aura around the ruby slippers. The final section of the East, West, deals with the protagonists of Indian residents of England who belong neither to
India nor to England. They bring together the East, and West, and focus on the crossing between them. The two boyhood friends Chekov and Zulu try to bring the west with the east. They are the barriers of the two. Zulu who is honest in his profession is alienated from his profession and community. As a true officer he hands over the information about the Sikh terrorists to Chekov. Both the friends return to India after the death of Indira Gandhi. At the end both are alienated. Zulu is alienated from his profession and sets up a detective security service and Chekov is alienated from the world as he is killed in the bomb blast along with Rajiv Gandhi. Certainly Mary is another protagonist, who works in the narrator’s house, is transported to London along with the family. She enjoys the liberty and freedom of alien country by developing friendship with a widower Mr. Mecir, who is known as ‘courter’. But after some days she is vexed with the freedom of the west and starts feeling not at home. She develops a heart trouble. The doctor finds nothing wrong with her general health. And one fine day she announces the reason for her disease was homesickness. Her sense of alienation from her homeland never allows her to stay longer in London. She returns to India immediately and lives for thirty more years. She does not feel at home in London. She is just like Rehana, who feels happy and content only in her homeland. It is similar to the plight of Rushdie, who is alienated from his homeland and is not satisfied with the host country. As Blythe Will comments,

Rushdie makes it explicitly that he resides principally in a state of doubt rootless it seems is his.... and every intellectual’s native country. But that has its compensations. The writer is entitled to the joy of the nomad, migrating from one land to another, blithely, crossing artificial borderlines, at home everywhere and nowhere.12

Thus though all the four writers deal with the theme of alienation in their stories they do it in their own way throwing light on several unexplored aspects of alienation. So also
the four writers deal with the theme of human relations in their stories. As most of the stories of modern literature are character dominant the stories of the four writers deal with human relationships. Though all the protagonists in their stories struggle to establish good human relationships with their counterparts some succeed and some fail. Raja Rao sees everything and conveys everything through the relationship of the protagonists with their counterparts. The protagonists Javni, Akkayya, Narsiga, Motikhan establish good human relationships with their counterparts. Though Javni belongs to a low pariah cast she succeeds in getting the love and affection of a Brahmin family. She works in the family not for money but for the affection and love she gets from them. So also Akkayya works as a maid servant throughout her life in the house of her sister, not for the shelter they provided to her but for the love and affection she gets from the children of the family. She is the only person who looks after the every newborn child in that big family as if they were her own children.

Rao's protagonists have good relationships not only with human beings but also with animals. The protagonists, Rangappa, Motikhan develop good relationships with snakes. Though Rangappa fails to get love and affection from the members of his family he gets the love and affection of a snake, which protects his ancestral property, so also Motikhan. His relationship with the snake is very special. It is a relationship symbolizing the relationship between two religions, the Hindu and the Islam. In the previous birth the snake was pandit Srinath Sastri who had taken the birth as a snake to get salvation. Motokhan also in his previous birth was a basket maker. He is reborn as a Muslim to get salvation. Their relationship is the relationship of compassion when all is well both live well and if anything goes wrong the snake has to bite Motikhan.
While some protagonists succeed in having good relationships with their counterparts there are some who fail to do so. Motila fails to have a good relationship with his wife, son, and daughter-in-law because money comes in between. Thus almost all the protagonists in the stories of Raja Rao establish good relationships with their counterparts except one or two.

Just like the protagonists of Raja Rao the protagonists of Anita Desai also try to establish good human relationships with their counterparts. All her stories highlight subjugation of innocence by brutal forces, human relationships, the problem of children and women. Almost all the protagonists succeed in establishing good human relationships with their counterparts, except very few. Mr. Bose establishes a good relationship with his wife in the story, "Private Tuitions by Mr. Bose". Desai in this story depicts the harmonious wife and husband relationship with its bliss, petty quarrels, and reunions. So also a nameless painter succeeds in having good relationships with his wife and daughter. The responsibility of the father as the head of the family is highlighted in the story, "Sales". The protagonist Otima in "Pigeons at Daybreak" succeeds in establishing an affectionate relationship with her husband. She always takes every possible step to keep her husband comfortable because he is an asthma patient. The ceremonial wife and husband relationship is depicted in this story. The protagonists, Asha and Anu in the story, "Winterscape" succeed in establishing good relationship among them. When Asha falls sick after giving birth to a child Anu sacrifices her studies and helps her sister. Their relationships is too deep that Anu even sacrifices her son when Asha continuously gives birth to stillborn babies. She stays back with her sister when her husband dies. In the story, "Underground" also Desai projects the wife and husband relationships marvelously between Jack and Meg, Bob and Helen. Though Bob purchases a big house on the seaside
to run a hotel, he withdraws the idea when his wife gets a heart attack. He does not want to create any sort of inconvenience to his wife. But he is most unfortunate to lose his wife. But he feels the presence of his wife in that house and never allows anyone into it because he does not want to be disturbed and come out of the musings about his wife. In the story, Desai, through Suno, proclaims that too much attention by the parents towards their children leads to repulsive reactions. The protagonist Harish fails to establish his relationship with his wife and family, as he is too much obsessed with the fine surface textures of the objects. He fails to fulfill his duties towards his family. The protagonist Rakesh fails to establish his relationship with his father. Just like Suno Rakesh’s father is vexed with too much of attention paid to him.

While some protagonists fail and some succeed to establish good human relationships in the stories of Desai, almost all the protagonists in the stories of Bharati Mukherjee fail to establish good relationships with their counterparts. In her two volumes Darkness and The Middleman and other stories, she explores the relationships between men and women between father and children and between wife and husband. Her protagonists like Angel, Nafeeza Hafeez, Mr.Bhowmic, Manny Patel fail to establish their relationships with their counter parts. Angela fails to establish good relationship with Dr. Menazies, because her background does not allow her to have good relationship with the doctor. She rejects the marriage proposal made by the doctor. So also Nafeeza an immigrant to the U.S. enjoys the advantages of being an expatriate, but fails to have good relationships with the natives and even with her husband. She is even humiliated by the natives. Mr.Bhowmic wants to have good relationships with the Native Americans but unfortunately his daughter becomes a pregnant through artificial insemination taking advantage of the freedom and liberty of alien country. With this Mr.Bhowmic though wants to develop good
relationships with Americans decides to leave America for India. So also Dr. Manna Patel, a psychiatrist is an immigrant to America. He marries an American but fails to establish good relationships with his wife, as he is unable to forget his relationship with his homeland. The feeling of alienness comes in the way of their relationships. He decides to leave the country. But he wants to be a good father to his son; he wants to have affectionate relationship with his son by sending gifts to him on his birthdays. Thus almost all the protagonists who are immigrants to U.S. and Canada fail to establish their relationships with their counterparts, as their expatriate psyche does not allow them to have good relationships.

While the protagonists in Darkness are rather weak and mild in having relationships with their American counterparts the protagonists in the stories The Middleman and Other Stories are energetic and diverse immigrants who want to alter the American mosaic by having relationships with America and American milieu. They are daring enough to have relationships with the American counterparts. But Americans are afraid of having relationships with the Asian immigrants. Maria, Panna butt, Blanquita Jasmine and Maya Sanyal are courageous and daring enough to have good relationships with their American counterparts. But when the time comes Maria kills one of them and runs away with her childhood friend Andrews. But Panna Butt is quite opposite to Maria, and wants to leave behind her husband in India to have a relationship with America because she feels free and wants to enjoy the advantages of the alien land. So also Maya Sanyal rather confused in having relationships with her American counterparts, first marries her American co student, then divorces him and establishes her relationship with the owner of the house and again leaves him to marry an Indian at the end.
While the protagonists of Asian immigrants are ready to have the relationships with their counterparts the American protagonists like Alfie, Sharon, Camille, Rindy, Jason and Griff are not ready to have any relationship with the Asian immigrants. Alfie, though wants to marry Maria he does ask her to marry, as she is too ambitious. At the end Maria's lover leaves him alive, only for the reason of not aspiring to marry her. Sharon fails to establish her relationship with her husband, as she can not bear the supremacy of her stepdaughter over Jason. At the end being unable to continue her life with Jason leaves him to his daughter. So also Camille leaves her Indian counterpart Dr. Manna Patel. Thus most of the Asian protagonist in her stories fails to establish their relationships with their counterparts, while some of the American counterparts fail and some succeed. A.V. Krishan Rao comments,

The American family has become very different not just because of social influence and new sexual standards but because of interaction between mainstream Americans and new immigrants. Her stories are disturbing or discomfiting because they challenge the accepted conventional codes of behaviour and show the changes taking place here under the impact of waves of immigration from non-white countries. 14

While the stories of Bharti Mukherjee deal with the plight of the people from Asian countries to the West and their relationship with their counterparts in their adopted lands the stories of Salman Rushdie in his *East, West* deals with the relationships of the protagonists with their eastern and western counterparts. They run between India and London. In the stories set in the East the protagonists are Indian and Pakistani. They try to establish human relationships with their counterparts in India and London. Miss. Rehana wants to have good relationships with the family where she is working as servant maid at the cost of her relationships with her husband in London. She sacrifices the luxurious life
of a wealthy man in London to have her relationship with the children in the house where she is working. East is always best to her when compared with the west. Ramani another protagonist develops an unusual relationship with the wife of a thief with five children. The woman is ten years older than Ramani. Ramani though succeeds in having a good relationship with the widow he fails to have good relationship with the village and the village schoolteacher who is his well-wisher. Though he goes to Bombay he never feels at home there. It is clearly known from his letters to the schoolteacher that he is just boasting.

In the second set, which is focused on the three icons of the west Hamlet, the Ruby slippers, and Christopher Columbus. Yorick, the jester in the story Hamlet tries to have good a relationship with his prince because he has to save his scull from the hands of the prince. Rushdie presents the unusual relationship of the people at the auction with the Ruby slippers worn by the famous heroine in the movie The Wizard of the Oz. Their relationship with the slippers is arrived at out of necessity. Every one in the hall wants to have it for the safe landing in their homeland. In the last story in the second set Rushdie presents the relationship of Columbus with the Queen Isabella. Columbus’s relationship with the queen is out of necessity. He needs the help of the Queen to undertake his voyage to unknown region. So he wants to have good relationship with the queen and stands all the insult the Queen imposes on him. Isabella also wants to have good relationship at the end because he is the only man that can satisfy her desire to conquer the unknown region. In the story, “Chekov and Zulu” he presents the relationship between the two boyhood friends. The story depicts how forces of history impinge on personal lives of both the friends’ companionship. They maintain uniformity not only in their professions but also in their death as the narrator depicts the two friends talking with
each other at the end of the story. Death also does not divide the two friends. The final story depicts the unusual relationship of an Indian servant with a porter in London. Certainly Mary, the protagonist of the story develops her relationship with the chess master to feel at home in the alien country but after some days she decides to leave London as her relationship with her homeland is more stronger than her relationship with the chess master. Rushdie in this story depicts through the protagonists his longing for his homeland. Though exiled he too wants to restore his relationship with his homeland.

Thus all the four writers explore on the theme of human relationships in their own way. In the modern short stories social problems play an important role in the lives of the protagonists, as the stories are character dominant. The protagonist’s existence in the society depends upon his status in the society whether it is in India or abroad. Sometimes the protagonists struggle hard to prove themselves in order to fit into the society. Such are the protagonists in most of the short stories of Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee and Salman Rushdie. Among the four writers Raja Rao is successful as an artist because he makes a deep study of man not only in isolation but also in the social milieu. He gives full scope to his characters to establish their identity as social beings by making them intrinsic to the values and experiences which are valid in an Indian context.

In the two volumes of short stories, Raja Rao explores the darker side of our inherited customs and beliefs but he is not as strident as Anand or Iswaran in exploring them. He has a great zeal for reformation in society as is evident from the story, “Javni”. The story unravels the evil consequences of the caste system in the society. He also explores the superstitious beliefs of the villagers in this story. In the early twenties and thirties superstition and traditional beliefs have dominated the Indian village society. In the story,
“Akkayya”, he exposes the evil of the child marriages. Akkayya is married to an old man who had grandchildren at the time of marriage. She becomes a widow even before she comes to know the meaning of marriage and widowhood. Raja Rao also warns against the impending disintegration of the family ties in the society through this story. In the story “A client” he exposes the tactics of the marriage brokers to catch suitable grooms to get money. They are like anglers who catch the fish without water. Rao proclaims through this story that Indians give much importance to process of marriage than love. The story also depicts how parents of the both, the bride and the groom fall victims to the brokers. The broker is also very intelligent in convincing both the parties and if any thing goes wrong in future he throws everything in the name of God. Raja Rao explores the social evil of maintaining concubines by rich people in the society. The number of concubines indicated the financial status of the individual in those days. He also proclaims through the protagonist how this false idea ruins one’s life as that of Motilal whose grandfather, a rich man, is left penniless on the roads. The two snake stories “Companion” and “The True story of Kanakapala” explores the blind belief and social trauma about snakes.

The stories “In Khandesh”, “The Cow of Barricades”, and “Narsiga” tell us about the political situation in India during the nineteen thirties and forties. They dwell upon Gandhi’s impact on Indian society. Raja Rao who is an activist, is influenced by Gandhian thought towards action. Many of his stories illustrate the consolidation of people in groups and the emergence of an awareness of Indian’s identity. The story “Narsiga” presents the national movement in the tale of an orphan shepherded-boy. He is protected and looked after by a Brahmin couples who support Gandhi in his social as well as political teachings. Gandhi in those days was Mahatma, the God, who has no temple. The protagonist Narsiga’s faith in Gandhi is such that when Gandhi is released from jail.
he feels very happy. He goes around the village and announces the news to all the villagers as if his own relative was released. “In Khandesh” also Rao depicts the freedom struggle and the British rule, the long lost feudalism, which was on the rise in the shape of the Maharaja’s visit to the village and the forced loyalty expected by British Government. In the story, “The Cow of Barricades” he presents the freedom struggle at its peak. The author presents in a symbolic way the Mother India reflecting the oneness of the country and all its salient values. He is the first man who acquainted the West with the aspirations of Indian freedom struggle and the British atrocities. He also presents the cow as the symbol of self-sacrifice and martyrdom. She is the mother in bondage. She is the all-sustaining and self-giving mother earth. Raja Rao here presents the Indian traditional belief of personifying the cow as the mother, the mighty power over all. Thus Raja Rao presents the social problems, which were predominant during thirties and forties in India, particularly in villages. As K.R.Rao says,

Rao’s stories are woven around the seemingly simple and unsophisticated lives of rural, households and uneasy tension between dreams associated with the past and realities related to the present. Trapped in the sterility of tradition and the coarseness of custom, the individuals struggle for some comprehension of their destiny, some discovery of personality and some metaphor of meaningful selfhood as a foil to the withering anonymity and impersonality of Indian life. In such a situation, values get blurred and life becomes uncertain and agonizing. Javni, the disinherited wife, Akkayya, the childless widow, Motilal the inconsequential ‘gram-vendor, Narsiga the listless shepherded boy, and others emerge out of a landscape which is at once symbolic and realistic.15

Just as Raja Rao depicts the problems of the society before independence, Anita Desai delineates social problems which are purely personal. In her two volumes of stories she
depicts the tension between convention, family solidarity and individualism, social requirements, and the impersonal factors. Her protagonists like Ravi, Suno, a nameless painter, Mr. Bose, the teacher struggle to establish themselves in the society by proving their worth. Ravi, tries to prove his superiority over his counterpart Raghu, and Suno tries to get a first class in degree and to get a good job so that he can satisfy his parents, and the nameless painter to please the buyers of his paintings and to support his family. All of them struggle to fit themselves well and be honoured by the society. She also explores through the painter's life the hyoricritical show of friendship of the buyers of the paintings of the painter. In the story, "Pineapple Cake" she presents the triumph of instinctive urges over sophistication. The dignity and honour vanish in them clash with instinctive urges. Mrs. Fernandez is so inhuman that she ignores the death in the party and grabs her son's arm and makes him sit in a chair and shows him a plate of pastries and pineapple cake. Desai explores the bitter nature of middle class morality by satirizing the behaviour of Mrs. Fernandez.

In the story, "Farewell Party" Desai presents the world of upper class executives and their wives. In his or her world everyone is known not by his or her name but by the name of the company in which he or she is working because they give importance to the social status which they get, by virtue of the brand names of the companies. The wives are known by the names of their husbands, and not by their names. All the stories in the second volume The Diamond Dust are set in India, America, Mexico and London, and which are labeled as stories of domestic life. In the story, "Royalty", through the character of Raja Desai wants to hit at the falsity of friendship. Raja, an old friend of the retired couple, seeks shelter in their house on the pretext of friendship. He creates a lot of disturbance in their life and damages the love and affectionate relationship of the
protagonist Sarla with her sister by giving scope for revenge and jealousy. Desai very sensibly focuses on the need for a delicate balance, which has to be maintained at all costs, if one wants to be a socially important person. The story, “Winterscape” is a focus on the social custom of looking after the aged parents by their children in their old age, which is very strong in Indian tradition. She also explores the sociology of a remote Punjabi village, where education to girls is denied. She wants to protest against the age old dogma of looking down the girls when compared with the boys in the society by presenting the father of Anu and Asha who comes forward to sent his daughters to schools quite against the criticism of the village elders. “The Man Who Saw Himself Drown” is another attack by Desai on the timidity of individual in the society. She wants to proclaim that a timid cannot exist in the society. The protagonist who identifies himself with the dead man struggles hard to disclose his identity in the society, but he fails to come out of his timidity and dies for the second time. Desai here wants to prove the old saying that the timid die everyday while the bold dies only once.

In the story, “An Artist’s Life” Desai explores, how the hypocrisy of the elders shatter the dreams of the young ones. Polly, the protagonist’s desire to become a great painter is shattered by the misbehaviour of their tenant who happened to be a great painter. She makes the students from the orphanage clean the backyard. In the story, “Topoztlan Tomorrow” Desai proclaims against the destruction of peaceful atmosphere of the villages at the guise of modern civilization. The beautiful and peaceful atmosphere of the village Topoztlan is shattered and disturbed by the signs of modern life, a wine shop, a hotel and a butcher’s shop set at the center of the village, creating all kinds of disturbance to the peace of the village. In the last story “Rooftop Dwellers” Desai presents the problems faced by individuals in getting a decent accommodation to live in
through the protagonist Mayona who comes to Delhi to work in a magazine. It is very difficult for the unmarried girls to get accommodation in the cities. The Managing director of the magazine is the best example of the middleclass-working women who always complain about their mothers-in-law and husbands for not cooperating them. It is a universal problem that Desai has explored through this character. Desai also presents every problem of working women through the struggle of Moyna to go to her working place in D.T.S. buses, and the behaviour of the passengers and demand of auto rickshaws that constantly worry all the working women in general in the society. Thus though Desai has not projected many social problems faced by her protagonists there are certain problems which play an important role in the lives of her protagonists. Her main preoccupation is to probe into the inner world of the individuals. As Shyam M. Asnani says,

"Desai is not interested in social or political probing, the outer weather, the physical geography, or the visible action. Her forte is the exploration of the interior world, plunging into the limitless depths of the mind, and bringing into relief the hidden outer of the human psyche. This main thrust on the inner life of the individual, on myriads of inner impressions passing fancies and fleeting thoughts, together with her razor-like sharp awareness of the futility of existence is perceptible in each of her stories."

While the protagonists of Raja Rao and Anita Desai struggle to establish their identity by exploring the evils of Indian society and Indian milieu the protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee struggle to establish their identity and fit well in the American society. Almost all the stories in the two volumes of stories depict her dilemma between the two cultures of the east and the west, the adopted and the inherited cultures. In her first volume she explores the racial discrimination that is predominant in the Canadian society. She
explores Indians expatriate experiences in the Canadian society. The expatriates naturally become immigrants who gradually assimilate into the host society at all levels psychological. Social and cultural and try to become true citizens of the host country. All the protagonists in Darkness are the representatives of her personal experiences in Canada. She is bitterly ill-treated by the Canadians. The stories like “The Isolated Incidents”, “Tamurlan”, “Indus”, and “Visitors” depict how the immigrants of Indian origin face the racial discrimination in Canada. Ratna Clayton, a Chef like Mohan Gupta, Mohan Persawd, suffer racial discrimination in Toronto because the Torontians are very particular of their racial purity even there are incidents of physical assault also on the Asian immigrants in Toronto, Montreal and Canada.

Mukherjee’s preoccupation with the idea of finding a safe home in alien land finds place in her other stories like “Nostagia”, “Visitors”, “A Lady from Lucknow”. The protagonists like Manna Patel, Nafeeza Hafeez, Vinita Kumar, suffer from a sense of longing for the old land and old ways in the alien land. This sense of longing for the lost world and the new world with which they live does not offer them a safe place. Though they struggle to assimilate fully into the alien land their alien psyche never allows them to assimilate fully and they remain aliens in their host land and crave for the homeland. Mrs. Vinita is tangled in between the two cultures, the adopted and inherited, as one requires the exoticism of ethnic identity and other demands complete abandonment. These mutual requirements threaten individuals self and identity.

While all the protagonists in Darkness are trapped inside the society of Canada and Toronto the protagonists of The Middleman and Other Stories are trapped in the American society. The protagonists like Maria, Panna Butt, Jasmine, Maya Sanyal,
Mr. Venkatesan, and Blanquita struggle to establish themselves in the American society. Maria is treated like a trump card in the hands of the smugglers and the underworld dons. Even then at the end she succeeds in fitting herself well in the American society and marries her childhood friend, after killing the gang leader who captures her. Panna Butt, another protagonist lands in U.S. to do her Ph.D leaving behind her family and husband. She adapts very well to the social and cultural milieu of America. She feels free in America being well educated and her position sounds better than those of her mother and grandmother as the need to act like a traditional wife is not there for her now. She enjoys fully the freedom of American society. The Americans that the protagonists encounter with are primarily middleclass white people who fit into the old white Anglo-Sax on idea of Americanness. The racial tropism manifests itself when the Asian newcomer’s presence becomes unbearable, and provokes the Americans to leave the scene. Such is the case of Blanquita. She knows six languages, knows the American culture very well and in even daring enough to ridicule their ways. She feels comfortable because America is everyone’s dream and everyone’s second country. She even makes fun of her counterpart, Griff for not having any spark of love. Quite contrary to her, Maya Sanyal feels rootless in the American society. She is a psychic because she suffers from a sense of self-alienation she is not be able to find roots either in her native culture or foreign. Though she is better educated than Blanquita, she is unable to fit herself well into the American society. Whereas Jasmine, like Blanquita fits well into the American society. She works as a mother substitute in the house of an American family. As there is no way to go she struggles hard to construct a balance between her present position and her past life and at the same time she establishes her self well in the present position. Her struggle reminds one of tight rope-walkers. So also is Mr. Venkatesan, a college teacher from Sri Lanka leaves his country at the age of forty to try his fortune in America. He lands in America.
only to earn money and support his big family, but unfortunately not lucky enough and settle down as husband of a widow of the owner of a restaurant. Thus all the immigrants who have come to America by chance or by necessity have to understand the two hundred years of history of America and learn to adapt to American society. The final story, “The Management of Grief” is a pungent hit at the irresponsible behaviour of the Canadian government who does not show any concern when many Asians die in a plane crash. Instead of extending their help to survivors of the families of the diseased, the Canadian government demands the settlement of dues from them. Mukherjee criticizes the inhuman behaviour of the Canadian government towards the Asian immigrants. Thus Margaret Atwood comments on the stories that,

This is Bharati Mukherjee at her dire best, exploring the new World like a cross between Lucretia Borgia and a wise child from Saturn seizing each opening for the stiletto and commenting blithely on unsavoury details, the natives would prefer to sweep under the carpet.¹⁷

While the protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee struggle to establish themselves in the American society the protagonists of Salman Rushdie struggle with the problems in the societies of Indian, Pakistan, and London. Just like Charles Dickens, and Mulk Raj Anand the protagonists of Rushdie are rich and poor rubbing shoulders with each other. Exiled from his country and religion he took shelter in Scotland Yard. In his stories East, West, he depicts people deprived of family, and friends, and their struggle to find a safe home. The protagonists like Rehana, Ramani and Hashim in the first set of stories are deprived of their families, friends and even the village. Rehana, being satisfied with the position of a maid servant, wants to deny a luxurious life of the wife of wealthy husband who is three times order to her. She wants to stay in her home country instead of aspiring to the sophisticated life of the wife of a rich husband in London. Like Rushdie to her
home is the best place to live in. In the story, “Good Advice is rarer than Rubies” Rushdie explores the cunning activities of a middleman to trap the innocent women at the Consulate. The story, “Free Radio” is a satire on the attractive incentives that the government offers to the citizens who undergo a family planning operation. “The Prophets Hair” is a pungent satire on the Islam. Hashim, the protagonist of the story keeps with him the relic of the prophet in a silver vial not for the holiness of the relic but for the beauty of the vial. He wants to add it to the collection of his antiques. Because of the relic everything goes wrong in the house of Hashim. Though Rushdie presents the evil effects of the relic, he is not against Islam as he confesses in his essay “100 Days Trapped inside a Metaphor.” In the story, “At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers” he presents the Ruby slippers worn by Dorothy in the movie, “The Wizard of the Oz”, as symbols of quasi-religious significance. He criticizes how the society idolizes fame and money to hide an underlying vacuum. Different types of people gather at the saleroom to buy the slippers, even the priests.

The four writers have showed their singularity in using the different tenets like the narratology, irony, imagery and symbolism and language in their stories. Raja Rao uses the ‘I’ oriented narration and omniscient point of narration in many of his stories. In some stories he uses the fable and parable form of narration particularly when he deals with the themes of relationships between animals and human beings. He even tries to use the modern technique of stream of consciousness in his stories. But in most of the stories he uses the first person narration because he has a very special liking for it as he confesses in an interview with Ranger Ranvir that,

I like to write in first person singular, because I find it more sincere, Gandhi used to say, you can lie to some one else, but you cannot lie to
As Raja Rao likes to use the ‘I’ oriented narration very much while Anita Desai uses the mixed mode of narration. In most of her stories she uses the mixed mode of narration. In many of her stories she starts the stories with omniscient narration and in the middle whenever she thinks it right she switches to the first person narration. But this frequent shifting of the mode of narration never damages the unity of the story. On the other hand it makes the stories authentic. But the story remains a unique achievement both in its form and fable and 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. In some of the stories she uses the pure ‘I’ narration to suit the themes of the stories and in some stories she uses even the fable and parable form of narration to make the stories authentic and real. She depicts the story within the story method also to remind the old oral traditional form of narration. In some stories she even uses the dramatic monologue form of narration to strengthen her themes.

Bharati Mukherjee uses the omniscient mode of narration in all her stories which are set in America and Canada. She employs familiar American narratives to make her themes alive and authentic. In her earlier works she uses the omniscient mode of narration but later when her stories were published she shifts her mode of narration from omniscient to the first person authorial point of view to give authentic touch to her stories. Some of her stories in *The Middleman and Other Stories* she uses the first person narration because she explores the American culture, the violence., the underworld activities. She is also quite at ease while using the male point of view. The publishers also mistook Mukherjee as a male writer, and wrote a letter to her addressing as
Mr. Mukherjee. She confesses that she is a sort of mimic, an unconscious mimic, so she can easily adapt to other gender and other races.

Just like Raja Rao, Rushdie also prefers first person narration and the fable and parable form of narration in his stories set in India, Pakistan, and London, he uses the first person narration in many of his stories to make them authentic. In one of his stories he uses the historical oral traditional method of narration perfectly with mystery, magic and more significantly, morality as the theme carried throughout the story. Like Raja Rao he is too much attracted by the traditional way of storytelling. In one of his stories he also uses the dramatic monologue form of narration. Like Anita Desai he also, if necessary, shifts from one method of narration to another depending upon the theme. He also uses the mode of socio-political satires in his stories. Many of his stories in first person narration appear to be autobiographical in tone, as he depicts his personal experiences in his stories. Thus there is a similarity among all the four writers in the mode of narration, though the settings of the stories are different.

Besides the narrative technique irony also plays an important role in constituting a successful story. The four writers have used three types of irony, situational, verbal, and dramatic in their stories in a unique way. Raja Rao uses verbal irony to depict the agony and sufferings protagonists, particularly the female protagonists in his stories. He uses situational irony to depict the themes of freedom struggle, and in some stories he uses dramatic irony, blending with 'I' narration. On the whole his use of irony is explicit in almost all his stories. But Anita Desai uses the characteristic and situational irony in many of her stories. She uses situational irony when her protagonists are caught in the conflict with the situation in the story. In some stories she uses exclusive and destructive
irony to suit her themes. In some stories the use of irony is biting and bitter. In some stories she uses devastating irony to depict the primeval instincts in adults. She also uses dramatic irony to present how too much care and attention by the adults on children and the children on their elders, result in bad repercussions in many of her stories dealing with the themes of children, parents, and their relationships.

While Desai's use of irony is to some extent soft and mild, the use of irony by Mukherjee is more disgusting and powerful. In her stories she uses sarcastic and biting irony to depict her themes of expatriation immigration and assimilation. As she confesses in one of her interviews, she uses the self-protective and mordant irony to explore the pain and agony of the state-of-the-art of expatriation. In some stories she uses situational irony to depict the double-edged situation of the immigrants in America and Canada. She uses biting irony to explore how the Asian immigrants particularly Indians, suffer to acculturate and assimilate fully in the host country. In some stories she uses subtle irony to depict the indignant nature of Canadian government towards the Indians.

While Mukherjee uses mordant and biting irony to bring out her themes, Rushdie uses satirical and situational irony to bring out his themes in his stories. In the first set of the stories, he uses situational irony to explore the helpless situation of the protagonists to survive in the society. They expect one but they face another in their lives in the society. In some stories he uses satirical irony to depict the satirical situation of his protagonists. Though the use of irony varies from one to another among the four writers, there is a commonality of the themes among all the four writers.
Apart from narration and irony, the use of imagery and symbolism play an important role in bringing out the themes of the stories effectively. Different writers have used imagery and symbolism in different ways in their works of art. Raja Rao uses imagery and symbolism with great expertise. It is one of the most effective devices adopted by him. In some stories of female protagonists he uses pictorial imagery to depict the miserable position of them in the society, particularly of the widows and orphans. They are presented as simple and credulous women of an Indian village in the pre-independence days. The cow and the mother earth are the common images he uses to depict the women protagonists who always sacrifice their lives for the sake of their kith and kin. Some times he also uses the peepal tree, the blue water of the river and vast sky above to describe the forbearance of the women. In some stories of the freedom struggle he compares the Mahatma with a prince, which he likes the most. He uses it to symbolize the most adorable one whom one looks for inspiration. The expression, ‘as clear as the drops of Ganges’ is the beautiful verbal image he uses to depict the agony of the protagonists. Death is compared with the pictorial image of a headless horse, and with the sound of the drumbeats and the thudding sound of the train. He also uses the holy images of Gods and Goddesses in some of his stories to strengthen his themes. In some stories he also uses different images and symbols from puranas and Itihasas to suit his themes. He is also an expert in using the flowers and human organs like eyes as images to depict the deeper feelings of the protagonists.

As most of the images and symbols of Raja Rao are drawn from the Indian mythology and legends, Anita Desai uses the images and symbols, pertaining to the urban and domestic settings in her stories. She uses images in order to foreground the character’s psyche and then to create mainly an Indian atmosphere in accordance with the
requirements of the themes. Imagery is a very flexible means of capturing the rhythm of local life to her. She uses different images to present the state of mind of her protagonists. The images like a couple, watermelon and pineapple cake, signify the psychological transformation of the protagonists. The calm and quite dawn with the flight of the pigeons conveys the sense of relief from the dull drab existence, the pain and suffering of the summer season. Hostility among the friends and relatives is conveyed through the image of the presence of the serpent in some stories. Even the photographs serve as images in her stories.

The imagery and symbolism of Bharati Mukherjee sounds native to U.S., Canada and India. She uses rich verbal and pictorial imagery and symbolism to present themes of expatriation, immigration, and assimilation in the alien land. In some stories she uses the nations of America and India as metaphors to show the broken identities of the protagonists in alien nations. She even uses language and religion as metaphors to depict the immigrant psyche. She uses sensuous and pictorial imagery to depict the theme of rebirth and refashioning of the protagonists in the alien nations. Birds like pigeons and bats, animals like pythons, leeches, serve as images to depict the miserable life of the protagonists in the host land. Just like Raja Rao she also refers to Goddesses as symbols in her stories. Being a Bengali woman she has a special adoration for Goddess ‘Kali’. She uses Kali Matha to suggest the evil premonitions in the dreams of the protagonists. She also has a special liking for the Mughal miniature paintings. She refers physical beauty to bring out the theme of conflict of the protagonists in the alien nations. The struggle to establish oneself in the host country is conveyed through the beautiful pictorial imagery of physical beauty and flowers.
Salman Rushdie uses different kinds of imagery and symbolism borrowed from the myths and scriptures of religions and he interweaves with those of English literature. In some stories he uses visual imagery, the burden of the protagonist Ramani through the rickshaw he pulls along with thief’s widow and her five children. The phenomenal effort he was making to draw the rickshaw itself is symbolic of some evil that is going to happen to Ramani. In one story he uses a relic as the symbol of catastrophe. He also uses antiques as the symbols to depict his themes. The toys like Sandalwood animals, Naga spears etc are used to suggest his religious sense. He also takes the famous icons of the West to bring out his themes in the second set of his stories. He also presents himself as a symbol to depict the theme of alienation. He uses surrealism and magic realism in some of his stories. He uses surrealism to depict the unnatural relationship that exists between the east and the west. Thus the imagery he uses is appropriates to the theme of his stories.

All the 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 the land. The non-native speaker faces so many problems in depicting the thoughts and themes in a non-native language. Particularly when the Indian creative artist has to depict his themes in English language he/she has to mould and alter the language to suit it to the Indian ethos, characters, and situations. He/she cannot write totally like a British writer 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. He 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 express the Indian thought and tradition. His devotion towards the blending of form and substance has enabled him to record his vision. 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. He modifies language significantly but does not lapse into juggernaut English. He has evolved a distinct standard in English which has a correct usage of English, but of Indian soul and colour, through, 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. Raja Rao has achieved this in a successful way. Raja Rao uses English language in a lucid way to depict the religious beliefs and ignorance of the villagers and their credulity, superstitions in a marvelous way in many of his stories. He uses the Indian sounds in English language though they are not understandable to the foreign readers. He uses abusive words to suit the characters in their situations; particularly he mixes the Kannada vernacular, expression and rhythm in English language. He coins suitable names to his characters that appear native. Thus his use of language with sounds and images enables us to picturise the situations in front of our eyes as if they have been taking place before us. The use of abusive words makes his characters appear quite natural in their situations. He also uses poetry and poetic expressions in some of his stories.

Anita Desai too has done so much to formulate her own language to suit her themes and characters. Born to a Bengali father and German mother, she longs to write in Bengali but she confesses that she is too much obsessed with the English language and she finds it more suitable to her fiction. She knows how to live with English language and how to deal with problems created by it and sometimes how to ignore them. In her view one's language is one's mother. Her presentation of Indian scenes and settings in English language is quite natural and quite native. She always depicts the middle-class and upper middleclass traditions in her stories in realistic terms. Though some of her characters are
illiterate they never speak any abusive words. She sidetracks such situations by employing words like ‘curse’ and ‘abuse’. She also uses poetry to describe certain situations in her stories. In most of the stories she uses songs to suit the situations. She has a special liking for Tagore’s poetry, so she uses lines from his poetry to hit her situations. In some of her stories, even prose runs like poetry. She uses some Bengali and Hindi idioms and phrases as they are without giving their English translations. In some situations she mixes both English and Hindi words to suit the speech of the characters. She is an expert in using compound nouns in vernacular modes of expression. The use of vernacular words sometimes warrants an explanation to foreign readers who are not likely to be acquainted with such words. Though the use of the vernaculars is revealing and releasing to the Indians they probably irritate the foreign readers. On the whole she does not seem to have faced any problems in using English language to present her themes and characters in her stories. On the other hand she modifies her language to some extent in order to give a natural local colour to her stories.

Bharati Mukherjee does not lag behind in modifying English language to suit her American and Canadian settings and situations. Her primary education in missionary schools which was more like a British school helped her in this regard. The authority over the language and the obsession to become a writer from her childhood had enabled her to pick up English as the medium of expression. After her Master’s degree her stay in Iowa also helped her to develop the language skills. As all her themes and settings are from America and Canada she does not face any problem in depicting them in English language. Though she wrote first novels in British English, she uses American English in her short stories, set in America and Canada. Her long stay in U.S and Canada also enables her to depict the social scenes and settings of America in her stories. She also feels free in using the American expressions. Though the Indian readers cannot
understand the meaning of some of the American expressions, she never gives any explanation, as Raja Rao and Anita Desai never gave any explanation to their Indian expression in their stories. The characters also speak English fluently as they all are well educated, 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 she never finds it difficult to use English language, either British or American. While depicting the characters like gangsters, shooters and underworld people she uses the language quiet fit to them and their situations as she herself confesses in one of the interviews that she is a kind of mimic of herself, she can easily catch any language and accent easily within a short time of her contact with them. She also uses colloquial expressions to suit the situations. While depicting the Indian characters she never hesitates to use wrong expressions to suit them. As all her characters are from urban and semi urban settings and well educated middle class background she never uses abusive words except in some situations where she depicts underworld activities. She also uses some German and French expressions in her stories as she had picked them up while she was in those countries as child. Though she likes the poetry of Keats and Tagore she never uses any poetic references in her stories.

While Bharati Mukherjee uses pure American English Salman Rushdie uses chaste British English. There is an effective simplicity and harmonious progression of mood and meaning in his English expression. The tone and tenor and flavour remind one of eighteenth century fictional prose of Fielding and Sterne. His experiments with language are one of his remarkable achievements. Most reviewers have waxed lyrical over his quality that no Indian writer has had the courage to handle English language with the gaiety and joyousness like him. His primary education in Jon Cannon School run by
missionaries introduced him to the Anglophone Indian educational system. From his childhood he was a bilingual. He too like Raja Rao has experimented with English and succeeded remarkably well in his experiments and innovations. In his opinion English in Indian is diverged significantly from Standard English. India has made its own English as the way America and Ireland and the Caribbean and Australia had made their own language. At school he was more independent and more forceful of 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. Abundant felicity of expression and passionate interest had made Rushdie’s use of English more enjoyable. He has achieved far greater success than Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand in using English language to depict the Indian situation and setting. When Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan started writing, the proposition 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 the capabilities and achievements of Indian writers in English have been fully established beyond any doubt. The only problem he faces 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’. The diction he uses in each story is perfectly suited to the character’s voice, which in turn is well suited to the story. He also uses Urdu words in conversations and does not mind to give translations because they look natural to the vernacular of the characters. Though he is often accused of writing unreadable prose, his stories prove that he can write readable prose in a realistic mode, if he wishes. He never
uses abusive words. Though he likes poetry and music there are no poetic reference in his stories.

Thus, though all the four writers are best known for their novels, their contribution to the short stories is not least. They are the outcome of the intense outburst of their emotions. Even though these writers wrote these short stories during the period of relaxation between the writing of one novel and the next, they are written about themes that have a universality of appeal. The short stories have provided the necessary space for these writers to experiment with a variety of techniques and tenets of the short story. To writers like Desai and Mukherjee the short stories have also proved to be testing grounds for testing the effectiveness of their themes so that they could attempt an extension of the same themes in some of their novels. Some of the short stories have come handy for these writers to resolve some personal dilemmas and also to reconcile themselves to the existing reality. All the four writers have focused on Indian setting though Bharati Mukherjee deviates from others in depicting the American and Canadian settings in her stories. Thus all the stories of the four writers are remarkable and memorable for their unique themes and settings and form a commendable unit of Indian English shorter fiction.

References.


